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Denver's mayor offloads immigrants on Aurora

Mike Coffman
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In late November 2024, Mayor Mike Johnston asked me for permission to use an extended-stay Quality Inn hotel in Aurora to help temporarily house some of the busloads of migrants that were overwhelming Denver. I initially said yes, but it soon became apparent that beyond giving the newly arrived migrants a 30-day hotel voucher, he had no plan for them other than leaving them homeless in Aurora. To make matters worse, his contract with the extended-stay hotel owner forced all of the existing residents — who were paying by the week because they didn't have the income or the

credit to get an apartment lease — out to make room for busloads of migrants coming from Denver. When I found this out, I called Johnston and demanded that he pick up the migrants, as soon as their vouchers expired and take them back to Denver. He did and from that point forward, I turned down his requests for further assistance. Unlike Denver, Aurora is not a city and county form of government, so we do not have the specific funding sources, or the structure, necessary to provide support on an ongoing basis.

After the August 18, 2024 video of the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua (TdA) at the Edge of Lowry Apartments in Aurora went viral, communications teams from both Denver and Aurora thought it would be a good idea if Johnston and I would do a joint interview with Kyle Clark at 9 News to show that both Denver and Aurora, along with our state and federal law enforcement partners, were aggressively pursuing TdA gang members to help calm the national hysteria over the issue.

Just before the interview started, I turned to Johnston and said how I thought it was strange that I seem to be having all the problems with Venezuelan gangs, and he didn't. I then said that I thought that's because he was "the situation by knowing where they were in his city while I didn't. Johnston, who talks incessantly in political soundbites, said nothing in response.

On Sept. 11, 2024, a friend of mine, Miles Cortez, sent me an online article from a publication called City Journal entitled, "in Aurora: How the federal government subsidized the migrant madness in suburban Colorado." <https://www.city-journal.org/article/chaos-in-aurora>.

The article stated that it was Johnston who, via the cover of two nonprofit organizations, moved migrants from Denver to Aurora.

According to the article: "this funding in hand, the two NGOs began working with landlords to place migrants in housing units and to subsidize their rent. One of these organizations, Papagayo, worked with a landlord called CBZ Management, a property

management company that operates the three apartment buildings at the center of the current controversy: Edge of Lowry, Whispering Pines, and Fitzsimons Place, also known as Aspen Grove.”

After reading the article, I confronted Johnston about whether this was true. He affirmed that Denver had contracts with nonprofits that “have” placed migrants from Denver to Aurora but he refused to confirm a number, where they were housed, or what resources they were given. He defensively said that information wasn’t available.

Our city attorney, Pete Schulte, has obtained copies of the contracts between Denver and the two nonprofits through the “Open Records Request Act (CORA)” and we now know that the words “in Denver or in the surrounding communities” was quietly inserted into these contracts to allow these nonprofits to put the migrants in Aurora without notifying us. It gives Johnston cover, should it become public, by allowing him to say that it wasn’t his decision to put them in Aurora; it was the nonprofits who made the decision.

Also, contradicting Johnston’s statement that the information wasn’t available was a compliance provision in the contracts, again obtained via a CORA request, that required the nonprofit organizations to provide the information about how many migrants were sent to Aurora and where they were housed.

Our city attorney has followed up with an additional CORA request for information, but Johnston’s appointed Denver city attorney is claiming that the reports containing the numbers of migrants sent to Aurora and where they were placed cannot be released because they contain personal identifiers such as the names of the migrants. Then, Denver should redact the names and send us the information.

Venezuela is a failed socialist dictatorship whose economy has collapsed. The only role of law enforcement is to protect the Maduro regime from the people and not to protect the people from criminals and as a result, criminality is rampant. Unfortunately, where

there is a concentration of Venezuelans here, the criminal element sometimes follows and superimposes itself on the Venezuelans to exploit them. I believe that such was the case with CBZ properties, particularly at the Edge of Lowry Apartments, in Aurora.

Aurora has suffered from a national embarrassment that has harmed the image of our city in a way that could have lasting economic consequences. As the mayor of Aurora, I'm asking that Mayor Mike Johnston be transparent and tell the truth about what he did.

Mike Coffman is the mayor of Aurora. Coffman previously represented Colorado's 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House and has served as Colorado's secretary of state and its treasurer, among other elected offices. Coffman also is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps who served in the Gulf War and the Iraq War.

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