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POLITICAL MOJO

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Got A Problem? Blame It On Illegal Immigrants

— By **Tim McDonnell** | Wed Jun. 22, 2011 4:30 AM PDT

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"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she / With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" | Or, you know, don't. *jordi.martorell/Flickr*

Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) took some heat this weekend for blaming wildfires in Arizona and New Mexico on illegal immigrants. McCain has since recanted (sort of), claiming that he was merely repeating what an unnamed Forest Service official told him in a briefing.

McCain's comments are just the latest example of our country's habit of blaming all manner of problems on immigrants. Let's take a look at a few recent instances of illegal immigrants becoming scapegoats for... well, you name it:

- **Car Accidents:** Thank Arizona's senior senator for this one, too. McCain told Bill O'Reilly (who else?) that Arizona's highways were plagued by illegal immigrants who intentionally crash into other drivers. No word on how doing so could possibly be to their benefit.
- **Swine Flu:** Remember this? While everyone was running around buying face masks and speculating on Swine Flu's origin, CNN's Jack Cafferty suggested that illegal immigrants—not just anyone traveling from Mexico—might be at fault.
- **The Mortgage Crisis:** Conservative pundit Michelle Malkin argued that banks specifically targeted illegal immigrants for shady home loans, and when they couldn't pay up... well, you know what happened.
- **America's Drug Problem:** The majority of illegal immigrants coming from Mexico are "drug mules," according to Arizona Governor Jan Brewer.
- **Litter:** Some officials think border crossers need to brush up on their "Leave No Trace" etiquette.
- **California's Budget Deficit:** Forget about mismanagement and overspending: some argue that California ran out of money because of illegal immigrants, who used services like hospitals and schools without paying for them. (Actually, many undocumented immigrants pay taxes.) Immigrants had a friend in the Governor, though, who said they were an "easy scapegoat" and not the real source of the problem.
- **Bad Traffic:** The American Immigration Control Foundation ran ads accusing immigrants (illegal and otherwise) of worsening gridlock and pushing urban sprawl.
- **Various Episodes of Violence:** Something scary happened in your neighborhood and you can't find the criminal? No problem! It was probably illegal immigrants (this rule applies internationally, too).

Immigrants must be exhausted after leaving their foreclosed homes in pot-laden cars, crashing in standstill traffic on their way to the ER, hacking and wheezing, and then tossing their used Kleenex out the window!

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Tim McDonnell is an editorial intern at Mother Jones. For more of his stories, [click here](#).

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- DavidCornDC: WTF. I mean, WTF. RT @andrewkroll .@DavidCornDC is on Hardball right now. Little does he know we are evac'ing his office to avoid the rain
- DavidCornDC: RT @timothypmurphy: RT @smencimer: The Jamie Leigh Jones jury has returned, verdict in hand. More TK!

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