

Crisis Management Case Study: Gov. Ron DeSantis

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis sends plane loads of illegal immigrants to Martha's Vineyard. From a crisis mgt. standpoint, how effective was this political stunt?



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis

Source: Twitter

*"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-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Tom Madden, Founder & CEO, TransMedia Group

This is a bit awkward for me as I'm a fairly conservative guy who usually votes Republican, depending on whether the candidate is worthy.

And I was hoping it wasn't true that my sometimes feisty governor used taxpayer funds to make a political statement? Ouch.

As a crisis manager, I often wince at some of the stunts our politicians pull on both sides of the ever-seething political spectrum.

Last week 50 migrants from Venezuela and Colombia landed on Martha's Vineyard, a wealthy island off the coast of Massachusetts, but hardly an infrastructure mecca equipped to deal with such a blind-sided invasion.

The stunt was meant as a swipe at President Biden's disastrous border policy that's causing havoc and disruption, not to mention suffering and death of countless poor immigrants who craved to live the America dream. I wonder what poet Emma Lazarus would say whose iconic words grace our Statue of Liberty.

DeSantis sent two planes full of migrants from Texas, prompting surprise and confusion among islanders who had to quickly scrounge up aid for the arrivals and a place for them to sleep overnight at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

Those who were flown at Florida taxpayer expense by the governor were even more surprised, officials said. Many were shellshocked and afraid, a therapist and nurse practitioner told the Cape Cod Times.

Migrants said they had been in Texas, and it appeared DeSantis chose to step in and finance their transportation to make a political statement about immigration, part of a Republican effort to pressure Biden "to do something."

DeSantis was following the lead of other Republican governors, Greg Abbott of Texas and Doug Ducey of Arizona, who have sent migrants to Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C.

"We take what's happening at the southern border very seriously, unlike the President who has refused to lift the finger to secure that border," DeSantis said, noting the record number of people and drugs transiting across the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

As part of a broader plan to keep immigrants from attempting to enter the country illegally, DeSantis said he wanted to send a message that they were unwelcome in Florida, which is not a sanctuary state.

I agree with much of this in theory, but in practice, as a crisis manager, I'm uncomfortable. If asked, I'd have recommended finding a kinder way of bringing the border issue into the media spotlight. I don't think it helps the cause using puzzled and exhausted migrant children as political pawns.

Sure, the fired up Republican base is applauding DeSantis, but what about the mothers who care about children?

The independents growing weary of politicians and their stunts? The U.S. citizens who are the descendants of immigrants?

How will all this affect whom they support and more importantly, how they'll vote?

If Gov. DeSantis had asked me what I thought of this latest stunt, I would have recommended that he accompany the migrants

on the flight, take fewer families along and make sure they had enough money to pay for room and board and amenities wherever they landed.

Governor, you're using these people like actors in a play, so pay them! Also, these people weren't drug smugglers, rapist, or criminals who illegally entered, but were migrants who had entered legally and were vetted individuals applying for asylum, if that makes any difference in how you regard them.

And I might also have suggested they land somewhere in Massachusetts where there were hotels where they could stay more comfortably than sleeping in church pews.

In other words, I would urge that the stunt lovers on both the right and left treat their pawns in this political chess game more like human beings.

After all, they just want what our ancestors wanted when they braved crossing the turbulent sea to reach the shores of freedom.



About the Author: Tom Madden's prescription for agida is writing. His fifth book *WORDSHINE MAN* recently became available on Amazon. When not writing books or his weekly blog at *MaddenMischief.com*, he's CEO of the PR firm he founded, ***TransMedia Group***.