

# United States: Trump Ratchets Up Attack on Immigrant Children

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While the plight of children of asylum seekers separated from their parents fades from the news, hundreds remain incarcerated and still not reunited. Of these some 400 are children of parents who have already been deported, and there is very little chance that these families can be reunited soon, and probably never will be.

Others are children of parents arbitrarily deemed unfit. A typical example is Juan Hernandez, who came with his three-year-old daughter Maria seeking asylum. The government kept her in detention and wouldn't let her be reunited with her father because of two alcohol-related offenses that occurred more than 12 years ago.

Hernandez was then tricked into signing papers he couldn't read agreeing to be deported, after officials lied saying by signing he would be reunited with Maria. He was deported and the three-year-old remains in detention.

Juan Hernandez first came over the border without papers from El Salvador in 1999 after he was repeatedly attacked by gangs. He was 17 at the time, and found work picking lettuce for agribusiness. In 2001, he obtained temporary protected status, granted to Salvadorans at the time because of devastation caused by an earthquake.

He was convicted in 2005 of carrying an open container with an alcoholic beverage in his car. He got another conviction for driving while intoxicated in 2006. When he failed to renew his temporary temporary status in 2006, he was deported.

Feeling unsafe in El Salvador he moved his family to Chiapas, Mexico. There is an increasingly violent situation in that state, and last March he made the decision to seek asylum with his daughter, hoping that if it was successful, he could bring his entire family. Instead he was swept up Trumps "zero tolerance" policy barring almost all asylum seekers from entry, was imprisoned and separated from Maria.

The government claims that any criminal offense as well as unspecified "red flags" is sufficient to declare a parent unfit. Immigrant rights groups say that in most instances the crimes are minor, and have no bearing on the parents' ability to care for their child. Few of the cases would cause an American parent to be ruled unfit.

While the separation of children of asylum seekers lingers on, mass incarceration of immigrant children has ballooned. The New York Times reports that in May 2017, there were 2,400 such children. As of September, the number increased more than five fold, to 12,800 and climbing. While these include the asylum seekers, most came across the border alone.

"The huge increases, which have placed the federal shelter system near capacity, are due not to an influx of children entering the country, but a reduction in the number being released to live with families and other sponsors."

“Zero tolerance” was one new policy designed to bar immigrants, another was adopted last June. The authorities announced that potential sponsors and all adult members of their household, who could take in unaccompanied immigrant children, would have to submit fingerprints and that data would be shared with immigration authorities.

Traditionally, most sponsors have been undocumented themselves, or someone in their home is. So many are obviously wary of submitting their fingerprints. Even those who do, have to wait months to be vetted. The result is a sharp reduction in the number of immigrant children being released into homes.

The Trump administration's answer isn't to get rid of the whole anti-immigrant project and act humanely - it is to build more detention facilities. One of these is an outdoor tent concentration camp called “tent city” in Tornillo, Texas, scheduled to be tripled in size to help accommodate the expected (by the government) rapidly growing number of immigrant children destined to be inmates.

The Obama administration initiated this dreadful program, but Trump has put it on steroids. Under Obama, most such inmates were released before 20 days, the lawful limit by court order. Trump thumbs his nose at such restrictions, and is demanding Congress remove them while he violates them.

Detaining children for months in these detention centers has produced severe depression, violence and other unhealthy mental results. Younger children are especially susceptible to be traumatized by such a situation. Experts predict long lasting impairments and personality disorders like PTSD.

These immigrants Trump is attacking are those who cross the border with Mexico. Many come from there, but many others come from Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua up through Mexico. Not the people who look like “Norwegians” as Trump has said he welcomes.

The target here includes all Latinos. Undocumented Latinos are part and parcel of Latino communities and families. Striking out against the undocumented terrorizes these families and communities.

Of course Trump has said he doesn't want not only people with brown skin but black skin also, people from what he calls “shithole countries” like Haiti and sub-Saharan Africa. Of course he doesn't much like people from northern Africa either, Arabs and Muslims.

Just as the recent hurricane Florence hit the East Coast, wreaking great destruction, the administration took \$10 million from the budget of the Federal Emergency Management Authority, which is supposed to help aid victims of the hurricane, and put it into the funds for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, one of the spearheads of the anti-immigrant drive.

Florence resulted in a deluge of rain in many areas, causing flooding which as of yet hasn't reached its worse as rivers are still cresting. Many have been forced to evacuate, homes have been destroyed, people have died. As in other cases, especially hard hit is the poorest section of the working class, including Blacks and Latinos.

The undocumented have to undergo more hardship. Many express concern that they will encounter ICE if they seek help. A mother in the coastal city of Wilmington, North Carolina, which has been isolated by surrounding flood waters, told NBC News that she feared being separated from her children by ICE if they evacuated to a shelter.

She said, [translated] “My smallest daughter, the little one, asked me, ‘Mom, I'm afraid that our home is going to be destroyed, and I don't want to go to a shelter because I don't want to be

separated from you. I would rather die first than be separated from you.”

Even small children have heard the news about separation.

TV shots of vehicles plowing through flood waters show that some of them are identified as from ICE.

In this “very racist” society as Noam Chomsky has accurately described it, the overt white nationalism of Trump has to be opposed, and will have to be overcome if ever the whole working class can unite to fight this and all the forms of exploitation and oppression of this capitalist society.

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