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What Does Trump Have Against Children?



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I hate the children being taken away.

—[Donald Trump](#)

Finally, a tweet we can believe. Trump does seem to hate those immigrant children; he must because they're part of the "[infestation](#)" he's so alarmed about.

But now he's relented. Or has he? A cursory reading of Trump's [executive order](#) seems to indicate it. But in the immortal words of Admiral Ackbar in *The Return of the Jedi*, "It's a

trap!” — a trick to save Republican bacon in the November congressional mid-term elections.

Trump still wants a zero-tolerance policy of criminal prosecution for all “illegal entry” (which logically is not possible), with family cases expedited. That means families will be mercifully detained together during the sped-up period of criminal processing, after which, when disposition is achieved and the parents are imprisoned, the children will be taken away. Big deal.

As Montanans for Immigrant Justice put it:

While this is movement in the right direction, DO NOT BE FOOLED by what this Order does. Here are the facts thus far:

1. Families will not be immediately separated, but they will be held in detention together.
2. Crossing the border “illegally” will no longer be deemed a civil violation, it will be deemed a criminal violation.
3. Because it is a criminal violation the parents will be charged criminally. At that point, their children will be forcibly taken.
4. The Executive Order will provide a provision that families will be expedited through the criminal process. This means that the removal of their children will be expedited.

The day after he signed the order, Trump himself said, “I signed a very good executive order yesterday, but that’s only limited. No matter how you cut it it leads to separation, ultimately.”

And what about the 2,400 children now in detention? After confusion emanating from the White House and other places, CNN reported, “Officials clarified the children would be reunited with family members.” When?

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is looking at whether its bases can hold up to 20,000 families and unaccompanied children. Twenty thousand.

So it was a hell of a Father’s Day; it was hard to have fun while seething at Trump’s cynical policy of snatching immigrant kids from their parents and holding them hostage in cages to get Congress to accept his malignant “reform” of the immigration law.

The Trump people have managed to combine Big Lies and shocking dehumanization, along with some horrifying honesty in this latest shameful episode in the terrifying series called The Trump Administration. They lie when they blame Democrats for the child-snatching and caging — as Trump now concedes. They lie when they say previous administrations did the same thing. Earlier policies were horrendous, but they did not snatch babies from their mothers’ breasts or fathers’ arms. The Trumpsters lie when they

say the law compels them to perform such cruel acts — again, which Trump now concedes. *It does not.* None of these claims is true.

This is a discretionary policy, at first rejected then urged on Trump by adviser and ethno-nationalist Stephen Miller and carried out by Bible-toting AG Jeff Sessions, who believes the US government, like all governments, was ordained by God. (Plenty of evangelicals disagree.)

But the Trumpsters are honest when they say this is a tactic to deter other migrants and to extort new immigration restrictions from Congress: the wall and an end to the diversity lottery and family migration, both of which Trump has misdescribed before. He either doesn't understand or lies about how those two programs work, but that's how this guy rolls. It's hard to tell, but I'm willing to believe it's some sick combination of ignorance and deception. He doesn't care how those things really work.

Republicans have taken up his cause by proposing bills to cut *legal* immigration. Too many foreigners are poisoning our pure lily-WASP culture apparently, so it's time to make a last-ditch stand. Do they have any idea how long ago that horse bolted the corral, assuming the horse ever existed?

Amazingly, many people, including some who call themselves libertarians, defer to Trump on grounds that the law must be obeyed and enforced. Aside from the fact that this is an autocratic decree and not the requirement of legislation, oh really? Should slaves in the South not have run away? Should others not have helped them? Should gun laws be obeyed? If gun manufacturing were outlawed, would these people not make one in the basement? Should the income tax be faithfully complied with? Should Germans have turned the Jews hiding in the attic over to the Nazis? I could go on, but I don't want to beat the obvious to death.

Why suddenly zero-tolerance? Oh right, Sessions says we have to send a message to other desperate people who are trying to get their kids out of violent and impoverished Central American environments. Yes, zero-tolerance is just the ticket — if you're a moral monster at heart.

Oh, but national sovereignty means border security. Oh yeah? Then dash national sovereignty. If it requires one of the cruelest penalties imaginable for children and their parents, that's reason enough to say, "Screw it."

The same people say that if immigrant parents don't like the consequences, they shouldn't try to bring their children here. On Facebook, Adam Bates, a heroic voice of reason, tossed that in the rubbish bin where it belongs:

I **hate** this argument. First, let's draw a distinction that is so obvious I shouldn't need to say it. There are two distinct types of consequences: natural and artificial.

Natural consequences are the unavoidable risks of engaging in a certain behavior. For instance, burning your hand because you negligently put it on a hot stove. That is a natural consequence of that behavior.

Artificial consequences are not inherent risks in the behavior, they're risks that some outside party is imposing on their own initiative. For instance, burning your hand because some asshole jabs you with a cigarette for doing something he doesn't like.

Somehow that distinction has been lost, especially among social conservatives who incessantly treat government abuses as if they're laws of nature instead of just some asshole's tyrannical whims.

A natural consequence of prolonged opioid use is constipation. Getting shot to death by the DEA is not a natural consequence, but an artificial one.

A natural consequence of walking across the border desert is dehydration. Having your child yanked away from you and thrown into a dog cage by CBP is not a natural consequence, it's an artificial one.

If the threatened consequence for a behavior is itself arbitrary and illegitimate, then the person engaging in the behavior is blameless.

This isn't hard.

No, it isn't. It's so easy that one naturally wonders about the motives of those who make the "argument."

The Trump policy is unsurprising since his record on children was horrendous from the start. His support for Israel's racist and apartheid state does the most damage to Palestinian children. Has he done anything to stop enabling the crushing of the people of the Gaza Strip or the daily brutality of military rule on the West Bank or the systemic discrimination of Israel's Palestinian Arab "citizens"? No, he has not, though he could in the next minute.

And how about the children he's helping to destroy in Yemen through Saudi bombing, starvation, and cholera? Or those who live in daily and nightly terror at the sound of drones in the eight countries he's terrorizing by that high-tech weapon of war?

For that matter, how about the poor American children he's harming through his trade wars, which will raise consumer prices and jeopardize their parents' jobs?

So this is nothing new.

But wait. Perhaps I have not given Trump his due. I can think of one case where he was moved to take action when his daughter Ivanka showed him pictures of children who were suffering the effects of alleged chemical weapons allegedly used by Syrian President Assad. What did he do? He dropped bombs. That was broadly praised as “presidential.”