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Family Separations: Trump's Executive Order Does Not Hide This Historical Pattern of Cruelty



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The separation of families can only continue to operate if there are enough collaborators to reproduce the system of apprehension, transport, processing, and internment. As far as any moral compass goes, one ought not to wait for hindsight to see the dirty work that is now as clear as noonday light and for this reason impossible to sanitize. One ought to be a first responder to save the children from needless trauma.

To be sure, the hour is already too late for several thousand children separated from their parents and in some cases their siblings. Those who have been interned have been and continue to be harmed. And there is no apologetic, no excuse, no “professional” protocols in heaven or on earth that can morally justify such child abuse. Trump’s attempt to distract from this crisis with a last minute executive order comes late for these children and families. For future asylum seekers and migrants, the executive order opens another deeply troubling possibility: indefinite incarceration of families or deportation without legal representation and fair-minded judicial review. This hardly provides an adequate solution to the crisis of separation and only aims to consolidate the power of ICE and a long historical pattern of cruelty.

For this reason, all professional associations some of whose membership provide “services” directly for or is allied in any way with ICE, the ICE child separation program, and future practices of indefinite family internment ought to issue statements prohibiting collaboration with this system, such collaboration being acts of moral turpitude. Those who are financially invested in the facilities that “house” these children might consider rebalancing their portfolios. The child separation system, that is, all of its supporting institutions and practices, ought to be dismantled without delay. Of course, those social workers who have the best interests of separated children in mind can minimize further trauma by doing everything possible to ensure prompt family reunification. Half measures with regard to reunification, or tweaking of judicial procedures that prolong separation would only cover over and prolong the “zero tolerance” regime.

The surprising news is that child separation and internment has become a national scandal. The push back is widespread and without equivocation. It is now clear that immigrant child internment troubles humanistic instincts while it fuels the sociopaths committed to a white supremacist agenda. We ought not to labor under any illusion with regard to the violent nature of this agenda. The internment policy only works through coercion; after all ICE, on behalf of the state, is tearing children from the arms of their parents. Appropriately, some states have already withdrawn some of all of their national guard from the border area as gestures of dissent against this atrocity. But all National Guard troops ought to be brought home until there is a full investigation as to how such inhumane machinery was set up so quickly, without proper oversight, at first hidden from public view, and ultimately exposed by persons of conscience.

Let’s be frank about what is happening before our eyes. The cruel and inhumane incarceration of children torn from their parents is a fascist response from a narcissist

government that strokes its own ego by claiming to be the greatest nation in the world. Yet this greatness is being pursued by a regime of endless war abroad and ethnic cleansing and social control at home. Yesterday it was the Obama administration that ratcheted up the mass deportation machine, paving the way for the rabidly racist Trump, whose child internment program has already suffocated the lives of innocent children held hostage by a gang of criminal hoodlum politicians. The sociopaths who had the nerve to go on national television to proffer rationales for this program of *Zero Tolerance* are all too willing to violate in an irreparable manner the dignity and innocence of the child.

The separation of families is not a new social pathology; it is a historical chain of incidents that stem deep back to slavery times when African families were separated and sold during the slave trade never to be together again.^[1] Native Americans can speak to this painful separation from the community fiber when in some cases their children were taken away and sent to boarding school to be processed (civilized) and indoctrinated into ‘*Anglo-American ways*,’ a cynical way to purge them of their own traditions and practices. The Japanese experience is relevant here too. During WWII thousands of Japanese families were sent to internment camps. They were arrested and confined from the general population for racist reasons that labeled them a national threat.

An urgent question for common decency is how the program had gone on this long? It is no surprise that the cries and pleas of these children could not move the cold hearts of hateful policy makers.

One may wonder how long it would take for immigration officers to take a leave of absence for the sake of not participating in this cold-blooded act of incarcerating our young. Several thousand separations later, the answer is: too long, unconscionably long. This practice of ethnic cleansing, with its colonial racist foundation, is an extension of a deep-seated discriminative rationale towards others who are not citizens of empire, and whose colored skins are different from those of the imperial masters.

If we are to get to the bottom of the social pathology that makes child internment possible in the United States today, we must first confront the banality of evil. Let’s not forget the democrat self-proclaimed feminist, Madeline Albright’s words when asked if five hundred thousand Iraqi children were worth the price during the embargo and war with Iraq. Offending even liberal apologists of the war, she firmly said, “Yes”. This banality of evil extends from the highest levels to those who directly implement policy, that is, physically take children into their custody. Even if that custody should be momentary, it is the

necessary coercive moment that subjugates the parents and traumatizes the child. It is not a good thing to do, and even “following orders” does not change its moral content.

Of course, not everyone on the front lines is having pangs of conscience and this is not lost on television and twitter viewers across the country. The sarcasm of a regular citizen converted into a border patrol officer inside a prison verbally disguised as a detention center calling the cries of the children an “*orchestra in need of a conductor.*” While most of mainstream media has stepped up to the plate to cry foul about child internment, the Fox News commentator attempting to depict the separation as a trip to summer camp reflects the imbedded violence that spins the wheels of a fascist moment in the making.^[2] To be sure, there is a base of support for this fascist moment. This Eichmann war criminal attitude of indifference not just by this one officer but of many citizens who happily go along without any questioning is frightening, for it is this same mentality, so ready to dehumanize the other that is also prepared to pull the lever of elimination at command. Hannah Arendt discusses this normalizing of violence and bureaucratic mentality of carrying out one’s “duty” to follow orders at the root of an everyday evil that creeps into the very fabric of society. We hear echoes of Walter Benjamin’s reminder in 1940 that the “‘emergency situation’ in which we live has become the rule.”^[3] It is no wonder that a political science instructor would often say, years ago, that U.S. was one step away from fascism. It was a hard statement to believe until they came for the children and “tender aged”.

What is more disgusting is to read in a Los Angeles Times article the willingness of Latino/Chicano/Hispanic/Latin X generation to “Answer the Call of The Border Patrol in the Age of Trump” while singling out Mexicans.^[4] Those brown people who join the “Zero Tolerance” cause have, as Frantz Fanon points out, joined their white supremacist masters, even identified with them, in carrying out the act of oppression against their own blood. Mexico’s condemnation of these “Cruel and Inhumane Immigration Policies” falls short of any real political muscle flexing.^[5] Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray is criticized for evading a response to the separation of families. Videgaray sent more tweets congratulating the Mexican World Cup soccer team win over Germany than against the separation of families, as singer Sasha Sokol points out.^[6] The audio of crying children is not as loud as the cheering of “G O A L!” but it is indeed deafening, opening a breach in the normalization of crimes against humanity.

For Trump a major illnesses of this country derives from Mexico. All that is brown is Mexican, ‘*bad people,*’ ‘*bad hombres,*’ and criminals. At the G7 Economic forum in

Canada, the vampiric words of Trump could not hold back, dripping out to the more serious prime minister of Japan, that he would deport 25 million Mexicans to Japan.^[7] This statement caught the G7 participants by surprise since it is already understood silently amongst them that the global south is the major supplier of wealth for the G7; much of the wealth of the G7 comes at the expense of the resources and labor of Latin America, Asia and Africa. It is the very policy, imposed by the global North, of permanent war in the pursuit of control of natural resources and human labor as well as the drive by Washington to impose a unipolar world that has generated the worst migration crisis since World War II. Trump's reprimanding and the chastising of Germany and Europe's lack of immigration control within their borders is no less than a Nazi call for the return of whiteness, the *superior race* without people of color and the most vulnerable.

Trump's exclamation "I will not allow migrants to infest us"^[8] is an outright paraphrase of *Mein Kampf* launched to dehumanize "shit hole countries" and "dangerous" migrants. The invasion of the "West" by the "Third World" is the rallying cry of these growing movements of fascist populism from Washington to London and across continental Europe.^[9] This should give us pause to avoid what is still not inevitable: the Nazi turn. "The astonishment that the things we are experiencing in the '20th' century are still possible is by no means philosophical."^[10] Benjamin calls for a radical interruption, a true emergency that would break this tradition in which the exception has become the rule.

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