

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپائی

AUGUST 17, 2018

by RON JACOBS
18.08.2018

The Barbarism of US Immigration Policy

Since Donald Trump took over the White House, many US residents have been repeatedly shocked by the cruelty of his immigration policy. From the detention of returning relatives at US airports when his Muslim ban was announced to the separation of children from their parents seeking asylum on the southern border, the cries of alarm have finally focused attention on US immigration policies. As should have been expected, Trump's supporters have pointed out that his policies are just an extension of those in place since at least 2001. The acknowledgement of this is supposed to somehow absolve Trump from his harsh enforcement of the policy. Similar criticism has come from the left, where the point being made is that much of the Democratic Party is also implicit in the atrocity that is US immigration policy. When all is said and done, the important aspect to this is that many more US citizens are becoming aware of the way Washington's agencies treats humans crossing US borders and their newfound knowledge is making them angry.

Earlier this year, Verso Books published an important and timely text by journalist Eileen Truax titled *We Built the Wall: How the US Keeps Out Asylum Seekers from Mexico, Central America and Beyond*. An immigrant herself, Truax's narrative tells the stories of individuals and families under threat from police, military and other forces in their home countries and their attempts to gain asylum in the United States. Simultaneously, she provides a recent history of US immigration policies, a look at who profits from those policies and a hopeful call for a new look at human migration and for more humane policies. While her focus is on the future, she does not let those in previous administrations off the hook for their complicity. Reading the book is an emotional roller

coaster—at times one feels tears welling up and at other times one works to keep their anger on hold. Exasperation and determination are two words that come to mind while reading the stories of those hoping for asylum and those aiding them in their quest.

Truax focuses primarily on the stories of a couple families and immigration advocates. She provides both a history of the families' interaction with Mexican authorities and those from US immigration agencies. These stories include murders, threats, inaction by US courts and abuse from US immigration officials. It is clear that the stories in this book are not unusual when it comes to the lives of asylum seekers from Mexico and Central America. Truax's narrative includes unsung heroes and nameless officials "just doing their job." It is a job that makes them complicit in a crime against humanity that is far from being maned that by the people who run the world.

We Built the Wall was published before the Trump administration ordered the separation of asylum seeking families at the border and before the repeal of the order allowing women fleeing from abuse to claim asylum. It was published before various administration officials heard recorded cries of toddlers being ripped from their parents. It was published before those officials' response to hearing the recordings rationalized the practice by repeating the mantra "the law is the law." *We Built the Wall* was published before news was leaked that the Trump administration intends to have ICE begin removing legal immigrants from the country and just as the private prison industry was given the funding to build five new detention facilities. Still, it is still a blistering indictment of the immigration policies of the United States and an eye-opening testament to its innate cruelty.

A key aspect of the debate on immigration that often seems to be forgotten is that one is talking about human beings. Women, men, children; families, friends and lovers. Their humanity is no less than that of those debating their future and no more than that of those who wear the uniform of the immigration authorities ushering them through the system. Truax's text refuses to let the reader forget this. Indeed, it is the foundation on which the book is based. It is this truth that those officials and politicians busy contriving more ways to deny that humanity do not want US residents to consider.

Personal stories of inhumane treatment of individuals by the authorities serve to emphasize the actual barbarism of those authorities. However, they can also disguise the universality of that barbarism. In *We Built the Wall*, author Truax manages to convey both individual atrocities and the general atrocity of the US immigration control system itself.

In her undertaking, she has provided an important read for those desiring to understand and change that system.