

## The Broken Fate of Migrants Through US Policy

In one of the most diverse nations in the world, one that is seen by many as the land of opportunity, a silent crisis is brewing. During the majority of our education and experience, people have spoken of America as some sort of promised land, where dreams can be recognized. This truly looks amazing on paper; however, once one puts down the fairy tales about equality and justice, and looks at the real world, this description of America is far from reality. The brutal dehumanization of migrants on our southern border not only sullies the world view about US policy but this process of stripping rights away from migrants is, at its core, fundamentally inhumane.

It's safe to say America's past is plenty stained from the white man benefiting off of the labor of another. It happened for almost 200 years in the south, but the more unknown development of America's infrastructure was largely due to labor from the hands of immigrants. In the Southwest and California, an influx of immigrants from Asia largely shaped the gold rush that followed, the building of railroads, and the development of San Francisco. According to the Library of Congress, 75% of New York's population was an immigrant or first-generation American between the years 1900 and 1915. Further, NCBI.gov found that "Immigrants were generally more willing to accept lower wages and inferior working conditions than native-born workers (Zolberg 2006: 69). Great efficiencies in the production of goods led to higher profits that could be reinvested in new technology, which led to even more production. . ." between the 1880s and 1920s. Market Watch explains, "Oxford researchers studied the effects of immigration in the U.S. between 1850 and 1920. . . and its effect on economic prosperity today. And they

found that ==the counties with more historical immigration have overall higher incomes, less poverty, and less unemployment even today... increasing the percentage of historical immigrants in a county by just 4.9% results in a 13% increase in average per capita income today, as well as a 44% increase in average manufacturing output per capita from 1860-1920 (and a 78% increase in 1930)...”. The experts have finally found something to agree on: the fact that immigration has not only built the US we know and live in but that the nation we live in would be an entirely different place without the working hands of migrants.

The expansionist state of America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was having some problems. The US population was more concerned over the influence the states held on a global scale, and things turned sour. Many fell behind calls for a homogeneous state. This public push led to one of the first policies of its kind. It was called to Immigration Act of 1924, but to many, it is now known as the Asian Exclusion Act. This policy which was later written into US law limited the number of migrants from certain parts of the world and altogether banned immigration from Asian countries. With the passing of this policy, the first of its kind, the narrative started to shift, along with the cultural approach towards immigration and the way that immigrants were treated. The long-respected tradition of treating immigrants like criminals was born.

The new American way was born, a long-respected custom that was eventually brought into politics which can bring us back to the 21st century. The year was 2003 and after the atrocious 9/11 attacks, calls for President Bush to increase security inside the nation lead to the founding of a new monster: ICE - the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. Almost immediately a problem arose within ICE. ICE started to detain and abuse migrants. It

began with just those who had committed crimes but under the current administration, it has grown to so much more. A federal agency is being allowed to abuse its power and commit atrocities critics have compared to war crimes. But more on that later.

Immigration at its core is something of a second chance for many. A chance to start over or a chance to finally provide for one's family. However, these people who are simply vying for a chance to start over have become demonized by policymakers, the media, and worst of all, the public. America's hidden bias against migrants was something that started in the '20s, however, it is something that is still largely prevalent today. Immigrants have nowhere to hide. Being constantly bashed by the media, having laws actively working against them, and having literal headhunters beating their doors down, immigrants have become demonized in the American Society.

This knowledge and unfortunate turn of events for the migrant community makes advocating for immigrant rights more essential now than ever before. To give a voice to those our system has chosen to silence, advocacy is more than needed.

For the past 200 years, immigrants have not had the rights, representation, or the care they deserve even though they have helped our economy and society. Immigrants are the ones who keep America running by taking the difficult, low wage labor jobs such as farming, construction, and restaurant work. Further, immigration is essential, not only when it comes to diversifying a nation, but also when it comes to an influx of ideas. Immigrants are 30% more likely to have a small business or create their work, strengthening not only the national economic status but also providing new opportunities for consumers and workers alike. Further, this vital process brings in more than \$776 billion annually making our economy run smoothly and

providing much-needed boosts to the socio-economic status of many cities across the nation.

They've not only brought new cultures, new food, new ideas, and new interactions but they also further diversified our communities. While the US does not have an official language, before the arrival of immigrants for the first time in large numbers in the 17th century, the native languages were spoken. Soon the immigrants of the time, the white man took over and during the process of ethnic cleansing and stealing land, made the unofficial language of the states English.

Immigrants from around the world have brought new language and experiences into this country, furthering the value and necessity of said migration. In the US having Social Security is viewed as a “privilege” by those who take it for granted daily. The members of our society who have no voice, who are undergoing the process of taxation without representation in the present day would disagree. This nation is built off of the backs of Immigrants, but the rampant irony in the situation is that what the white man felt some 250 years ago got changed, but what the underserved have felt ever since then has gone unnoticed. It's time to change that. And that is the importance of the movement. WE need to bring light to this situation and fight for the rights of immigrants, the same rights our founding fathers fought for in regards to the white man.

While there have been numerous harmful practices that impact immigration, there is one policy in particular that stands out: the zero-tolerance policy. Put into effect in April of 2018 by the Trump Administration, this approach sought to both confine and criminally prosecute any migrants without authorization entering the US anywhere but the official gate of entry. As a result of this, migrant children were often separated from their families and placed in detention facilities. Also, the Trump Administration promised an increase in the number of ICE employees

and, consequently, the number of deportations of undocumented immigrants. The combination of these two plans has only worked to be detrimental for migrants seeking a better life in the states.

Firstly, the Trump Administration's plan to have more ICE employees and deportations has led to procedures that are rushed to keep up with the expected amount of deportations. This hasty method of working has enabled ICE to perpetuate the harsh conditions and treatment of immigrants due to poor organization. As a report from the inspector general at Homeland Security stated, "ICE agents. . . are ill-equipped to monitor those on their caseloads. . . Some officers have more than 10,000 cases. . .". With such high demand for deportation, ICE employees struggle to meet their quota. Not only this but in their efforts to sustain this expectation detainees are often treated cruelly and placed in imperfect conditions. The ACLU maintains that ICE has a history of abuse saying, "Many of ICE's removal tactics take away even the right to a fair hearing in court. . . They implicate the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, the constitutional guarantee of due process, and the constitutional guarantee of equal protection and freedom from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and national origin.". These techniques violate basic human rights but are also unlawful in themselves. It comes as no surprise that with such an abundance of cases, ICE has had a difficult time keeping track of all their detainees. This has resulted in multiple agents' failure to keep track of those migrants who do pose a significant threat to the public. The inspector general's office at Homeland Security noted that "Jean Jacques, a Haitian national, was released from ICE custody in 2015 even though he had been convicted of attempted murder and given a final order of deportation. While on the street, he killed another man.". Due to ICE's poor organization, a flagged, undocumented immigrant was mistakenly released and took

another person's life. This situation could have been avoided if not for the zero-tolerance policy that pushed unattainable numbers of cases onto ICE officers.

Amid the COVID pandemic, ICE officers and policymakers seem to have turned a blind eye to the most basic needs of detainees in detention. Since the start of March, the Trump Administration has worked hard to deport thousands of migrant children under the pretense that they could be carrying COVID-19. However, all of the deported children have undergone testing that produced negative results. Instead of addressing the needs of these children, the Trump Administration has taken to blaming a virus for the mass removal of these migrant children. Not only have they turned away healthy children seeking asylum, but recent studies have shown that their process for testing is not the most reliable. According to ProPublica, "In most cases, ICE is satisfying this requirement by using rapid COVID-19 tests produced by Abbott Laboratories that can produce results in as little as 15 minutes. While Abbott's rapid tests have come under scrutiny for a high rate of false-negative results, they continue to be used by the Trump administration." Luckily, one country--Guatemala--requires the US to provide negative test results from a process that takes roughly four or five days to ensure more accurate readings. These papers are mandatory for any migrant child being sent back to their country of origin. But, lately, Guatemalan officials suspect that the US is violating these terms. One Guatemalan official said, "... only a few of the children who have been returned to Guatemala under the policy have documentation proving they've tested negative for COVID-19." Many critics believe that ICE could be responsible for the spread of the virus due to inaccurate testing. False negatives could mistakenly send an immigrant back home while carrying it.

Yet ICE's egregious treatment of immigrant children doesn't stop there. For the past few years, the media seems to be constantly sharing shocking footage about the conditions these children are placed in. Youth are confined to overcrowded, filthy detention facilities with limited hygiene and food. Immigrant attorney Elora Mukherjee recounted her horrifying visit to one detention center for children noting, "In 12 years representing immigrant children in detention, I have never seen such degradation and inhumanity. Children were dirty, they were scared, and they were hungry." Mukherjee went on to describe how the detainees were covered in bodily fluids and each got the same amount of food regardless of age or needs. But nothing is more appalling than the firsthand account of abuse from 10-year-old Dixiana. Dixiana was arrested at the border and separated from her mother before being herded into a cramped cell. She and her cellmates were made to sleep on the concrete floor with nothing more than an aluminum blanket. Dixiana then explained the bathrooms and food saying, "When I did go to the bathroom, there was no door or separation between the toilets. . . For breakfast, they gave me a frozen ham sandwich. The ham was black." These are just some examples of what Dixiana--at only ten years old--experienced while in these facilities. The conditions presented in these camps are unarguably unfit for any human being, let alone children. The zero-tolerance policy encouraged this environment by promoting the separation of parents from their children. And while this policy was eventually retracted, it continues to persist unofficially.

For centuries, the lawmakers in our nation have used policy to push agendas, from keeping slavery to booting peaceful groups of dreamers out of the country. It is finally time to take a firm stance. A person's life and right to work for the opportunities to better themselves and their families is not something that is an agenda. It is a basic human right. It's time to give a

voice to those who were silenced by the white man's agenda, time to finally get the point across that lives are not just something to be thrown around on capitol hill. And that is where you, the reader come in. You and your ability to take action can make all the difference. We need to send a message and there are 3 main ways to do so. The first and probably most important action a reader can take is to educate themselves. Education is essential in the society that we were brought into, but history has always been written by the winners. In the dire situation above, it is important to read about the suffering and abuse of the migrants in our country. The second way you can take action is by getting involved in your community. Starting protests, letter-writing campaigns, and writing or calling your local and state officials. Many times they want to hear from the public and this message must get out. The final way a reader can spark change inside their communities is through the process of educating others. As mentioned before, most people know very limited amounts about the silent crisis in America. Ignorance is complacency and we cannot afford to let innocent people suffer at the hands of an ignorant public. We all have a part to do in this fight.

We will leave you with one powerful message from the great Oscar Handlin: "Once I thought to write about the history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the Immigrants were American history."

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