

Leading Democratic activists accidentally share photos of immigrants detained under Obama administration

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Dozens of prominent liberal activists and a former Obama administration official attacked the Trump administration on social media late Sunday, posting pictures showing immigrant children sleeping in enclosed cages in US detention centers. Those sharing the images incorrectly assumed they were taken of children affected by Trump's new barbarous policy of separating parents and children when they cross the border illegally. Within hours, however, it was revealed that the photos were in fact taken in 2014, during the Obama administration.

Former Obama speechwriter Jon Favreau, reporter Shaun King, and Women's March co-organizer Linda Sarsour were among the most well known figures who shared the photos and condemned the Trump administration over social media for neglecting children.

Shaun King, who twice voted for Obama, and campaigned heavily for him in 2008 and again in 2012, wrote, "I saw this photo floating around and didn't know if it was real, It is. Children of immigrants are being held in cages, like dogs, at ICE detention centers, sleeping on the floor. It's an abomination."

Favreau reportedly wrote before deleting the tweet, "This is happening right now, and the only debate that matters is how we force our government to get these kids back to their families as fast as humanly possible."

Neither acknowledged that the harrowing scenes took place under the administration they supported. The incident is a damning exposure of the hypocrisy and cynicism of the Democratic Party and the entire US liberal establishment who were silent while the Obama administration carried out a full scale assault on immigrants throughout his eight years in office.

The episode comes only days after the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a detailed report on the systematic brutalization of unaccompanied immigrant children captured by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) from 2009 to 2014 at the US-Mexican border. Under the Obama administration, methods employed against these youth echoed those practiced by the CIA and US occupation forces at black site torture centers and Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.

The reports exposed the routine rape and sexual assault of children by officers, who deprived the immigrant youth of food, water, and medical attention, among other inhumane behavior.

The disturbing photos of the caged children accidentally circulated by these Democratic Party operatives were taken in a holding cell where hundreds of mostly Central American immigrant children were being processed at US Customs and Border Protection in Nogales Placement Center in Arizona after a surge of unaccompanied child migrants in 2014.

In response to the surge of migrants, the Obama administration rushed to open a new detention facility in Dilley, Texas, which became the largest family detention center in the US, able to hold 2,400 people. The facility was owned and operated by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)—the world's largest private prison company. After dozens of reports of prison-like conditions for children, including sexual, mental and physical abuse, a judge invalidated the center's license in December 2016.

In a pathetic and unsuccessful attempt at damage control, Favreau tweeted the true source of the photos had been exposed, "These awful pictures are from

2014, when the government's challenge was reconnecting unaccompanied minors who showed up at the border with family or a safe sponsor. Today, in 2018, the government is CREATING unaccompanied minors by tearing them away from family at the border."

This statement is a complete falsification of the reality of the Obama policy, which was to warehouse immigrant youth in detention centers and rapidly deport them, often without legal representation. By the end of Obama's eight years in office, his administration had deported more immigrants than any in history. The administration regularly detained children who arrived with a parent even if they had another parent or relative to whom they could be released, in blatant defiance of federal law.

In July 2015, Judge Dolly M. Gee of the Federal District Court for the Central District of California issued a ruling against this policy. The US government argued against this move, claiming previous legislation did not cover the conditions of children who were housed *with* a parent, thus making them not entitled to the protections of youth found alone.

The new measures introduced by the Trump administration earlier this month, to immediately separate children from their families and even detain them on military bases, marks a new stage in the war on immigrants. However, what the Democratic Party is determined to obscure is that these measures flow seamlessly out of the policies pursued under the Obama administration. In fact, the ease with which Trump is able to carry out its assault on immigrants was made directly possible by the Obama administration and is continually aided by current congressional Democrats.

When leading Democratic Party members such as Bernie Sanders, state that they are willing to work with Trump "to make sure we have strong border security," it is exactly these policies, carried out by Obama and escalated by Trump, to which they are referring. What is "strong border security" if not a code word for bolstering those law enforcement agencies, such as ICE and CBP, who patrol the border and apprehend, detain and deport immigrants?

Trump's chief of staff, retired General John Kelly, who defended separating families in an NPR interview this month, saying that "the children will be taken care of—put into foster care or whatever," was appointed to

address the issue of Central American immigration in 2012 by the Obama administration. In this role he called for the US to detach fair labor and human rights standards from arms sales in Central and South America, and explained that "homeland defense does not begin at the 'one yard line' of our Southwest border, but instead extends forward, throughout the hemisphere, to keep threats far from our nation's shores."

On this basis Kelly oversaw the persecution of thousands of Central American immigrants traveling throughout Mexico, in an attempt to detain and deport them before they ever reached the US border. Senate Democrats overwhelmingly voted with their Republican counterparts to confirm Kelly to head the Department of Homeland Security, including the leaders of the supposed "liberal" Democrats, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren.

Just seven weeks before Trump took office, the Obama administration went before the US Supreme Court to defend its power to indefinitely detain immigrants facing deportation proceedings—many of them legal US residents and asylum seekers—without granting them the right afforded to virtually anyone facing criminal prosecution to appear before a judge for a bond hearing to determine whether or not their imprisonment is justified.



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