

Five die fleeing US immigration police as children spend Father's Day in jail

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Five people died and several more were injured near the US-Mexico border Sunday when US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and local police pursued a car full of immigrants at speeds of over 100 miles per hour. The driver of the large SUV carrying 12 immigrants lost control and flipped several times, throwing bodies across Highway 85 in Big Wells, Texas, fifty miles north of the border.

With body bags and the charred remains of the SUV nearby, Dimmit County Sheriff Marion Boyd told the press that the pursuit was “good police work” and called for the construction of a wall along the US-Mexico border. Immigrants, he said, are a “real problem.”

The crash is the latest link in a chain of escalating violence perpetrated by the government against immigrants both at the border and in the interior of the US. Yesterday was Father's Day and some 2,000 immigrant children spent the day locked up in detention centers where they have been detained after being separated from both parents as part of the “zero tolerance” policy carried out by the Trump administration since May.

Many of these children are being held at a tent city on a military base near El Paso, Texas. Beginning Tuesday, temperatures at the internment camp are forecast to be above 100 degrees for at least ten days.

A rapid intensification of anti-immigrant measures is underway across the country. Reports surfaced over the weekend that a bus driver in Maine told riders they had to be US citizens to travel while a CBP officer stood by and asked travelers whether they were citizens.

In Southern California, an African-American passenger yelled at fellow travelers that they did not need to turn over their papers when a CBP agent boarded and asked passengers for identification. The

officer then left. The woman, Tiana Smalls, wrote on Facebook:

“These border patrol officers act like they do because they EXPECT people to be afraid of them and just comply. The lady next to me spoke NO ENGLISH, but she was a very kind woman. She looked TERRIFIED when they boarded. I felt it was my duty to defend her. We DO NOT LIVE in Nazi Germany. No one should be asked to present ‘papers’ for interstate travel. I defended her, and I defended myself. We DO NOT HAVE to just take this s--- LYING down.”

Detentions and arrests continue at a record pace across the US. Sandra Chica, the wife of Ecuadoran immigrant Pablo Villavicencio, published an op-ed in Sunday's *New York Daily News* appealing for support. Villavicencio was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) two weeks ago after delivering pizza to a soldier on a military base in New York who reported him to immigration authorities.

“Today is Father's Day, and this is the first time my two little girls will spend it without their father,” Chica's open letter reads. “They made handwritten cards and drawings telling him how much they love him, but sadly they won't be able to give them to him.

“I have visited Pablo a few times at the Hudson County jail. Pablo describes a scene where individuals are deported daily. Like him, many of these people came to this country to provide a better life for their families. It is shocking that a government can behave like this and separate loved ones. ...

“When Pablo speaks to our daughters over the phone, we cry. The pain of being ripped away from our family is unspeakable. ...

“On Wednesday, our oldest daughter will celebrate her fourth birthday. Pablo will likely not be there, and she'll be wondering why. I'm sure that all fathers

reading this can imagine the pain they'd feel missing these important days with their beautiful children.”

Former top White House aide Stephen Bannon defended the Trump administration's attacks on immigrants on ABC's "This Week" interview program on Sunday. "I don't think you have to justify it," he said, referencing the separation of thousands of children from their families. "We have a crisis on the southern border."

Bannon was given ample airspace to make his fascist appeal. He said that "elites" were conspiring to support immigrants and that "this illegal immigration—the people that hurt the most are the Hispanic and black working class." Bannon said immigration "suppresses their wages, it destroys their health care, it destroys their school systems."

The Democrats are aware of mass outrage at President Donald Trump's deportation policies and concerned that family separation is such a provocative initiative that it will create mass demonstrations demanding the release of detained immigrants and general amnesty for those present without proper papers.

A number of small but significant demonstrations have taken place in recent days, and the Democrats have intervened to ensure that these protests not challenge the bipartisan mass deportation plan enacted under presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

With this in mind, a group of East Coast Democratic congressmen visited a detention facility in New Jersey over the weekend and released a cynical statement opposing family separation, which reads: "Trump and Sessions say they are following laws. That is a lie. There are no laws requiring families to be ripped apart. ... Trump claims Democrats are to blame for families being broken up. That is a lie. Republicans control every branch of government."

But the Democrats tore hundreds of thousands of parents from their children during the Obama administration, when 2.7 million people were deported. The Democratic Party's position exposes the bankruptcy of the lesser-of-two-evils argument. Their line is effectively: "Republicans detain children and separate families. We Democrats will continue to detain children, and we will continue to separate families, but we won't separate detained families."

In fact, the Democratic Party is responsible for strengthening the law that made it a federal crime to illegally re-enter the US—the crime for which parents have been jailed under Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions' "zero tolerance" policy and separated from their children.

In 1993, when the Democrats controlled Congress and the presidency, the Senate voted to drastically increase jail sentences for "illegal re-entrants." The measure passed 95-4, with all but three Democrats voting "yes." Those who voted in favor included Joe Biden, Barbara Boxer, Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, Paul Wellstone and Harry Reid.

Democrats also provided the votes necessary to pass the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which barred all immigrants from applying for legal status for either three years if they were present unlawfully for six months or ten years if they were present unlawfully for a year or more. The hated "3 and 10 year bars" became law only through the "yes" votes of 21 Democrats in the Senate and 88 in the House. Bill Clinton signed both the 1993 and 1996 laws.

Initial demonstrations across the country are a positive sign that millions are horrified by the American immigration Gestapo. But opposition to the attack on immigrants must be based on opposition to both the Democratic and Republican factions of the ruling class and the capitalist system as a whole.



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