

# Child concentration camps in America

Eric London  
2 October 2018

Across the United States, under cover of darkness, the government is rounding up immigrant children and sending them to a desert concentration camp in Tornillo, Texas, near the US-Mexico border. In recent weeks, hundreds have been transferred from foster shelters to Tornillo, where they live in tents, 20 to a room.

The *New York Times* spoke with employees at shelters who described scenes that recall the most shameful episodes in American history, including the capture of fugitive slaves, the forced removal of Native Americans from their land, and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War Two.

According to the *Times*, “In order to avoid escape attempts, the moves are carried out late at night because children will be less likely to try to run away. For the same reason, children are generally given little advance warning that they will be moved.”

With the children in a panic, some shelter employees reportedly cry when officials descend upon their facilities. Others protest and raise concerns about the safety of the children at the desert concentration camp, to no avail. Children beg to know whether they will be taken care of at their new location. Phone numbers for their emergency contacts are written on belts tied around the children’s waists.

Roughly 13,000 children are currently detained in shelters and immigration detention facilities nationwide, a record high. Conditions in immigration detention centers and shelters are deplorable, with children reporting cases of rape, sexual abuse and physical violence.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is expanding the size of the Tornillo tent city, which currently houses 1,600 immigrant youth, to 4,000. Starting in November and extending through March, the average daily low temperature will be below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Trump administration will soon begin detaining children indefinitely, having pulled out of the Flores settlement, a court agreement that barred the government from detaining immigrant children for more than 20 days.

The administration has also been arresting, detaining and deporting relatives of detained children who submitted official applications to sponsor the children.

The midnight Gestapo-style roundup of children has been treated as a non-event by the two big business parties and the corporate media. Instead, the entire political and media establishment is focused exclusively on the allegation that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted Christine Blasey Ford at a party in 1982, when they were both teenagers.

The Democratic Party’s focus on Kavanaugh’s alleged sexual assault is a deliberate effort to distract from his record as a defender of indefinite detention and torture under the Bush administration. Democrats have covered up the fact that in 2017 Kavanaugh ruled to deny a detained 17-year-old immigrant the right to abort a pregnancy on the grounds that immigrants are not entitled to basic rights.

Speaking Saturday in Austin, Texas, Democratic House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi made revealing comments about the Democratic Party’s midterm election strategy. She advised candidates not to focus on Trump’s attacks on immigrants, explaining that calling for “shutting down ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]” merely “serves the president’s purpose.” According to the *Texas Tribune*, Pelosi said she has told Democratic candidates that focusing on the issue would “waste energy.”

Despite its claims to be an “anti-racist” party, the Democratic Party is orienting itself toward Trump’s anti-immigrant chauvinism. On September 26, nearly 70 percent of Democrats in the House of Representatives voted either “yes” or “present” on a resolution “recognizing that allowing illegal immigrants the right to vote devalues the franchise and diminishes the voting power of the United States citizens.” Keith Ellison, a leader of the “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party, was among those who voted in favor of the anti-immigrant resolution.

The same day as the congressional vote, Democratic California Governor Jerry Brown vetoed a state bill that

would have barred immigration officials from arresting immigrants at courthouses. Brown also extended the deployment of the state's National Guard on the Mexican border.

Following the Democrats' lead, many political groups that call themselves "socialist" but in reality function as factions of the Democratic Party, have dropped the defense of immigrants.

The International Socialist Organization has not published an article on the US government's attacks on immigrants since September 10. Socialist Alternative and *Jacobin* magazine, which is linked to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), have not published articles on the US immigration situation since August 24 and August 22, respectively. The fall issue of the DSA's magazine *Democratic Left* does not include a *single reference* to the attacks on immigrants.

The Socialist Equality Party views the defense of immigrants as an urgent question not only for immigrants themselves, but for the defense of the democratic rights of the working class as a whole.

The attack on immigrants is an attack on the working class. There are 20 million undocumented immigrants in the US, comprising a significant section of the working population. While the ruling class seeks to divide different sections of workers against one another, the fight against corporate power and social inequality is impossible without the unity of immigrant and non-immigrant workers.

Moreover, the police state methods currently employed against immigrants will be used against all workers and political opponents of the government. The federal government is building a network of concentration camps and empowering state agencies to break down doors, set up checkpoints, conduct military-style workplace raids and haul people off without due process. This is a powerful mechanism of state repression that the ruling class will use against striking workers and demonstrators.

The defense of immigrant workers is necessary to establish the unity of the working class internationally. In almost every country, immigrants comprise a significant section of the working class, and everywhere their rights are under attack. In Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria and across Europe, governments are adopting the anti-immigrant policies of neo-Nazi parties in an effort to pit workers against each other and block the growth of the class struggle.

Nationalists like Bernie Sanders claim that immigrants weaken the position of the working class. To the contrary,

the presence of large international populations within each country testifies to the global character of production and the global character of the working class. It reflects the objective identity of interests of workers of all countries and all national origins, who face the same conditions of exploitation at the hands of the same transnational corporations. Workers today have an unprecedented opportunity to open lines of communication between one another across national boundaries and strengthen their position against their common corporate enemies.

The fight to secure the basic democratic and social rights of the working class requires a resolute defense of the rights of immigrants and unqualified opposition to all forms of racism and national chauvinism. The Socialist Equality Party demands:

- The immediate release all detained immigrants and the dismantling of immigrant concentration camps and prisons
- The abolition of ICE, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and all immigration-related enforcement agencies internationally
- The prosecution of all government officials responsible for jailing immigrants and immigrant children
- Immediate citizenship for all undocumented people wherever they reside
- The de-militarization of borders and dismantling of border checkpoints to allow free and safe passage
- The guaranteed right of workers to travel and move about the world as they please.

Workers must revive the time-honored slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all!" This is a necessary prerequisite for the development of an international revolutionary socialist movement.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**