



Free Our Future:

An Immigration Policy Platform for Beyond the Trump Era

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FREE OUR FUTURE: AN IMMIGRATION POLICY PLATFORM FOR BEYOND THE TRUMP ERA

The escalated war on immigrants by the Trump regime, most recently exposed through the horrific separation of migrant parents and children, has struck a nerve and mobilized millions. This moment calls for bold vision and action. This document provides a vision matching the severity of the threats we face. We offer immigration policies that not only call for the abolition of immigration enforcement agencies, but for full-scale decriminalization of immigration. Our policy demands are bold by design. It is time to push forward reforms that can contend with the horrific harm we are witnessing as parents and children are torn apart.

Our demands have one central goal - to abolish ICE so that immigrant communities can live with dignity. Our vision will continue to evolve in the months and years to come, but we remain grounded in a commitment to free our future.

We refuse to propose solutions that only help some immigrants, dividing our communities between those labeled “deserving” of humanitarian reform, and those who will be left in the system of immigration enforcement, detention, and incarceration.

As we respond to the horror of family separation, we have to demand justice for all immigrants, not just kids and their parents. If we limit our demands to those people who have children, we are buying into a right-wing nationalist vision that requires you to be married and have children for your life to matter. The prisons and military camps being planned and built right now endanger all communities who are targeted by law enforcement - poor folk, Black folk, queers, Muslims, people with disabilities, indigenous folk - and anyone else the Trump administration considers a barrier to their white supremacist vision for this country.

We have to stop the agencies that Bush created to target immigrants and Muslims, and that Trump is expanding at an astounding rate.



Our Policy Demands

The images of children being taken from their parents are viscerally shocking. In response, people all over the country have mobilized to confront this devastating government action. We ground our policy recommendations in the knowledge that this is not the first time that the lives of our children and our families have been targets of the federal government. In fact, separating families is an ongoing tactic used throughout U.S. history against communities of color, indigenous people, and people with disabilities.

In order to free our future, we start by demanding the following:

ABOLISH ICE

Immigration and Customs Enforcement exists to target, imprison, and deport immigrants. Locking up and exiling people are their only reason for being. Immigration enforcement officers are now the largest federal police force. Their budget is more than that of all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. They are accountable to no one, and take their marching orders directly from Trump. We need to defund ICE, and we need legislation that dismantles the agency. They have only been around for 15 years, and their continued existence is far from inevitable. There's already movement: at least 21 Democratic congressional primary candidates have come out in favor of abolishing the agency. Trump's deportation squad should cease to exist. Immigration enforcement as we know it must end. [Read more](#)

REMOVE ATTORNEY GENERAL JEFF SESSIONS AND REIMAGINE THE CRIMINAL DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The Department of Justice has become Jeff Sessions' personal army for locking up Black and Latinx people in pursuit of a War on Drugs that is already a proven failure, and the war on immigrants. With the DOJ under its current leadership, our families will continue to be separated and children will continue to be jailed and lost. Jeff Sessions must be removed and the U.S. Attorney's Offices across the country must cease prosecuting the migration and drug "crimes" that currently constitute the bulk of their work. These prosecutions devastate families and communities. It's time to reverse course and reimagine a Department of Justice that serves our people rather than targets them, one that focuses on actions like stopping polluters and corporations that exploit workers and the environment.

HISTORY OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE U.S.

Family separation was a central strategy of slavery and continues to endanger black communities today. Enslaved families suffered permanent separation through the sale of parents and children to different owners. The penalties for resistance included death. Jeff Sessions has justified his current separation of immigrant families by citing to the very same bible verse supporters of slavery used to defend the separation of children from their mothers prior to the Civil War. Black families continue to be targeted for separation, with the criminalization of parenting while poor leading to huge numbers of black children taken from their families and placed in foster care.



REPEAL LAWS CRIMINALIZING MIGRATION

The federal laws prohibiting “unlawful entry” and “unlawful re-entry” are the legal weapon behind the heart-breaking separation of parents and children by the Trump administration. Under a new policy of “Zero Tolerance,” Sessions’ Department of Justice is attempting to prosecute and imprison all migrants (including those with children) arrested after crossing the border--drastically ramping up the already-record breaking deportation efforts of the Obama administration. Even before “Zero Tolerance,” migrant prosecutions had already grown to be half of all federal prosecutions each year, and resulted in a federal prison boom. Congress should immediately repeal 8 U.S.C. § 1325 and 8 U.S.C. § 1326, the laws that criminalize migration and punish immigrant families. [Read more](#)

END OPERATION STREAMLINE

Operation Streamline is a federal strategy of mass hearings and mass imprisonment. The U.S. government puts dozens of immigrants into a courtroom, shackled at their hands and ankles. Then, rather than giving them individualized hearings, the Department of Justice puts them through a mass procedure all at once, finding them all guilty and sentencing them for having crossed the border without permission, after which they are usually deported by ICE. Operation Streamline has criminalized migrant crossings in the southern United States on a mass scale already. Now the Trump administration has expanded it beyond limited cities in Arizona and Texas to include the entire southern borders of Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico. Officials in California have announced the beginning of mass prosecutions there as well, with Trump and Sessions planning to convict hundreds of immigrants per day. Ending Operation Streamline is essential to ending the criminalization of migration. [Read more](#)

HISTORY OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE U.S.

Family separation has been central to the U.S. government’s policies of eliminating and controlling indigenous communities. Starting in the 1870s, the U.S. government forcibly ripped indigenous children from their parents and communities and sent them to prison-like boarding schools where they were forbidden from speaking their language, and subjected to violent, forcible assimilation. Indian boarding school policies were kept in place until the 1960s. Today, indigenous communities continue to fight to preserve their ability to parent their own children in the face of continued family separation.



ENACT NON-COOPERATION POLICIES AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS THAT GO BEYOND 'SANCTUARY' LAWS

While the immigration police force might dwarf all other federal police forces in size and budget, they still require the cooperation not only of private industry actors, but of state and local authorities to carry out their agenda of detention and deportation. States and localities vary in their willingness to partner with ICE, but even places that have declared themselves “sanctuaries” continue to facilitate ICE’s violence. In Washington State, for example, while the Democratic governor and state attorney general touted their resistance against Trump, the state’s Department of Licensing was sharing the photos and addresses of thousands of immigrants with ICE so the agency could track them down and deport them. The fights to kick ICE out of our communities have been going on since the agency’s inception, and now, more than ever, we must hold our towns, cities, and states accountable for abetting Trump’s racist agenda. Sanctuary and non-cooperation policies must be more than symbolic. They must actually prevent data-sharing, stop the rental of county jail to ICE for immigration detention, and eliminate all other enforcement support provided to ICE by our state and local governments.

END ALL FORMS OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION

As the world’s leading jailer, it is no surprise that the U.S. also imprisons more immigrants in secure facilities than any other country. These include federally and privately-owned immigrant detention centers, county jails whose Sheriffs contract with ICE to fill their own coffers, Border Patrol-run temporary detention facilities, and Bureau of Prisons facilities designed specifically to hold immigrants. All of them have been exposed for violating immigrants’ basic dignity and human rights in every possible way, and prisoners in these facilities have regularly gone on hunger strikes to protest their treatment. Immigrants under surveillance also include children who are held in shelters and foster homes, and immigrants whose movements are constantly tracked and limited through ankle-monitoring devices. No reforms will make caging immigrants acceptable. No new cages must be built. All forms of immigration detention must end.

HISTORY OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE U.S.

During World War II, Japanese-American families were targeted as ‘enemies’ of the US and imprisoned in remote camps guarded by military personnel, where they were housed in barracks and tar-paper shacks with no plumbing or heating. Japanese-American teenage boys were forced to take loyalty oaths and join the U.S. Army or be sent to higher security camps away from their families. One solution being proposed to the current crisis - to detain immigrant families together - would return the U.S. to this shameful era.



END ALL CONTRACTS BETWEEN PRIVATE SECTOR AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES INVOLVED IN IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

The majority of immigration detention beds are owned and operated by private prison corporations who profit from the misery of the people they detain. These companies are only the tip of the “homeland security market” iceberg. The collection of contractors include those who provide substandard food, exorbitantly-priced telephone services, and negligent medical care to detained immigrants, and those contractors seeking to cash-in on the separation of families at the border. They are vultures who benefit tremendously from the expansion of enforcement. One company alone has received a billion dollars in contracts for detaining children since 2015, even before the current arrival of families at the border. Without these actors, the U.S. government will have a much harder time carrying out their anti-immigrant agenda. We have a responsibility to expose them, divest from them, and organize to end their contracts.

DEFUND THE BORDER PATROL AND FUND BORDER RESCUE

The Border Patrol specializes in violence against immigrants of color through policing the U.S. borders. Even under Obama, abuses by Border Patrol officers were so extreme that the agency changed their definition of “corruption” to preclude having to report to Congress the “non-mission-compromising” murders and sexual assaults carried out by their agents. Under the Trump administration, Border Patrol cruelty - and impunity - have skyrocketed. Border Patrol agents are not only destroying the water supplies humanitarian groups leave for migrants who might otherwise die of thirst in the desert, but are also criminally prosecuting members of those very humanitarian groups for their efforts to save the lives of migrants, thousands of whom have died crossing the desert. It’s time for the Border Patrol as we know it to be disbanded. One alternative would be a new border rescue group reconfigured into a life-saving force of emergency-service workers, not police.

HISTORY OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE U.S.

The U.S. is the world’s largest jailer, with 5% of the world’s population and nearly 25% of the world’s prisoners. With millions of imprisoned parents, the U.S. also leads the world in family separation through incarceration. The disproportionate policing of communities of color, particularly Black communities (Black children are seven times more likely than white children to have a parent in prison), makes separating families of color a chief task of police officers and prosecutors across the country. What’s more, the unrelenting police murders of Black people - including children - create the ultimate destruction of families.



BAN THE USE OF THE MILITARY FOR IMMIGRATION CONTROL

President Trump has declared that he will use Department of Defense resources to build prison camps for migrants, including some exclusively for children. The U.S. military is already the biggest purveyor of violence on people of color around the world, and this will expand its role in violence against people of color within the U.S.. This is not without precedent - the imprisonment of Japanese-Americans during World War II and of Haitian refugees at Guantanamo in the 1990s are two recent examples of the military used to cage civilians. Banning the use of military for migration control (whether it be hunting immigrants at the border or in the interior, imprisoning them, or any other immigration enforcement activities) will help prevent a dangerous expansion of U.S. military power against domestic targets.

STOP FUNDING AND TRAINING OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO CARRY OUT IMMIGRATION POLICING

The work of policing the U.S. borders has extended far beyond the U.S.-Mexico border. The U.S. funds and trains migration security forces across the world (over 15,000 trained in over 100 countries), in an effort to keep migrants from entering the U.S. while ensuring capital and goods flow freely. Under the Mérida Initiative, the U.S. funds Mexican security forces to arrest, detain, and deport Central American migrants trying to reach the U.S. border. U.S. dollars fund the violent tactics engaged in by Mexican security forces, rendering the Mexico-Guatemala border even more dangerous than the U.S.-Mexico one for border crossers. In the Dominican Republic, the U.S. encouraged the creation of a border policing agency, and then sent Border Patrol officers to train the newly minted local migration security forces, specializing in keeping Haitians from crossing the border into the country. The U.S. must stop exporting its violent migratory policing practices by ending all aid and training to foreign governments intended to stop the free movement of people.

HISTORY OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE U.S.

U.S. government policies also ensure that people with disabilities will be disproportionately separated from family members and denied their rights as parents. The U.S. has a long history of sterilizing people labeled disabled or “feeble-minded” that was even endorsed by the U.S. Supreme Court. People with disabilities have also endured forced institutionalization in medical and psychiatric facilities, and today people with disabilities are targeted for imprisonment and police violence, including murder, at incredibly high rates.

HELP PUSH THIS VISION FORWARD! SHARE OUR FACT SHEETS.

Abolish ICE Fact Sheet

Repeal 1325/26 Fact Sheet

Operation Streamline Fact Sheet



To Free Our Futures and Secure Our Present, We Must Abolish ICE

WHY ARE WE CALLING FOR THE ABOLITION OF ICE?

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) exists to target immigrant communities for detention and deportation. Locking up and exiling people is their sole purpose. ICE and Border Patrol combined are now the largest federal police force. Their budget is more than that of all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. They are accountable to no one, and take their marching orders directly from Trump.

Criminalizing immigrants is what ICE does best. Under Trump, ICE has abandoned any pretense of restraint, with their director openly stating he wants every immigrant to “look over your shoulder.” Unless ICE is stopped, they will continue to break into our people’s homes and workplaces, to wait outside our schools and places of worship, to prowl through courthouses, and to target our activists, detaining and deporting some of us and terrorizing those left behind. Trump’s brutal, racist immigration police force has already demonstrated that they have the capacity to terrorize immigrants by separating parents and children. This administration considers every undocumented immigrant a threat, and ICE is the police force capable of carrying out the Trump/Sessions white supremacist fantasy of ethnic cleansing. In the face of this danger, dissolving the agency is the only way forward.

HOW DID WE END UP WITH ICE?

Imagining a world without ICE shouldn’t be too hard to do. After all, the agency has only been around for 15 years, with its roots in the post 9/11 nationalist panic that led to the framing of immigration as a national security issue, and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and ICE (it’s sub-agency) in 2003. From these xenophobic roots, the agency has consistently expanded its technological capacities and its surveillance, detention and deportation activities. Bush created ICE, Obama expanded and sharpened its capacity for harm, and Trump has gladly unleashed this weaponized, unaccountable behemoth against our community. Congress continues to fund ICE, despite the countless reports of its cruelty and incompetence.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, ABOLISH ICE?

We literally mean: disband the agency. Trump's deportation squad should cease to exist. Immigration enforcement as we know it should end. What would this mean in practice? A moratorium on deportations. The end of all forms of immigration detention. The reimagining of the Border Patrol as a humanitarian force that rescues migrants, rather than destroying their water supplies to hasten their deaths. Border Patrol could be staffed by emergency services experts and healthcare workers, not police.

We need to establish a truth and reconciliation commission to examine the abuses perpetrated by Homeland Security agencies (ICE, CBP, USCIS, TSA). We need reparations distributed to the millions who have been terrorized by ICE. Maybe you're not used to seeing such bold demands emerge from our side. The Right, on the other hand, has demanded the dissolution of nearly every cabinet level agency at some point. Let's be bold too. Let's create a future free of ICE, free of the possibility that any future President will have at their disposal a police force whose sole purpose is to terrorize immigrant communities.

I'M ON BOARD - HOW DO WE DO IT?

Ultimately, we need to make it politically impossible for Congress to continue to support immigration enforcement. **We need to defund ICE**, and we need legislation that dismantles the agency. There's already movement: at least 21 Democratic congressional primary candidates have come out in favor of abolishing the agency. **Over 100 members of Congress called for cutting ICE's budget this year.** A group of activists in Portland shut down an ICE office by camping outside it and refusing to leave. People everywhere are pushing their local government to refuse cooperation with ICE. Businesses are being outed and shamed by their own employees for contracting with ICE. The agency's spokespeople are turning into whistleblowers. The heads of ICE and DHS are being followed and hounded by everyday people demanding their resignation.

AND REMEMBER....AVOID DISTRACTION!

We don't need ICE to be reformed. We need it gone. We don't need deportations to be better managed through "family-friendly" prisons. We need our people free. Our allegiance is not to the smoother functioning of a federal agency that was designed to target us - it is to our people, from those immigrants who have lived here for years to those who arrived yesterday, all of whom ICE would deport if given a chance to do so.



Congress Must Decriminalize Migration to Stop Family Separation: The Case for Repealing The Laws That Make Migration a Crime

Want to truly support immigrant families and children? Then join the call to demand that Congress stop Trump and Sessions by repealing the two laws that make migration a federal crime. The laws prohibiting “unlawful entry” and “unlawful re-entry” are the legal weapon behind the heart-breaking separation of parents and children by the Trump administration. Under a policy known as “Zero Tolerance”, Sessions’ Department of Justice splits apart families by prosecuting and imprisoning all migrant parents using these laws and placing their children in federal foster programs.

Where Did These Laws Come From?

While the most recent versions of these laws were put in place in 1952, the criminalization of border crossing has its roots in a 1929 law explicitly designed to deter immigration from Mexico and criminalize, prosecute, and imprison immigrants. This 1929 law was part of a long legacy of white supremacist legislation denying citizenship, immigration and free movement to Black, Native, Asian, and Latinx people. Senator Blease, a pro-lynching white supremacist, pushed the border criminalization laws into being, citing the “Mexican Problem.” From 1929, we can draw a direct line between open white supremacist Senator Blease and the white supremacist agenda of Attorney General Sessions. Jeff Sessions has picked up Blease’s xenophobic mantle, vowing to prosecute migrants to keep the country from being “overwhelmed” by those who seek to “stampede” the U.S. - language that dehumanizes the mostly brown immigrants crossing the border and exposes Sessions’ racist criminalization project. Sessions’ master plan involves moving these policies beyond the border zones and into every state in the country.



What Does This Have to Do with Family Separation?

In April 2018, the Trump administration made the choice to implement existing immigration laws in a new, more extreme way: separating immigrant parents from their children at the border in order to charge the parents with unlawful entry, a misdemeanor punishable by up to 180 days in jail, or unlawful re-entry, a felony punishable by up to 20 years in federal prison. Jeff Sessions calls this campaign of terrorizing families "Zero Tolerance," and is wielding unlawful entry and re-entry laws as yet another weapon in the Trump arsenal. He has plans to convict hundreds of immigrants a day through the expansion of "Operation Streamline," a strategy of mass hearings and mass imprisonment, with dozens of immigrants arraigned, found guilty, convicted and sentenced simultaneously.

Experts estimate that this Zero Tolerance policy will mean the prosecution of more than 200,000 people per year. Already, migrant prosecutions under these white supremacist laws have grown to consume half of all federal prosecutions, and resulted in a massive federal prison boom.

Trump's June 20th Executive Order does not end this practice, it simply guarantees that parents entering for the first time will be imprisoned alongside their children while they are criminally prosecuted. What's more, people entering after a previous deportation (many times to try to reunite with their children) risk being charged with felony reentry, and face years in prison.

From their beginning, the laws that criminalize migration have generated only misery, not deterrence, as people travel in search of survival for themselves and their children when conditions in their home countries become untenable.

The Demand:

Congress should immediately repeal 8 U.S.C. § 1325 and 8 U.S.C. § 1326, the laws that criminalize migration and punish immigrant families. For too long, legislators have ignored the harm caused by these laws, allowing the Trump Administration to carry out a plan to criminalize all immigrants and violently separate families. It is time for Congress to rein in the laws that make the grotesque crisis of children being separated from their parents possible. All those who believe that families belong together and out of jail should demand an immediate repeal of these laws.



End Operation Streamline: Stop The Mass Criminalization of Brown Families At the Border

What Is Operation Streamline?

Operation Streamline is a federal strategy that requires federal criminal charges be brought against people arrested crossing the border without permission. Operation Streamline started in 2005 under President Bush and was expanded by the Obama Administration. The Trump Administration's "Zero Tolerance" immigration policy seeks to further expand and enhance this practice.

Under Operation Streamline, people caught at the southern border of the United States are charged with the criminal offense of illegal entry, a misdemeanor punishable by up to 180 days in jail, or unlawful re-entry, a felony punishable by up to 20 years in federal prison. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) arrests migrants at the border, then turns them over directly to the Department of Justice (DOJ). Migrants are then fast-tracked through mass prosecutions that result in convictions in federal criminal court.

In these mass prosecution proceedings, seventy to eighty people are brought into a courtroom at the same time, shackled at their hands and ankles, for a group hearing before a federal magistrate judge. The defendants usually share one government-appointed defense lawyer, and many do not know what is going on. Many hearings last no longer than 25 seconds for each person. After migrants are found guilty, they serve time in federal prison and then they are pushed through the deportation process in the immigration court.

Operation Streamline has criminalized migrant crossings in the southern United States on a massive scale. Migrant prosecutions under unlawful entry and re-entry laws have grown to consume half of all federal prosecutions, and resulted in a federal prison boom. The Trump administration has expanded Operation Streamline beyond certain cities in Arizona and Texas to include the entire southern borders of Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico. Officials in California have announced that they will begin mass prosecutions in San Diego by July 2, 2018.



Why Does It Matter?

Operation Streamline enacts the fundamental racism of U.S. border enforcement by placing a process for mass criminalization and deportation of immigrants only at the country's southern border to target brown individuals and families. This sweeping policy mandates that migrants crossing the southern border be branded criminals, and that their rights to request any relief from deportation--such as asylum--in immigration court be disregarded. Upon arrival, they are swiftly and cruelly shackled, caged, and convicted en masse.

In addition to destroying any semblance of due process, Operation Streamline relies on the coercive power of intimidation, incarceration, and, most recently, family separation to extract mass guilty pleas, which result in federal imprisonment before eventual deportation. This large-scale, racialized criminalization of migration is funneling brown families into the federal prison system, making it even less likely that they could ever be considered for asylum, and leaving them more vulnerable to the conditions that prompted them to seek refuge in the first place. The imposition of a criminal record further impedes people's ability to safely enter this country, find employment, secure shelter, and access basic civil and political rights. By charging immigrants with a misdemeanor as soon as they cross the border, every subsequent attempt to re-enter subjects them to felony charges and federal imprisonment, without any consideration of the conditions they are seeking to escape or the fact that they may be coming back to find their children.

Under the Trump Administration, Operation Streamline has re-energized this country's well-worn practice of removing children from their parents as a weapon for maintaining white supremacy and controlling communities of color. Openly white supremacist Attorney General Jeff Sessions did not shy away from this when he said, "If you are smuggling a child then we will prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you as required by law...If you don't like that, then don't smuggle children over our border." While such claims purport to be rooted in an unmet goal of "deterrence," the punishing and traumatic impacts of this practice far exceed such claims. With Trump's recent executive order the administration now claims that it will no longer implement this tactic, but it will do so simply by jailing brown families together, and indefinitely. Detained families will continue to suffer swift en masse criminalization under Operation Streamline without abatement. There have also been few steps taken to reunify families that were already separated as a result of this brutal policy.

Conclusion

Although the policy of separating parents and children at the border is new, the policy of criminalizing migrants is not. As long as migration is criminalized, migrants can be prosecuted, jailed, and separated from their children at the whims of the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice. Operation Streamline, which has persisted through three presidential administrations, demonstrates what cruelty and racism this law makes possible. The ongoing use of Operation Streamline makes powerfully clear the need to end criminalization of migrating families, and institute safe and supportive entry resources for those who are crossing the border.