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From #WhereAreTheChildren to #FamiliesBelongTogether - Amerikkka's 'New' Border Crisis

Abomination 2.0 - A new old crisis

On May 24, 2018, one day prior to the commemoration of “(Inter)National Missing Children’s Day” and one day after the senate subcommittee hearing, [“TVPRAs and Exploited Loopholes Affecting Unaccompanied Alien Children”](#), stories of 1,500 “lost” immigrant children began circulating in the media -- #wherearethechildren went viral, with calls by advocates/celebrities/liberals to find the children and protect them from “traffickers”. A week later, the detention of unaccompanied immigrant children became sudden news as pictures from 2014 became re-circulated showing children held in cage-like enclosures. And finally, the horror of children ripped from their families at the border as a result of the [“Zero-Tolerance”](#) policy of the Department of Justice. *This has never happened before*, we are told, *this is extreme and “Un-American”*. Over the course of a few weeks, the “immigrant children crisis” has exploded in US media and in the popular imagination. Once again, the spectacle of US politics is being played out on the bodies of immigrant children.

“Make no mistake: Under President Trump, separating families fleeing persecution has become official U.S. policy. It’s extreme, cruel, un-American, and has to stop,” [Senator Dick Durbin tweet, June 5 2018](#).

“The idea of punishing parents who are trying to save their children’s lives, and punishing children for being brought to safety by their parents by separating them, is fundamentally cruel and un-American,” [Michelle Brané, Women’s Refugee Commission](#).

We write today from the rage and indignation we have carried for generations. We are not surprised, we are not shocked. We are outraged at the current suffering precisely because it is *not* new, it is *not* exceptional. We have witnessed the crisis as it was manufactured slowly, relentlessly – and we see too how the spectacle and the outrage over this new, particular abomination are preparing the conditions for “solutions” from above that will only deepen it.

Despite the rhetoric, there is nothing *un-American* about state violence targeting children -- on the contrary, the US is founded and lives on this principle. Black and Indigenous communities know that nation-building has meant the wholesale, mass abduction and tearing apart of children from families, communities and homelands. Our immigrant communities too have long suffered, and resisted, the US policy of mass family separation both domestically and abroad. While newly-outraged senators like Dick Durbin stake their political capital on their image as champions of a privileged category of immigrant children called “childhood arrivals” aka the Exceptional Dreamers, we have long had to struggle against legislation he and others promoted as part of their campaign calculations -- [legislation designed to dramatically increase family separation, expand criminalization and enforcement, and to make more and more adults and children deportable, detainable, and exploitable](#).

To understand the current crisis of state-sanctioned violence targeting children, and the ways that “protecting children” in the name of “American values” operates to further this violence, we have to look beyond the bullshit media spectacle, the fascist rhetoric of the right and the self-righteous posturing of the establishment Left. The crisis was produced in the interest of those who govern from above, who also stand to profit from mobilizing us around their fake solutions. Our effort is to organize our own response, our own analysis and vision that corresponds to a migrant struggle from below. This is a beginning, again, and again.

Shock and Awe - Conditioning a public for expanding state violence

Images of immense suffering, of children being abducted and locked in cages, are being hyped up and exploited by the media for increased ratings and by politicians for political capital. But this flood of images also has a different function, one that is familiar from military and media logic employed by the US since the first Iraq War. The goal of shock and awe is to confuse and disorient people and disable their capacity to understand what is happening, rendering them unable to accurately read the nature of the battlefield. The coverage is intended to elicit overwhelming sentimental responses while leaving unexamined the set of policies, interests, deals and instruments that converge to produce family separation, and the larger consequences of this moment for both immigration and the prison industrial complex (PIC). We have been here before.

The current form of child separation is a result of the administration's expansion of Operation Streamline, a program started in 2005, to the entire southwestern border region. The Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have coordinated to prosecute 100% of all migrants apprehended for "improper entry" (entering without a formal inspection process, being seen as misrepresenting or concealing facts, which includes anyone seen as making "fake" asylum claims etc). Operation Streamline is not well known to the US public, with the possible exception of a small and short-lived "outrage" over the mass deportation hearings that characterize it, in which up to 80 migrants would be arraigned, found guilty, convicted and sentenced en masse. But grotesque though it is, this spectacle is only a small part of the problem. What is less visible is the cumulative and devastating consequences of Streamline and of the "improper entry" statute upon all immigrant populations and upon all the criminalized and racialized, poor and displaced communities of color residing in the US -- including the members of those communities who are children.

Criminalizing migration has turned migrant people into an experiment in non-personhood and detainability, which in turn exerts immense pressure throughout the entire domestic criminal and legal system. This refers to the expansion of impunity and discretion, to the ways immigration enforcement and incarceration produce new forms of criminalization and containment that may start out as extra-legal but become, over time, regularized. But it also refers to the ways immigration enforcement also functions as a way to expand the Prison Industrial Complex, the surveillance apparatus, and the racist production of surplus populations. Since 2005, about three quarters of a million people have been prosecuted in federal court for "improper entry" ; currently, almost 50% of federal prosecutions are immigration related, and more than 30% of people incarcerated in federal prisons are held for immigration offenses. The new "Zero-Tolerance" policy is sure to increase that exponentially, using federal prisons to detain immigrants awaiting prosecution and expanding the so-called "demand" for prison capacity to cage all those convicted.

The Department of Justice has also instructed immigration judges to close all open and pending deportation cases as quickly as possible. This dual, rapid-fire implementation of enforcement/prosecution is carried out with full knowledge that the federal detention, prosecution, incarceration and deportation system does not have capacity to handle the consequences. Jeff Sessions (DoJ) and Kirstjen Nielsen (DHS) have fully anticipated the fallout from intentionally overwhelming the system from multiple directions. Even though there is an effort to challenge these policies in the courts, just as with Trump's immigration ban, this maneuver has already created a burden in search of solutions that require the expansion of the PIC. DHS has already used this moment to leverage pressure upon Congress to increase

the Homeland Security budget for detention space, and also to push for a “legislative solution” that expands the capacity, scope and reach of enforcement and detention. The case for already existing legislative proposals like the enforcement-focused [Securing America’s Future Act \(H.R. 4670\)](#) is boosted and the race for the toughest border security bill begins -- we see this with the newly draft House GOP proposal, [The Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018](#). Given that prosecutions for improper entry are carried out in federal courts, and that people will be incarcerated in federal prisons, the spectacle of suffering and missing children is a useful distraction from the expansion of both the criminal and immigration enforcement systems that is sure to create child suffering of a far greater magnitude. What we are seeing on our screens, in other words, is the tip of the iceberg.

“Previously, most parents had been allowed to remain with their children in family shelters while awaiting asylum cases or deportation proceedings”, [NBCNEWS](#).

We are being groomed to cheer for the expansion of enforcement, surveillance and caging capacity, making state-sanctioned violence more efficient and less contestable. [As in 2014](#), outrage at this particular form of family separation is translating slowly, relentlessly, into calls for improving detention conditions by reopening military bases, [building tent cities](#) and giving new legitimacy to the idea of “family-friendly” detention as a form of family unification. The shock of this new abomination is retroactively casting family imprisonment in euphemistic terms -- ascribing, in retrospect, a nostalgic gentleness to the [“old” ways of doing things under Obama](#), which becomes not only acceptable and rosy, but beyond contestation.

Never before? Normalizing the abduction and incarceration of children

The left and the right have historically colluded on border enforcement, expanding criminalization and illegalization as their common agenda for any reform of the immigration system. That is obvious in the blatantly racist and xenophobic rhetoric of the right. It is less obvious in the rhetoric of the left, both during the Obama administration and in the triumphant anti-Trumpism of the current moment. Grassroots migrant justice organizations that have not fallen in line with Democratic Party politics and the foundation-sponsored immigrant-rights lobby have been accused of being “divisive” and “bad for the movement”-- a movement lead by a political class that is, presumably, trying to save our communities. In this moment of liberal moral outrage, if you dare question why the current crisis is represented as though children have never before been separated from parents or incarcerated, if you dare push back against the #savethechildren reactions of the newly-outraged so-called progressives, you are cast as not wanting to rescue the children or be part of the “solution”.

The innovation of the Trump administration is that it is separating children from the parents and re-categorizing them as “unaccompanied alien children” (UAC’s) or “unaccompanied minors”, thus funneling them into an older, already-existing system for detaining and prosecuting children. But how new is this really?

“Kids and babies have never before been ripped away from their moms and dads at the border, this is a new policy put in place by the Trump administration. In the past, obviously there have been kids who crossed the border illegally alone, and so the U.S. has facilities to handle those young people, mostly teenagers. But babies and toddlers who were with their parents until the government stepped in to take them out of their mothers' arms? That is new,” [Rachel Maddow](#).

The Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) designation and program already implemented precisely this kind of separation in the past. Many categories of children arriving at the border with parents, seeking asylum or attempting to cross at or between ports of entry, have been ripped away from their parents as a matter of policy and routine for many years, according to testimonies from Romani refugees, families from Brazil and targeted African countries, as well as from testimonies of social service workers involved in the UAC program.

But more fundamentally, it is critical to remember that children, by the millions, have been ripped away from families all along the border for generations. Firstly, because the border is more than the line on the map, and extends to the US-backed economic and military policies that produce mass displacement, and to the policies that coerce migrants to place their children with *coyotes* and *guias* as their only option for crossing; these separations have been a persistent and ongoing violence of US border policy in the lives of children. But even if we look only at apprehensions along the US-Mexico border line, there is no such thing as children who are “unaccompanied”, only children who have previously been separated from parents by US policy, away from the view of cameras -- children who, in other words, have been violently made to *become* unaccompanied. Over [200,000 children categorized as “unaccompanied minors”](#) suffered this form of forced family separation during Obama’s last term in office¹. There was and still is no outrage about this process. And how many of the more than 2.5 million people deported during the Obama administration were parents ripped apart from children? And where is the outrage over DHS policies of apprehending kids from Mexico and dumping them across the border almost immediately without a hearing before an immigration judge, deliberately redirecting them away from the locations of their crossing -- where they have some contacts, families or support networks -- and into areas where they would have no family or loved ones? The numbers of children separated in this expedited way as a matter of policy [average over ten thousand each year](#).

The persistent and systematic abduction of migrant children from parents has been happening *all along at a massive scale*, away from the view of cameras, but the conditions that produce this violence are not considered useful for a media campaign or political capital. The process by which children are made to become Unaccompanied Alien Children has become normalized, as though “unaccompanied” and “alien” is something that children simply are, as opposed to something the US government is doing to them. The more we see current outrage mobilized as “never before”, the more the past, ongoing and future abductions, suffering, separation and detention of children under any other conditions is made to seem normal and acceptable, recast in euphemistic terms -- as though the unaccompanied kids in Rachel

¹ Here is the estimate breakdown of apprehensions of children (UACs) at the SouthWest Border:

FY 2013= 38,000 - 9,500 of Quarter 1 (Oct 2012-Dec 2012) = 28,500

FY 2014= 70,000

FY 2015= 40,000

FY 2016= 60,000 + 10,000 of Quarter 1 (Oct 2016-Dec 2016) of FY17.

we are not counting January 2017 - last month of Obama’s presidency. The data is in fiscal years (Oct-Sept), so the actual estimate is 208,500 for Obama’s last four years in office.

Using reports of the Office of Refugee and Resettlement, we estimate 179,000 children taken into custody and classified as UAC’s during Obama’s second presidential term. While most of these cases are children apprehended at the SouthWest border, this includes children taken into custody after any form of contact with DHS -- including the northern or Southeastern border (targeting migrants from the Caribbean) or after family separation due to raids or other internal enforcement. However, many children from Mexico and Canada are often not accounted for in these numbers as children from contiguous countries can be summarily deported without being transferred to HHS/ORR custody after abduction.

Maddow's righteous rant were not ripped away from loved ones and put in cages, they were already alone and merely handled by "facilities".

Unaccompanied Alien Children - Overview of an incarceration system

So let's look at the current system that captures kids and labels them UAC's -- children separated from parents by other means, in other ways, systemically and as a matter of US policy. We will try to paint an accurate picture of how it is structured and organized. Our description is based on a thorough review of government documents including congressional hearings and reports, as well as testimonies of whistleblower employees of the social service agencies outsourced to operate UAC detention facilities². We will also look at the ways the current "crisis" is an opportunity to put into high gear what has been an effort to experiment with new forms of state-sanctioned violence on the bodies of these children by rejigging the UAC program and expanding its direct cooperation with enforcement agencies from ICE to local police jurisdictions. We will point out how euphemisms work to recast the structural violence of the state as benevolence, as a form of rescue and care. In all of this, the common thread is the production of categories of children who need saving by the state.

UAC is the name given to any person under 18 years old with uncertain immigration status who is detained by the Department of Homeland Security and who does not have an adult parent or guardian able to provide care for them, regardless of how they are apprehended and regardless of how the separation was produced: at the time of crossing, as a result of a raid or as a result of the detention of a loved one etc. DHS has jurisdiction over the arrest and initial detention of the children; they are under legal pressure to refer and transfer the children into the custody of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) / Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within 72 hours due to a legal precedent called the [Flores Settlement](#). HHS/ORR has jurisdiction over incarcerating these children who are also placed under deportation proceedings, which is usually referred to as "immigration processing". HHS/ORR contracts with local and national social service agencies-- Non-governmental (NGOs), non-for-profit organizations -- to provide secure detention facilities for the captivity of the children. The social service providers comply with protocols established by ORR, under the management and review of for-profit companies acting as Third Party Reviewer, to secure placement of the children with proper "sponsors". This involves an investigation of such sponsors and their entire households (including fingerprints and in many cases, home inspections etc) to determine if the children can be "released" to their care. The children are, however, not free -- throughout their detention and beyond, they are placed in some form of immigration prosecution; they have follow-up court dates and are subjected to the same slow violence targeting all people the state is trying to deport - the devastating nature of this slow violence is intimately familiar in our communities and yet becomes erased in government and advocate narratives about "release" and "reunification". After so-called release from "shelters", DoJ has jurisdiction over their prosecution. DHS has jurisdiction over their deportation.

DHS and HHS call this process whereby a child is captured, converted into a UAC, detained, processed for deportation and released pending deportation hearings, "*family reunification*". This cynical term masks the fact that the vast majority of these children know exactly where their loved ones are -- children cross the border with a parent's phone number in their pocket -- yes, even toddlers -- or have other relatives they are trying to reunite with when abducted by the authorities. They are not unaccompanied, they are made to be UAC for purposes of *processing*. The program interrupts their efforts to reunite with loved ones and, in effect, abducts them *in order to render them available for prosecution*. The program is

² A more detailed series of reports from whistleblowers, describing the UAC program in more detail, is coming soon

full of euphemisms: the facilities offer “care” instead of detention or incarceration, children have an “encounter” with authorities instead of an arrest, there are “beds” instead of inmate numbers, and families are subject to “home studies” not investigations and state surveillance. While in HHS/ORR custody, children are held in facilities called “shelters”, “*casa hogar*” or “family reunification centers”, not jails, detention centers, or lock-ups. Children are called “participants” not detainees or prisoners even though the facilities are locked, children are under prosecution, and prison-like disciplinary methods and routines structure every aspect of daily life -- from mealtime to bedtime to possibilities for social interaction, the restrictions on children are in many ways more severe than those faced by the general population in jails due to them being considered “vulnerable populations”³. Attempts at escape, which are not infrequent, lead to a police manhunt. Failed escapes lead to the child being placed in a “secure” or “staff-secure” facility, which describes the more dire conditions faced by children considered flight risks, suspected gang members (or children considered at risk for being recruited into gangs), children considered a danger to themselves and others, children with “behavior problems” and many others.

During Obama’s last presidential term, DHS abducted [over 200,000 children](#) and HHS detained over [170,000 migrant children](#), the majority from the countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. As of April 2018, HHS had a permanent detention capacity of over 11,000 child inmates at any given time, in facilities all over the country. Most of this incarceration capacity is located near the southwestern border, but many of these facilities are in cities like Chicago, which is, not surprisingly, a hub in the logistics of child captivity. We walk by these detention facilities every day without even knowing it. The mechanisms and procedures of this system, as well as the locations of the detention sites, have been highly secretive.

Missing, Trafficked, Recruited, Separated - #SaveTheChildren!

The UAC system of detention and prosecution is itself a result of a process of “saving kids” from border patrol and ICE detention. The euphemisms in the UAC system are not accidental because the program was put in place as a result of legal challenges over the conditions of detention faced by kids in facilities often known as “coolers” -- warehouses and other detention spaces under DHS jurisdiction at the border. The “solution” was to rename and re-organize the ways children are incarcerated and prosecuted, outsourcing most of the investigative and repressive functions to social service agencies. Since the program’s inception, the state has deepened the detainability and deportability of immigrant adults and children, while recasting incarceration as care, prosecution as release, and deportation as repatriation. This process continues in Trump’s Amerikkka, because you can be crazy right-wing and save the children, too.

The outrage is not at the ways the state targets human beings -- through apprehension, detention, removal -- it’s not in the captivity itself, or the fact of their deportability and detainability, the outrage has historically focused exclusively on the *conditions* of detention. This approach has proven to be an opportunity for *expansion* and *profit* for a range of nonprofits and social service agencies, whose financial

³ More details forthcoming in a follow-up report from whistleblowers. For now several examples: access to phone calls is much more severely restricted and the actual time for making calls is entirely at the discretion of the staff. Children who try to set aside some of their leftover food from mealtime to consume later are labeled hoarders and punished; this perfectly normal and necessary behavior, which many migrant children have learned as a positive survival skill, is just one example of how a child can become marked as having “behavior problems”, a spiraling process with great consequences upon their lives during and after detention. Siblings who arrive together are separated and any of their interactions, if any, are to be deemed suspicious and are strictly supervised.

self-interest is linked to carrying out state repression onto populations they are supposedly trying to help, save, or “represent” politically.

Several recent developments have shifted the focus to smaller and smaller, more precisely defined, subcategories of UAC’s that are slated for exceptional interventions under the pretext of their protection. In each case, congressional hearings were triggered to investigate how these children could have “fallen through the cracks” and the imperative of expanding state surveillance in the lives of children, families and entire communities became the policy solutions. Over this period, various cases began to be conflated. Below is a brief outline.

In 2014 a media scandal broke out when 8 children from Guatemala were discovered as being trafficked into forced labor on an Ohio egg farm; this became the pretext for an ongoing scare campaign carried out in congressional hearings mandating “tightening” of ORR policies and supervision. Until this incident, ORR had no jurisdiction or responsibilities after the children were formally “released” from the detention facilities. Between their release and their first court dates, most children were not directly surveilled by any state agency; in some cases, “post-release services” became recommended or mandated, which also served the function of limited surveillance. Following the scandal, Congressional investigation mandated that HHS/ORR and DHS develop a Memorandum of Agreement to clarify how these agencies would cooperate to share information about possible sponsors, and to better track the children post-release. This discussion did not address the ways that denying people immigration status is what exposes them to the risk of labor trafficking, nor did any of the representatives from social service agencies or the immigrant rights lobby who testified mention that the best form of protection against labor trafficking would be immigration status for both children and their families.

In late 2016, members of the MS-13 street gang murdered two US-born teenagers in Suffolk County. In early 2017, four teenage boys, three of whom were immigrants, were also killed by the gang; two of these boys had fled to the US to escape gang violence in Honduras and had pending asylum cases. These tragic cases became exploited by Donald Trump, who paraded the suffering parents of the two US citizen teenagers murdered by the gang as the literal background of his 2018 State of the Union Speech. Stating that gangs like MS-13 “took advantage of glaring loopholes in our laws to enter the country as unaccompanied alien minors”, this flashed onto prime time what had already been formalized as an accelerating collaboration between policing and the UAC system.

In August 2017, following congressional investigations, HHS/ORR implemented a new program called the *Community Safety Initiative*, which consists of:

- New forms of cooperation between HHS, ORR, DHS and law enforcement on UAC’s with suspected gang affiliation or “criminal background” – a deliberately broad and vaguely defined notion historically used to render populations available to state violence, punishment or exploitation.
- Notification of local police authorities when UAC from secure and staff secure facilities are released in their communities-- these are children who are flight risks, have what staff consider behavior problems, are considered a danger to themselves or others etc.
- ORR field staff begin integrating with local anti-gang task forces.
- Expanding the “secure bed” capacity, (from two juvenile justice facilities: one operated by a regional criminal justice consortium in Virginia, and the other operated by a county in California).
- Increased domestic apprehensions of children resulting from operations targeting gang members.
- Allows for not releasing “gang affiliated” children to sponsors, but to keep them in staff-secure “shelters” until their 18th birthday when they are turned over to ICE.

This gang scare is used to expand a “tough on crime” approach to the “care” of children, putting all detainable and deportable children at risk, as well as bringing new forms of DHS-Police cooperation targeting poor youth of color in cities across the country.

Conflating the gang scare, trafficking hype and myth of the “missing children” (see below), [Kristjen Nielsen \(DHS\) recently pushed](#) for a number of far-reaching interventions from Congress: terminating the Flores Settlement Agreement, amending the TVPRA to reduce and restrict the limits on DHS involvement in the lives of UAC’s, clarifying the statutory definitions of “unaccompanied alien children” etc. ([May 15, 2018 Full hearing](#))

#WhereAreTheChildren: When Captors Panic About Hostages Gone AWOL

In April 2018, during a Senate Hearing on the “[Oversight of HHS & DHS efforts to protect Unaccompanied Alien Children from Human Trafficking & Abuse](#)”, Steven Wagner (HHS) reported on the recently implemented “follow-up calls” for UAC’s. Staff from social service agencies are instructed to attempt three phone calls to the children’s sponsors 30 days post-release, and to document how many children were still living with sponsors, how many had run away, how many had relocated, etc. If phone communication could not be established, the social service provider and ORR note this as *unable to determine the whereabouts of the UAC*. Over a period of three months, ORR indicated this designation in 1,475 cases. One month later, this figure became the basis for the #wherearethechildren social media craze that had celebrities and advocates screaming for a “better tracking” system of the lost or missing children.

There are many reasons why the three phone calls could have resulted in no determination -- no one answered the phone, the phone number changed, sponsor decided to *swipe left* on their smartphone, etc. More importantly, families may have good reasons to avoid contact with a state agency like ORR -- which had until recently *kidnapped* their child -- given that most often parents, the sponsor, or other members of the sponsor’s household are themselves undocumented. In recognizing that the intrusion of DHS/HHS/ORR into the lives of these children constitutes an abduction, followed by prolonged prosecution, ORR/DHS concern over so-called “lost” children should be understood as a captor panicking that their hostages are absent without leave.

The real concern of officials behind the co-called lost children craze is revealed in the [closing statement of senator Rob Portman, Chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the US Senate](#), as to the purpose of these hearings: “*First: Human decency. Once these unaccompanied children are in the United States, we have a duty to ensure they are not trafficked or abused. Second: The rule of law. Our immigration system is broken. One problem is that half of these children are not showing up to their court hearings. That’s not good for the kids or for our system. We need to do better.*”

The child at risk - a manufactured category for new markets

The interest of federal agencies in manufacturing categories of children seen as being “at risk” and then promoting solutions for their protection has become a rallying cry that brings together and conflates different moments of state-manufactured panic: how do we find the lost children? How do we protect them from gang recruitment? From criminals? From themselves? How do we protect children from traffickers – and given that parents have, since the inception of the DREAMer phase and into the current Trump era, been implicitly or explicitly represented as traffickers of their children, how do we protect the innocent children from their criminal parents, families, communities? This hype masks a series

of important imperatives that reveal the deeper questions being pursued by the state and the capitalist interests it represents. How do we keep people hostage across all areas of social life? How do we keep prisoners locked up even outside of prisons -- a project of generalizing surveillance and enforcement which began with the so-called prison without walls program that promoted an expansion of containment via electronic shackles and surveillance while masquerading as an alternative to detention ([The New Housing Boom: “Secure Housing of Immigrants”](#)). How do these “at risk children” become useful -- how do we make profit from them?

The “child at risk”, the lost or trafficked or separated child, becomes a new project for surveillance, such that state and nonstate actors can occupy or take over new sectors that were not previously under their purview. Timeframes, social space and areas of peoples lives that were not previously subject to direct state intervention can be made available to the imperative for surveillance, with immediate large-scale profits in the form of technology, logistics and “consulting” contracts. The children also represent a new market for the social service sector, who have profited greatly from being the outsourced providers of state enforcement. The social service surveillance web includes “home visits”, phone calls etc and post-release services that have until recently been voluntary, in that families could opt-out, but are currently under consideration to be mandatory until the child turns 18 or is deported. New sources of grant moneys for social service agencies have opened-up -- putting the “profit” back into the non-for-profit/NGO sector!

For every crisis, a solution?

When a new category at risk is created, so too are the corresponding categories of those cast as unworthy, as undeserving of protection. These include the incorrigible children who do not make good figures for paternalistic rescue, gang members and runaways, the ones who abscond. Those made invisible by the spectacle, those cast as background so that the new figure at risk emerges, are implicitly cast as dangerous and criminal -- migrant adults are disappeared into the figure of potential trafficker by the state’s rescue of the children. While the “child at risk” category is an invention of the state, the figure of a perpetual child who will never reach adulthood, the real children the state is speculating upon, and upon whose bodies this production of risk is performed, will continue to suffer the consequences of expanding criminalization once they turn 18. ([Do it for the Children!](#))

There has been an outpouring of concern for the suffering of migrant children, a desire to act, to mobilize, to resist. But we know that media spectacle and catch phrases like #WhereAreTheChildren, #SaveTheChildren, #FamiliesBelongTogether have so far worked to obscure the vast prison, border, detention, military and economic systems that work together to produce family separation in all its forms. We cannot fight for migrant children and families based on deceptive and misleading narratives, appeals to “American values” and media hype touting *never before*. The Democrats -- who stole our movements while selling us out -- are once again posturing as the pro-migrant solution, while powerful NGO’s are already cashing in on our suffering by using this moment to fundraise and to distract from their *culpability* in producing the conditions that created the crisis to begin with. The powerful and well-resourced institutional left could easily challenge the ways migration is criminalized but have not done so. Even taken at face value, clear and simple responses are self-evident: DHS is claiming they are merely enforcing the law, and citing Article 8 of U.S.C 1325 as the reason prompting the enforcement, and yet so far no legislative proposal authored by the Democrats and promoted by the NGO’s has dared to eliminate provisions for the criminal prosecution of “improper entry”. We are seeing no coherent attempts to demand an end to the prosecution of migrants at the border and an immediate moratorium on deportations -- both of which can be seen as reasonable *first steps* in addressing some of the more obvious conditions

that produce family separation. The institutional left are instead trying to mobilize popular outrage around fake solutions -- family reunification based on improved conditions of detention, more access to “services”, better “care”, more efficient “processing” and surveillance, retoolings of “due process”, and the carving out of small exceptional categories deserving of paternalistic rescue.

A struggle for our communities starts from a refusal to believe the hype, a refusal to buy into the logic of worthy vs unworthy populations, good vs bad migrant, legitimate vs bogus asylum seeker, legal vs illegal migration, citizen vs alien. Our struggle is against the borders that produce these categories to begin with, against state sanctioned violence in all its forms. Our struggle demands the right to self-determination for all peoples affected by US policy and by the relentless pursuit of US economic and political interests. Our struggle is for self-organization outside and beyond electoral politics, beyond and against the professional movement leaders, it is a struggle for our own analysis, our own understandings and our own solutions from below.

In rage and solidarity,

NoName Collective

Moratorium on Deportations Campaign (MDC)

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