

US government may put separated immigrant children up for adoption

By Eric London
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An Associated Press investigation revealed Tuesday that the US government has been secretly allowing US couples to adopt immigrant children separated from their parents.

The AP investigation uncovered cases—many recent but some dating back to the 1980s—in which judges granted adoption requests even though the children’s actual parents were never informed. AP warns that roughly 200 immigrant children who remain separated from their parents as a result of the Trump administration’s “Zero Tolerance” policy are at heightened risk of being adopted.

The report featured the story of one child, Alexa, who was separated from her Salvadoran mother, Araceli Ramos. When Alexa and Araceli were captured crossing the US-Mexico border trying to flee Araceli’s abusive ex-partner, Alexa was torn from her mother’s arms, and agents told her she “would never see her again.”

“Alexa’s case began in November 2015 under the Obama administration,” AP writes, “years before Trump’s family-separation policy rolled out. Her 15-month separation from her mother exposes the fragile legal standing of children under the care of the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and a flawed, piecemeal system that can change the course of a child’s life.

“It took 28 minutes for a judge in a rural courthouse near Lake Michigan to grant Alexa’s foster parents, Sherri and Kory Barr, temporary guardianship. Alexa’s mother and the little girl’s immigration attorney were not even notified about the proceedings.”

Such horror stories have been playing out for years, the AP reports, under Democratic and Republican administrations. In another case in Missouri, AP writes, “An American couple managed to permanently adopt a

baby whose Guatemalan mother had been picked up in an immigration raid. That seven-year legal battle terminating the mother’s parental rights ended in 2014.”

But today, AP says, the mass roundup of immigrant children means “the risk has grown exponentially” that further adoptions are on the horizon. There are 13,000 immigrant children detained in the US at present, many without their parents.

Among the foster facilities that have fought to adopt children to US families is Bethany Christian Services, an extreme right-wing organization based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Bethany is run by religious zealots and funded by billionaire donors like Trump’s Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. The DeVos family has contributed over \$3 million to fund the organization, AP reports.

AP quotes former Bethany Christian Services supervisor Sara Zuidema, who said, “All of a sudden when we had these younger kids to place, everyone was really excited about that. They just felt that if these kids could know Jesus, everything would be OK.”

The report notes that Araceli, the Salvadoran mother separated from her daughter under the Obama administration, was shown photographs of her child “wearing an American flag tank dress, drawing outside in the Michigan sunlight. In another shot, the girl appears at the Barrs’ front door clad in a hot pink ensemble, next to a little red wagon and the family dog.”

Araceli was ultimately reunited with her daughter, but only because she posted Facebook videos pleading for help. The videos received millions of views, forcing the Salvadoran government to intervene because she could not afford to hire an attorney.

During a hearing yesterday before the Senate, DHS

Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen defended the mass detention of children, saying “their parents chose to do that.”

Republican Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma praised Nielsen, saying “You’re actually trying to be able to manage and provide care to kids that have not had care sometimes from their own parents ... You’re putting a positive face forward for America.”

The Democratic Party has explicitly abandoned the defense of immigrants from the midterm election campaign, focusing instead on 36-year-old allegations of sexual assault against Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

In an article titled, “The Democrats have an Immigration Problem,” the *New York Times* reviews years of attacks on immigrants by Democrats. Despite the fact that the article attempts to highlight the role of “pro-immigrant” Democrats, it includes new details of how the Democratic Party has deliberately blocked all efforts to defend the rights of immigrants over the last decade.

The *Times* notes that many Democrats with close ties to trade unions voted against a 2007 bill that would have provided a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, quoting former Democratic Representative Luis Gutierrez who referred to Bernie Sanders’ opposition to the bill: “‘This progressive icon,’ Gutierrez snickered, ‘racing from the Senate floor to go on ‘Lou Dobbs’ to say how he’s standing up for the American worker.’”

According to the *Times*, it was Democratic members of Congress who called Barack Obama’s counselor David Axelrod to demand Obama should never even discuss the prospect of slowing deportations. “Please make him stop talking about this,” the Democratic representatives reportedly said.

When the Democrats controlled the Senate and the House in 2010, the *Times* reports Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she would not advance any bill to slow the pace of deportations unless it had the support of “45 to 50 Republicans.” Obama told advocates of an immigration bill “this is not the time.”

Under Trump, the Democratic Party has supported the administration’s anti-immigrant policies. In the *Times* article, Gutierrez acknowledges that he and the entire Democratic Party supported Trump’s proposal to build a wall as part of a broader legislative deal giving legal status to young people enrolled in Deferred

Actions for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): “He said he wanted a wall. He got me to say OK. Bernie Sanders, all of them.”

When immigrant rights activists sought to pressure the Democratic Party to shut down the federal government over Trump’s later decision to pull out of the deal, the Democratic Party staged a meaningless vote and then berated activists. The *Times* writes that Democratic Senate Minority Whip Richard Durbin “privately reprimanded” one young DACA recipient who was upset with the Democrats’ acquiescence.

Earlier in 2018, nearly two thirds of Democratic House members voted “yes” or “present” on a Republican bill praising Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Crimes of historic proportions are being carried out against immigrants. Even during the World War II internment of Japanese, the government did not separate children from their parents. The closest precedent to the secret adoption of immigrant children is the splitting up of slave families at auctions in the ante-bellum South. It echoes the handover of the children of those “disappeared” by the Argentinian dictatorship of 1976 to 1981 to supporters of the regime.

The UN definition of “genocide” includes “forcibly transferring children of [one] group to another group.” While such policies are at present not yet being carried out on a mass scale in the US, the AP report is a warning to the entire working class of the profoundly anti-democratic tendencies within the American financial aristocracy.

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