

Oppose the Trump administration's deportation of 1,000 immigrant children!

By Norissa Santa Cruz—SEP candidate for US vice president
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The Socialist Equality Party and our election campaign denounce the escalation of the Trump administration's fascistic attack on immigrants.

Trump has expedited the deportations of over 1,000 children since March, shipping them to dangerous home countries before they can claim asylum in the US. The unaccompanied minors have primarily been deported to Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the United Nations children's agency UNICEF said Thursday, despite grave concerns for their safety.

An additional 447 migrant children have been deported to Guatemala and Honduras by Mexican authorities over the same period, according to UNICEF. In many instances, children are fleeing countries and hometowns where they have been raped, beaten or had a parent killed, according to attorneys and advocates. The agency warned that children returned by the United States and Mexico faced added discrimination because they are perceived as infected with COVID-19.

Immigration lawyers and human rights advocates have stated that some children have been woken up in the dead of the night in detention centers and loaded onto planes with zero notice to relatives. Others have been pushed back into Mexico just hours after being taken into custody. They have joined the tens of thousands of migrants forced to eke out an existence in squalid tent camps and crowded shelters along the US/Mexico border.

A total of 95 unaccompanied minors traveling without their parents were deported to Guatemala in March, a figure that is up 500 percent since January, according to the Guatemalan government. At least 92 have been deported to Guatemala during the first half of April.

The American government is directly responsible for the widespread infection of immigrants in detention facilities with the coronavirus. Adding insult to injury, many of the adult and child deportees arriving by plane to Central America are shunned. Twenty percent of known cases have been linked to the arrival of deportees.

In a statement this past week, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said, "COVID-19 is making a bad situation even worse. Discrimination and attacks are now added to existing threats like gang violence that drove these children to leave in the first place."

As of May 16, ICE reported that out of 2,368 tested, there were 1,181 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among those in custody. That the number of confirmed cases is not much higher is no doubt due to the absence of any serious testing.

The Trump administration is also using the threat of COVID-19 to coerce parents to separate from their children. Lawyers representing clients in family detention jails say ICE is telling parents they will allow children to leave the facility but not parents.

A horrific tragedy is unfolding. The international laws and statutes for children that once offered special protections for immigrant youth seeking asylum have been made a dead letter by this administration.

The Trump administration is justifying the new practices under a 1944 law that grants the president broad power to block foreigners from entering the country in order to prevent the "serious threat" of a dangerous disease.

Washington's sweeping anti-immigrant laws, border closures and travel bans have been presented as a response to the pandemic, when in fact they have long been prepared by a team of fascists, including the main architect of Trump's immigration policy, Stephen

Miller. According to White House officials, Miller had long viewed the special protections offered to minors as a major hurdle to carrying out full immigration bans and an obstacle for speedy deportations.

Additionally, anonymous officials told the *Times* that Miller had long pushed for the invocation of the president's broad public health powers. He tried this in 2019, when an outbreak of mumps spread throughout immigration jails across six states. Miller tried again that same year when Border Patrol stations were hit with an aggressive flu season.

The Trump administration is using the pandemic as an opportunity to escalate its fascist attacks. The Democratic Party, for its part, is complicit. From the beginning of the administration, the Democrats worked to channel all opposition to Trump, including over the attack on immigrants, behind their reactionary, militarist anti-Russia campaign.

Earlier this week, Joe Biden, the Democrats' presumptive presidential nominee, feigned concern over the deportation of the children, tweeting, "Donald Trump is using a global health crisis as an excuse to deport children and continue separating families."

The statement is nauseating in its hypocrisy. The Obama administration laid the basis for mass deportations and ICE raids, and it built the majority of detention prisons in the country. For this, Obama came to be known as the "deporter-in-chief," with Biden his vice president.

The Democratic Party has never had any qualms regarding deporting children and adults, or making them suffer in the freezing cold detention centers known as "hieleras" or iceboxes, where sexual, physical and verbal abuse is rampant.

The Socialist Equality Party demands an immediate end to deportations. All immigrants and refugees must be provided with safe housing, a livable income and universal access to testing and health care. These rights must be guaranteed to all workers as part of the necessary response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The SEP rejects all attempts to divide workers through the promotion of nationalism and xenophobia. Immigrants in the US have been particularly exposed to the coronavirus, with large numbers of immigrant workers in meatpacking and other industries where the virus has spread rapidly. Along with native-born workers, their lives and safety are in immense danger

as a result of the back-to-work campaign of the ruling class.

The SEP fights for the international unity of the working class. The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates that all the problems confronting mankind are global problems, and that the interests of workers in every country are the same. We stand for a socialist policy of open borders: the right of all workers to live in the country they choose, with full equality and citizenship rights.

The resources exist to ensure the safety and livelihood of all workers. The problem is the capitalist system which monopolizes the vast majority of humanity's wealth into the hands of a tiny corporate and financial elite. The ruling class has utilized the pandemic to fill their pockets, handing itself trillions of dollars all while spearheading the campaign with the Trump administration for workers to return to work and risk their lives, as well as the lives of their loved ones.

The fight for the rights of immigrants is inextricably connected to the fight to unify the entire working class in opposition to capitalism and for socialism. We call on all workers to take up this struggle by joining the SEP and supporting our election campaign.

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