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U.S. imperialism creates refugees, then criminalizes them at the border

written by Gregory E. Williams
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Soldiers put concertina wire on a border fence near the Brownsville and Matamoros Express International Bridge in Brownsville, Texas.

With Nikki Haley out of the race, Trump and Biden are officially facing off in a presidential rematch. Both of these deeply unpopular politicians are attempting to get ahead by scapegoating migrants and refugees at the U.S.-Mexico border. In dueling publicity stunts, they both went to the border on Feb. 29., hundreds of miles apart in Texas.

Despite the polarized rhetoric, there is little substantive difference between their approaches to immigration. Biden seeks to present himself as a uniter who can “reach across the aisle” and get the job done, courting a supposedly reasonable

section of the Republican Party less beholden to Trump. Trump depicts Biden as overseeing an open-border policy.

The reality is that the Biden administration has continued many of the more repressive Trump-era immigration policies.

Biden was Obama's vice president from January 2009 to January 2017. Immigrant rights groups labeled Obama the "[Deporter in Chief](#)," having deported [three million people](#) by the time he left office. Ultra-bigot Ron DeSantis even used these facts to try to make himself look more vicious than Trump, saying that [he would deport more people than Trump](#), whose deportation stats trailed Obama's.

Immigration legislation has been held up in Congress for months as different factions fight over the exact ways to manage U.S. imperialism's borders. The legislation has been tied to funding for U.S. proxies in Ukraine, for example, which some Republicans oppose.

They do not oppose Ukraine funding on anti-imperialist grounds but rather because they represent the interests of different factions of the bourgeoisie who want to emphasize different theaters of conflict. Both parties are still absolutely united on continuing the U.S.-Israeli genocide of Palestinians and provoking China, risking World War III.

The bipartisan bill that has been held up – the showpiece of Biden's "reaching across the aisle" – would enact further violence against asylum seekers. The bill would institute a trigger mechanism to shut down the border if an average of 5,000 people per day in a given week (or 8,500 in a single day) attempted to enter the U.S. outside the woefully inadequate legal channels.

The bill would involve pumping billions more of our tax dollars into the border police apparatus at a time when Kellogg's CEO is telling us to [just eat cereal for dinner](#)

because food and everything else is so expensive.

Sources close to the Biden administration have said that Genocide Joe is considering [executive action](#) to implement aspects of the immigration bill, bypassing the congressional morass.

In a special congressional election in New York, Democrat Tom Suozzi just won the House seat formerly occupied by George Santos. He scored this victory by bashing immigrants, calling the situation at the border an “invasion,” in fascistic, dehumanizing language reminiscent of Trump.

Biden's racist edge

Immigration was a focal point in Biden's March 7 State of the Union address, which marks the beginning of his campaign in earnest. Biden used racist terminology, referring to human beings as “illegals.”

Marjorie Taylor Greene put on her own show – wearing a shirt that read, “say her name” – and disrupting Biden by yelling this slogan, which came from the Black Lives Matter movement. Greene and other Republicans are capitalizing on the tragic killing of 22-year-old University of Georgia nursing student Laken Riley. A Venezuelan national is being charged with the crime.

The Republican narrative, of course, is that this incident is part of an epidemic of immigrant crime and violence and that the Biden administration's policies are too lax. The immigrant crime wave is a pure myth. Very good data has come from multiple studies showing that there is [no correlation between crime rates and immigration](#).

Stanford University economist Ran Abramitzky has even found that, since the 1960s, immigrants are 60% less likely to be incarcerated than people born in the U.S. – and

that's not because immigrants are treated more lightly. If anything, the opposite is probably true, as immigrants are criminalized in every aspect of their lives.

Since Greene and others have chosen to use the phrase, "say her name," we should note a huge, glaring difference between what she and her cohorts are doing and the BLM movement. While the immigrant crime wave narrative is a big lie, the constant murder of Black people by police is not. All the data backs this up.

Overall, the political situation for immigrants continues to worsen, with both parties relying on this tried-and-true method of dividing up the working class by pitting one group of workers against another.

Who are the migrants?

But who are the migrants, and why are they coming in increasing numbers? U.S. Border Patrol claims to have had a record-breaking 250,000 encounters with migrants at the southwest border in December 2023. Books have been written on this topic, but the short answer is that it is because of U.S. imperialism.

Forty-seven thousand Venezuelans were encountered in December. Washington has dealt Venezuela's economy deadly blows for many years, with sanctions that have increased dramatically since the Obama years. On March 8, 2015, Obama signed Executive Order 13692, declaring Venezuela an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

As with Cuba, the "threat" represented by Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution was simply that they pursued national sovereignty, making it more difficult for Wall Street to plunder the country's natural resources and exploit the people; they were pursuing a non-capitalist direction. The Venezuelan people held on firmly to the gains they had made and resisted repeated Washington-backed coups, but the

sanctions were devastating. The country's economy contracted 24.7% between 2013-16.

Trump's administration pursued a "maximum pressure" campaign, especially targeting Venezuela's leading industry, oil and gas. As with all U.S. sanctions, from Venezuela to Cuba to Iraq, the goal was to immiserate the population, leading to social collapse. The Biden administration let up just a little bit when it comes to Venezuelan oil exports but is threatening to ramp up sanctions again.

In 2021, the largest proportion of migrants came from Honduras, some 200 families a day, according to Border Patrol. The Obama administration - remember, Biden was vice president - orchestrated a coup in Honduras in 2009, sending democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya into exile.

For years, the country was plunged into economic chaos and violence. Politically, Honduras is just now getting back on its feet, with progressive President Xiomara Castro being elected in 2022 - much to the dismay of Washington.

The Border Patrol claims to have encountered 76,100 Haitians in the 2023 fiscal year. Haiti is in the news now because of the political and economic crisis following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021. The bourgeois media typically depicts Haiti's troubles out of context rather than talk about the history of colonialism and slavery and the U.S. imperialists' domination of Haiti. The U.S. occupied Haiti militarily from 1915 to 1934.

SLL writer Stephen Millies says:

"The super-rich have never forgiven the Haitian people for overthrowing slavery. More than two centuries of revenge followed with the U.S. military occupying Haiti for 20 years, followed by support for the Duvalier family dictatorship.

“It was the CIA which was behind the coup that overthrew democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Trump called Haiti, which helped liberate Latin America, a ‘sh-hole country.’”

Politicians like Trump and Biden orchestrate the poverty and violence that drive people from their homelands, and they repress them when they come to the U.S. out of desperation. Sanctions and coups are only the tip of the iceberg. Capitalist imperialism is a global system. Exploitation and oppression are structural. It is not defined by one policy or another.

But it is important that we grasp that it is the capitalist class – the filthy rich like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk – who create these inhumane situations to amass more wealth, that is, to accumulate capital. The politicians work for capitalists. Workers have no interest in upholding their system or going along with the scapegoating campaigns.

