

Press release



Migration, Trump, and México

Alejandra Castañeda
Coordinadora del Observatorio de Legislación y Política Migratoria

Within a span of three days, in April of 2018, the president of the United States made several public statements aimed against migrants and Mexico. Through twitter and in personal appearances, Donald Trump connected topics related to Mexico and Mexicans in the U.S. such as the wall, DACA, NAFTA, national security, and immigration laws that are easily exploitable for political purposes.

Trump reacted viciously to reports about the Central American Migrant Caravan making its way through Mexico during Holy Week, and heading to request asylum in the United States. He called these people a danger to U.S. security, criminals, even going to the extreme of stating that they wanted to take advantage of DACA despite the fact that the program doesn't exist anymore.

Likewise, he blamed Mexico for doing nothing to stop it stating that (quote) "Mexico has the absolute power not to let these large "Caravans" of people enter their country. They must stop them at their Northern Border, which they can do because their border laws work, not allow them to pass through into our country, which has no effective border laws" (TRUMP, tweet April 1, 2018).

As a consequence of this Easter outburst of fury, as if the U.S. were on the brink of war with Mexico, president Trump announced the deployment of troops—later clarifying National Guard—to safeguard the border.

Trump's idea that the U.S. "has no effective border laws" echo the negative views the Border Patrol and ICE in general, have about current U.S. immigration law that protects unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers, pregnant women, family units, and that allow for the conditional release of undocumented immigrants. For CBP and antimigrant hawks, laws that protect vulnerable people such as the *Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA)*, the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)*, and U.S. Asylum law are loopholes that need to be corrected.

While many aspects of the Trump administration are chaotic, immigration policy has been clear and coherent. During his first year, Trump's government has designed and applied immigration policy aimed at restricting and complicating documented and undocumented immigration to and in the U.S. At the heart of all of the Trump administration's immigration policies lies the objective to eliminate any category of exception or protection against deportation, any special treatment including immigration through familial ties.

The administration's first actions were three executive orders related to immigration enforcement, border security, and limiting immigration from certain Muslim countries (1). In April of 2017, a fourth executive order impacted the employment based immigrant visa program. Likewise, throughout the year the administration announced the cancellation of the Temporary Protected Status of nationals of El Salvador, Haití, Honduras, Nicaragua, among others. Finally, in September of 2017, the program that protected dreamers from deportation known as DACA was also canceled.

In all, it is safe to say that the immigration policies from the Trump administration aim at eliminating exceptionalism, turning every undocumented migrant into a deportation priority, criminalizing their presence even more, and punishing those entities that want to protect immigrant communities. Even more worrisome, however, is its stated intent in changing the current immigration system that gives preference to family reunification, for one that limits family based migration to only spouses and children and emphasizes merit based preference.

In summary, in spite of the apparent dysfunctionality of the Trump administration, immigration has remained a coherent policy topic, as well as Trump's anti-Mexican agenda. It remains to be seen whether a new wall will be built between the two countries, but it is safe to say that the attack on immigrant communities will continue.

(1) Check our Pictochart to see a summary of these policies: <http://observatoriocolef.org/?infograficos=politica-migratoria-en-la-administracion-trump-primer-ano-de-gobierno>).