

Spring 2018 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network
Spring 2018 Issue, Volume 62
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1/9: Trump's attacks on humanitarian immigration just became a full-blown war

He's trying to force 260,000 immigrants to return to El Salvador after decades in the United States

Dara Linddara Vox.com

Trump's attacks on humanitarian immigration just became a full-blown war

He's trying to force 260,000 immigrants to return to El Salvador after decades in the United States.

On Monday, the Trump administration announced that it was stripping approximately 260,500 Salvadoran immigrants — who've been in the US for at least 17 years, since a 2001 earthquake — of temporary legal status as of July 2019.

It's the latest, and most significant, blow in the administration's fight against Temporary Protected Status, an immigration program that lets the government allow immigrants to stay in the US and work legally after their home countries are struck by natural disasters or war.

El Salvador is the fourth country for which the Trump administration has announced an end to TPS protections over its first year. In total, the administration has set up more than 320,000 immigrants to lose their legal status over the course of late 2018 and 2019 (and possibly as many as 375,000, depending on what it decides to do with 57,000 Honduran immigrants this spring).

The overwhelming majority of those immigrants have deep roots in the US. And Salvadorans might have the deepest roots of all: Approximately 192,700 US-born children have at least one parent who's on track to lose legal status due to the administration's Monday announcement.

The Trump administration argues that the TPS program was never intended to allow immigrants to stay for 17 years, and that it needs to end temporary status to provide a "permanent solution." But it's unclear, at best, that the Trump administration will be interested in pushing Congress to legalize hundreds of thousands of Central American (and Haitian) immigrants. Furthermore, the administration is telling Salvadoran immigrants that they have 18 months to make other arrangements to stay in the US or pack their bags.

After two decades in the US, hundreds of thousands of families will now have to decide whether to return to one of the most violent countries on earth — or remain in the US as unauthorized immigrants and try to slink into the shadows.

No president wanted to end humanitarian immigration. Then came Donald Trump.

Temporary Protected Status serves as a form of humanitarian relief, offered to nationals of countries struggling with the aftermath of war, natural disasters, or other humanitarian crises where conditions on the ground make it difficult for people to return safely. Ten countries — El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen — are currently in the program, which is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security and is granted in six- to 18-month intervals that can be renewed as long as DHS deems a designation necessary.

El Salvador was on the TPS list in the 1990s during its long and bloody civil war, but was removed in 1992 (though a related program, Deferred Enforced Departure, protected Salvadorans from getting deported through 1995). In 2001, though, after an earthquake struck El Salvador, the government allowed Salvadorans in the US to apply for TPS again. In the intervening 17 years, it's renewed protections 10 times.

To enter the program, nationals of a designated country must clear a number of conditions: They must maintain a relatively clean criminal record and pass a background check, they must pay a \$495 processing fee when they first apply for the program and every time their status is renewed, and they must reside in the United States at the time of their country's designation. This usually means that TPS beneficiaries are undocumented immigrants who were already in the US, those who overstayed a visa, or those who hold some other form of temporary immigration status.

TPS beneficiaries are granted authorization to work in the US (and in some cases the ability to travel internationally) and a reprieve from deportation. But outside of that, TPS doesn't grant many other benefits; beneficiaries do not have legal permanent resident status, and while a small number of beneficiaries may be eligible for green cards through the sponsorship of a US citizen family member, the program is not intended to provide a path to citizenship.

In practice, that meant that once a country's TPS was up for review, presidents had two choices: They could renew TPS for that country, kicking the can down the road; or they could terminate it and give thousands of people no way to stay legally in the US.

Unsurprisingly, most presidents chose the former. But equally unsurprisingly, the Trump administration is taking the opposite approach. With six opportunities to extend TPS over its nine months in office, it's fully extended one of them — South Sudan — while terminating three countries' protections on delays and offering six-month punts twice (Honduras and the initial six-month extension for Haiti).

Over its first year in office, the Trump administration has made it clear that it wants to completely overhaul the basis on which the US grants legal status to immigrants. It envisions a "merit-based" immigration system in which individual immigrants are selected based on their high level of education and relevant professional skills — and the government has no obligation to let immigrants come to or stay in the US just because their homes and families are already here.

There are a lot of current US immigration policies that run afoul of the Trump administration's ideas of merit, but TPS might be the biggest affront to their vision. Not only does it extend legal protections to people based almost entirely on what's happened in their home countries, rather than what they can contribute as individuals, but it applies to people who were already living in the US when TPS was granted — instead of allowing the US to select immigrants in advance.

But the fundamental problem, from the Trump administration's point of view, is that TPS is designed to be temporary, and a temporary program shouldn't be leading people to settle in the US.

To that end, the administration has taken nearly every chance it's gotten to wind down TPS protections. In September, it announced that it was giving about 500 Sudanese a final 18 months on TPS. In November, it hit 59,000 Haitian immigrants and 2,500 Nicaraguan immigrants with the same 18-month deadline. (It was unable to come to a decision about the fate of

57,000 Honduran immigrants, forcing an automatic six-month extension, which will expire this spring.) And now it's doing the same for what it estimates to be 260,500 Salvadorans.

The Trump administration thinks El Salvador is too dangerous to take immigrants from, but too safe to qualify for TPS

The statute creating TPS tells the secretary to look at "conditions in the foreign state" when making decisions about TPS. The Trump administration's review, it claims, found that El Salvador has recovered sufficiently from the 2001 earthquake to be a safe place to send hundreds of thousands of immigrants back to. And on a press call Monday, senior administration officials pointed to the "repatriation" of tens of thousands of Salvadorans from the US in recent years as evidence that the Salvadoran government can successfully reintegrate people.

This is not exactly the way the Trump administration tends to describe El Salvador. The country is the home base of MS-13 — the transnational gang Trump has referred to as "monsters," and which he and his top officials use to argue for everything from tightening asylum laws to defunding cities that don't maximize compliance with federal immigration agents. In fact, the administration has bragged about how many MS-13 gang members it has deported to El Salvador — the very same people it's now claiming are proof of the country's ability to absorb returned immigrants.

In 2015 (the most recent year for which data is available from United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime), El Salvador had 108.64 homicides per 100,000 people. That made it the deadliest country in the world by a wide margin — the next most dangerous, Honduras, had 63.75 homicides per 100,000 — and 22 times as dangerous as the United States.

El Salvador is slightly safer than it was in 2015. In January 2017, the country had its first day without a murder in two years. But by fall, violence was spreading again: In September, the country witnessed 435 homicides, or almost 15 per day.

American policy has deeply shaped El Salvador's recent past anyway. The US supported one of the sides in the civil war that led to the country's original TPS grant. In the 1990s, efforts to deport immigrants who had been convicted of crimes played a major role in exporting MS-13 — which started as a Los Angeles prison gang — to El Salvador, where it took root.

More recently, the flow of Salvadorans seeking asylum in the US, usually out of fear of violence from MS-13 or other gangs, is disproportionately made up of unaccompanied children and families — in part because of US laws offering guarantees for standards of treatment (and, in the case of unaccompanied children, options for legal status) that aren't available to single adults. (This has been cited by some Republicans as a reason to change those laws, so as not to "incentivize" children or families fleeing violence to come to the US.)

The Trump administration's line on TPS is that it's not about the broader stability of a country, but just about recovery from the initial disaster. But the federal government has the authority to grant or extend TPS based on "ongoing armed conflict" or "other extraordinary temporary conditions." Asked on Monday about those criteria, a senior administration official simply said it did not believe those conditions applied to El Salvador in 2018.

The Trump administration is attempting to deny — or simply ignore — that the people they're stripping of status have deep roots in the US

It's not even that Salvadoran immigrants are now being pushed to return to the same gang violence they fled to come to the US. By definition, every Salvadoran immigrant with TPS has been here for at least 17 years — before the homicide rate skyrocketed. As of January 2017, according to an estimate from the Center for Migration Studies, 51 percent of Salvadorans with TPS had been in the US at least 20 years.

Salvadorans aren't just the biggest population of those with TPS; they're also the best integrated. According to the CMS estimates, 85 percent speak some English, with 48 percent speaking English "well, very well," or exclusively. Their labor force participation rate is 88 percent — above the US average of 63 percent — and their unemployment rate is 5 percent. There are 45,000 mortgages held in the names of Salvadoran TPS holders. TPS holders make up a substantial portion (16 percent) of all Salvadorans in the US.

From the administration's perspective, all of this is a sign that previous presidents screwed up, by allowing TPS protections to continue after the initial disaster that spurred them faded into the past. But its relentlessly narrow focus leaves out a large group of US citizens: the 192,700 children who have been born in the US to at least one parent who is a Salvadoran with TPS.

Most of these children are almost certainly under the age of 21 (the age at which they'd be able to sponsor their parents for green cards, under certain circumstances). Those TPS holders who were eligible for legal status have probably already gotten it — University of Kansas professor Cecilia Menjivar estimates that tens of thousands of Salvadoran immigrants got TPS in 2001 but no longer have it (presumably because they've gotten permanent legal status or left the country).

When a reporter asked on Monday whether the Trump administration was telling parents with TPS to take their US-born, US citizen minor children to El Salvador, the senior administration official said, “We’re not getting involved in individual family decisions.”

DHS Secretary Kelly Testifies Before Senate Appropriations Committee On Budget

Pushing hundreds of thousands of people back into the shadows in the name of a “permanent” solution

As the Trump administration has ended TPS for country after country, it’s started to emphasize that it’s up to Congress to find a “permanent solution” to address the fate of the people it’s stripping of legal status. Because TPS was never intended to be permanent — and because it doesn’t itself provide a pathway for people to become permanent residents — the administration maintains that if Congress decides that these 260,000 Salvadoran immigrants (and the 62,000 other immigrants whom it’s stripping of TPS in the next year and a half) should stay in the US, it’s up to Congress to let them apply for green cards.

There’s a difference between telling Congress to come up with a solution and actually pressuring it to do so. The administration hasn’t endorsed any bills to grant permanent status to TPS holders; the only immigration bill it has endorsed, the RAISE Act, would slash legal immigration instead of opening up new pathways for it.

And, of course, the administration has already pulled a move like this before. When it announced in September it was winding down the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, Trump claimed he was giving Congress six months to find a “permanent solution” for the 700,000 immigrants protected from deportation under DACA; with less than two months left, negotiations are nearly at a standstill, in large part due to the administration’s apparent insistence on getting its entire immigration agenda passed as part of a DACA deal.

If the administration really does think that a “permanent solution” that will allow Salvadorans to stay in the US is forthcoming, it’s not telling Salvadorans that. The purpose of delaying the end of TPS by 18 months, the administration says, is to give current TPS holders time to adjust to permanent status if eligible — and to make arrangements to leave the US if not.

Eighteen months may seem like a long time. But for people who’ve been in the US for 18 years — with children who’ve never lived anywhere else — that may not be nearly enough.

The immigrants facing the loss of TPS have another option the administration didn’t specify (and that it doesn’t tend to acknowledge). They can remain in the US after their legal status expires, becoming unauthorized immigrants. They’d join the 11 million current unauthorized immigrants, many of whom were under little risk of deportation in the final years of the Obama administration and now have to deal with the fear of ICE apprehension on a daily basis. They’d join the other tens of thousands of immigrants who will have lost TPS and stayed. And they’ll join, unless Congress has come up with a bill in time, the 700,000 US-raised immigrants who are at risk with the end of DACA.

The Trump administration says it wants permanent solutions. But in its first year, its immigration legacy has been to move more and more people into contingency and vulnerability.

1/8: Activists Demand Freeholders and County Executive End Immigrant Detention in Newark

Resist the Deportation Machine, Recently Formed Organization, Calls for Demonstrations, Sends Open Letter

Eric Lerner, on behalf of Resist the Deportation Machine

Resist the Deportation Machine (RDM), a recently-formed network of immigrant activists, has demanded that the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders and Essex County Executive Joseph DiVencenzo immediately end immigrant detentions at the Essex County Correctional Facility (ECCF) in Newark. The demands, formally conveyed in an open letter to the Freeholders and the County Executive that was emailed January 5, calls on them to end the contract between the County and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) to hold 850 immigration detainees at the Center. To support the demands, RDM has called for a demonstration at ECCF, 354 Doremus Ave in Newark at 1 PM, Saturday, January 27.

“ICE’s detention centers throughout the country are a crucial part of its cruel and illegal deportation machine that is spreading terror and disrupting the lives of millions of immigrants”, RDM’s letter states. “Without ICE’s ability to hold up to

41,000 immigrants in detention, it would be impossible for it to deport the 400,000 or more immigrants per year it is now expelling.”

To end this injustice, RDM is participating in a campaign to shut down all immigrant detention centers, starting with Essex County. “The ICE system is full to capacity,” RDM’s letter points out, so shutting detention centers will force ICE to free many of the detainees.

RDM’s letter emphasize that the immigrant detentions without charge or trial are unconstitutional and a threat to the rights of all. “RDM views this fight as part of the broader battle to defend the equal rights of all who live here,” RDM member Eric Lerner explains. The threat of immigrant detentions and deportation undermines the rights of all to due process. The fear of this unconstitutional repression hinders immigrants’ ability to defend their rights to unionize, to organize and to strike, and thus weakens the rights of all working people, no matter where they were born.

RDM aims to spread this campaign to the other detention facilities in NJ, including in neighboring Hudson and Bergen Counties. “We hope that other groups around the country will do the same thing in their regions,” says Lerner, “Shutting down this whole machine is the best way to protect the rights of all now threatened with deportation—the DACA youth, Haitians, Hondurans and other losing their Temporary Protected Status (TPS), everyone who lives here.”

The Jan. 27 demonstration is the next step in a campaign initiated by a broad coalition of immigrant and other groups who rallied in Newark on Nov.9 and presented their demands verbally to the Freeholders during their Board meeting. The Nov. 9 action was endorsed by the following organizations: SIDEC (Stop Immigrant Detention in Essex County), New Jersey Industrial Union Council, Movement For Socialism, Unidad Latina en Accion, Decarcerate the Garden State, Pax Christi NJ, Haiti Solidarity Network NE, Cosecha, Food & Water Watch, Essex Rising, Newark Education Workers, Hudson Civic Action; Green Party of New Jersey; Anakbayan NJ; Migrante NJ; Gabriela NJ

More actions are planned until the detention centers are closed.

Text of the letter follows:

Jan.5, 2018

Dear Essex County Chosen Freeholders and Essex County Executive DiVencenzo,

We are writing to strongly urge you as members of the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders and as County Executive to immediately act to end the contract with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) to hold 850 immigrant detainees at the Essex County Correctional Center in Newark.

ICE’s detention centers throughout the country are a crucial part of its cruel and illegal deportation machine that is spreading terror and disrupting the lives of millions of immigrants. Without ICE’s ability to hold up to 41,000 immigrants in detention, it would be impossible for it to deport the 400,000 or more immigrants per year it is now expelling. Most of the 100 detention facilities are, like the Essex County Correctional Center, leased from local authorities.

Shutting Down detention centers will force ICE to free immigrant detainees. The ICE system is full to capacity, and ICE is requesting Congress authorize 5,000 more beds. Detainees that are no longer housed at ECCC can’t, in general, be moved elsewhere because there is no room for them. ICE will have to release many of them. We are as well demanding that Hudson County and Bergen County close their detention centers and we expect that shutting down one of these centers will inspire other campaigns throughout the country. Multiple shut-downs will cripple ICE’s entire deportation operation, preventing ICE from simply moving detainees around. In 2006, the closing of the Passaic County immigrant detention facility in Paterson led to the paroling or outright release of over 140 detainees.

Immigrant detentions are unconstitutional and a threat to the rights of all. By ICE’s own admission immigrant detainees are “administrative detainees” who have not been charged with or convicted of a crime. Their detention—really imprisonment under a different name—violates the basic protection of the Bill of Rights that no person is to be deprived of liberty without due process—indictment and trial by jury.

Deportations and Detentions Undermine All Workers’ Rights. The threat of arbitrary detention and deportation deters many immigrants from defending their rights to decent wages and working conditions. This hinders the ability of all workers to defend these rights.

Essex County Must not Run on Blood Money. The fact that the county profits from the unconstitutional detention of immigrants, because ICE pays for the beds, is not a valid argument for collaborating in the ICE deportation machine. The

County could raise money by selling opioids as well, but that would not make it a wise policy.

Therefore you should act now to immediately end the detention contract with ICE.

Sincerely yours

2/8: US immigration and customs agency seeks to join Intelligence Community

February 8, 2018

Joseph Fitsanaks – Intel News

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is reportedly seeking to join the Intelligence Community, which includes the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and other intelligence-focused arms of the federal government. Currently, ICE is a federal law enforcement that operates under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security. It consists of two components: Homeland Security Investigations, which probes cross-border criminal activity, including drugs and weapons trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime; and Enforcement and Removal Operations, whose mission is to find and capture undocumented aliens.

But some senior ICE officials have been exploring the possibility of joining the US Intelligence Community. According to The Daily Beast, which reported the alleged plans, the officials believe that by joining the Intelligence Community, ICE will become privy to intelligence that will assist in its mission. They also claim that membership in the Intelligence Community would afford ICE “greater prestige, credibility and authority” within the federal government. The Daily Beast reports that ICE’s effort to join the Intelligence Community began during the administration of US President Barack Obama. However, it has picked up steam following the election of President Donald Trump. Some believe that President Trump would be willing to sign an executive order that would incorporate ICE in the Intelligence Community.

Some civil liberties watchdogs, however, are weary of such plans. They claim that ICE is a domestic law enforcement agency and should not have access to practices and techniques used by spy agencies like the CIA or the National Security Agency. The latter frequently break the laws of foreign countries in pursuit of their mission, which is to steal foreign intelligence. These agencies are characterized by a different culture, say critics, which is not respectful of legal constraints. But supporters of ICE’s proposed inclusion into the Intelligence Community argue that there are several law enforcement agencies that are already members of the Intelligence Community. Notably, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration—both law enforcement agencies—belong to the Intelligence Community.

The Daily Beast said it contacted ICE but a spokesperson refused to comment on the story. The Department of Homeland Security did not return emails and phone calls about the proposal to include ICE in the Intelligence Community.

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1/25: Trump Exploits Dreamers to Fulfill Stephen Miller’s White Supremacist Wish List

Church World Service

Washington, D.C. - CWS strongly condemns the White House’s supposed immigration “reform” memo leaked earlier this evening. Stephen Miller’s plan reverses President Trump’s earlier commitment to sign a legislative solution for Dreamers. It would hold hostage a pathway to citizenship for some Dreamers by stopping U.S. citizens from sponsoring their parents, siblings, and even children; supercharging a deportation force that is already wildly out of control; and spending \$25 billion on a wasteful border wall.

“This White House proposal is immoral, and in no way a serious attempt to pass a legislative solution for Dreamers. With this memo, President Trump has demonstrated that he cannot lead but will allow Stephen Miller and other white supremacists to dictate his policies. The administration is continuing to wage its war on immigrants, this time by exploiting dreamers and redefining family. This is part and parcel of a xenophobic and white supremacist agenda. Dreamers are Americans—and it’s time for Congress to recognize that fact. 87% of the American public already does,” said Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service.

“After President Trump ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, he pledged to sign a bipartisan solution for Dreamers. Now, he is going back on that promise and demanding the restrictionist portion of comprehensive immigration reform in exchange for a Dreamer solution for which he has already pledged support. This exploitation of Dreamers’ predicament - a plight which President Trump has caused - calls to mind Matthew 18:6, in which Jesus proclaims If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. There is already broad bipartisan consensus on a solution for Dreamers - Congress must not bow to Stephen Miller’s white supremacist agenda that will dismantle the very values upon which this nation was founded.”

CWS urges the public to call their Members of Congress and demand that Congress reject this White House proposal and instead pass a clean DREAM Act now.

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1/13: Trump, condemned for shithole countries remark, denies comment but acknowledges ‘tough’ language

Ed O’Keefe and Anne Gearan – Washington Post

President Trump’s comments about African countries and Haiti drew condemnation from around the world Friday, putting the White House and Republicans on the defensive while casting doubt on hopes of resolving disputes in the coming weeks over immigration legislation.

In a tweet Friday, Trump seemed to deny using the term “shithole” to refer to some countries during a private White House meeting Thursday, but acknowledged he used “tough” language during the negotiations. Among Republicans, there were differing responses to the comments, but few of them outright condemned his remarks.

The lone Democrat present for the Oval Office encounter said that Trump’s denial was false and the president “said things that were hate-filled, vile and racist.”

“I cannot believe that in the history of the White House, in that Oval Office, any president has ever spoken the words that I personally heard our president speak yesterday,” Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) told reporters.

In a sign that the outcry over Trump’s remarks is unlikely to abate quickly, senior House Democrats said that they planned next week to introduce a resolution censuring the president for his comments.

A day after the White House did not deny that Trump used the vulgarity, first reported by The Washington Post, Trump dove into the controversy and blasted out his own version of the meeting early Friday morning on Twitter.

“The language used by me at the DACA meeting was tough, but this was not the language used. What was really tough was the outlandish proposal made — a big setback for DACA!” Trump wrote, referring to negotiations over the Obama administration’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that allowed children brought to the country illegally, known as “dreamers,” to avoid deportation.

But Trump’s attempt at a denial did little to quell the international outrage at his reported comments that the United States should seek immigrants from countries such as Norway instead of African and Latin American nations.

“There is no other word one can use but ‘racist,’” United Nations human rights spokesman Rupert Colville said at a briefing in Geneva. “You cannot dismiss entire countries and continents as ‘shitholes,’ whose entire populations, who are not white, are therefore not welcome.”

Ebba Kalondo, spokeswoman for the African Union, said the comments were alarming.

“Considering the historical reality of how many Africans arrived in the U.S. during the Atlantic slave trade, this flies in the face of all accepted behavior and practice,” she said.

The controversy began Thursday when the president grew frustrated with lawmakers during an Oval Office meeting as they discussed protecting immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador and African countries as part of a bipartisan deal over the dreamers, according to several people briefed on the meeting.

“Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?” Trump said, according to these people, referring to countries mentioned by the lawmakers.

Trump then suggested that the United States should instead bring more people from countries such as Norway, whose prime minister he met with Wednesday.

A White House official said Trump also suggested that he would be open to more immigrants from Asian countries because he felt that they help the United States economically.

In addition, the president singled out Haiti, telling lawmakers that immigrants from that country must be left out of any deal, these people said.

“Why do we need more Haitians?” Trump said, according to people familiar with the meeting. “Take them out.”

In November, the Trump administration rescinded deportation protection granted to nearly 60,000 Haitians after the 2010 earthquake and told them to return home by July 2019. This week, the administration announced that similar protections for roughly 200,000 Salvadorans will end in September 2019 — unless Congress enacts legislation providing them permanent legal status.

In another tweet Friday, Trump focused on remarks attributed to him about Haiti, saying: “Never said anything derogatory about Haitians other than Haiti is, obviously, a very poor and troubled country. Never said ‘take them out.’ Made up by Dems. I have a wonderful relationship with Haitians. Probably should record future meetings — unfortunately, no trust!”

Early Saturday, the president again took to Twitter to address his critics: “The Democrats are all talk and no action. They are doing nothing to fix DACA. Great opportunity missed. Too bad!” Less than an hour later, Trump tweeted, “I don’t believe the Democrats really want to see a deal on DACA.”

Reaction to Trump’s remarks across the political spectrum and around the globe mirrored what has happened in the past — hastily arranged meetings among diplomats, outrage and sharp criticism from Democrats, and measured comments by Republicans.

At an appearance in Milwaukee, House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) called Trump’s words “very unfortunate, unhelpful,” pointing to his own Irish ancestors’ migration to America.

“It is a beautiful story of America, and that is a great story and that is the story we have today and that is a story we had yesterday and that is what makes this country so exceptional and unique in the first place,” he said. “So I see this as a thing to celebrate, and I think it’s a big part of our strength.”

Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), who has been negotiating the immigration policy deal with Durbin and Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), said in an interview with The Post that he was not at the meeting, but heard about Trump’s comments “before it went public. And what I’ve heard reported is consistent about what I heard about the meeting.”

Flake said that Thursday’s comments reflect what Trump has reportedly said in the past about Haiti and Nigeria. “I’m not surprised at the sentiment expressed — it’s consistent with what he’s said — but that he would do that knowing the fury it would cause.”

In a statement Friday afternoon, Graham, who was at the meeting, did not specifically address what Trump said.

“Following comments by the President, I said my piece directly to him yesterday,” he said. “The President and all those attending the meeting know what I said and how I feel. I’ve always believed that America is an idea, not defined by its people but by its ideals.”

On Friday, Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) told a South Carolina newspaper that Graham told him that the reported comments are “basically accurate.”

“If that comment is accurate, the comment is incredibly disappointing,” Scott told the Post & Courier newspaper.

In a joint statement, Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and David Perdue (R-Ga.) — two of Trump’s biggest allies on Capitol Hill who attended Thursday’s meeting — said, “We do not recall the president saying these comments specifically but what he did call out was the imbalance in our current immigration system, which does not protect American workers and our national interest.”

Trump, the senators said, “brought everyone to the table this week and listened to both sides. But regrettably, it seems that not everyone is committed to negotiating in good faith.”

Cotton and Perdue are co-sponsors of legislation that would enact severe restrictions on legal immigration — a bill Trump has said he supports, but that senior GOP leaders have said could not pass Congress.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), who also attended the meeting, did not address the comments in a statement issued by his office Friday.

“There are almost 800,000 young DACA beneficiaries who are facing imminent deportation in March if we don’t reach a deal,” he said. “I’m not going to be diverted from all possible efforts to continue to negotiate to reach a deal. So statements at the eleventh hour are not going to distract me.”

An immigration hard-liner in Congress, Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), tweeted support for Trump’s remarks Friday: “If those countries aren’t as you described, Democrats should be happy to deport criminal aliens back to them. &End #AnchorBabies, too.”

In the wake of news reports about his comments, Trump initially was not particularly upset by the outcry and spent a portion of Thursday night calling friends and confidants to assess the potential fallout — part of his routine attempts to take the temperature of longtime contacts, according to a White House official familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak frankly about the president’s response.

While Trump does not generally enjoy widespread negative media coverage of his more controversial statements, the official added he is cognizant that the situation will probably be perceived differently in Washington and on television news compared with his political base across the country.

Hillary Clinton, Trump’s 2016 Democratic rival, weighed in, tweeting that Friday’s eighth anniversary of a major earthquake in Haiti “is a day to remember the tragedy, honor the resilient people of Haiti, & affirm America’s commitment to helping our neighbors. Instead, we’re subjected to Trump’s ignorant, racist views of anyone who doesn’t look like him.”

Left unanswered is how much damage Trump’s comments have done to the ability of Congress to soon reach a deal on DACA.

Durbin said in a written statement Friday that he and others in his bipartisan group will continue pressing for an agreement. It “continues to build support for the only deal in town,” he said.

¡ Arriba! Las Vegas Worker Center launches in the Trump era

Pablo Alvarado Executive Director NDLO
www.ndlon.org

Bliss Requa-Trautz Executive Director ¡ Arriba! Las Vegas Worker Center
arribalasvegas.org

The NDLO team is very proud to announce that this Friday, January 26th, workers, organizers, community leaders, and elected officials will inaugurate the ¡Arriba! Las Vegas Worker Center.

The center will serve as a beacon for day laborers, domestic workers, youth, construction workers, TPS holders and other low-wage workers to have a voice and a conduit to advance their migrant and worker rights. As the workers say, “¡Arriba! is our second home, a place to collectively defend ourselves and stand up for each other.”

¡ Arriba! Las Vegas Worker Center’s mission is to develop, educate, and empower worker and migrant communities to take action in defense of their rights.

Will you make a solidarity donation to support this new space for resistance?

Mr. Trump and his prejudiced followers intend to establish a climate of terror that leads to migrants fearing government and its institutions, US citizens fearing non-citizens, whites fearing people of color, and progressive politicians fearing the federal government. They want migrants to give up their rights, their fight, and to self deport. But ¡Arriba! will be a bullhorn for humble

workers and migrants, individuals and families, to speak up and stand their ground. We will not be silenced.

Under the leadership of founding director Bliss Requa-Trautz, the Center is already challenging the xenophobic offensive coming from the White House. With only five months in existence, ¡Arriba! has established itself as a critical immigrant worker organizing space in Las Vegas. ¡Arriba! is anchoring fights against deportations, recovering unpaid wages, organizing TPS holders, and negotiating for a better treatment of day laborers at Home Depot.

In only five short months ¡Arriba! has already:

- Published a report on the local day labor industry. Day Labor in Las Vegas: Employer Indiscretions in Sin City. This report exposes and takes on the widespread and systemic injustice against working people.
- Recovered \$10,000 in unpaid wages with 20 pending wage theft cases.
- Trained over 100 workers in basic labor rights and how to prevent and fight instances of wage theft.
- Brought together 250 TPS holders from Central America to stay informed and advocate for permanent residency.

¡Arriba! Las Vegas Worker Center - "Poder, Honra y Dignidad" - located at 1948 E. Charleston Blvd - Las Vegas, Nevada 89104.

2/14: White House won't discuss immigration status of Melania Trump's parents

Rebecca Savransky - The Hill

The White House is refusing to discuss the immigration status of first lady Melania Trump's parents.

The Washington Post reported that the first lady's spokeswoman initially declined to comment on the matter.

"I don't comment on her parents, as they live private lives and are not part of the administration," said Stephanie Grisham, spokeswoman for the first lady, according to the Post.

A White House official also declined to comment when asked if the first lady's parents came to the U.S. via so-called "chain migration," which the president has frequently criticized.

"I'm not going to get into specific cases," the official told reporters Wednesday.

The Post listed a number of possibilities for the status of Melania's parents — Viktor and Amalija Knavs — including the possibility that they are in the U.S. on IR-5 visas, which means they are legal permanent residents, or the possibility they could be here on tourism visas and asked for extensions.

According to the Post, when it showed its list of possible options to Trump's spokeswoman, she said: "None of those options apply."

"As we noted, we gave Grisham, the first lady's spokeswoman, ample opportunity to explain the immigration status of the Knavs," the Post wrote in its fact-checker piece.

"It's a mystery why the White House refuses to answer such a simple question, given the president's high-profile demand to limit immigration."

Viktor Knavs is a former member of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Amalija Knavs worked at a textile factory. According to the Post, the couple is now retired.

The Knavs have been living in the U.S. for at least a year, according to reports.

President Trump has made immigration a key part of his agenda.

Last year the president kicked the immigration fight to Congress when his administration announced it was ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allows certain immigrants brought into the country illegally as children to work and go to school without fear of deportation.

The immigration fight has taken center stage this week in the Senate, but Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has indicated the debate will conclude by the end of this week, which means immigration reform could once again fall short.

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website: <http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

Contact Information:
E-mail: info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org
(213) 403-0131 (Los Angeles)
(202) 595-8990 (Washington D.C.)

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June 1-12, 2018 US Activist to China Delegation: Silk Road, One Road One Belt Study Delegation (12 Days)

Friday June 1, 2018 – Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Cost: \$1700USD (Plus US-China Airfare)

Projects of National Immigrant Solidarity Network (NISN) and Action LA Network

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U.S. Activist Solidarity Delegation to China, organized by National Immigrant Solidarity Network and Action LA Network, come to join our 12-days exciting social and cultural study delegation to go to Beijing + historical Silk Road cities: Xian, Dunhuang, and Urumqi, understand history and diverse background, as well as how China's One Road One Belt initiative will affect the World and migration.

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May Day 2018: Call to Action!

We are calling A national day of multi-ethnic unity with youth, labor, peace and justice communities in solidarity with immigrant workers and building new immigrant rights & civil rights movement! Fight Against Trump's Racist Anti-Immigrant Agenda!

Wear White T-Shirt, organize local actions to support immigrant worker rights!

1. No to anti-immigrant legislation, and the criminalization of the immigrant communities.
2. No to militarization of the border.
3. No to the immigrant detention and deportation.
4. No to the guest worker program.
5. No to employer sanction and "no match" letters.
6. Yes to a path to legalization without condition for undocumented immigrants NOW.
7. Yes to speedy family reunification.
8. Yes to civil rights and humane immigration law.
9. Yes to labor rights and living wages for all workers.
10. Yes to the DACA, Clean DREAM Act and LGBTQ immigrant legislation.

We encourages everyone to actively linking our issues with different struggles: wars in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine & Korea with sweatshops exploitation in Asia as well as in Los Angeles, New York; international arm sales and WTO, FTAA, NAFTA & CAFTA with AIDS, hunger, child labors and child soldier; as well as multinational corporations and economic exploitation with racism and poverty at home—in order we can win the struggle together at this May Day 2018!

Please send your local May Day 2018 Action Information to : ActivistWeb@gmail.com