

PRESS RELEASE (FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

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Elders and Friends Standing with Immigrant Children and Their Parents

Philadelphia, Friday, June 29, 2018 at 7:30 am

In Front of the Offices of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, at 8th and Cherry Streets

We are a group of Philadelphia residents who love our city and the country we live in. We also love truth, justice, and the values of democracy and freedom that the Union has struggled to make its distinctive marks. At the same time, we are deeply aware of the many times when our nation has denied the humanity of persons whom it did not recognize as its own, as part of "us," even with the complicity of the law and the silence of large segments of the population. We believe we are living through one of those dangerous moments.

The separation of 2,300 children from their asylum-seeking parents has shocked the country and the world. With the support of many young friends, we, who have acquired the experience of a long life, who have raised children and grandchildren, invoke the moral authority most world societies grant their elders as we join millions of voices in decrying President Trump's violent policy of separating children from their parents. The American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics have established that the trauma of this forcible separation causes children to be deeply and constantly fearful, and to lose the ability to trust other human beings; it disturbs their sleep and eating patterns; and most ominously, it has a long-term impact on brain function. Indeed, the AAP states that, "Highly stressful experiences, including family separation, can cause irreparable harm to lifelong development by disrupting a child's brain architecture."

The emotion and separation anxiety that many in the U.S. public have witnessed through videos and other recordings also point to the immense suffering of parents who do not know where their children are. These are families whose lives have already been disrupted by profound violence and poverty in their home communities. They have had no choice but to risk undertaking an unimaginably long and dangerous trip in the most precarious circumstances to find a safe haven for their children.

We demand the immediate reunification of children and their parents. We oppose the criminalization of asylum seekers and the detention of families. We demand that the Federal Government respect the due process any asylum seeker is entitled to by law. We have come to protest and some of us are ready to risk arrest in the process of making this statement.

The large numbers of people forced to leave Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, signal a crisis of proportions large enough to call for multilateral solutions. A human displacement of this size cannot be resolved through the eye of the needle of asylum process. We call for President Donald Trump as a statesman to call on the United Nations to define this exodus as a crisis of refugees, and to invite Canada and Mexico to a colloquium among equally sovereign nations to address the orderly and respectful resettlement of these families.

From our long experience, we know there is only one human family. That human family has only one home, and that home is the Earth.