Protect the Kids: End the Drug War

Militarized Drug War Feeds Forced Migration and Mass Incarceration

52,000 Latin American Children Fleeing Home to Border and 2.7 Million U.S. Children with Parent Behind Bars

In recent weeks, the plight of the 52,000 unaccompanied children apprehended at the U.S. border since last October, many of whom are fleeing drug war violence in Central America, has permeated our national consciousness. The devastating consequences of the drug war have not only been felt in Latin America, they are also having ravaging effects here at home. All too often, children are on the frontlines of this misguided war that knows no borders or color lines.

In Latin America, the core of this crisis can be directly linked to the longstanding drug war the United States has waged in the region. The U.S.’s militarization campaign to combat drug trafficking has resulted in the destabilization of major parts of Central America, increased murder rates, and mass disappearances. Half of the 10 cities with the highest homicide rates in the world are found in the small region of Central America. This epidemic of violence destroys lives and diminishes opportunities for creating viable livelihoods, leaving children in these countries with little choice but to embark on the treacherous journey to the U.S. in search of refuge and safety.

In the U.S., the drug war has fueled unprecedented levels of mass incarceration, the brunt of which is borne by African-American communities. The U.S. incarcerates more people for drug offenses than Western Europe incarcerates for all offenses combined. Though African-Americans represent only 13 percent of the population, they comprise more than 40 percent of those incarcerated for drug law violations, despite similar rates of use and sales across racial and ethnic lines. This indefensible situation tears apart families and communities, leaving children vulnerable. 2.7 million children are growing up in U.S. households in which one or more parents are incarcerated, many of whom are for nonviolent drug offenses. These children are forced to live apart from their parents because of the inhumane commitment to incarceration the country has embraced for more than 40 years.

In the face of this spiraling tragedy that continues to disproportionately consume the lives and futures of black and brown children, it is imperative to end the nefarious militarization and mass incarceration occurring in the name of the war on drugs. So often, repressive drug policies are touted as measures to protect the welfare of our children, but in reality, they do little more than serve as one great big Child Endangerment Act.

On behalf of the children, it is time to rethink the war on drugs.
A Better Way Foundation
A New PATH (Parents for
Addiction Treatment & Healing)
A New Way of Life
All of Us Or None
Alternet
AMOS Project
Black Alliance for Just
Immigration
BOOM! Health
Border Network for Human Rights
Broken No More
California Friends Committee
Catholics United
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Living and Learning
Coloradans For Immigrant Rights,
a project of
the Colorado AFSC
Colorado Criminal Justice
Coalition
Community Health Outreach
Work
Conference of Major Superiors of
Men
Courage Campaign
Decarcerate PA
Dignidad Rebelde
Disciples Home Missions
Domestic Workers United
Drug Policy Alliance
Ed Orlett – Former Ohio State
Representative
Ella Baker Center
Faith in Florida
Families for Freedom
Florida Immigrant Rights Coalition
Francican Action Network
Friends Committee on National
Legislation
Global Exchange
Grassroots Leadership
Grief Recovery After a Substance
Passing
Harm Reduction Action Center
Homies Unidos
Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy
– Roosevelt University
Institute of the Black World 21st
Century
Justice Not Jails
Law Enforcement Against
Prohibition
League of Young Voters
Legal Services for Prisoners with
Children
Los Angeles Community Action
Network
Los Angeles Regional Reentry
Partnership
Marijuana Majority
Marijuana Policy Project
Metropolitan Community
Churches
Michelle Alexander
Moms United to End the War on
Drugs
Mothers Against Teen Violence
NAACP
National Advocates for Pregnant
Women
National Institute of Latino Policy
National People’s Action
New Mexico Women’s Justice
Project
North Carolina Harm Reduction
Coalition
Ohio Justice & Policy Center
Partnership for Safety and Justice
PICO CA
Presente.org
Prison Policy Initiative
Progressive Christians Uniting
Protect Families First
Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, Trinity
United Church of Christ
Rights for All People
Rio Grande Foundation
Sisters of Mercy of
the Americas – Institute Justice
Team
South Los Angeles Reintegration
Council
Southern Coalition for Social
Justice
StopTheDrugWar.org
Students for Liberty
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
The Global Justice Institute
The Labor Community Strategy
Center
The Next Movement Committee
The Ordinary People Society
The San Francisco Drug Users
Union
Treatment Alternatives to Street
Crime
United Methodist Church, general
Board of Church and Society
United We Dream
VOCAL
William C. Velasquez Institute
Working Families Organization
Young Women United
Youth Justice Coalition