

A R I Z O N A
Daily Sun

An assumed disposition and an unfortunate pigmentation: Battling the president's wall of lies

Gabriel Granillo

January 10, 2019

Life in the Valley opened my eyes to a lot of experiences. During the blistering summer heat I experienced my first car accident. I experience young love and had my first beer. It was also the first time I experienced a wall meant to keep people like me out.

I was dropping a friend off at her gated neighborhood, and she told me to park outside near the back entrance—away from her house.

“My parents would be pissed if they saw you,” she said.

“Why?” I asked.

“They’re kind of racist.”

“I don’t even speak Spanish,” I said.

“I know, but they don’t know that.”

“But I haven’t done anything wrong.”

“I know, but they don’t know that,” she said.

I wasn’t bothered that they didn’t know me. I was bothered that they didn’t *care* to know me. I could have walked in and introduced myself, and they could have seen that I was (am) just a pop-culture nerd obsessed with quoting movies, writing poetry and eating way too much ice cream. But they didn’t care to know me. So I was forever banished from this neighborhood because of an assumed disposition and an unfortunate pigmentation.

I despised that wall. It became this towering reminder of how I was not welcomed, not unless I had the right clothes, the right income, the right car, the right skin. I felt hated.

But watching the president’s prime-time address to the nation Tuesday night, I know now that it wasn’t hate. It was fear.

“Some have suggested a barrier is immoral. Then why do wealthy politicians build walls, fences and gates around their homes?” he said during the address. “They don’t build walls because they hate the people on the outside, but because they love the people on the inside.”

The president went on to talk about a police officer, an Air Force veteran, a Georgia native and a 16-year-old girl from Maryland who were all murdered by “illegal aliens.”

If we’re cherry picking events to stoke fear of an entire group of people, let’s talk about James Alex Fields Jr., who injured 28 people and killed Heather Heyer when he deliberately drove his car into a peaceful protest; Stephen Paddock, who injured more than 800 people and killed 58 when he open fired on a crowd at the Route 91 Harvest music festival; and Ian David Long, a Marine Corps veteran who injured 10 people and killed 13 when he brought a gun into a bar in Thousand Oaks, California. All white men, all of whom pose more of a threat to national safety than the president’s supposed border security crisis.

The president and his political cohorts—because it’s not simply the president, but the system and the people that enable and give rise to his ideologies and conspiracies—would have you believe that undocumented immigrants are dangerous, they’re pouring into our country and there’s nothing we can do about it unless we build a wall to keep them out. But according to the U.S. Border and Customs Protection agency, less than 400,000 individuals were apprehended trying to cross the southern border in 2018. Compare that to 2001, when that number was 1.3 million individuals.

And to the president’s assertion that undocumented immigrants are more prone to commit violent acts, a 2018 Cato Institute study proves it’s nothing more than fear-mongering, racist rhetoric. The study, which looked at crime in Texas, found that illegal immigrants saw 56 percent fewer criminal convictions than native-born Americans in Texas in 2015. An article by the *Washington Post* last year confirms this research and dismantles the notion that illegal immigrants represent a threat to public safety.

“This is a humanitarian crisis. A crisis of the heart, and a crisis of the soul,” the president said on Tuesday night.

Amid the third-longest government shutdown, which the president could easily undo, over a stupid and ineffective wall, and after his administration separated families and left children in cages, he wants to talk about heart and soul? After two years of presidency based on fear and division, the president would like to implore the American people to think with love—for “the people on the inside,” of course.

I think about that wall in the Valley a lot, how the people inside perhaps did love each other and wanted to keep each other safe. What’s more important than the safety of our loved ones? I think about what that wall meant to me and what I felt—shame, anger, sadness—and I can’t imagine what it must feel like to have an entire country disavow and fear your very existence.

Outside of the president’s would-be wall, there are decent people fleeing violence and poverty. They are not swarming, pouring, ravaging, raping and killing. We would know that if we cared to.