



Don't fall for hateful rhetoric

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A series of recent reports about undocumented immigrants and crime has revealed President Donald Trump's narrative on the subject for exactly what it is — false, hateful rhetoric that unjustly vilifies an entire group of people.

Four academic studies released in recent months — count 'em, four — all reached the conclusion that immigrants are not to blame for increases in crime. In fact, the studies that measured crimes committed by immigrants versus native-born citizens showed that the newcomers were responsible for fewer crimes.

Here are the details:

- Examining data from Texas, which records the immigration status of arrestees, the Cato Institute found that undocumented immigrants were arrested and convicted less often than native-born Americans for murder, sexual assault and theft.
- In two separate studies, criminologist Michael Light from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, found that an increase in illegal immigration over the past three decades had not spurred a rise in violent crimes, DUI deaths, drug overdoses or such nonviolent crimes as drug and alcohol violations.
- The U.K. journal Migration Letters published a research paper indicating that young immigrants commit fewer crimes than legal immigrants and Americans born in the U.S.

Those findings, which were reported last week by National Public Radio, come as no surprise to anyone who questioned Trump's statements about immigrants.

Other studies have reached the same conclusion, which makes sense given that undocumented immigrants have a vested interest in obeying the law, as an arrest or citation could lead to deportation.

None of this is to suggest that undocumented immigrants aren't responsible for some crimes. They are, and some of those crimes are horrific. Those who commit any crime on American soil

— whether a U.S.-born citizen, naturalized immigrant, undocumented immigrant, visa recipient or visitor — should be arrested and penalized.

But as the studies show, it's patently false to suggest they are committing a disproportionate share of crime.

For Trump to maintain his rhetoric is reprehensible. It's not only verifiably untrue, but it threatens to make undocumented immigrants more vulnerable to being victimized by making them less likely to report crimes and cooperate with authorities.

Trump's willingness to demonize populations of people, drive wedges into our society and pander to nativist impulses of hatred against non-native born people appeals to the worst in us, not the best. And that's the true tragedy of the Trump presidency. While most presidents attempt to appeal to our best, he's trying to mobilize us by playing to Americans' hatreds and fears while using a narrative he knows is false.

In a state like Nevada, which is home to a large and vibrant immigrant population, it's essential that officials focus on the facts behind immigration and crime, and not the rhetoric coming from Trump and his administration.