

# The Washington Post

## What happens when a presidency runs on #FakeFears? Real fears are ignored.

Petula Dvorak

September 7, 2017

Fake fear is our new leader.

Washington's new ruling class is not governing with compassion, common sense, measured research, knowledge of history or the future. There is a doctrine of fake fears. And these same people also have a problem with things we should actually be afraid of.

Let me explain.

**Fake Fear:** The “bad hombres” President Donald Trump talked about during the campaign last year begot this week's DACA repeal thing. Trump wants us to be afraid of these immigrants, and he's ready to trash the lives of more than 800,000 Americans looking for a path to legal residency by killing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

The truth is that these immigrants, brought here as children by their parents, “have lower incarceration rates than native-born Americans of the same age and education level,” according to a report issued last week by the nonpartisan CATO Institute.

**Real Fear:** Hurricanes. You know them — from Katrina to Harvey to Irma — millions of people and billions of dollars tell you hurricanes devastate lives, cities and industries.

But Trump refuses to fear them. Earlier this year, he proposed a budget that slashed about \$667 million for the disaster preparedness programs run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. That budget also proposed \$6 billion in cuts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which helps rebuild homes and hospitals.

The fake fear administration also killed a post-Katrina rule requiring building projects eligible for federal funding to take such measures as elevating structures in flood zones away from the reach of rising water before they get government cash. And they did this just in time for hurricane season.

But hey, the \$108 billion in damage and the 1,800 lives lost in Hurricane Katrina must not mean much when it your moral compass is fake fear.

**Fake fear:** The apparent crime wave that Attorney General Jeff Sessions keeps warning Americans about.

“We have a crime problem,” Sessions said in February. “I wish the rise that we are seeing in crime in America today were some sort of aberration or a blip. My best judgment, having been involved in criminal law enforcement for many years, is that this is a dangerous, permanent trend that places the health and safety of the American people at risk.”

But the facts say otherwise.

This year is on pace to have the second-lowest violent crime rate of any year since 1990, according to a report by the Brennan Center for Justice this week that analyzed statistics from the nation's 30 largest cities.

Real fear: Though we've seen more and more horrifying videos of civilians being shot by police officers, we still have little comprehensive data that shows how often this happens and how agencies can prevent these tragedies.

"What we really need to know is how many times police shoot people, not just how many of those people die," David A. Klinger, a criminal justice professor at the University of Missouri in St. Louis who studies police use of force, told The Washington Post earlier this summer.

The Post began compiling this information in 2015, relying on local news, social media and our own reporting.

This is a real fear for real people. This is true whether you're a black man, such as beloved cafeteria worker Philando Castile, who was doing nothing wrong when he was killed in Minnesota last year by a nervous police officer. And it's true if you're a white woman, like nurse Alex Wubbels, who was seen in a viral video last week being roughed up and arrested by a Utah detective for simply doing her job. The fake fear people seem to have little interest in addressing this problem.

The FBI's weak, self-reporting system that has been the only way to track this was called "embarrassing and ridiculous" by fired FBI director James B. Comey.

Fake fear: Muslims in America. Trump's attempts at a travel ban, fulfilling his campaign promise of a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States" have reinforced a growing and misplaced Islamophobia throughout our country. We've seen the fake-fear sentiment in workplaces, in small-town councils trying to mess with mosques that have been peaceful and unnoticed for years, and I even saw it one of my sons' sports teams this summer.

The truth is, from 2008 to 2016, right-wing extremists carried out twice as many terrorist attacks on U.S. soil than Islamist extremists, according to a recent report from The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund and The Center for Investigative Reporting's Reveal.

Real Fear: White supremacists in America. The FBI and Department of Homeland Security issued a joint intelligence bulletin that said white supremacists "were responsible for 49 homicides in 26 attacks from 2000 to 2016 ... more than any other domestic extremist movement."

They issued this statement just a couple months before the protests in Charlottesville, where an avowed Nazi sympathizer was arrested after a car drove into a crowd, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring 19 others. There is no mistaking that was real.

We deserve real care and real concern from our leaders when it comes to real fears. There's no shortage of them.

Let's start by calling out #FakeFears when we see them. Washington is full of those these days, too.

