



## High Crimes And Misdemeanors

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The Department of Homeland Security has established a new office, called Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE), tasked with publishing a weekly list of crimes committed by aliens.

Several commentators have pointed to the eerie parallels between this toxic list, part of Pres Donald Trump's relentless demonization of aliens, and Nazi Germany's practice in the 1930s, when Hitler's Ministry of Justice issued an edict to publicize criminal indictments against Jews.

Their aim is to whip up hysteria by stigmatizing all members of a group by associating them with the criminal actions of a few, stoking hatred and possibly even violence against them.

Of all the canards Trump has uttered — and there are many — perhaps the most pernicious and reprehensible are his oft repeated assertions on violent crimes by undocumented aliens.

He launched his campaign with the infamous pronouncement, "When Mexico sends its people... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." During his first week in office he issued an executive order declaring that unauthorized aliens "present a significant threat to national security and public safety" and directing the Department of Homeland Security to "make public a comprehensive list of criminal actions committed by aliens." Relatives of victims of "illegal alien criminals" are frequent props at his political rallies, and three relatives of victims were invited as his guests and referenced in his first speech to the joint session of Congress.

To be sure, some undocumented immigrants commit crimes. But for all the hysteria that Trump and his supporters have whipped up nationally with exaggerated claims about rampant crimes by

illegal aliens, Americans have less to fear from violence by noncitizens than they do from U.S. citizens.

A 2007 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that “immigrants have much lower institutionalization (incarceration) rates than the native born.” A Cato Institute study of the 1980, 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses concluded that the imprisonment rates of the native-born were two to five times higher than those for immigrants. Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, told *The New York Times*, “There’s no way I can mess with the numbers to get a different conclusion.”

A more recent study by the American Immigration Council of 2010 census data discovered that native born citizens age 18-39 are twice as likely to be incarcerated than immigrant males (1.6 percent of immigrant males in the age group were in jail, compared to 3.3 percent of the native-born). The rate for undocumented immigrants was even lower. The study found that 1.7 percent of poorly educated immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala age 18-29 were in jail, compared with 10.7 percent of native-born men without a high school diploma.

Far from unleashing a tsunami of violence, a recent study in the *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice* over a 40-year period found that “immigration is consistently linked to decreases in violent (e.g., murder) and property (e.g., burglary) crime.” A meta study of 50 papers in *The Annual Review of Criminology* reported that a vast majority of studies supported an inverse correlation between immigration and crime.

The overwhelming and consistent evidence from research studies over the past several decades is that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes, engage in delinquent behaviors or be repeat offenders than citizens. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that youth born abroad are less likely to engage in criminal behavior than native born youth. Christopher Salas-Wright, an epidemiologist of high-risk and antisocial behavior at Boston University, says, “The evidence is really compelling that immigrants are involved in (antisocial) behaviors at a far lower rate than native-born Americans.”

Ofcourse, not all immigrants are angels and the United States is surely within its rights to protect itself from and deport violent and criminal aliens. But the xenophobic Trump administration’s attempts to defame and stigmatize all immigrants with its constant drumbeat about alien criminal activity and publishing Nazi and Jim Crow style alien criminal activity reports by VOICE harken to some of the darkest chapters in Western history. A murder committed by an alien “bad hombre”, in Trump’s words, legal or undocumented, is no more heinous than that by a citizen. Every crime is reprehensible and every victim deserving of our sympathy and support. And, as the recent Kansas shooting reminds us, immigrants are victims of crimes too — predominantly at the hands of U.S. citizens. But VOICE will not be documenting these lesser murders in Trump’s America.