



Immigrants aren't criminals and terrorists, they are our relatives

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It was bad enough when Donald Trump maligned immigrants on the campaign trail. Now, his administration has taken this lying to a new level and is skewing reports to cast immigrants as scary, evil people and quashing research that proves immigrants are an asset, not a detriment, to America.

The Department of Homeland Security last week released a report purporting to show that terrorism is the work of immigrants to the United States. There are many problems with this report. First, it counted international terrorism suspects who were extradited to America for trial from other countries as immigrants. This is nonsensical. And many of them were on trial for crimes that had nothing to do with terrorism.

The report also included data for terrorist attacks overseas, not in America, further muddying its conclusions.

The report also took no account of domestic terrorism attacks, which killed 106 people between Sept. 12, 2001, and Dec. 26, 2016, according to an April 2017 report from the Government Accountability Office. The report does not include the Oct. 1, 2017, shootings in Las Vegas in which 58 people were killed. More than 500 people were injured.

Perpetrators of domestic terrorism include white supremacists, anti-government groups, such as Sovereign Citizens, and groups with extreme views on abortion, animal rights, the environment or federal ownership of public lands, according to the FBI.

A 2009 report by Homeland Security warned of the dangers of right-wing extremism in the U.S. was withdrawn by the Obama administration after outcry from right-wing politicians.

During that same time period, 119 people were killed in the U.S. by "radical Islamist violent extremists," the GAO report said. The most deadly attack in this list is the June 2016 attack at a nightclub in Orlando, where 49 people were killed. Although the killer, an American whose parents were from Afghanistan, professed allegiance to the Islamic State group in a 911 call, the CIA found no evidence of contact.

Even the conservative Cato Institute panned the report by Homeland Security and the Department of Justice. “The new DHS/DOJ report produces little new information on immigration and terrorism and portrays some misleading and meaningless statistics as important findings,” Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the institute, wrote last week.

Cato’s analysis found that 155 people were killed on U.S. soil in terrorist attacks since Jan. 1, 2002. Thirty-four were killed by foreign-born terrorists and 121 by domestic terrorists. Since the beginning of 2002, native-born Americans were responsible for 78 percent of all murders in terrorist attacks committed on U.S. soil while foreign-born terrorists only committed 22 percent, Nowrasteh wrote.

In addition to skewing data to make immigrants look scary, the Trump administration is trying to hide research that shows they are significant contributors to our country.

Last year, it suppressed a study by the Department of Health and Human Services showing that refugees contributed \$63 billion more to government coffers, through federal, state and local taxes, than they cost over the past decade.

The comports with other reports that found immigrants are a net benefit to the economy, especially when it comes to starting businesses.

One small group of immigrants currently in the spotlight, the roughly 690,000 who qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program or DACA, contribute more than \$3 billion to the federal balance sheet and \$42 billion to the country’s gross domestic product annually, according to an analysis by the American Action Forum, a Republican-led group (former Maine Gov. John McKernan is a board member). Deporting these people, who were brought to America as children usually by their parents, will cost up to \$21 billion.

Most Americans can trace their heritage back to ancestors who migrated to America. Like these long-ago relatives, current immigrants to the U.S. come here to build a better life, to escape poverty and persecution and to join family members who already live here. Casting these new arrivals as criminals, terrorists and takers is factually wrong, mean spirited and economically misguided.