

# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

## Can Donald Trump at least stop using crime victims as props?

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President Donald Trump wants you to be afraid of people you shouldn't fear. He wants that fear to motivate you to support him and his policies. And he is willing to do anything – even exploit the families of crime victims – to do this.

How do we know this?

Because he's done it.

People's pain for political gain?

Following the announcement that his administration would no longer be separating migrant families at the border Trump held a press conference and photo op with individuals whose family members had been killed by undocumented immigrants.

In doing this he drew a direct connection between migrants at the border and criminals.

He said, "These are the American citizens permanently separated from their loved ones. The world permanently being the word that you have to think about. Permanently. They're not separated a day, two days. Permanently. They were killed by illegal aliens. These are the families that the media ignores."

First, they are NOT families the media ignores.

### **Arizona facility houses immigrant children separated from families**

Second, any number of studies have shown that immigrants are much less likely to be convicted of crimes than native-born Americans.

That's not a political argument. It's a simple fact.

The author of a study by the conservative Cato Institute said, "As a percentage of their respective populations, there were 56 percent fewer criminal convictions of illegal immigrants than of native-born Americans in Texas in 2015. The criminal conviction rate for legal immigrants was about 85 percent below the native-born rate."

Scientific studies, not scare tactics

The author of a study published in the journal *Criminology* actually found that crime goes down in places with higher numbers of undocumented immigrants, saying, "Increases in the undocumented immigrant population within states are associated with significant decreases in the prevalence of violence."

The pain of those who have lost loved ones to crime – no matter the perpetrator -- is real, and they can express their grief or anger or outrage in any way they choose.

But Trump is using this particular group of victims for political gain.

It should disgust you.

Imagine a president parading before the cameras the families of crime victims killed by African-Americans.

Would that be seen as racist?

Is it any less unfair than taking advantage of families impacted by undocumented immigrants?

How about victims of white criminals?

Imagine a president trotting out before cameras the families of crime victims killed by white perpetrators?

How would that go over?

Or perpetrators only from the South?

Or only from New York City?

Or only with Italian surnames?

Or only Jewish... wait ... that has been done before.

During Trump's press conference with the families of victims killed by undocumented immigrants he said, "I hear that oh, no, this population is safer than the people that live in the country. You've heard that, fellows, right? I hear so much. I say is that possible? The answer is not true. You hear like they're better people than what we have, our citizens. It's not true."

Spreading fear and discord

Actually, the part about being safer IS true.

And the claim about being "better" was never made. By anyone. That's just Trump trying to stir resentment and hate, suggesting you can't trust immigrants no matter what facts are presented.

Just as he's done with Muslims. And to a degree with the media. Howling about "fake news." Calling journalists the "enemy of the people." All of it for political gain.

The strategy is simple. Ignore the facts. Play to fears and existing prejudices. And if the people you are trying to convince don't yet have fully developed prejudices, teach them.

Trump has done so with undocumented immigrants. He has done so with Muslims. And I'd guess he's not finished spreading the seeds of distrust and hate about other groups to audiences old and young.

It's been done before...sadly

That kind of political strategy has been utilized before.

In 1938 there was a children's book published in Germany called "The Poisonous Mushroom."

There is a line in it that goes: "Just as it is often hard to tell a toadstool from an edible mushroom, so too it is often very hard to recognize the Jew as a swindler and criminal."