

## Letter to the Editor

Russell Hart

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Dear Editor,

In this era of “alternative facts,” some things need to be challenged if truth is ever to win out.

In a letter from January 20th, Ms. Anderson of San Diego in further support of Trump’s presidency asserts that the building of the southern border wall was a success that keeps us all safe from the caravans of illegals crossing the border and further that she would rather see kids safe in cages than be sold into sex slavery.

The Cato Institute, a VERY conservative, Republican-leaning research institute states in their January 20, 2020 publication, “Overall, we find that border fencing has had no appreciable effect on either property or violent crime rates.”

Is that clear enough? Can we put it to rest?

The Cato Institute further questions the legitimacy of such a wall that cost 3.9 million per mile. I question would we have not been better off spending that money on foreign aid to help people be safe in their own countries?

More egregious is Ms. Anderson’s assertion that children were better off in cages than being sold into sex slavery. This is presented as though these were the only two choices, as though a compassionate path could not be found where children are allowed to remain with their parents until immigration status could be determined. One would have to be watching nothing but Fox News to not know that inflicting pain upon families through traumatic separation was part of the plan to deter future immigration.

We don’t know how many children are brought into the U.S. and sold into sex slavery, but 70,000 infants, toddlers, latency aged children and adolescents have been confined to cages without knowledge as to where their parents are. Let’s not pretend. The vast majority of these were separated from their parent’s arms and not from sex traffickers.

A famous British study following WWII showed that children who stayed in London with their families during the German bombing fared better psychologically (despite the bombing) than those who were sent north to stay with other caring families. The famous John Bowlby who pioneered research on Attachment Theory noted that these separated children showed signs of depression, anxiety, had nightmares, had difficulty showing emotion, had difficulty engaging with others, engaged in self harm, had in general what we would now recognize as PTSD and some showed signs of criminality. We know these children at the border show the same set of symptoms and I suspect we've groomed the next wave of terrorists. The Trump administration knew exactly what they were doing to these children. I continue to be upset by the irrationalization.

Children were not kept safe by separation from parents. They were traumatized intentionally. It makes me think of the sadistically cynical signage above the entrance to Auschwitz where Jews were either worked to death or incinerated: "Arbeit macht frei" or Work sets you free. We can't move on until we reckon honestly with what we've done.

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