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What the family separation taught me

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Unless you've been in a coma, you've probably heard about the immigration debacle.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who's also Public Enemy Number One amongst Methodists, announced that the Trump administration would be implementing a new zero-tolerance policy for illegal immigration where all illegal entrants would be referred for criminal prosecution.

When you combine this new policy with the laws which were on the books, the end result was over 2,000 immigrant children separated from their parents, locked up in youth detention centers across the country, most of them with little to no chance of being able to contact their parents again.

Reports of these child camps, along with audio from the camps and photos — some real and some not — were met with a storm of rage and indignation from politicians, business leaders, celebrities and everyday people from both sides of the aisle.

For context, the Koch brothers, Hillary Clinton, the Catholic Church, Congressman John Curtis, First Lady Melania Trump, Senator Orrin Hatch, the Cato Institute, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, former President Barack Obama, Lt. Governor Spencer Cox and Utah State Sen. Jim Dabakis have all spoken out in one way or another against this new policy or the terrible-yet-inevitable results of it.

It was truly President Trump and his red hats against the world. And Trump caved with an executive order.

This was the big story of the past couple of weeks, and hopefully, it will continue to hold America's attention for a while longer. The President's executive order does nothing to unite the 2,000-plus children with their parents, it just lessens the likelihood that more families will be broken apart. Additionally, it stands on shaky legal ground and could possibly be overturned in court. There's a lot of work to be done before this issue is really fixed.

I don't want to waste time talking about President Trump's constantly changing rhetoric regarding his immigration policy. I don't want to explain the difference between legal asylum seeking and criminal activity.

I don't want to spend time talking about the difference between past catch-and-release policies and current zero-tolerance policies and the effect each has had on this issue. Nor do I want to explain that when your catch-and-release policy gives preference to families, fewer families are separated than when you implement a zero-tolerance policy. That's just how math works.

I don't even want to talk about how absurd it is that people are arguing about the difference between putting children in a cage and putting children in "chain-link fenced holding areas."

It's abundantly clear that positions have been staked out, talking points have been memorized and nobody's opinion is going to change, facts be damned.

Instead of focusing on adding more noise to an unwinnable debate, I'd like to focus on something else instead.

The fact is, Trump said that there was nothing he could do to fix the problem. He said that only Congress could stop the separations. We even have video of him saying that not even an executive order could help.

Nonetheless, the president signed an executive order because people refused to let this go.

The amount of insanity the president has gotten away with is, frankly, unprecedented. His shamelessness and lack of decorum may make it difficult to hold him accountable in any meaningful way, but it can be done.

The lesson is that public pressure still works. Calling elected officials, signing petitions, and donating time and money to political organizations, these tactics all still work. The Tea Party knew this in their heyday, but I believe movements like theirs ultimately fail because they fight against things instead of for things.

There are liberals, moderates, conservatives and libertarians who are all against one policy or another of President Trump's for different reasons, and it seems like bipartisan pushback is one of the few things that he responds to.

The president, and the alt-right, have brought us into a new era of politics where the normal rules don't seem to apply but they do.

The immigration story is a microcosm of his presidency. He created a problem with bad policy, lied about it, said something crazy about forming a "Space Force" to throw people off his scent and then tried to move on.

But this time, we got him to back off. Or at least we nudged him in a different direction. Bipartisanship can work. Americans can find still work together to accomplish shared interests. America may be walking a thin line, but we haven't totally given in to our Caligula stage yet.

There may be a lot of work still to do to reunite those separated families and create reasonable immigration policy, but I for one am hopeful that we can do it. We can still affect positive change, as long as we call our elected officials, vote and choose wise causes to donate too.

If this policy “isn’t who we are,” then we should continue working together in a bipartisan fashion and create policies that represent us.

Maybe then, we can talk about the space force.