



If the Media Wants to Win Back Public Trust, It Can Start Reporting Truthfully on Immigration

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Immediately following acting ICE Director Thomas Homan's press gaggle yesterday, several news outlets reported that Homan "contradicted" President Trump when it came to crimes committed by illegal aliens. This on the same day the President met with families who had loved ones killed by illegal aliens, to urge the passage of legislation that would strengthen interior enforcement.

The basis for these reports was the following exchange between Director Homan and a reporter (emphases are mine):

QUESTION: Sir, aren't you concerned though about exacerbating fears about undocumented immigrants? You're making it sound as if undocumented immigrants commit more crimes than people who are just native-born Americans. There was a Cato Institute study put out in March of this year that says all immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans relative to their shares of the population; even illegal immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans. What is your sense of the numbers on this? Are undocumented people more likely or less likely to commit crimes?

DIRECTOR HOMAN: I think you're misinterpreting what I'm saying. What I'm saying is two things. Number one, **people that enter this country illegally violate the laws of this country.** You can't want to be a part of this great nation and not respect its laws. So when you violate the laws of this country -- and the taxpayers in this country spend billions of dollars a year on border security, immigration court, detention. And they go through a process. They get a decision from the immigration judge -- most times will appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals, then to a circuit court. When that due process is over, that final order from a federal judge needs to mean something or this whole system has no integrity.

I don't know what other federal agency in this country is told to ignore a federal judge's order from a bench. We are simply doing our job. **Did I say aliens commit more crimes than U.S. citizens? I didn't say that. I'm saying, number one, they're in the country illegally. They're in the country -- they already committed one crime by entering the country illegally. But when they commit a crime against a citizen of this country, they draw our attention.**

Director Homan explicitly said the reporter was misrepresenting his position. Homan then went on to explain he had said nothing about the crime rate among the illegal alien population, nor had he claimed that illegal aliens “commit more crimes than people who are just native-born Americans.” His point was that any individual who enters the United States illegally has committed a crime and must be held accountable to the law. Almost every American not a member of the D.C. press corps finds nothing controversial about Director Homan's position, most especially since he is charged with the task of enforcing U.S. immigration law.

Jim Acosta, White House correspondent for CNN, most known for not getting called on at White House press briefings, was one of the first out of the gate. On Twitter, he announced:

Horman [sic] concedes undocumented immigrants do not commit more crimes than native born Americans.

Later headlines pronounced:

Immigrants are not ‘Criminals, Drug Dealer and Rapists’ Ice Director Says, Contradicting Trump (Newsweek, Jason Le Miere)

The director of ICE just declined to support a central argument of Trump’s candidacy (The Washington Post, Philip Bump)

Immigrants Don’t Commit More Crime Than US-Born Citizens, The Top Immigration Enforcer Just Said (Buzzfeed, Adolfo Flores)

Fact Check: No Evidence Undocumented Immigrants Commit More Crimes (NBC News, Jane C. Timm)

ICE director appears to break with one of Trump’s key beliefs on immigrants and crime (Business Insider, Michelle Mark)

The debate raging over what constitutes “fake news” is often fatuous. What precipitated that debate, however, the current sorry state of American journalism, is of the utmost importance to anyone concerned with maintaining a free society in America.

Much of the reporting on Homan’s comments was complete misrepresentation, undoubtedly deliberate on the part of some reporters in an effort to divert attention away from Americans who have suffered tragedy due to the failure to enforce immigration law. Some of the reporting was complete fabrication (see *Newsweek*, *Buzzfeed* above).

A large reason there is such a gulf between what happens and what journalists report is that many journalists see themselves as “protectors of the truth,” as illustrated by NBC News host Chuck Todd. The truth is *their* truth, stemming from an ideology that does not permit any contradictions or contrasting points of view to get a fair hearing.

While some Americans may turn to media figures for affirmation of beliefs already deeply held, I wager most Americans don’t turn to Chuck Todd, or any other media figure for “the truth.” Instead, they want reporters to accurately report facts, such as what the director of ICE actually said about immigration law enforcement.

Instead, what we see from too many reporters is the insertion of their own deeply held beliefs in place of facts on the ground. When a reporter refers to an illegal alien as an “undocumented immigrant” this is an attempt to deny the criminal act of illegal immigration. It is absurd to suggest, as the reporter did to Director Homan, that individuals living and working in the United States illegally, which very often concurs with the commission of multiple felonies, are *less likely* to commit crimes than American citizens.

The reporter who questioned Homan on comparative crime rates cited a report by the Cato Institute, a report regularly touted by those who pretend illegal aliens haven't broken any laws but are merely caught in a semantic trap constructed by those of us who, according to Cato, also argue for ridiculous propositions such as borders, national sovereignty, and the rule of law.

Last week, I highlighted the many problems with the Cato report. In brief, Cato pulled a bait and switch. It set out to “prove” that immigrants commit less crime than the native-born, while failing to note that there is already a consensus that the crime rate for immigrants, i.e., legal permanent residents, is relatively low. It then conflates legal immigrants with illegal aliens, and substitutes incarceration rates for crime rates. The former is ancillary to the latter, not equivalent.

There is also no reliable data on the legal status of the foreign-born incarcerated in the United States. In order to circumvent this impediment, the Cato authors simply invented a methodology that gave them the results they wanted, and they gave certain reporters what they wanted — a report from a D.C. think tank that proves “the truth” regardless of the facts.

NumbersUSA believes U.S. immigration policy should broadly benefit the American people and their posterity, and that the current immigration system fails in this regard. We have confidence that the evidence overwhelmingly supports our position, and that public opinion is firmly on our side. We welcome the greater availability of immigration-related data, and greater public access to that data.

There are those who strongly disagree with NumbersUSA positions and policy prescriptions. Some of those who disagree with us are sincere and engage in honest debate. Many others do not, I would offer because they know neither the facts nor the American people are on their side. They do have most of the media in their camp, and they count on this fact to help impose their agenda on an averse electorate.

The U.S. immigration system, almost everyone agrees, is broken. The divide between the American people and, for lack of a better word, the elite, over how to fix it is one of the most pressing issues we now face. Yes, much of the squabbling about what is “fake news” is just silliness perpetrated by unserious people.

The proliferation of dishonest reporting on immigration is gravely serious, and is a threat to our civil society.