

A World Designed by Playground Bullies. Separating Children From Their Parents

The money just isn't there for most social programs, but it's there for war, surveillance and incarceration

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As the week's news slaps against my consciousness like road slush, some fragments sting more than others. For instance:

"According to the DOJ's court filing, parents who are not currently in the U.S. may not be eligible for reunification with their children."

I can't quite move on with my life after reading a sentence like this. A gouge of incredulity lingers. How is such a cruelly stupid rule possible? What kind of long-term ramification will it have on the entirety of the human race?

The [Common Dreams](#) story goes on:

"The ACLU and other immigrant rights advocates have argued that many of the parents who have been deported were pressured to agree to deportation without understanding their rights, following the traumatizing ordeal of family separation—many after fleeing violence and unrest in their home countries."

Oh, to be a desperate human being, caught between "interests."

And then there's this:

"If they would just confirm to us that my brother is alive, if they would just let us see him, that's all we want. But we can't get anyone to give us any confirmation. My mother dies a hundred times every day. They don't know what that is like."

This is not more news from the Mexican border. This is from a recently released [Amnesty International](#) report on the U.S.-backed war in Yemen, being waged by a Saudi Arabian coalition that has visited famine, a cholera epidemic and mass bombings on the Yemeni people.

Also, as [Kathy Kelly](#) notes: Human Rights Watch and the Associated Press have exposed “a network of clandestine prisons” in Yemen, operated by coalition partner the United Arab Emirates. The reports, Kelly writes,

“described ghastly torture inflicted on prisoners and noted that senior U.S. military leaders knew about torture allegations. Yet, a year later, there has been no investigation of these allegations by the Yemeni government, by the UAE, or by the UAE’s most powerful ally in the Yemen war, the United States.”

This of course is all marginal news, mostly kept in the shadows by the corporate media, which focuses on Russiagate and the Trump Follies, that is to say, on political entertainment, us vs. them, neatly packaged and fed to American news consumers as though it were their unending World Cup tournament. And **Hillary Clinton** [tweets](#):

“Great World Cup. Question for President Trump as he meets Putin: Do you know which team you play for?”

And another gouge of incredulity lingers. Global politics is reduced to winning and losing, our team vs. their team, which makes life a lot more convenient for the powerful because it jettisons the hellish consequences of the game from public awareness: the cholera and torture and such, which are the regrettable side effects of confrontational politics.

Or rather, the hellish consequences are reported selectively — only when “they” do it. The point of the reporting is not to expose the suffering and focus public attention on the need to eliminate its complex causes, but rather to score a point for “our” side (we’re not like that) and quietly justify whatever harsh actions we must undertake in order to (eventually) prevail. What matters is the game, not the human consequences.

All of which adds up to a con game much, much bigger than **Donald Trump**, who is basically a malfunctioning cog in the machine. The “machine” is sometimes called the Deep State, which [Mike Lofgren](#), the former Republican congressional aide who coined the term, described as “a hybrid entity of public and private institutions ruling the country” — that is to say, Wall Street and Silicon Valley in league with the departments of Defense, State and Homeland Security, along with the Justice and Treasury departments, the CIA and much more. It’s America’s quiet, unofficial government, the military-industrial complex holding hands with the prison-industrial complex. The money just isn’t there for most social programs, but it’s there for war, surveillance and incarceration.

And Donald Trump, malfunctioning cog or not, has contributed to the Deep State’s invisibility simply by accusing it of being the cause of his troubles, thus making it possible for the president’s opponents — almost two-thirds of the country — to dismiss the whole thing as a conspiracy theory and maintain the feel-good assumption that the United States is still a darn-good democracy.

The reality, however, as **Benjamin Page** and **Martin Gilens** point out in their book *Democracy in America?* (as quoted by [Paul Street](#)), is that government policy “reflects the wishes of those with money, not the wishes of the millions of ordinary citizens who turn out every two years to choose among the preapproved, money-vetted candidates for federal office.”

Back to the border, then. Back to Yemen and all our other ongoing wars. Back to the 800-plus U.S. military bases located around the world. Back to our militarized police departments. Back to every political and bureaucratic cruelty “our team” commits in defiance of the likely wishes of a true democratic majority.

One consequence of this game is to keep humanity on the surface of what’s possible. We’re living, I fear, in a world designed by playground bullies, with institutions focused primarily on self-perpetuation and indifferent to the harm they create. Rules matter. Values don’t.

Life is sacred? Not at the border. Not across the ocean and “over there.” And if life is only sacred for some, it is, in fact, sacred for no one.

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