

Protect the Kids: End the Drug War

Militarized Drug War Feeds Forced Migration and Mass Incarceration

52,000 Latin American Children Fleeing Home to Border and 2.7 Million U.S. Children with Parent Behind Bars

In recent weeks, the plight of the 52,000 unaccompanied children apprehended at the U.S. border since last October, many of whom are fleeing drug war violence in Central America, has permeated our national consciousness. The devastating consequences of the drug war have not only been felt in Latin America, they are also having ravaging effects here at home. All too often, children are on the frontlines of this misguided war that knows no borders or color lines.

In Latin America, the core of this crisis can be directly linked to the longstanding drug war the United States has waged in the region. The U.S.'s militarization campaign to combat drug trafficking has resulted in the destabilization of major parts of Central America, increased murder rates, and mass disappearances. Half of the 10 cities with the highest homicide rates in the world are found in the small region of Central America. This epidemic of violence destroys lives and diminishes opportunities for creating viable livelihoods, leaving children in these countries with little choice but to embark on the treacherous journey to the U.S. in search of refuge and safety.

In the U.S., the drug war has fueled unprecedented levels of mass incarceration, the brunt of which is borne by African-American communities. The U.S. incarcerates more people for drug offenses than Western Europe incarcerates for all offenses combined. Though African-Americans represent only 13 percent of the population, they comprise more than 40 percent of those incarcerated for drug law violations, despite similar rates of use and sales across racial and ethnic lines. This indefensible situation tears apart families and communities, leaving children vulnerable. 2.7 million children are growing up in U.S. households in which one or more parents are incarcerated, many of whom are for nonviolent drug offenses. These children are forced to live apart from their parents because of the inhumane commitment to incarceration the country has embraced for more than 40 years.

In the face of this spiraling tragedy that continues to disproportionately consume the lives and futures of black and brown children, it is imperative to end the nefarious militarization and mass incarceration occurring in the name of the war on drugs. So often, repressive drug policies are touted as measures to protect the welfare of our children, but in reality, they do little more than serve as one great big Child Endangerment Act.

On behalf of the children, it is time to rethink the war on drugs.

A Better Way Foundation	Friends Committee on National Legislation	PICO CA
A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)	Global Exchange	Presente.org
A New Way of Life	Grassroots Leadership	Prison Policy Initiative
All of Us Or None	Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing	Progressive Christians Uniting
Alternet	Harm Reduction Action Center	Protect Families First
AMOS Project	Homies Unidos	Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, Trinity United Church of Christ
Black Alliance for Just Immigration	Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy – Roosevelt University	Rights for All People
BOOM! Health	Institute of the Black World 21st Century	Rio Grande Foundation
Border Network for Human Rights	Justice Not Jails	Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team
Broken No More	Law Enforcement Against Prohibition	South Los Angeles Reintegration Council
California Friends Committee	League of Young Voters	Southern Coalition for Social Justice
Catholics United	Legal Services for Prisoners with Children	StopTheDrugWar.org
Center for Constitutional Rights	Los Angeles Community Action Network	Students for Liberty
Center for Living and Learning	Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership	Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Coloradans For Immigrant Rights, a project of the Colorado AFSC	Marijuana Majority	Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
Colorado Criminal Justice Coalition	Marijuana Policy Project	The Global Justice Institute
Community Health Outreach Work	Metropolitan Community Churches	The Labor Community Strategy Center
Conference of Major Superiors of Men	Michelle Alexander	The Next Movement Committee
Courage Campaign	Moms United to End the War on Drugs	The Ordinary People Society
Decarcerate PA	Mothers Against Teen Violence	The San Francisco Drug Users Union
Dignidad Rebelde	NAACP	Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime
Disciples Home Missions	National Advocates for Pregnant Women	United Methodist Church, general Board of Church and Society
Domestic Workers United	National Institute of Latino Policy	United We Dream
Drug Policy Alliance	National People’s Action	VOCAL
Ed Orlett – Former Ohio State Representative	New Mexico Women’s Justice Project	William C. Velasquez Institute
Ella Baker Center	North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition	Working Families Organization
Faith in Florida	Ohio Justice & Policy Center	Young Women United
Families for Freedom	Partnership for Safety and Justice	Youth Justice Coalition
Florida Immigrant Rights Coalition		
Franciscan Action Network		