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LIVING IN THE ICE AGE

THE EFFECTS OF HOSTILE IMMIGRATION POLICIES ON AMERICA'S MENTAL HEALTH



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"If you're in this country illegally and you committed a crime by being in this country, you should be uncomfortable, you should look over your shoulder. You need to be worried. No population is off the table." -Thomas Homan, Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), until June 30, 2018

The Trump administration's immigration policies enforced by the U.S. Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency triggered serious psychological distress for many within the immigrant community, regardless of whether they were living in the United States with legal permission or not. The president's numerous attacks even on humanitarian immigration is spreading fear and uncertainty far beyond those who are officially targeted. These regressive policies are not without consequence and jeopardize the health and well-being of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike, with children at an exceptionally high risk.

The fear and anxiety that children and parents feel today under these policies is long-lasting and will not fade in a post-Trump United States. Many experts say that the deep and persistent stress that this generation of children has experienced will continue to affect them for the rest of their lives.

In this presentation, we will explore the life of immigrants and refugees in the United States under the continual threat of ICE seizure and explore recommendations grounded in the Ulysses Syndrome framework. The insights will come from stories and anecdotes derived from interviewed individuals and communities, rather than from more empirical social science research. That type of study remains to be done.

Keywords:

Trump, Immigration policies, Fear and anxiety, Children and families, Ulysses syndrome

About the author

Originally studying architecture at Central University of Venezuela in Caracas, Maria Elena later earned a certificate of distinction in leadership and empowerment from Polytechnic University of Valencia and a diploma in gender leadership through the EQUAL initiative of the European Social Fund. Maria Elena also completed the University Expert Diploma in Mental Health, Cultural Processes, and Psychological Interventions with Immigrants, Minorities, and the Socially Excluded from University of Barcelona.