

While watching with horror the recent deliberate separation of children from their parents at Mexican-American border crossings, I thought back to other comparable policies in history. Unlike those instances in the past, the public outcry against this cruel policy speaks well for us as a society.

This ugly policy choice was designed to deter families or unaccompanied children from securing asylum in this country. Both President Trump and Attorney General Sessions spoke openly about the problem: they not only want to deport people who try to come illegally, but even keep those who are entitled under our law to ask for asylum to enter. The program was designed to end immigration and prevent the "browning" of America.

Reacting to the public outrage, the President reluctantly withdrew the part of his "zero tolerance" order separating children from their parents. However, several thousand children already have been secreted throughout the country without any procedure for reuniting them with their parents. Infants and toddlers who do not know their names yet and will suffer most from the loss of their parents. Did anyone think this through?

What will happen to the Hispanic children now in American custody? If the parents are deported, who will find their children for them? Will we put the little ones up for adoption? South American dictatorships have done such things: (Argentina and Chile), giving them to military families to rear. Will there be, as pediatricians tell us, developmental damage that could be irreparable?

Egypt. A historic tour of policies regarding "alien" children is enlightening. Those who know the Bible know the story of the Egyptian captivity and enslavement of the Hebrew immigrants. When Egyptians became alarmed by the fertility of their Hebrew immigrants, the Pharaoh ordered the surrender and drowning of every first-born boy. In this story, the Pharaoh's childless daughter was the first to violate the order. She adopted the baby Moses and reared him as her own.

Ancient Greece. The Greeks, after winning the long, bitter Trojan War, decided to kill all enemy males, lest they grow up seeking revenge. They did not hesitate to include infants, despite some initial hesitation to do so. The great ancient Greek theaters dramatized this horror in "The Trojan Women," a play critical of this genocide. The Greeks, at least, had consciences.

The Romans. The Romans (and Greeks before them) had long wars with their political trade rivals, the Phoenicians. They decided ultimately on a policy of genocide, killing all males (including babies) and absorbing the women as slaves. This is ugly, but the Phoenicians themselves had a policy about first born children that horrified their Greek, Roman, and Hebrew enemies. The Phoenicians feared their fierce god, Baal, who, they thought, demanded the sacrifice of all first-born children. Anthropologists have found caves full of slaughtered baby skeletons. Imagine the grief of every young mother over her first baby!

The Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turks conquered the Byzantine lands, peopled for 1000 years by Greeks. Their policy was thought out and really evil. They demanded the surrender of every Greek fifth boy child upon birth, put them in orphanages where they were raised as Muslims speaking Turkish, and trained them as an elite military force that was used to keep the Greeks under control. This was called the Janissary Program that sent shudders across the Christian world.

All of these programs should horrify us today. Human beings appear to have two conflicting emotions: fear of the "other," strangers who come to attack us or those among us (Xenophobia); and hospitality and compassion. Our own society is experiencing this struggle: those who feel threatened by strangers coming among us, strangers with different languages, religions, and racial identities; and those who are willing to accept such strangers among us if the strangers are willing to accept our core values (speak our language, be tolerant toward others, and follow the law).

It takes a real emergency for a person to give up all that is familiar at home to become strangers in a strange land. We need a rational immigration policy, and we need it now.

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of God's Law or Man's Law. You may contact her at [Lfarhat102@aol.com](mailto:Lfarhat102@aol.com) or [www.globalthink.net](http://www.globalthink.net).