

# The Delray Democrat

## Abuse of Immigrants Is Good Business<sup>1</sup>

*June Sandra Neal*

I know. Numbers are boring. But stay with me.

Trump lies. There is no “invasion” of illegal immigrants. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center’s latest study, the number of “apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border has sharply decreased over the past decade or so, from more than 1 million in fiscal 2006 to 396,579 in fiscal 2018.”

Central Americans have supplanted Mexicans as the majority seeking legal asylum here from the terrors of their home countries. Yet, after grueling treks of thousands of miles, they are miserable again in detention camps, immigrant jails and “shelters.”

Thousands of the most vulnerable, the children, have been suffering in our own backyard.

According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, whose figures most certainly are under-reported, approximately 14,300 children have gone through the Homestead Temporary Shelter for Unaccompanied Children in FL. Their detention is illegal and their treatment deplorable.

Trump denies it. But people don’t hide what they are proud of. DHS refused even members of Congress unannounced visits, and in the few government-controlled ones, no cameras were allowed. Senator Kamala Harris reported she circled round and climbed a tree to see what she could. Senator Elizabeth Warren climbed a ladder. Both scenes could be in North Korea. The government’s propagandist photos show neat, though crowded, rooms, ala military barracks. But surreptitious cell phone pictures and eye-witness accounts reveal the lie. Protestors had been braving the heat and humidity outside the facility and the media continued its censure. Nothing changed.

And then, on August 3, all the children were quietly whisked away.

We don’t know why or to where. Officials claim it was to get them out of the way of possible hurricanes. A plausible reason. If so, why did they evacuate the children in the middle of the night?

This detention is contemptible. It is also good for business. There are approximately 200 detention centers, “shelters,” and immigrant jails and prisons scattered throughout the country. Why are people who’ve committed no crime (as seeking asylum is their legal right) not allowed

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to live with relatives already in the United States? Or in motels, for which taxpayers would expend far less than they do now?

One answer: 60% of the migrants are in privately-owned migrant prisons. And it's quite profitable. The U. S. has a long, dark history of private companies cashing in on natural disasters and war. Remember Halliburton and Blackwater? Not only do these private contractors do well, so do the government officials with lobbying ties to them.

Item: February 2017. Comprehensive Health Services paid the U. S. Dept. of Justice more than \$3.8 million to settle claims of medical fraud, double-charging the Internal Revenue Service for services. CHS was purchased by Caliburn, owned by a private equity firm that hired former Trump Chief of Staff John Kelly as a lobbyist who failed to disclose his \$37,000 earnings from that firm to the government.

Item: July 2017. Despite all that, Governor Rick Scott (who should know something about medical fraud) awarded CHS a \$600,000 tax package for a project at Cape Canaveral. One year later, the DHS gave CHS a \$341 million no-bid contract to operate the Homestead Shelter until October of 2019. But as of August 3, no children are there. Quartz news service reported Homestead was costing taxpayers \$500,000 per day to operate.

Item: May 2018. General Dynamics was awarded a \$1.6 million contract for "training and technical assistance" at Homestead.

Item: December 2018. American Canyon Solutions of California won a \$60.5 million contract to manage Homestead.

All for a place that should put our government to shame. Homestead is a metaphor for immorality and unchecked greed. And our government is in no rush to change, not when its friends and former officials find the system so lucrative.