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# Opinion

## A Letter from America's Children

**D**ear U.S. Media, Democrats, Republicans, Independents and to the concerned Americans who poured out into the streets to protest Donald Trump's cruel and faulty immigration policies,

What about us?

We understand and applaud your response to this administration's malevolent separation of immigrant families from their children—policies and practices so un-American and shocking that they have come to dominate the national conversation. Your immediate, visceral response to evil spurred you into action.

But there is another evil, a pervasive, chronic and unrelenting wickedness that we, your children, live with every day. We are being shot down on the nation's streets, locked away in juvenile facilities, poisoned by dangerous drinking water, threatened and harassed by neighborhood gangs, left homeless, either alone from abuse or with parents that cannot afford to put a roof over our heads. We live in neighborhoods bereft of adequate food sources and with fathers and mothers so wrought with financial and psychological instability they can't provide our needs.

And because our nation has lived with this reality so



Ron Harris  
NNPA Guest  
Columnist

long, it has become almost accepted. It has become quietly and unconsciously perceived as part of the norm, part of the landscape, like the air we breathe, until little by little it becomes so caustic that it kills us or chokes us into action. Unfortunately for us, your children, you haven't reached that point.

There are 408,000 of us, American children, who also have been separated from our families and placed in the care of others, like the 2,000 immigrant children who you took to the streets to protect. Many of us languish in foster care with little hope of ever being united with our parents or extended families. As we watched the huge crowds that stretched across 700 U.S. cities Saturday. We saw the signs proudly held high that read, "Family Separations Are Cruel." And we thought, "Yes, they are." What about us? Where is our march? Where is our media coverage?

Half of us currently in foster will be homeless within

six months after growing too old for the system. We are unprepared to live on our own. We have limited education and no social support. About a quarter of the rest will be homeless within two to four years of leaving the system. Some of us will become part of the 20,000 U.S. children annually forced into prostitution.

**“There are 408,000 of us, American children, who also have been separated from our families**

Another two million of us this year will be separated from our families and placed behind bars and in juvenile custody. Many of us, like Clarice, one of twin 14-year-old sisters in Montgomery County, Md., can't go home because there is no suitable home to go to. Her parents are homeless, and authorities can't release her to an unstable home. Other parents are dysfunctional or can't provide the guidance we need. So, we go behind bars because there are not enough

treatment facilities for us.

We want a march, too, one for better schools for all, because you recognize how the hopelessness created by faulty education diminishes lives and leads to incarceration – that 32 percent of white males in juvenile custody dropped out of school, and that nearly half of African-American and Hispanic male youth behind bars also quit.

Media reported how families from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico are fleeing to the U.S. to escape gangs in their countries. Many of us live in gang-infested neighborhoods, too. In cities like St. Louis, Baltimore, New Orleans, Detroit, Cleveland, Las Vegas, Kansas City, Mo., Memphis, Newark and Chicago, the 10 U.S. cities with the highest murder rate, we have long understood their terror. We understand their fear.

In Chicago, a city rife with street gangs and where at least 16 children have been murdered in the first six months of this year, more than 50,000 people demonstrated for the rights of immigrants fleeing gangs in countries few of them have ever visited.

Read the rest of this commentary at  
**TheSkanner.com**

## Maxine Waters Takes Strong Stand for Fair Housing

**W**hen Dr. Ben Carson was named Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), many housing and civil rights advocates wondered how a world-renowned neurosurgeon would direct the future of housing in America. By his own admission, he arrived at HUD with no governmental experience or active interest in housing's history either.

Despite those professional shortcomings, Secretary Carson swiftly began a series of actions that triggered broad and sustained criticism from civil rights and housing policy advocates. On Secretary Carson's watch, HUD proposed billion-dollar budget reductions, increased rental fees for public housing tenants, removed explicit language on fair housing from the agency's mission statement, and halted efforts that require local communities receiving HUD funds to address fair housing needs.

In sum, Secretary Carson has acted like a man on a mission with no time to spare.

This past January, Carson also announced a suspension of a key rule known as Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). The rule that went into effect in July 2015 required any state, lo-



Charlene Crowell  
NNPA  
Columnist

cality, or public housing authority receiving HUD funds to have a plan and timeline that incorporates community concerns to actively address fair housing issues in their locales.

**“Since becoming Secretary, Ben Carson has taken numerous steps to eliminate fair housing protections for the most vulnerable**

Although civil rights and consumer protection advocates have brought legal challenges to reverse the suspension of AFFH and other misdeeds, the wheels of justice continue their characteristically slow and deliberate pace.

But California Congresswoman Maxine Waters recently stepped up to file legislation designed to cure many of the regressive ills pushed by Secretary Carson. On June 26, she introduced a bill entitled, Restoring Fair Housing Protections Eliminated by HUD Act of 2018 (H.R. 6220).

“The Department of Housing and Urban Development is supposed to create strong communities; expand access to affordable housing; and enforce fair housing rights,” said Congresswoman Waters. “Unfortunately since becoming Secretary, Ben Carson has taken numerous steps to eliminate fair housing protections for the most vulnerable families in this country.”

The following day, June 27, the House Financial Services Committee, chaired by Rep. Jeb Hensarling of Texas, convened a hearing with Secretary Carson.

“Over the last 20 years, the HUD budget has doubled, whereas the family budget, which pays for it, has increased by less than double digits,” said Rep. Hensarling. “In fact, HUD's budget has grown faster than almost every other federal budget function, including social security, education, and national defense. HUD resources have not been the challenge,

HUD's focus and success has been.”

Speaking next as the Committee's Ranking Member, Congresswoman Waters offered a completely opposite perspective on HUD and Secretary Carson. In her remarks, Rep. Waters underscored that her new legislation was intended to revoke key actions by Secretary Carson and return them to HUD's fair housing agenda. Those actions included restoring:

Fair housing language to the agency's mission statement with the specific inclusion of text stating “inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination”;

HUD's AFFH rule as soon as practically possible following the bill's enactment;

HUD's Local Government Assessment Tool that helps state and local jurisdictions to comply with the AFFH rule within 30 days of enactment; and

A requirement that the HUD Secretary report to Congress a Secretary-directed review of fair housing complaints that involve an online platform. The Secretary's report to Congress would also include analysis of trends related to discrimination.

Read the rest of this commentary at  
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