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Beyond Borders: How the MAGA Movement Is Redefining Who Belongs in America

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Francisco Rodríguez-Castro, President & CEO

The Insensible Mass Deportations of Innocent Families: America's Internal Exile

Each day, the Trump administration carries out an aggressive campaign across towns, border crossings, and courtrooms—a campaign not of tanks or bombs but of detention buses, handcuffs, and deportation notices. Yet, the cost is just as human and just as irreversible.

Before I go any further, we must all agree that illegal immigration was entirely out of control with policies that allowed the flow of illegal immigrants to continue to flow into the United States, with all kinds of consequences.

However, what is troubling about the recent immigration crackdown is the generalization and depiction by the Trump Administration that all illegal immigrants are criminals or come from mental institutions. You see, there is a fine line between illegal immigrants and legal immigrants.

There is indeed a troubling overlap between public perceptions of undocumented and legal immigrants, particularly among segments aligned with the MAGA movement. This conflation often results in discrimination against legal immigrants, who, despite their lawful status, face suspicion and hostility.

My biggest concern I have as a Puerto Rican is that we could be branded or discriminated against as illegal immigrants just because we look and sound different.

Misidentification and Discrimination

A study from Washington University in St. Louis found that many white Americans tend to assume immigrants are undocumented until proven otherwise. This bias leads to discriminatory treatment based on appearance or accent, irrespective of legal status.

Legal immigrants have reported being told to "go back to where you came from", a phrase that gained national attention when former President Trump directed it at four U.S. congresswomen of color, three of whom were born in the United States.

Policy Actions Affecting Legal Immigrants

The Trump administration's policies have also impacted legal immigrants. For instance, the Supreme Court allowed the administration to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for over 500,000 migrants, increasing the risk of deportation for individuals who had been legally residing in the U.S. for years.

Additionally, the administration proposed creating an "Office of Remigration", aiming to repatriate migrants, including some legal residents, to establish ethnically homogeneous states. Critics argue that this move aligns with far-right ideologies and could normalize racist policies.

Personal Stories Highlighting the Issue

The case of Kilmar Ábrego García, a legal immigrant deported to El Salvador despite a court order protecting him, underscores the consequences of such policies. His deportation sparked outrage and legal challenges, highlighting the vulnerabilities even legal immigrants face. Furthermore, over 1,400 international students had their visas revoked amid a crackdown on dissent, with many detained under inhumane conditions despite lacking criminal charges.

There is another part of the story that affects the most fragile and innocent that, includes children mothers, grandparents, and everyday workers are being torn from their communities not because of violent crimes or public safety threats but because of a harsh, ideologically driven agenda to reshape America in the image of the MAGA movement. While it may seem like immigration enforcement to most, this is actually a form of political erasure.

Under President Trump's second term, immigration enforcement has reached levels unseen in decades. According to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), deportations surged by over 45% in the first 120 days of the administration, with more than 360,000 people expelled, many of whom had no criminal record at all. In May 2025 alone, over 9,000 children were separated from at least one parent due to expedited removals, detentions, or border closures.

Midnight raids are shattering entire families. Asylum-seekers are turned back at the border under revived "Remain in Mexico" policies, now even more draconian than before. Migrants who have lived in the U.S. for decades are being deported without due process, including essential workers, teachers, and military veterans. In recent months, Puerto Rico has found itself at the crossroads of national immigration enforcement raids. Once largely invisible on the island, they have become more frequent and more aggressive, mostly in known Dominican neighborhoods and even in Condado construction sites that apprehended 50-plus Dominican nationals.

These operations, carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), have ignited a firestorm of fear and confusion among both undocumented and legal immigrants. But perhaps more striking is how these events have begun to shape a broader and more dangerous narrative: one that conflates legality with criminality, foreignness with threat.

Although Puerto Rico is not traditionally seen as a focal point for illegal immigration enforcement, recent directives from Washington have made it clear: no U.S. jurisdiction is exempt. From my point of view it becomes quite clear that the cruelty is not incidental—it is the point.

This mass expulsion campaign reflects a deeper ideology: that America must be "cleansed" of those deemed unworthy or "other". The deportations are not just about immigration status—they are about who is seen as belonging in Trump's America. And it is a chilling continuation of a long historical arc where exclusion, xenophobia, and racial resentment are weaponized for political gain.

The emotional toll is impossible to quantify. We've seen images of children crying in front of ICE buses. Videos of elderly immigrants being dragged from homes. Teachers, doctors, and neighbors disappeared overnight. The trauma inflicted by these policies will last generations, echoing in the lives of American-born children left behind, many now placed in foster care or suffering from PTSD.

We must recognize these deportations not just as enforcement—but as the opening act of a movement built on discriminatory foundations.

As my grandfather once told me, "Every man can be seen in three ways: as he says he is, as others say he is, and as his actions determine who he truly is". Under that lens, the MAGA movement must be seen not by its slogans but by its actions. Those actions demonstrate a systematic dismantling of empathy, equity, and humanity.

Just as history remembers the silence of nations during earlier purges and displacements, we will be judged not only by what we believed—but by what we allowed.

Internal GOP Dissent

Not all Republicans support these measures. Georgia State Representative Kasey Carpenter criticized the broad enforcement policies, noting that many law-abiding immigrants contributing to the economy are being unjustly targeted. He emphasized the need for a more nuanced approach to immigration enforcement. These examples illustrate the fine line between legal and illegal immigration becoming increasingly blurred in public perception and policy, leading to discrimination and challenges for legal immigrants.

The real question that we must ask is: Has MAGA become a Discriminatory Movement?

The "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement, led by Donald Trump, has significantly reshaped American political discourse. While its proponents claim it aims to restore America's former glory, a closer examination reveals a pattern of policies and rhetoric that systematically marginalize various communities. This article examines the specific ways in which the MAGA movement has implemented discriminatory practices, supported by data and factual references. In my view, there are seven points to ponder.

1. **MAGA's Isolationist Policies and Global Discrimination:** Despite claims of prioritizing American interests, the MAGA movement's foreign policy has often alienated traditional allies and undermined international cooperation.
2. **Neglecting African American Communities:** The Trump administration's rollback of civil rights protections has disproportionately affected African Americans.
3. **Marginalizing Latino Populations:** family separations and mass deportations have had profound impacts on Latino communities. Furthermore, proposed tax reforms threaten to cut essential programs like Medicaid and SNAP, which millions of Latino families rely on for healthcare and nutrition.
4. **Disregarding Puerto Rican Americans:** has often been treated as an afterthought under MAGA policies. We suspect the greater impact is yet to come with the passage of the One Beautiful Tax Bill, which is expected to affect Medicaid, Medicare, and the nutrition assistance program known here as PAN, among other key federal programs.
5. **Eliminating LGBTQ+ Rights:** the MAGA movement has actively rolled back protections for LGBTQ+ individuals. Executive actions have targeted transgender rights, including attempts to ban gender-affirming care and redefine gender strictly based on biological sex, thereby erasing the identities of transgender and non-binary individuals.
6. **Favoring the Wealthy Over the Poor:** the Big Beautiful Tax Bill, a cornerstone of MAGA economic policy, disproportionately benefited the wealthy.
7. **Attacking Higher Education Institutions:** Higher education has been targeted in attempts to defund universities, particularly those perceived as liberal strongholds. Harvard University, for instance, faced threats of losing federal funding and its ability to enroll international students, actions criticized as politically motivated attacks on academic freedom.

The Final Word: A Reckoning with the Soul of the Nation

What we are witnessing is not simply an immigration policy; it is a test of national character. Behind every deportation statistic is a name, a face, a family shattered. The cruelty is not random; it is strategic, systemic, and purposeful. The MAGA movement, through its policies and rhetoric, has recast belonging as a privilege granted by ideology rather than a right upheld by law and humanity.

We are witnessing an internal exile, not by geography, but by rejection. Communities are being exiled from dignity, from safety, from inclusion not because they broke the law but because they no longer fit into the narrow, exclusionary vision of what "American" means in this era.

We have been here before this country has known the darkness of internment camps, exclusion acts, and redlining. And each time, history has judged harshly not just those who perpetrated injustice but also those who watched in silence. Today, as legal immigrants, citizens, and fellow human beings are swept into a storm of fear and dehumanization, we must choose silence or action, complicity or courage.

The erosion of rights begins with the marginalized but never ends there. Suppose we allow mass deportations to become normalized. In that case, if we justify the destruction of families under the guise of law and order, we are not safeguarding our nation; we are unraveling its moral foundation.

The measure of any great nation is not how it treats the powerful but how it defends the vulnerable. If we do not rise in defense of justice now, the history books will record not only the tragedy of the deported—but the cowardice of those who remained indifferent.

Let us not be remembered for standing by. Let us be remembered for standing up.



Francisco Rodríguez-Castro, President & CEO • frc@birlingcapital.com
PO Box 10817 San Juan, PR 00922 • 787.247.2500 • 787.645.8430

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