The Downsides of the United States-Mexico Border Wall and Why US Citizens Should Not Support It

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As Donald Trump descended an escalator in Trump Tower on June 16, 2015, he announced his intent to run for president of the United States. With this announcement also came the infamous line said by Trump, "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will have Mexico pay for that wall" (Santucci and Stracqualursi, *ABC News*). Trump is known for his outrageous remarks, so no one was too surprised when he said this. However, the idea of constructing a wall to keep one group of people out of the United States is illogical at best. At worst, Trump is using the wall to make political statements about why non-citizens should not come into the United States. But, these statements have inconsistences that Trump has yet to address. The funding for the wall, the crime and drug rate, and the fact that Mexicans will find other ways to enter the U.S. are all issues that need to be addressed more thoroughly. Perhaps Trump needs to do more research on these three primary issues of constructing the wall before he makes boisterous promises.

In perhaps Trump's most infamous statement, he said that Mexico would pay for the wall. Trump spoke too soon because Mexico's president, Enrique Peña Nieto, says Mexico will not pay for the wall. This should leave United States citizens to wonder where the money will come from, and if Mexico won't pay to build the wall, I guess the United States tax dollars will. Tax dollars are exactly what Trump was after when he proposed a budget of $18 billion in order to build the wall, according to Kaitlyn Schallhorn at *Fox News* Thus far, only $1.6 billion has been approved by House of Representatives to start building the wall, but the budget for the wall still has to make it through the Senate, according to Priscilla Alvarez at *The Atlantic.* Since the House of Representatives has only approved $1.6 billion of the $18 billion budget, Trump had to find a different way other than tax dollars to fund the wall, and he did find a way. On March 25, 2018, Trump tweeted, "Because of the $700 & $716 Billion Dollars gotten to rebuild our Military, many jobs are created and our Military is again rich. Building a great Border Wall, with drugs (poison) and enemy combatants pouring into our Country, is all about National Defense. Build WALL through M!" Here, "M" is assumed to mean the military. Funding for the military is mostly tax dollars, so in a way, Trump would indirectly get the $16.4 billion that he still needs from United States citizens. There are other, more beneficial, areas that tax dollars could go to that would improve our country's safety.

As indicated in Trump's tweet, he feels that the amount of illegal drugs coming across the border implies a need for military grade security. But, Trump has a tendency to speak before he knows all the facts. According to Christopher Woody at *Business Insider*, Trump said, "drugs pour through our southern border at a record clip." There is no denying that drugs are imported at the United States-Mexico border. However, the most harmful drugs do not come from Mexico. According to *Drug Rehab*, marijuana is largely imported from Mexico, but drugs such as cocaine

and opium come from places like South American countries and Afghanistan. This simply means that Mexico is not even the main country where the most harmful drugs come from. Mexico is the primary country where marijuana comes in, but marijuana is already becoming more accepted in the United States. According to *Governing,* "thirty states and the District of Columbia currently have laws broadly legalizing marijuana in some form." While that still lacks about twenty more states before the entire United States has legalized marijuana, that number is over half of the U.S. This does not mean that drugs should be imported illegally, but this does mean that Mexico is not causing the majority of the worst drug problems. If marijuana is the worst drug that a person takes, they are still doing better than many who take more harmful drugs. Besides the drugs being imported, Trump does not take into consideration the amount of drugs that are made within the United States. A lot can be done to prevent drug use within the U.S. with an $18 billion budget, but instead, Trump has to use this money on a wall that will likely not hinder many people anyway.

Besides illegal drugs being imported, Trump feels that undocumented immigrants often commit crimes, and the way he says this indicates that he feels they cause the majority of criminal activities in the United States. However, Jane Timm at *NBC News* reports that "a slew of studies have found that immigrants as a whole — both legal and undocumented — commit less crime than native-born Americans." When Trump speaks before he knows all the facts, he directs many United States citizens' opinions in the wrong way. Because of what he has said, and the fact that U.S. citizens do not do research, these citizens often blame the wrong people for crimes, and they often have false notions about certain races. Timm at *NBC News* reports that sanctuary cities, which are where undocumented immigrants often feel the safest, are actually safer than cities where immigrants are more persecuted. This indicates that undocumented

immigrants are unlikely to be the problem, at least not the main problem. When Trump speaks before he thinks or speaks out of spite for others, he sets a tone about certain groups of people that enhances hatred in others. This leads these people to hate those groups of people with no real reason why they should. It is always important for United States citizens to do their research about important topics, but there will always be people, no matter where they come from, that are bad people. However, considering that there are far fewer undocumented immigrants than actual citizens, it is no surprise that undocumented immigrants do not make up the majority of the crime rate.

The primary reasoning for Trump wanting to build this wall is the fact that people and drugs cross the border illegally. United States citizens are aware that drugs and people cross the border, but what Trump is not considering is the fact that many undocumented immigrants come into the United States by means other than across the border. According to *CBS News,* "While only a small fraction of border arrests are at sea, authorities say heightened enforcement on land, and a bigger fence, is making the offshore route more attractive." People coming to the United States via the oceans is not the most rational way for people to come here, but it is an option for people who are willing to go to whatever measures in order to get to the United States. If the wall is meant to stop people and it does end up working, immigrants will begin turning to the oceans to get to the U.S. Another way that they get in the United States without crossing border illegally is that they "enter the country legally, whether on a visa or through port of entry, and then stay longer than allowed" according to Alvarez at *The Atlantic*. Alvarez also mentions that it is hard to track down undocumented immigrants that stay longer than their visa allows. Besides using the $18 billion budget on the wall or preventing drug use, this money could be used on removing immigrants who stay longer than their visas allow, since Trump appears to be against immigrants

in the United States. Since the wall won't stop illegal immigration, Trump should find a different way to justify spending so much money on the wall.

Since Trump's announcement that he was going to run for president, he has become president and made many more outrageous remarks, some in regards to the wall and some regarding other things. Most of Trump's remarks about the wall have been false or not well researched. These remarks leave something to be desired since they are based on what Trump thinks he knows, not what is actually true. As United States citizens, it is our job to research the facts and come to our own conclusions without false remarks from our president leading us astray. If Trump gets everything he wants from the wall, which he is unlikely to do, the United States would no longer be a nation founded on different immigrants. It will become a state where people are excluded based on falsities.

About the author:

Molly Daniels is a sophomore at East Tennessee State University. She is a member of the Overton County Tennessee Democratic Party. She has about twenty cats and two dogs.

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