

## The Snake: Anti-Immigrant Propaganda Used to Dehumanize Our Neighbors

by Jason Carson Wilson  
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Our government separated a Congolese woman from her 7-year-old daughter. The Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detained and separated them at the California-Mexico border. The woman was released March 6, but the little girl remains in ICE custody in Chicago. Confronted with this particular travesty a colleague posted a question on her Facebook page: “Feel safer?”

My answer is no.

The Chicago Tribune reported that an initial screening established that the woman had a “credible fear” of returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security made no official comment about the woman or her daughter, but DHS spokesman Tyler Houlton claimed, on social media, that the separation was necessary. She didn’t elaborate.

The U.S. was built on the “forced migration” and enslavement of African peoples. But, now, in the name of “security” people of color are being turned away and expelled from our nation. Watching young adults struggling to achieve the American dream under constant threat of deportation, and established adults with families being torn apart, is immoral and outrageous enough. Processing the detainment of a 7-year-old is impossible.

Deporting undocumented immigrants with little due process and keeping Dreamers in perpetual limbo has nothing to do with national security. And undocumented immigrants, which the Administration and some in Congress deem dangerous, aren’t the proverbial snakes that President Trump has labeled them. The President made new recently for quoting lyrics from “The Snake,” in an effort to criticize U.S. immigration policy.

*Take me in, tender woman,” sighed the snake  
“I saved you,” cried the woman  
“And you’ve bitten me, but why?  
You know your bite is poisonous and now I’m going to die”  
“Oh shut up, silly woman,” said the reptile with a grin  
“You knew damn well I was a snake before you took me in”*



The use of his 1963 song as an anti-immigration anthem would not have pleased Oscar Brown, Jr., a lifelong Chicagoan. He was a Black singer, songwriter, playwright, poet and civil rights activist. He began earnestly pursuing a music career after Mahalia Jackson recorded another song, “Brown Baby.” His daughters, Africa and Maggie, have decried the President’s use of the song in appearances on CNN and MSNBC. Maggie, a friend and fellow University Church (a United Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ congregation in Hyde Park) member, stressed her displeasure in person Sunday.

People searching for better lives aren’t snakes. They are neighbors who, as people of faith, we are called to love. Banishing people in need isn’t what love is supposed to look like. Our nation is embracing isolationist views and turning its back on neighbors in need. This nation is becoming “The Snake,” even as many people fight for just world for all.

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