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## David McGrath: Trump's use of 'border czar' bully to terrorize immigrants taking page from sadistic Civil Rights-era Bull Connor



Tom Homan, White House "border czar," speaks during Turning Point's annual AmericaFest on Dec. 22, 2024. (Josh Edelson/Getty-AFP)

By **DAVID MCGRATH**

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Americans who saw Tom Homan speak at the Republican National Convention last summer or on any recently televised interview likely came away with the impression Donald Trump hoped for when he appointed him as his “border czar”: intimidation.

The beefy former police officer with the thick New Jersey accent habitually jabs with his index finger as he foretells what he will do to immigrants, much like a World Wrestling Entertainment contestant making pre-fight predictions at center ring.

Except that when he sneers that illegal aliens better “start packing” or warns that “their days are numbered” or announces ominously, “We’re going to take the handcuffs off ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement),” Homan is not an actor in one of pro-wrestling’s staged soap operas. He is threatening real, living, vulnerable human beings: men, women and children, mostly from Mexico but also from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

The overwhelming majority of the “millions of illegal aliens” whom Homan promises to arrest and deport were innocent citizens in their origin countries. Their only crime is they crossed the border into our country illegally to escape gang violence and drug cartel wars and to seek a better life for themselves and their children.

Readers of a certain age hearing Homan cannot help but be reminded of Bull Connor, the infamous Birmingham, Alabama, police commissioner when George Wallace was the state's governor.

Like Homan, who frequently professes how "pissed off" he is about illegal Latino immigrants, Connor was equally inflamed, making speeches in his deep braying voice about doing whatever it took to keep African Americans segregated.

Though not as physically large as Homan, Bull Connor, emboldened by [his ties to the Ku Klux Klan](#) and gubernatorial patron, projected the kind of sadistic confidence reminiscent of that portrayed by the prison warden in the movie "Cool Hand Luke."

In the same tone that Tom Homan bragged about massive raids he was planning in Chicago and New York as soon as Trump was inaugurated, Connor once disclosed in 1963 his plan to discourage Civil Rights "freedom riders" by holding back his police and giving the KKK a 15- to 20-minute head start to attack them.

And in one of the most shameful acts in American history, Gov. Wallace's bullish enforcer ordered Birmingham troopers to blast kids with high

pressure fire hoses to turn them back during a protest known as the Children's Crusade. Any who lagged behind were chased by snapping German shepherds.

Apparently an attribute shared by both Connor and Homan was that neither would allow any sentimental notions with regard to children standing in the way of doing their bosses' bidding.

In Bull Connor's case, film coverage of his fire hose and police dog attacks was broadcast on TV, triggering shock and fury in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere and ultimately leading to passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

In Homan's case, more than 5,000 innocent children were taken and separated from their parents upon his recommendation in Trump's first term as a way to deter border crossings. Though country-wide outrage brought about a halt to the cruel practice, nearly 1,000 children have yet to be found.

Imagine what must be inside the head of a 4-year-old taken from his mother's arms in 2018 and orphaned in some unknown place today. Or their parents' agony, night and day, for the past five years.

When U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez confronted Homan at a [Congressional hearing](#) with documented evidence that he authored the child separation plan in violation of international human rights agreements, he denied it with his customary swagger and deflected her questions.

Yet, he has been invited by Trump to reprise his campaign of strong-arm tactics and rights violations and he promised to [confine kids with their families in detention camps](#) this time instead of separating them, yet another rights violation since many of the children are American citizens.

He said it's [just what he's been waiting for](#) and that he'd even do it without being paid.

“Trump comes back in January, I’ll be on his heels coming back, and I will run the biggest deportation force this country has ever seen,” he said.

“They ain’t seen s— yet. Wait until 2025.”

Well, 2025 is here. Trump’s bully, no longer just pawing the dirt, has begun his onslaught.

Judges and courts, local law enforcement, responsible government officials, and organizations like the National Immigration Justice Center and the U.N. must say no to this and stand up to any and all terrorizing tactics and rights violations.

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