

TOUGH TRUTHS TO FACE

In recent weeks we as individuals – and as a country – have had to come to grips with very unpleasant realities, things that we knew were there below the surface but now have burst forth front and center:

- The full extent of the cruelty this president is willing to use to force his views on others.
- Pictures of toddlers, bereft at the terror of being separated from a parent; the head of the Children's Pediatric Society terming it "child abuse"; Frank Bruni calling it "hostage taking".
- Trump's supporters giving him an all-time high approval rating. Trump said, in WH, "My people love it."
- The callousness of the leadership in the House and the Senate not agreeing on substantive legislation to decide the fate of 1.8 DACA students and 11 million undocumented immigrants.

On the other hand, there has been a tsunami of fierce reaction against the Administration's policies:

- 8 governors have refused to send National Guard soldiers to the Border. 560 Sanctuary cities.
- American and United airlines will stop accepting separated children as passengers.
 - U.S. Bishops have condemned the policy of separating families. Pope Francis called it "immoral."
 - Laura Bush, Melania and Ivanka Trump, and Michelle Obama all lambasted the separation policy.
- The two Methodist churches that Sessions attends have charged him with "child abuse."
- Steve Schmidt, declared that the Republican party he long served is "corrupt, indecent and immoral."
- Nicholas Kristof ends a scathing column against separation by saying "to wrench shrieking children from the arms of their parents is not just cruel, not just abhorrent, but truly evil."
- Media reporters and comics have also been fierce in their coverage of the immigration policies.

Europe is struggling with a similar antipathy towards immigrants. It is fueling England's desire to leave the European Union, overturning Italy's political establishment, and giving Viktor Orban's populist Hungarian government a fourth term. Immigration from the Middle East and North Africa has led to calls in Europe to prevent its so-called Islamization. In the U.S. several studies have concluded that "alongside their anger over lost jobs and stagnant wages, many of the non-Hispanic white voters who tipped the presidency to Mr. Trump were motivated by fears that they were losing demographic ground to other groups." (*New York Times*: June 20, 2018. "Immigration Myths and Global Realities").

Part of the fears about these issues are fueled by peoples' perceptions that there are more immigrants than there really are, by 10-35% in the United States, Britain, France and Italy. The same is true of perceptions regarding underestimates on the education of immigrants and overestimates on their poverty rate and dependence on welfare. The reality is that there are fewer undocumented immigrants living in the United States in 2016 than in 2007. And arrests along the border with Mexico plummeted last year to their lowest level since 1971.

Perceptions, however, not hard facts, are what drive fears and emotions. So, too, do biases – and Fake News. At the same time, escalating trade wars between the U.S. and most of our allies (not to mention China and Russia) are adding additional fuel to individuals and countries already pushed to the breaking point. Trump is a master at recognizing vulnerabilities and attacking them relentlessly. A therapist friend of mine calls him a "global abuser" because of the way he can trash any institution or agreement with a few words and a wave of his hand – U.S. Congress, the G-8 countries, the U.N., NAFTA, the Paris Global Warming Contract, the Trans Pacific Partnership. You name it, Trump has sabotaged every one of them.

The stakes are high, on all fronts. Hope lies with the Tsunami of voices of individuals and organizations that are rising up to say: "Cease and desist! This is not who we are, as a nation — or a global community." Jim Ewens