

## **120 and 123 Shaila and Consuela**

These two composite figures represent the Trump administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy, dedicated to preventing or punishing every illegal immigrant trying to cross the southernmost U.S. border from Mexico and other countries. One shocking means of deterring immigration has been separating children from their parents and guardians.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, during an October 2016-February 2018 trial run of this policy, 1768 immigrant children were taken from their families. Within and after the official six-week "Zero Tolerance" program (April-June of 2018) at least 5,500 of the Western Hemisphere's poorest and most vulnerable children were targeted. The "official" policy was reversed after international condemnation, hundreds of protests, numerous lawsuits, and the deaths of at least five children . . . And yet it continues.

With no system in place for tracking and/or reuniting families, thousands of these children are still separated from their parents, many of whom were deported. Left in foster homes or languishing in detention centers (often in deplorable conditions) these innocent children simply fell through the cruel cracks of Trump's "Zero Tolerance."

Of all the figures I have built, these two were the most difficult and emotionally draining. How could I channel the horror I feel about these events? How can I give this topic the weight it deserves? I can't. My disbelief and rage are overwhelming, paralyzing. I keep imagining my own daughter and granddaughter ripped from my arms.