

*Visiting Immigrants in
U.S. Detention Facilities*



Introduction

Detention Watch Network is pleased to offer this new resource for establishing immigration detention visitor programs -- a compilation of many members' considerable expertise.

DWN members assist immigrants detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) in many ways. Some are lawyers, social workers, or chaplains working directly with people in detention. Others are community organizers and advocates, working to change the policies and practices that violate the human rights of asylum seekers and other immigrants who come to this country seeking protection and life and that tear apart families and communities. Others are individuals and their families directly impacted by the detention and deportation system willing to speak out about the impact of the harsh U.S. policies and working to reform the system so that others do not have to go through the same suffering.

There is another important way to assist immigrants in detention, especially those with no friends or family nearby to visit them, and that is as a friend. Friendship that affirms humanity in the midst of a dehumanizing scenario and provides emotional support to some of the world's most vulnerable people is one of detained immigrants' most important needs.

This is the vital role you can fill as a volunteer visitor. Your visits will provide hope to individuals. They also will empower your witness as an advocate for improved treatment of detained immigrants and, especially, for alternatives to detention whenever possible -- especially for persons who have fled persecution in their home countries and asked the United States to take them in.

More than a decade of experience is reflected in this manual, which we hope will be valuable to you as you explore beginning your own visitation program. We have tried to provide as many examples from as many different visitation programs as possible. Such a diversity of voices is important, as each group that begins a visitation program will have its own experience depending on the location and management of the detention facility, demographics of the detained population, resources of the visitation program itself, and other variables.

The manual provides guidance for how to form, educate and train a group of visitors, how to begin relationships with detention staff and detained immigrants, and how to sustain and support individuals throughout their detention. It emphasizes the importance of partnerships with other organizations locally, regionally and nationally that work on detention issues. It explores why visiting immigrants in detention is so important (including affirming statements from those formerly detained), the moral and ethical responsibilities of a visitor (including confidentiality, an understanding of interpersonal power dynamics, etc.), and the often-complex questions that arise throughout the visitation experience.

As you work through the manual, remember that there are numerous DWN members and friends who can offer their experience and assistance. Website and contact information can be found throughout the manual. We encourage you to adapt the manual to your particular context. And we look forward to hearing and learning from your experiences with visitation. Good luck, and thank you for your friendship to those in detention.

Acknowledgements

Special credit and thanks are due to Will Coley and Jesuit Refugee Service for originally developing many parts of this manual for the volunteer visitation program they started at Elizabeth Detention Center in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1997.

Mr. Coley based the program on a model he had seen at the Campsfield House Detention Center in England (www.aviddetention.org/uk and www.asylum-welcome.org).

Deepest thanks also are due Jen Smyers of Church World Service for shepherding this manual through multiple stages of the writing and editing process. She is an active member of the Detention Watch Network visitation and other working groups.

Thanks also to David Fraccaro, coordinator, and Carol Fouke-Mpoyo, chair of The Riverside Church Sojourners Immigration Detention Visitor Project, who contributed substantially to the manual. Their New York-based project, along with First Friends in Elizabeth, N.J., today carry on the visitation program that Mr. Coley and JRS initiated.

John Wilkinson of the Bellevue Center for Survivors of Torture gave valuable input to the post-release assistance section, and immigration legal colleagues at American Friends Service Committee, Newark, N.J., and Human Rights First, New York, N.Y., reviewed and provided corrections to the manual.

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Who are Detained Immigrants?

The detention of immigrants is the fastest growing prison industry in the United States.¹ Every day, approximately 33,000² immigrants are held in detention centers throughout the country. In 2008, more than 311,000 immigrants were held in detention facilities,³ eight operated by the federal government, and others by private prison corporations or local counties. Detained immigrants include both individuals and whole families, including young children.



Photo by PC(USA)

The people in immigration detention are detained (imprisoned) for a variety of reasons. Some have crossed a U.S. border without the required documentation to seek a job that pays well enough to feed their family. They may have been apprehended at the border or in a raid and are waiting for deportation. Others came to help sick relatives or rejoin a family member in the United States and have overstayed a temporary visa – often because they had been unable even after decades of waiting to get one of the few visas available to allow them to rejoin family permanently.

Some have committed a crime, served their time, and are detained waiting for deportation. Others are lawful permanent residents subject to deportation for minor offenses such as buying stolen jewelry or the possession of marijuana, which are misdemeanors for U.S. citizens but deportable offenses for lawful permanent residents. Other immigrants cannot return to the United States if they have traveled outside the United States in violation of a temporary visa or asylum status, and are thus detained upon re-entry. Many immigrants in detention are married to U.S. citizens and have U.S.-born children. They are the faces of immigration detention.

Additionally, many people in immigration detention are asylum seekers. In fact, it is estimated that 10 percent⁴ of individuals in detention on any given day are asylum seekers fleeing persecution in their homeland because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Most immigrants face civil charges relating specifically to their immigration status. However, some immigrants have been charged with identity fraud for using false social security cards in order to obtain work, which is a criminal offense. Depending on these charges, detained immigrants may proceed to either civil or criminal court. Those being charged with criminal offenses will be held in criminal facilities, rather than immigration detention facilities, which are for civil offenses. Whatever their circumstances may be, individuals in detention often suffer from inhumane treatment in detention.

This manual is intended to provide a framework and tools to help begin a successful immigrant detention visitation program. In the manual, you will find background information about immigrant detention, definitions of key terms, and step-by-step instructions on how to start a visitation program. We hope that this manual will help you begin a program and provide you with the necessary resources to help your program grow.

¹ www.detentionwatchnetwork.org

² www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/immigration/cwc_d1p1.html

³ <http://www.midwesthumanrights.org/immigrant-detention>

⁴ www.detentionwatchnetwork.org

*Immigrant Detention:
Facts & Information*

Terminology

LEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Legal immigrants are people born outside the United States who have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. They essentially have the same rights and obligations as a U.S. citizen with the exceptions of voting, holding certain public offices and employment by federal agencies in civil service positions.

LEGAL NON-IMMIGRANTS

Legal non-immigrants have been admitted to the United States for a specific purpose (e.g. work or study) for a temporary stay that will end when its purpose has been accomplished.⁵

MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrant workers move from one region or country to another in search of employment.

LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS (LPRS)

Lawful Permanent Residents are immigrants with “green cards” who can remain indefinitely in the United States but can be detained or deported for certain offenses, including misdemeanors punishable by one or more years in jail, detention, or deportation. After five years, an LPR can apply for U.S. citizenship.

CRIMINAL ALIENS

Criminal aliens are non-citizens who have committed a crime and are therefore deportable. Under immigration law, crimes often treated as misdemeanors for U.S. citizens are deportable offenses for lawful permanent residents.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Undocumented immigrants are persons in the United States without valid immigration documents. Most undocumented immigrants are barred from legal re-entry for three or ten years once they leave the country. They may be permanently barred from legal re-entry if they have criminal records.

REFUGEES

Refugees are persons outside their homeland who are unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Each year, a certain number of refugees are selected by the U.S. State Department to undergo seven security screenings and enter the United States through the Refugee Resettlement Program. One year after arriving in the United States, a refugee can apply for Lawful Permanent Residency (LPR), and after five years as an LPR can apply for U.S. citizenship.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Asylum seekers are seeking refuge in another country due to persecution faced in his/her native country for the same reasons as refugees. People who apply for asylum at an airport or other point of entry into the United States are often detained. The difference between refugees and asylum seekers is that asylum seekers are physically present in the United States and are seeking permission to remain, while refugees are outside of the United States and are seeking to be resettled in the United States.

⁵ http://www.grads.vt.edu/igss/general_info/definitions.html

ASYLEES

Asylees are people who have been granted the legal status of asylum in the United States due to persecution faced in his/her native country for the same reasons as refugees. Immediately after being granted asylum, asylees are authorized to work in the United States. One year after arriving in the United States, an asylee can apply for Lawful Permanent Residency (LPR), and after five years as an LPR can apply for U.S. citizenship.

PAROLEES

Parolees are non-citizens to whom the Attorney General has granted a temporary stay for humanitarian or public interest purposes and who can be detained at any time. Parolee status expires after one year (renewable at the U.S. government's discretion), and most parolees are prohibited from applying for LPR or citizenship.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the bureau within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which enforces immigration laws and administers the apprehension, detention and deportation of immigrants.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (CIS)

Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) is the bureau within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that administers applications for immigration benefits such as visas, adjustment of status, and naturalization. The Asylum Corps in USCIS makes decisions on affirmative asylum claims.

CORRECTIONS CORPORATION OF AMERICA (CCA)

Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is one of the private corrections contractors that work with the FBI, ICE, and the U.S. Marshall Service. CCA has over 60 facilities and houses more than 80,000 offenders and detained immigrants.⁶ Similar contracts are given to GEO Group, Management Training Corp, and Cornell Companies.

BOARD OF IMMIGRATION APPEALS (BIA)

Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) is the highest administrative body within the Department of Justice that interprets and applies immigration laws. The BIA hears appeals regarding decisions made by Immigration Judges (IJs). These decisions are binding unless overturned by the Attorney General (AG) or a Federal Circuit Court.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW (EOIR)

Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is the agency within the Department of Justice that administers the Immigration Court and the BIA. EOIR judges make decisions on defensive asylum claims and other claims for relief from removal during removal proceedings.

⁶ <http://www.correctionscorp.com/about/>

The U.S. Immigration Process⁷

AFFIRMATIVE VS. DEFENSIVE ASYLUM

Individuals who are in the United States may apply for affirmative asylum by submitting an application to USCIS. The application must be submitted within one year of the date of the most recent arrival to the United States, unless changed circumstances can be shown. Once the application is filed, a USCIS Asylum Officer will conduct a non-adversarial interview with the applicant, usually within 43 days. The time period may be longer if the applicant does not live near one of the eight Asylum Offices.⁸ If USCIS finds the applicant ineligible for asylum, the applicant is referred to an Immigration Judge at EOIR. According to USCIS, processing is usually completed within six months of the initial application; however, due to administrative backlogs it may be longer. During this time, most applicants are not authorized to work.

An immigrant may seek protection from deportation by seeking asylum through a defensive asylum claim. Asylum seekers can also be placed into removal proceedings by a USCIS asylum officer if their affirmative asylum application is denied; or if they are apprehended while undocumented, are in violation of status, were caught trying to enter the United States without documentation, or are asking for asylum at the port of entry. Immigration judges hear cases in a court-like setting and many asylum applicants are detained during the hearing process. Defensive asylum hearings are adversarial and include direct testimony, cross-examination, and witnesses. Applicants found ineligible for asylum or other forms of relief from removal are ordered to leave the U.S. under an order of deportation, or in some cases, voluntary departure.⁹

EXPEDITED REMOVAL

This process gives U.S. immigration inspectors and border patrol officers – instead of immigration judges – the power to order people deported. It applies to people who arrive without valid travel documents or with false documents at airports and border check points or who are apprehended within 100 miles of the U.S. border and entered the country without inspection less than fourteen days before apprehension. Asylum seekers are not supposed to be deported under expedited removal unless they are first given an interview with a U.S. asylum officer to decide if they should be allowed to apply for asylum. But the process has inadequate safeguards. A study conducted by the bi-partisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom revealed that there are serious problems in the way that U.S. immigration authorities conduct the expedited process. For example, in 15 percent of the cases observed by the Commission's experts, people who expressed a fear of return were not given a chance to be interviewed by an asylum officer.¹⁰

FINAL ORDERS OF DEPORTATION

Also known as “removal orders,” these are issued by DHS or an Immigration Judge. Applicants can appeal a decision directly to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) within 30 days of the judge's decision. The notice of appeal is not considered filed until it is received with the required fee or fee waiver form. The appeal must include specific reasons or it may be dismissed. The BIA does not consider new evidence, unless there are exceptional circumstances – it only reviews if the applicant had a fair trial and the law was properly applied.

⁷ This section provides a basic overview of the U.S. immigration process, however, it is not meant to be a detailed explanation of current law and eligibility requirements. Immigration law is very complex and the laws may vary according to an individual's particular circumstances.

⁸ https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=offices.type&OfficeLocator.office_type=ZSY

⁹ <http://appeals.us-visa-now.com/appeal-to-board-of-immigration-appeals.htm>

¹⁰ Human Rights First: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/asylum/101/pdf/terminology-052305.pdf>

The BIA has broad discretionary powers in these cases, but will usually affirm the judge's decision. If the BIA upholds the removal order, in some cases judicial review may be available from the U.S. Courts of Appeal.¹¹

AVENUES TO APPLY FOR LEGAL STATUS

Different ways of applying for a visa from outside the United States include: sponsorship by a family member or employer, applying to the diversity visa lottery, etc. All applications must be approved by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Entering as a refugee is an entirely different process, as refugees are identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), extensively interviewed and screened, and then enter the United States through the State Department and are welcomed by U.S. non-profit service providers.

The initial step of obtaining an immigrant visa can be a very lengthy ordeal. There is currently up to a 24-year wait for family-based visas and a 7-8 year wait for employment-based visas. The "diversity visa lottery" attempts to increase immigration from underrepresented countries by putting 50,000 visas in a lottery, but simultaneously excludes applicants in certain countries with many residents seeking to enter the United States.

APPLYING TO ADJUST STATUS TO A LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT (LPR)

Immigrants must submit an application for a Green Card and an application fee of \$1,010 per person as of December 2008. They cannot have any medical issues, financial issues, criminal history, or previous immigration violations that would make them "inadmissible." Immigrants who entered without permission generally cannot adjust to LPR or any other status while in the United States and most are barred from re-entry.

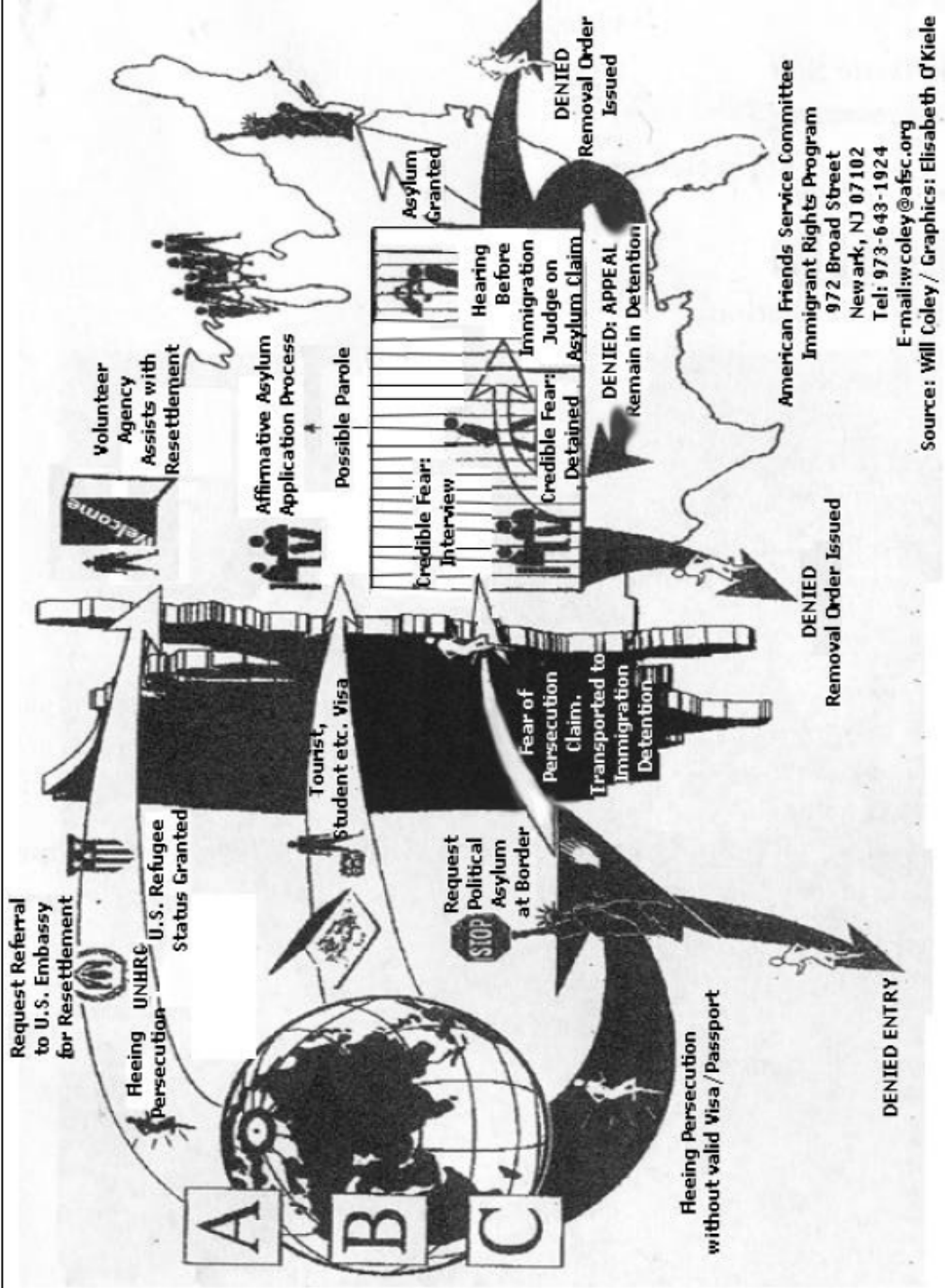
APPLYING FOR U.S. CITIZENSHIP

A Lawful Permanent Resident may apply for citizenship after five years (three years if sponsored by a U.S. Citizen spouse). A test of U.S. history and basic English is administered. Applicants must demonstrate "good moral character" and pay an application fee of \$675 per person as of December 2008. Anyone born in the United States is automatically a U.S. Citizen. Children of parents who naturalize may automatically derive U.S. Citizenship.¹²

¹¹ <http://www.smoosmanlaw.com/removal.html> Information included here from: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services www.uscis.gov; National Association of Foreign Born www.foreignborn.com; Maryland Catholic Conference www.mdcathon.org

¹² http://www.uscis.gov/files/native/documents/Citizenship_2004.pdf

Applying for Refugee Status / Political Asylum in the United States



Paths of Entry

- A. Refugee Resettlement
- B. Travel with Valid Documents
- C. Travel without Valid Documents

DEPORTATION SYSTEM: RAIDS TO DEPORTATION

ICE Raids and Sweeps



- Right to remain silent
- Access to counsel/union (no free lawyer)
- Initial ICE interrogation and detention of detainees
- Treatment of detainees

- Some ICE trigger sites: factories, day laborer sites, apartments, homes, streets
- Workplace: warrant or employer consent
- ICE may coordinate with local police, parole or probation officers
- Note: Traffic and police stops can also trigger ICE action. See Criminal Justice map.

ICE Deportation

- Notice to Appear—48 hours?
- Assigned deportation officer
- Stipulated orders or voluntary departure
- Consulate help
- Old deportation orders
- ICE and law enforcement decides: *deportation* process and/or *criminal* prosecution

Detention

- Facilities: federal, local/county, private
- Transfers
- Bond by ICE?
- Jail staff vs. ICE officers
- Abuse and detention



Criminal Prosecution
See Criminal Justice Map

- Free lawyer available
- Deportation process happens simultaneously or after prosecution.

Deportation
If immigrant has a final administrative order of deportation/removal, and no stay of deportation, ICE may deport him/her. Consulate usually issues travel documents first.



What happens to my family?

- Separation and transfers
- Power of attorney
- Family detention
- Visitation/phone call

Immigration Courts

NO FREE LAWYER		
Bond Hearing Sets bond (if eligible).	Master Calendar Decides deportability, relief eligibility. May order release/removal.	Individual Hearing Reviews relief applications. Orders release/removal.
To appeal this Court's decision: BIA must receive appeal within 30 days!		

Federal Courts

- District Court:** Challenging Detention (habeas).
- Court of Appeals:** Reviews BIA's deportation decision.

Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)

- No free lawyer
- To appeal BIA decision: federal Court of Appeals must receive appeal within 30 days!

Created by Families for Freedom, National Immigration Project of the NLG, NYSDA Immigrant Defense Project, and Detention Watch Network (March 2007)



Photo by CWS Religious Services Program

Why Visit Immigration Detainees?

According to Jack Gibbs, author of “Four Problem Areas of Pre-Trial Detention,” “the rapid transition to detention is deeply unsettling. It can result in “confusion, distortions of reality, withdrawal, apathy, and ultimately psychological breakdown.”

A friendly visitor can help detained immigrants cope with the stress and isolation of detention and be a link to the “outside.” A visitor’s presence ensures the detained immigrant that he or she is not forgotten. Wrote Gibbs, “support in the community may be a ‘stability zone’ which softens the psychological impact of confinement.” This is especially the case in conditions in which the detention involves violence and coercion (IDC, 2008). While providing stability for the detained immigrants, your visits may also be able to provide individuals with the knowledge that there is someone with whom they can share their concerns, someone who cares for their welfare amidst hopelessness and confusion.

In addition to the psychological impact of detention, many detained immigrants have previously experienced psychologically stressful conditions and in many cases may be recovering from torture, human trafficking, and other instances of trauma. Under these circumstances, it is extremely important for individuals to have a positive person in their life and to establish a meaningful relationship in the absence of support when their friends and family cannot visit them.

Gibbs continued, “detained immigrants face an information deficit due in part to the system.” Another researcher notes that “in the ennui of the cell, a [detained immigrant’s] demand for information and stimulation may become acute and urgent.”

A CONSISTENT VISITOR CAN PROVIDE A THREAD OF STABILITY IN A SITUATION OF CHAOS: FOR EXAMPLE, OFFICERS CHANGING SHIFTS AND RULES, DORM MATES SUDDENLY LEAVING, ROUND-THE-CLOCK “COUNTS” AND SEARCHES, DELAYS IN THE DETAINED IMMIGRANT’S SCHEDULED COURT APPEARANCES, ETC. VISITORS AFFIRM AN INDIVIDUAL’S HUMANITY IN THE MIDST OF A DEHUMANIZING SCENARIO.

“Surveys typically show that boredom is one of the most common and damaging problems in detention. Unable to alleviate tension, trauma, and anxiety through activity, the [detained immigrant’s] boredom may reinforce these feelings,” Gibbs said. Visits give individuals in detention a “break” from the boredom and serve to boost their morale and help them refocus their emotions on positive relationships.

Visiting immigrants in detention is also important because it may be one of their first experiences in the United States. By visiting a detained immigrant, you can demonstrate that you care about their situation and that others do as well. Moreover, your presence in the detention center might also play a strong preventative role in human rights abuses.

In addition to providing compassion, an open mind, and willingness to listen, visiting immigrants in detention is also a great benefit to visitors. Through this experience, visitors will be able to develop a deeper sense of the struggles that others face and to witness the powerful role that they may have in creating change for one person and the world around them with a simple smile, interest, and conversation.



How to Start a Visitation Program



Photo by PC(USA)

How to Start a Visitation Program

This toolkit will help individuals and community organizations create and implement a detention center visitation program. Please feel free to contact persons mentioned in the “resources” section for help, as they have facilitated similar programs. This toolkit should be used with their help and with augmented information specific to your volunteers and the detention center(s) you visit. Please share the experience you gain with Detention Watch Network – it will benefit others who are facilitating visitor programs! Also, please note that while much of this guide is designed to help individuals, community organizations, and religious congregations start programs to visit immigrants in detention, the process is the same for individuals who wish to go on their own. Individuals going alone should skip steps 2a and 3.

Overview of Steps

1. Locate the immigration detention center(s) near you
2. Organize your detention visitation program leadership team
3. Recruit, screen and train a small group of “pioneer” visitors
4. Identify detained immigrants who need and want visits
5. Begin visits
6. Expand the program
7. Develop and utilize resources

1. LOCATE THE IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTER(S) NEAR YOU

Visit www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/dwnmap to locate the detention site(s) near you. Note: It is very possible that one of your local jails (whether public, private, local, state, or federal) is housing individuals in detention.

If you live near one of the eight federally run immigration detention centers (“Service Processing Centers”) you can contact the Religious Services Program Coordinator for information about how to volunteer. See “Resources” section for the location of those eight centers.

For other centers, you will most likely need to do some background research on visitation policies and procedures.

Check first whether the detention site has a website – many actually do. You can also phone the detention center for information about visiting. You do not need to say that you are starting a visitor program. Say simply that you want to visit an individual in detention and you would like guidance on:

- ❖ Are individuals in detention allowed visitors from family and friends? How often and for what length of time? Are detained immigrants limited to a certain number and/or length of visit on a given day?
- ❖ Are visits contact or non-contact? (visits through plated glass and via video conferencing are increasing).
- ❖ What is the procedure for writing to a detained immigrant?
- ❖ What information about the individual in detention (name and Alien Registration Number “A Number”, etc.) will I need to bring to visit him/her?
- ❖ Does an individual in detention need to sign a request or put me on a list in order for me to visit?
- ❖ May I bring or send in books, magazines, newspapers, food, cash or money orders, clothing, or other items for an individual in detention? What is the procedure?
- ❖ Is there information the detention center needs about visitors in advance (some facilities require full name and Social Security numbers for background checks)? What information do visitors need to bring in order to visit a detained immigrant (e.g. type of ID, other information)?
- ❖ What restrictions are placed on the objects I will be able to keep with me during a visit (e.g. cellphone, wallet, papers, a book)?
- ❖ What are visiting hours?
- ❖ Is there a dress code for visitors?

Visiting a corporate-owned detention center and visiting a local or county jail may be different experiences. In local and county jails, the logistics will vary depending on the facility in terms of with whom you need to collaborate to gain access and what populations (criminal, non-criminal, or both) are being served. A good place to start would be to talk with the volunteer coordinator and/or chaplain at the facility. Just the fact that volunteers are physically entering the unit – as opposed to being kept out on the other side of the glass – may impact the approach that a visitation program must take in order to get visiting privileges and then to be sustainable.

In most of the country, detained immigrants are kept in county houses of correction that contract with the Department of Homeland Security to house individuals in detention. Detained immigrants in county jails generally include a range of individuals who are detained pending deportation for everything from visa overstays to major felonies. Individuals in detention populations may vary by region.

In New England, for example, detained immigrants are kept in the county houses of correction. Asylum seekers in this region then are not held in detention but released into the community, so those in detention tend to be people who are not asylum seekers.

Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM) provides a program as follows: Volunteers go through 24 hours of training and then orientation and background check with the house of correction. They physically go into the units and

see whomever wants to speak with them at that time. There are repeat visitors, but volunteers are not matched with individuals in detention. They gained access through the chaplain there and through an agreement with ICE and the house of correction volunteer coordinator. Doing any publicity or having sustained or outside relationships with the detained immigrants would jeopardize their program. They do not give out personal contact information, write letters, make phone calls on detained immigrants' behalf, or participate in any interaction outside of the facility – these are the prison's rules. If there's any advocacy they can do within the facility, they work with the house of corrections staff. In a way, the groups' hands are tied on a lot of things, but this allows them to focus fully on active listening and to fulfill their goal, which is to show detained immigrants that the wider community hasn't forgotten them, no matter what their situation.

A program might be similar to this or completely different. In some places, volunteers can serve as penpals, have a one-on-one continual relationship with individuals in detention, etc. It is common, however, for visitors to refrain from demonstrating outside of facilities in order to be allowed by the facility staff to visit detained immigrants inside.

2. ORGANIZE YOUR DETENTION VISITATION PROGRAM LEADERSHIP TEAM

a. Establish interest and leadership commitment

- ❖ Gauge the interest of your community or group with which you would like to start a visitation program (e.g. send an e-mail, host an information session).
- ❖ After determining interest in a visitation program, establish a few individuals who can serve as leaders in the group (about one leader for every five persons).
- ❖ Meet with these individuals and begin to delegate tasks (contacting the facility, recruiting volunteers, ensuring all volunteer forms are filled out, briefing the group on the realities of detention in your area and where detained immigrants are from, etc.).
- ❖ Set up a schedule of meetings (both for the leadership team as well as for the volunteers). These meetings should help coordinate the logistics of the program as well as provide support for visitors. Additionally, these meetings should emphasize and implement self-care principles.

b. Agree on purpose and parameters

Within the leadership committee, decide on the goals of the program as well as the boundaries or parameters. The purpose and parameters are important to establish so that all the members – both leaders and volunteers – have a clear idea of the goals of the program and organize their initiatives around these goals.

Specific questions to help discuss these issues might be:

- ❖ What are the purposes of our visits?
- ❖ What do we hope to provide the individuals in detention?
- ❖ How can we best express our commitment to the individuals in detention?
- ❖ What do we hope to gain from this program?

- ❖ What should we be aware of before and during our visits (e.g. not to proselytize, how to deal with unavoidable power dynamics between visitor and individuals in detention, confidentiality of information exchanged between the visitor and detained immigrant, the nature of the relationship between visitor and detained immigrants)?
- ❖ What makes a successful visitation program?

“Visitors seek to provide a compassionate face and an affirmation of humanity in the midst of a dehumanizing scenario.”

The answers to these questions must be extremely clear when beginning a visitation program. All of these issues are extremely important, but one which should be underscored is the “nature of the relationship between the visitor and the detained immigrant.” It is imperative that visitors understand the boundaries of the relationship and that they should not transgress these boundaries for any reason (e.g. getting too emotionally involved with or becoming romantically interested in a detained immigrant).



Visitors in The Riverside Church Sojourners Immigration Detention Visitor Project, at Elizabeth (N.J.) Detention Center. Sojourner's Photo

The Riverside Church project provides a model. It seeks out individuals in detention with no other friends or family nearby to visit them and matches volunteer visitors with them for 1:1 sustained relationships. Usually these are asylum seekers, and occasionally others whose family/friends lack the documentation to visit without risking arrest themselves.

Visitors “seek to provide a compassionate face and an affirmation of humanity in the midst of a dehumanizing scenario. We don’t visit as social workers or lawyers, but simply as friends. We urge visitors to recognize their role as listeners, allowing the detained immigrant to guide the conversation.”

Riverside’s visitor project has a non-proselytism policy. Instead, visitors try to support individuals in detention in rallying their own faith resources to cope with the stresses of detention. Riverside believes seeking converts is not an acceptable activity for a visitation program, for two reasons.

Visitors have more “power” than detained immigrants, much like doctors have more “power” than their patients and clergy more “power” than their parishioners. When there is such a power differential, the person with the greater power needs to be very careful not to abuse the power differential or make it seem as if participating in a certain religion is a criteria that must be met in order to be visited.

Furthermore, some asylum seekers have suffered religious persecution, often facing death due to their beliefs, making it even more inappropriate to attempt to convince them to change their religion.

c. Set up your systems

A few “files” will help you keep your visitor program running smoothly. These typically will include a volunteer spreadsheet with names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers including cell phone, languages spoken, interests)

Example

Detention Visitation Volunteer List				
Names	Email	Phone/Cell	Languages Spoken	Interests

Also, create a Detained Immigrant-Visitor Match List which would be a list of individuals in detention who need visitors (include, names, Alien #s, countries of origin, languages spoken, visitor name, date visited).

Example

Detained Immigrant-Visitor Match List					
Name of Detained Immigrant	Alien #'s	Country of Origin	Languages Spoken	Visitor Name	

If your church or organization is providing transport to the detention center (e.g. church vehicle, car pools), decide how to announce trips and receive RSVPs. An email listserv can work very well.

Determine how you will “track” visits and make sure that each individual in detention who wants a visitor can get one. Additionally, for the detained immigrants’ sake, leaders need to ensure that visitors are meeting their commitment to visit 1:1 at least twice a month. If your visitors will be going to the detention center on their own and/or at different times than the group, you might require them to email the group’s coordinator after each visit to report, simply, “I (name) visited (name) for (length of visit) on (date).” If your visitors go to the detention center together, you might get a “log book” and have your visitors jot the information right after the visits. Visitors should also “log” when a detained immigrant is no longer at the detention center (released, transferred, or deported).

Plan to meet regularly as a leader team for coordination and with all visitors for debriefing and continued training and support. Report regularly to your congregation or organization.

3. Recruit, screen and train a small group of “pioneer” visitors

Recruit your pioneer group of volunteers, who are willing to meet detained immigrants from around the world as an act of friendship. It may be good to start with a group of about five people who can be trained initially and then empowered to train other volunteers in the future.

Volunteer recruitment:

- Recruit volunteers from your organization, family, and friends.
- Recruit from other congregations of various faiths (temples, churches, mosques, etc.).
- Recruit from organizations throughout your city (civic groups, colleges, etc.).

The ability to speak a language other than English is not required but can be a “plus” and helpful for matching visitors 1:1 with individuals in detention. Do NOT contact detained immigrants’ local consulates or embassies to inform them of your program or to recruit volunteers (asylum seekers by definition are fleeing countries whose governments could not or would not protect them and/or who were their persecutors). Check with individuals in detention before contacting their country’s local expatriate community for prospective visitors, as there often are political and ethnic considerations and conflicts. See pages 15-20 for more guidance and structure on volunteer training.

4. Identify detained immigrants who need and want visits

Your goal is to find individuals in detention who need and want visits. The detention center itself will not be able to give you detained immigrant’ names, nor should you ask the detention center for names. Remember, individuals in detention are in U.S. government custody and in sensitive legal proceedings. That said, there are ways to find individuals in detention who need and want visits. The detention center might be willing to post a flyer in dormitory areas for detained immigrants interested in receiving visits. See pages 22-31. You might also try the following resource people in your community:

- ❖ Local immigration lawyers or legal clinics. The Detention Map at www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/dwnmap and directory of legal service providers at http://www.abanet.org/publicserv/immigration/legal_services_directory_map.shtml may be helpful.
- ❖ Detention center chaplain(s) and other faith or community leaders.
- ❖ Former detained immigrants.
- ❖ Current individuals in detention. Once you make your first contact, ask them if there are others in their facility who don’t have friends or family nearby to visit them.
- ❖ New Sanctuary Movement or other advocacy and support groups for immigrants.
- ❖ Local human rights groups concerned with immigration detention.
- ❖ The Religious Services Program at eight federally operated detention centers. See page 65 for contact information for these programs.

When you call, describe your interest in helping, rather than pursuing a project, in order to make this effort less threatening to the detention center. First Friends, an immigration detention visitor program in Elizabeth, N.J., has a “visitor request form” that detained immigrants fill out to confirm that they would like a visitor – a sample can be found in the appendix. You could ask local immigration lawyers to take some forms to their clients, who in turn could distribute them to fellow detained immigrants who would like to request a visitor. Also, once you start to visit someone, that person may be willing to distribute forms.



Normally, individuals in detention wanting visitors mail their visitor request form back to the visitor program, so be sure to include an address: Elizabeth (N.J.) Detention Center. Perhaps a community center, place of worship, or P.O. Box.

Typically, individuals in detention are allowed only a certain number of visits and/or a certain amount of time for visits each day (check your detention center's specific policies). Imagine that you visit in the morning, and the detained immigrant's brother travels a long distance to visit in the afternoon but is turned away because the individual in detention already has had his/her visit for the day! Seeking out detained immigrants without friends or family to visit them avoids any danger of such a conflict – and prioritizes visiting individuals in detention who most need it. Of course, if the detained immigrant gets friend/family visits only on certain days, you could be sure to visit other days, but try to communicate with the individuals in detention and be familiar with the detention facility's policies so that you do not inconvenience a detained immigrant's family member, pastor, or lawyer who may also be visiting.

5. Begin visits

Training and orientation of new visitors is ESSENTIAL. Experienced visitors should “mentor” new visitors. It is recommended that newly trained visitors make a trial visit, accompanying an experienced visitor to meet the detained immigrant he/she usually visits. This offers them an opportunity to test whether this volunteer opportunity is really for them, and it helps visitor programs weed out the “merely curious” (try to do that even before the mentored first visit). Then if the visitor is ready, match him/her 1:1 for a sustained relationship with an individual in detention who has requested and is awaiting a visitor.

6. Expand the program

Establish recruiting techniques that will publicize your program and inform as many people as possible. A few suggestions include:

- ❖ Develop a program brochure and place copies in public posting areas.
- ❖ Present to your church, school, etc. about your experience.
- ❖ Contact organizations where there might be interest. Pro bono lawyers might especially be interested.
- ❖ Advertise with announcements through campuses, congregations, etc.
- ❖ Speak with your local newspaper regarding the program for a story (free publicity!).
- ❖ Talk with neighbors, friends and family to raise awareness and gain support.
- ❖ Hold an information session so that people can learn about detention and the importance of visitation.

7. Develop and utilize resources

This step entails the development of a resource database that your program can draw from. Some resources are listed in this manual, but resources such as local civil rights/human rights groups should also be contacted to assist with this initiative. Also, creating a list of attorneys that may be willing to help the program in different capacities would be helpful. The leadership team and volunteer base can both be instrumental in this process of continuing to improve the operation of your visitation program.

Volunteer Training

The success of your visitation program will depend on the volunteers. They will be crucial to fulfilling the program's goals and in helping the program continue to grow. This brief overview is designed to help you give prospective volunteers the information and skills necessary to visit individuals in detention effectively. Following are some talking points and some handouts. The talking points are intended to be addressed with the volunteers and the handouts serve as summaries. The handouts are more elaborate, so it is helpful to walk through them with volunteers. The following bullet points are suggestions of what should be addressed in volunteer training:

- A. **Introduction:** You may want to use a film such as “The Visitor” to engage the audience and to give them a story to connect with.
 - a. Immigrants in detention—who are they and why we are visiting them.
 - b. Important background information (process of applying for asylum/refugee status, helpful terminology, etc.).

- B. **Getting acquainted with the program**
 - a. What does this detention visitation program consist of?
 - b. What are the requirements of the visitation program?
 - c. What will be the volunteer's time commitment to the program?
 - d. What is expected of the volunteer in this program?
 - e. What support should the volunteer expect to get from the program leaders?

- C. **Becoming a volunteer**
 - a. Volunteer handouts—pulling together all the information. Use these handouts to provide a summary of what was addressed at the training as well as to provide some additional important points (the role of the volunteer, steps for a good visit, and issues that should be referred to program leaders).
 - b. Fill out an application. (See sample volunteer applications in the appendix)
 - c. Volunteer Contract

A good sample “volunteer checklist” can be found below:

Volunteer Checklist:

Thank you for your interest in volunteering! Please read the checklist below to determine your interest, ability, and schedule for taking part in this immigrant detention visitation program.

- ✓ Learn more about immigrants in detention
- ✓ Develop an understanding of the program
- ✓ Assess your ability to partake in the program
- ✓ Determine your interest in the project and in what capacity you wish to volunteer
- ✓ Determine your schedule with your availability
- ✓ Read about the role of the volunteer visitor and steps for a good visit
- ✓ Contact your program leader with any questions

*Visitor Training
Materials*

Getting Acquainted with the Program

What does this immigration detention program consist of?

This detention visitation program consists of weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly visits to an immigrant in detention. The process will begin with volunteers being matched with a detained immigrant and the volunteers will agree to commit to a certain number of visits per month. The goal of the visits is to provide the individual in detention with some companionship and morale during their difficult time in detention.

What are the requirements of the visitation program?

This visitation program requires the volunteer to be committed and consistent in their visits with detained immigrants. Oftentimes, you may be the only individual in the person's life, so consistency is especially important for their morale. Persons without current immigration status should NOT visit detention facilities, since they could be apprehended and detained or deported themselves.

What will be the volunteer's time commitment to the program?

Addressing this question will depend on what you decide for the structure of the program and the frequency of the visits. Generally, you can assume that each visit will be about an hour (this amount of time may also depend on the particular facility). By estimating the time it takes to get to the facility, you will have a realistic idea of the time commitment of each visit.

What is expected of the volunteer in this program?

Volunteers are expected to be sensitive to the detained immigrants' needs. Additionally, it is important to point out that volunteers should not proselytize in the detention facilities. Respecting the detained immigrant's faith or lack thereof is crucial, as many of them have fled their countries due to religious persecution. Having said that, we also encourage the detained immigrant to talk about the ways his/her faith helps him/her cope with suffering and stress in a way that puts the needs of the individual in detention first. Therefore, any conversation on religion should be initiated by the detained immigrant and not the volunteer. Volunteers are also expected to communicate any issues or concerns to the program leaders. Common concerns might include not being able to make scheduled visits, dealing with or navigating the process of setting boundaries with the detained immigrant, etc.

What support should the volunteer expect to get from the program leaders?

The volunteer should expect to get consistent support from the program leaders. Program leaders will be in continuous communication with volunteers and will address any concerns that arise promptly. Program leaders will serve as the liaisons between the detention facilities and volunteers, so volunteers should expect to receive support regarding any issues that arise due to the visits at the detention facilities.

"Volunteers are expected to be sensitive to the detained immigrants' needs".

The Role of the Volunteer Visitor

Volunteers provide an important means of support for detained immigrants who often do not have friends or family nearby. Their role is one of friendship, goodwill, and concern for the detained individual's welfare. The visitor-detained immigrant relationship is uniquely rewarding for both parties.

As a volunteer, your visits will provide:

- A boost to morale.
- Friendship and a smiling face.
- A time when the individual in detention can put their worries aside and just chat with someone.
- An important source of hope for a detained immigrant.
- The opportunity to help individuals in detention with their English language skills.
- A chance for asylum seekers who were detained at a port of entry to learn more about the United States than within the walls of the detention center or jail or what they see on TV.
- An opportunity for you, the volunteer, to learn more about the person you visit, their story, and the legal and administrative processes that asylum seekers and other immigrants face in the United States.

As a volunteer, you are:

- NOT a lawyer to help someone figure out how to get out of detention or file a claim.
- NOT a mental health professional to assess and treat symptoms of mental illness.
- NOT a social worker.
- NOT a missionary or pastor trying to convert detained immigrants.
- NOT a source of financial support for the detained immigrant or their friends and family.

Nevertheless, helping detained immigrants contact organizations that can provide legal, medical, or psychological assistance is very appropriate and helpful for a detained immigrant. Contact your group leader for assistance.

It is recommended that you plan to visit an individual in detention at least twice a month for at least three to four months. It takes time and a reasonable frequency of visits to develop a relationship. When concluding a visit, always indicate when you will be back and then keep that commitment. Your visits are a source of constancy in a turbulent time, so be consistent. Let them know if you will be away for awhile, ask them if they would like another visitor while you are gone, and try to send them a note or a letter while you are gone. Take some time to develop a relationship with detained immigrants before giving them your home address or phone number, agreeing to contact the detained immigrant's lawyer or family members, etc. (unless truly urgent). "Just visiting" is enough! And that is all the visitation program requires.

Later, you may make the personal choice to do more (send books or pocket money, make phone calls on the detained immigrant's behalf, give your home address or phone number – remember, the detained immigrant will most likely be calling you collect). Some visitor programs encourage their visitors to have individuals in detention write them care of their church or another organization, and to give a reliable church/organization phone number to detained immigrants for use in emergencies.

Issues That Should be Referred to Program Leaders

- Legal matters: upcoming court dates, need for a lawyer, parole affidavits, filing appeals, etc.
- Mental and physical health concerns: depression, suicidal symptoms, prolonged illness, sudden weight loss, etc.
- Urgent detained immigrant needs: contact with family, immediate or impending release.
- Allegations of mistreatment or abuse of a detained immigrant inside the facility.
- Unprofessional conduct of detention center staff towards the volunteer.
- Requests for material assistance (e.g. money for a detained immigrant's account).
- Other questions or concerns the volunteer is uncertain how to deal with.

Know your boundaries. Determine which needs you can meet and which ones you cannot.

Steps for a Good Visit¹³

1. Introduce yourself, what group you are with, how you got the detained immigrant's name, and that you are there as a friend – not to sell anything, teach anything, or make anything happen for them legally.
2. Find out what name the person prefers to use and repeat it back to them.
3. Let the person guide the conversation. Say, "What would you like to talk about?" Some conversation starters might include: "Tell me about yourself." "How was your week?" "Have you been following (developments in current events, sports, etc.)?" "Tell me about your culture."

The detained immigrant is likely to ask you to say a word about yourself (your family, job, interests, etc.). As in any relationship, sometimes it takes a visit or two to "break the ice." Give it time!

4. Keep in mind that the individual in detention may want to just talk about the present and not the past. Don't pry into the details of their background or case. The detained immigrant may tell you their story when they are ready. Alternatively, they may never feel comfortable telling anyone besides their lawyer and the immigration judge.

5. Convey what you understand. ("You say you are not receiving any letters.") Be aware of non-verbal communication. Listen (and reflect back) not just the content but also the feelings of the conversation. ("You feel scared.") Use non-verbal communication yourself. Your smile, your hand gestures, touching hands (even through glass) can be powerfully encouraging.

6. Whether or not you share the same faith as the person you visit, you may find yourself conversing about the role of faith in coping with suffering and stress. If faith is important to the detained immigrant, ask how it sustains him/her. Please remember that you are there as a listener and friend to uplift detained immigrants through their own beliefs, not as a proselytizer seeking to convert.

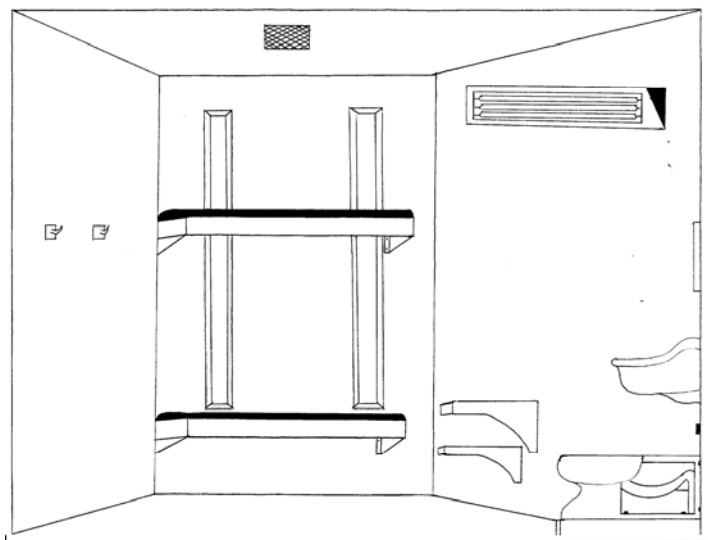
7. Know your boundaries. Determine which needs you can meet and which ones you cannot. At the request of an individual in detention, volunteers may be permitted to give money, mail something to the family member of

¹³ These steps are adapted from *The Riverside Church Sojourners Immigration Detention Visitor Project First Friends Handbook*, originally developed by Will Coley/Jesuit Refugee Service.

a detained immigrant, etc. if, and only if, the volunteer feels comfortable doing so. This is something you will have to decide within your group to help your volunteers set healthy boundaries while also providing assistance to their new friends.

8. End the visit by letting the detained immigrant know when you will be back. Say something encouraging and/or affirming to them and that you look forward to talking more with them soon.

9. Do not make any promises, unless you are certain you can keep them.



Drawing submitted by Jenny Polak. A detainee in CCA Eloy was asked to draw the prison while they waited for a court date. Author anonymous.

10. Make sure to record your visit and let your group coordinators know how your visit went in general terms, being sure to not violate important confidentiality standards.

11. Abide by the detention center's rules and be courteous to detention center staff at all times. The process of visiting carries with it certain stresses. For example, you may be searched, or have to wait a long time to see the person you came to visit, or become irritated by the attitude or behavior of a detention center staff member, or be surprised to learn that the detained immigrant you visit is no longer there. "Losing your cool" will serve no purpose other than, perhaps, to block you and others from visiting. Detention center staff have policies and procedures they must adhere to, and their work is not always easy. Addressing them with respect and professional cordiality is not only appropriate, but helpful to your goal of being able to continue to visit individuals in detention.

12. After each visit, let your group leader know simply that "I (name) visited (name) for (length of visit) on (date)." Let your group leader know if there are any problems that need to be attended to. It is also important to note if a detained immigrant has been (or is about to be) released, moved or deported. If you need to stop visiting someone for any reason, inform the individual in detention and your group leader, who can ask another volunteer to visit that detained immigrant.

Confidentiality

Respecting the confidentiality of the detained immigrant's background and legal case must be a high priority. Detained immigrants are in sensitive legal proceedings. Many (especially asylum seekers) may fear for their own lives and the lives of family members with them or in another country if word gets out that they are in a U.S. detention center. Many individuals in detention even refuse to speak about their immigration cases with other detained immigrants. A high level of confidentiality is a sign of respect for the individual in detention. Strict confidentiality protects both the detained immigrant and the visitor. With this in mind, visitors should follow the following guidelines:

1. Do not discuss or communicate information regarding an individual in detention's case with other volunteers, detention facility employees, other detained immigrants or deportation officers at the facility or when you leave the detention center.
2. If you want to tell other people about the experience of visiting, ask the detained immigrant's permission before sharing any part of his/her story. Use a pseudonym and a regional identification only (e.g. say "Africa" instead of "Guinea," for example).
3. Visitors need to find ways to work out their emotions following a stressful visit (e.g. you've heard disturbing details of your detained immigrant's personal story) without violating their confidentiality. (WRONG: "A detained immigrant was raped repeatedly ..." RIGHT: "A detained immigrant told me disturbing details about what he/she went through and I'm feeling very upset.")
4. Do NOT contact the detained immigrant's embassy or consulate! For example, asylum seekers by definition are fleeing a country where their government persecuted them or where the government could not or would not protect them. The LAST thing the individual in detention needs is for someone to inform his/her government that he/she is in U.S. detention.
5. Similarly, do not contact local expatriates from the detained immigrant's home country without checking with them first; there often are political and ethnic considerations and conflicts.

Common Questions from Individuals In Detention

“I don’t have a lawyer. I have a court date soon! What can I do?”

Unlike criminal courts, there is no ‘public defender’ for non-citizens in immigration courts. It is possible and likely for someone to seek relief from removal and go through the process without a lawyer. Studies confirm that an asylum seeker will have a better chance of success if he/she has a lawyer. There may be a local non-profit legal organization that offers pro bono (free) legal representation to eligible detained immigrants, and sometimes local attorneys will provide pro bono assistance. In some detention centers, these agencies work together to meet and ‘screen’ all newly arrived detained immigrants. Look for a list of such agencies in the detention center, online, or contact a local lawyer who may know or the local bar association for names of immigration attorneys (or see a list of many below). Individuals in detention should be able to make free telephone calls to potential lawyers, but may need a volunteer’s help finding a list of possibilities and doing some initial research that requires the internet. It will be up to your group to determine your policy in regards to this issue. Regardless, all volunteers should have a cursory knowledge of resources in order to best inform and help detained immigrants should they have this question.

These organizations may also be helpful to you:

Justice for Our Neighbors: Free legal assistance - general@jfon-umcor.org, (240)450-1186
<http://qbgm-umc.org/UMcor/refugees/justicenetwork.stm>

American Immigration Lawyers Association: Network of immigration lawyers - www.aila.org

American Bar Association Commission on Immigration:
http://www.abanet.org/publicserv/immigration/legal_services_directory_map.shtml

The National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild – www.nationalimmigrationproject.org

American Civil Liberties Union – www.aclu.org

“I haven’t seen my lawyer in weeks and I can’t speak to him/her on the telephone! Why won’t s/he come see me?!”

Attorneys are often strapped for time. From the detained immigrants’ perspective, their cases do not move as quickly as they would like them to. Many individuals in detention do not understand that oftentimes their lawyer can best help them from their office and not necessarily by visiting them. Encourage the detained immigrant to continue to call their lawyer’s office and leave messages, especially if the call is in regard to previously undisclosed information regarding the detained immigrant’s asylum claim. It is also suggested that the volunteer can help by calling and reminding the lawyer of the detained immigrant’s need to see him/her. Sometimes just knowing that someone else is interested in a detained immigrant’s case can prompt a faster response from a lawyer.

“I don’t feel well. I saw the doctor-they didn’t help-and don’t know what’s wrong.”

often complain about the medical services in detention. Often the complaints hinge on lack of communication. Encourage the detained immigrant to submit written requests to seek medical attention and to keep copies of these requests. The clinics inside the detention centers have access to telephonic interpreters but seem to rarely use them (perhaps to save time and money). Tell the individual in detention to insist on having an interpreter over the telephone when they visit with the doctor. The volunteer can write a note for them to take to the doctor which says, “I don’t understand. I would like an interpreter over the telephone.” You can also document the detained immigrant’s stories for advocates to use in bringing the case up with the detained

immigrant's lawyer, the detention center administration, or even government representatives to press for better medical attention in the facility.

More Ways to Get Involved

- Educate others by hosting an informational meeting on immigration detention.
- Coordinate with a local community agency involved in immigration and/or refugee work to send a representative to speak at a meeting. In turn, help them with their initiatives.
- Volunteer to be the PR person for your local group and contact all types of media for stories on your work and the lives of individuals in detention.
- Invite a former detained immigrant or another immigrant or refugee to come speak about their experience to your congregation.
- View a documentary or video about immigration detention such as “The Visitor,” written and directed by Tom McCarthy; “Abandoned,” distributed by Bullfrog Films, and “Chasing Freedom.”
- Host a “welcoming fellowship” event that invites immigrant and/or refugee congregations to a shared event (such as a potluck, etc.) with your congregation and creates opportunities for interaction, shared stories, and budding friendships.
- Involve your congregation in helping newly arrived immigrants learn English.
- Be a Pen Pal to someone in immigration detention far from your home.
- Gather materials that could be utilized by detained immigrants such as books, specifically language dictionaries, educational supplies, etc. for the detention center library (check your local detention center for guidelines).
- Provide spiritual literature, books, and religious items for Religious Services Programs and local chaplains (e.g. Bibles, Torahs, and Qur’ans in various languages, rosaries, tefillin, prayer rugs, yarmulkes, Rastafarian crowns, kufis, crosses, devotionals, and other religious materials).
- Be a friend and assist those who have been released from detention. Contact local services providers, in your community that assist those who have been released from detention or other immigrants and refugees, and find out how you can be involved in their efforts.
- Provide temporary housing and assistance to a detained immigrant upon release from detention.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in support of refugees and immigrants and the contributions they make to our country and your community.
- During your personal devotional times and your worship services, pray for persons experiencing immigration problems and for those who are trying to meet their needs.
- Offer a “minute for immigrants in detention” during your worship service. Sponsor an “Immigration Sabbath Service” around World Refugee Day (June 20), Independence Day (July 4), or Thanksgiving.

- Organize your congregation to do focused reflection on immigration from a theological perspective – perhaps combine it with a Thanksgiving celebration.
- Speak out against xenophobia and the scapegoating of foreigners when you hear it.
- Transform your experience into policy change for fair, humane immigration reform that will unite families, reform visa policies, improve immigration detention conditions, make greater use of alternatives to detention, and allow undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status.
- Network with local and national organizations; sign up for advocacy alerts offered by organizations advocating for immigrants and refugees (see the “Resources” section of the appendix).

Educate

Coordinate

Volunteer

Correspond

Organize

Befriend

Network

Transforming Your Experience Into Policy Change

Many U.S. immigration detention centers are in need of improvement in terms of medical treatment, human rights, nutrition, access to legal counsel, and religious services. Since October 2003, at least 104 immigrants have died in detention centers for want of adequate medical treatment. The lack of medical attention is just one reflection of the challenging circumstances that detained immigrants face on a daily basis.

All of us have a responsibility to act to effect positive change on a national scale. Public policy advocacy provides us with another opportunity to achieve the ultimate goal of fair, humane treatment for all persons. Through advocacy you can prevent individuals from enduring the fate of Reverend Joseph Dantica. An 81-year-old Baptist minister in Haiti, Dantica fled his country when his church was set on fire by gangs. He arrived in Miami with a valid visa but decided to seek asylum because he was afraid of overstaying the time allotted by his visa. While being interviewed by an immigration officer, Dantica began to show dramatic signs of sickness. Medical attention was not provided by medical staff at the detention center and Dantica died a day later, chained to his bed¹⁴.

The resources listed will provide valuable information on these and other immigration-related issues. If you sign up for their advocacy alerts, you can receive the latest information regarding immigration reform efforts.

Detention Watch Network Action Alerts: www.detentionwatchnetwork.org

Church World Service Advocacy Alerts: www.churchworldservice.org

Human Rights First: www.humanrightsfirst.org/asylum/asylum.aspx

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Action Alerts: www.lirs.org/news/advoupdate.htm

National Immigration Forum: www.immigrationforum.org

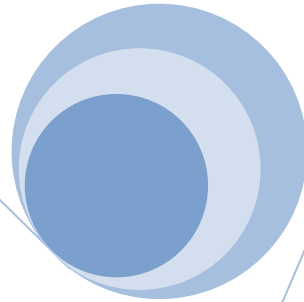
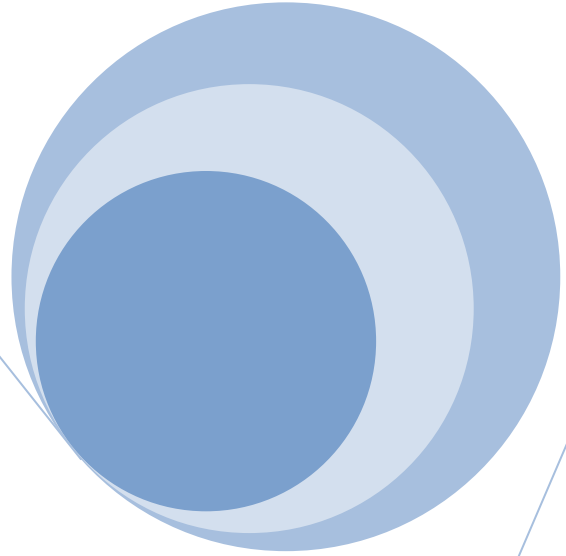
America's Voice: www.americasvoiceonline.org

Interfaith Immigration Coalition: www.interfaithimmigration.org

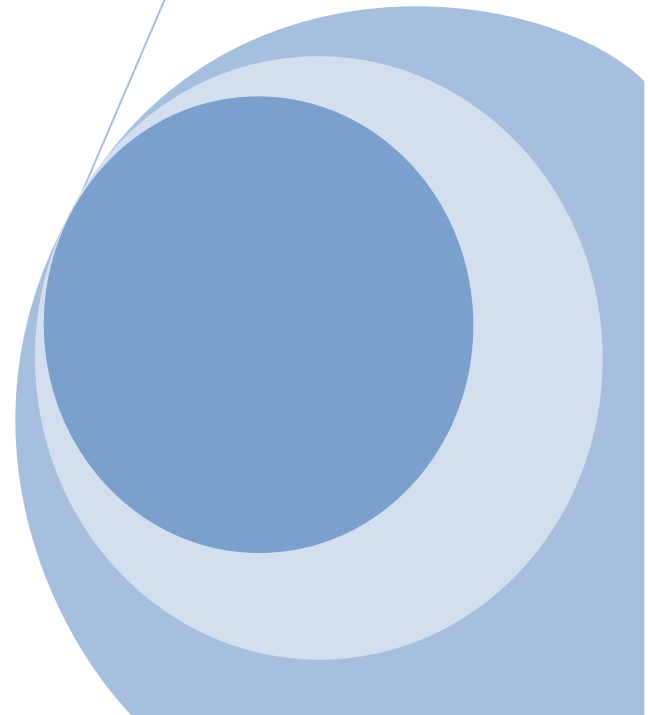
We can all take part in advocacy for these bills and other positive pieces of legislation by writing and making phone calls to Congress, authoring opinion pieces in local newspapers, engaging in online conversations about immigration, and seeking to educate those around us – our friends, family members, colleagues, church members, etc. – so that they are also informed and motivated to advocate for reform. New opportunities for advocacy will constantly arise as new legislation is introduced, and thus it is crucial that our involvement and education remain current *and interactive*. By signing up for advocacy alerts and continuing to visit immigrants in detention, we can transform our knowledge into dynamic advocacy to effectively and constructively express our faith and conviction. Advocacy furthers the service of visitation by championing justice and improving the way the United States welcomes the stranger. In the process of making a truly lasting impact on the country, the service of advocacy also creates change and renewal in the hearts of everyone involved.

We can all take part in advocacy for these bills and other positive pieces of legislation by writing and making phone calls to Congress...

¹⁴ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/immigration/cwc_d1p3.html



Appendices



Visitors Bring Human Touch to Detention Centers

New America Media, Commentary, David Fraccaro, Posted: May 29, 2008

Editor's Note: A program that pairs detained immigrants with visitors is bringing something new inside the walls of detention centers: hope. David Fraccaro is coordinator of The Riverside Church Sojourners Immigration Detention Visitor Project and a member of Detention Watch Network, a national coalition working to reform the immigration, detention and deportation system.

Today my heart screams for hope...

The hope of waking up one day free of bars and chains...

The hope of living a life without these problems...

The hope that one morning I will be able to smile again...

The hope of dreaming of a peaceful future full of happiness...

The hope of never again stumbling upon an obstacle so difficult to overcome...

The hope of waking up, only to find that everything that has happened to me would only be a dream...

This hope, like the word itself, is only a hope.

NEW YORK — A young Colombian woman detained at Elizabeth Detention Center and Hudson County Jail in New Jersey for more than a year wrote this reflection on hope in December 2007. She had escaped traumatic conflict and abuse in Colombia, and had hoped for the warm, open and secure welcome promised by the Statue of Liberty.

But when she asked for political asylum upon arrival in the United States, the reception was far from welcoming. She was arrested and imprisoned in a windowless converted warehouse. In January 2008, she was deported.

My experience visiting detained asylum seekers during the past five years has opened my eyes to the suffering of these most vulnerable people held for months, sometimes years, in detention centers and jails across the United States.

For nearly 10 years, the Sojourners Immigration Detention Visitor Project, a social justice ministry of The Riverside Church in New York City, has recruited, trained and transported volunteers, matching them one-on-one with detained asylum seekers.

Each week, members of our volunteer corps—students, nurses, artists, business people, scientists and others—travel together in a church van from Manhattan to visit Elizabeth Detention Center, located on a dead-end street in a warehouse district near Newark Airport.

The detained immigrants we visit come from Somalia, Tibet, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Kashmir and other countries where people suffer severe human rights violations.

These visits bring us face to face with detained immigrants' stark daily reality. They are not criminals, but their possessions have been confiscated and they have been given prison uniforms and an alien number bracelet. They are forced to spend 22 to 23 hours every day in the same "dormitory" with toilets and showers open to

public view. Their one hour of “outdoor” recreation is in a large room with a skylight. The food is substandard; mail, phone, and television privileges are strictly monitored, and solitary confinement is often the “solution” for the sick, the troubled and any who resist rules.

Visitors seek to provide a compassionate face and an affirmation of humanity in the midst of a dehumanizing scenario. We don’t visit as social workers or lawyers, but simply as friends. We urge visitors to recognize their role as listeners, allowing the detained immigrant to guide the conversation.

As a result of powerful reporting on deaths in detention by The New York Times, The Washington Post and CBS’s 60 Minutes¹⁵, and the recent release of the powerful new film *The Visitor* by former Sojourners volunteer Tom McCarthy, there is potential for greater outcry against the U.S. detention of asylum seekers. As more Americans realize what goes on behind prison walls, we hope they will join us in urging the United States to seek alternatives to detention so that immigrants are only held in detention facilities as a last resort and jails are never used for this purpose.

In the meantime, we are committed to visiting the detained, and working with groups in cities near detention centers to begin their own visitation programs.

To learn more about the visitation program, please contact sojourners@theriversidechurchny.org

Also see: <http://sojournersvisitorprogram.blogspot.com>

¹⁵ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/immigration/cwc_d1p3.html,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/opinion/06tue1.html>, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/05/09/60minutes/main4083279.shtml>

Immigrant Detention Visitor Experiences

Visitor: "Visits 'release' individuals in detention, giving them a break from their current reality."

Sally Ahearn, New Jersey

"As a member of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, N.J., I joined the Peace & Justice Committee. I volunteered to start visiting a detained immigrant at Elizabeth Detention Center. First Friends trained me and assigned me to a man from India. He was sweet and never had an unkind word to say about anybody the entire year I visited him. He was charming and had a winning smile.

He was incarcerated for 18 months. I would send him books, which he read avidly. He told me that there was only one television for 40 men in a dorm. Each nationality demanded time viewing their shows, so he began to learn Spanish and Chinese just to pass the time. Eventually,

he began to play volleyball during their recess. He said that the bunks the detained immigrants slept on were so small that the taller men's feet hung over the edge. He got thinner and thinner before my very eyes each time that I would visit. He began to look pale and haggard as the year wore on.

During the summer, I told him that there was a bear in my neighborhood. It was so evident that I was anxious, that he took pity on me. In order to distract me, he topped that by telling me that he had had a tiger in his neighborhood that had eaten the farmers' pigs.

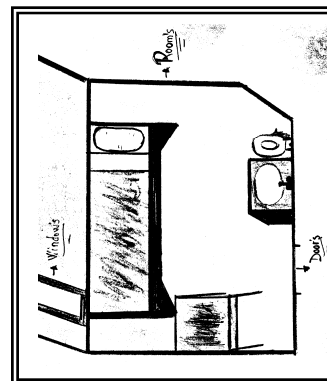
After he had been in the EDC for about a year, he began to beg me to get him out. He was beside himself and desperate. I tried writing letters to senators, congressmen, and the man in charge of parole at the EDC. He never told his mother where he was, because he feared that she would lose sleep if she knew. I really felt for him. He missed his family so dearly. To make matters worse, he found out his sister was planning to get married that coming August, and he swore that he would be at the wedding

Finally, one night he called and asked me if he could wire \$2,000 to me via Western Union. He asked me to take the money to a lawyer who specialized in immigration law in New York City. This lawyer had helped other detained immigrants at the center to get released. I agreed to help.

It turned out that the local Western Union was my supermarket, Stop & Shop in Waldwick. I got the money and drove into the city with it, worried that I would get mugged with all that cash on me. I met the lawyer. He agreed to proceed in court after I handed his clerk the \$2,000. Two weeks later, I got a phone call from the detained immigrant. He had been released and was ecstatic! He wanted to thank me for helping him".

Melfi, New Jersey

"I have been visiting the same detained immigrant since January at the Elizabeth Detention Center. She is a young woman, in her 30s, from Nigeria. The first day we meet, I just felt so compassionate about this young woman. She is very sensitive and has an absolutely beautiful heart. She keeps herself busy with what she can do -- working in the kitchen, for which she earns \$1 a day. Yesterday she made her 9th month in there, it is so sad to hear her talk about how she has missed 9 good months out of her life.... 9 good months for a young, good human being, only looking for a better place to live in the world, with more freedom ... with a dream of one day being free in the much talked beautiful land America.



Drawing submitted by Jenny Polak.

And in 9 months in America she has not even seen the day light. I have learned that it is not fair what a good human being has to be put thru, I know we all need to belong to some place but why is it so hard for such a great land not to open its arms for great, good human beings.

I have changed myself so much, because it is really a great feeling to give unconditional love to someone in need, to someone who does not have another human being to care for them, to make them laugh in this hard difficult times, and to tell them stories about the weather, or family and kids.

This is my first time doing this, and the need is just so big, when I think about it, they had so little, in everything specially in hope, and we go about our life without even noticing a next door neighbor in need.

Regarding the facility, I have learned that some of the guards are nice, but some are very rude, also the food, is really bad, if that can improve it will be a good thing, these are people in there, and sometimes they stay in there for way too long.

I beg to whom it may concern, to please work on some different procedure to treat this kind of cases, everyone in there has a clean record, ALL are only looking for freedom and a better quality of life, please, let's offer some hope to this brothers and sisters in need of a hand, of help, after all isn't that what we all want FREEDOM".

Debbie Cooper, New York, NY

"A couple of years ago, I started visiting asylum seekers in immigration detention because I wanted to do something to help them, to let them know that someone outside the detention center knows and cares about them, give them someone different to talk to, maybe make their difficult situation a little easier. I think this has happened, because the individuals in detention I've visited express their tremendous appreciation, so I'm very happy about that. Our program is so rewarding in that way, though I do feel helpless sometimes that I can't do more – help detained immigrants get out of there sooner, or just let them walk out with me when I leave after a visit.

What I didn't expect was that I, too, would get so much out of this program. I had traveled a lot, and met people from many cultures and walks of life, but these visits have allowed me into a different world of both hope and sadness. So many people suffer terribly in their own countries, and leave their homes and families to seek safety and freedom in the United States, only to end up in immigration detention. It is humbling to get to know a few of them.

I have learned about the dismal conditions in their countries and in detention, how difficult it is to get a lawyer or medical care, that they never get to breathe fresh air, that they languish for months and years incarcerated like criminals but accused of no crime.

Learning about this has enabled me to tell others, none of whom have ever heard of these tens of thousands of individuals in detention, so hopefully they will be moved to do something about it, since with knowledge comes the possibility of change. Telling others has led me to advocate with Congress for better laws, and fairer implementation of existing ones, so I realize that we can make a difference. Knowing about this has caused me to learn about what services are available, and where the good lawyers are, so I can help detained immigrants find decent representation and assistance.

So while I continue to hope that my visits help the detained immigrants that I come to know, I know that they have enriched my life beyond what I'd ever imagined. I have the privilege of new friendships, and an understanding of how to make the world at least a bit better for others. Even if you just visit, know that you will be making a difference for others and yourself".

Stories and Quotes from Detained Immigrants

"I've been in this detention center for more than a year. My sister lives nearby but she isn't documented so she can't come to see me."

"Your visits give me a new perspective. It's so good to exchange ideas, and to talk about something besides my case and life in detention."

"I was going to write a book about human rights abuses in my home country. Now that I've experienced U.S. immigration detention, I'm going to write about human rights abuses in the world."

I am a detainee at the Elizabeth Detention Center. I had been in detention since March 23, 2007. It is important to me to have a visitor because it help me get some of my stress off, and also it make me feel the spirit of the outside world once again. There are so many reason why I mean to have a visitor as a detainee but words can not express all off them. So I am proud of those visitors, keep on your good job. God bless you.

Jean Pierre Kamwa – Cameroon (Story courtesy Human Rights First)

"I fled from my home country because my life was in danger there. As a student in Cameroon, I protested against the government and in favor of democracy. I was arrested 8 times, and tortured brutally while I was in prison. I escaped from prison, and immediately came to the United States to seek asylum. I came to this country because I know that it stands for human rights. Because my government took my passport, I had to travel on false documents.

As soon as my plane landed, I told INS officials that I was here to seek protection and that my life was in danger. They handcuffed me, and treated me like a criminal. They chained be to a bench overnight. Eventually they interviewed me, but they did not give me an interpreter even though I spoke only a little English. Then they strip-searched me. I could not believe I was in America.

They took me to the Wackenhut detention facility in Queens. They took me there in chains – chained to another asylum seeker. I was very scared because I did not know where they were taking me or why. When I got to the detention facility, they strip-searched me again. They took my clothes and gave me an orange prison uniform to wear. It was like being in jail. There was no privacy. The toilets and showers were in the same room with us. We had to speak to our visitors through a glass window.

I lived like a prisoner in the detention facility for 5 months. I was so surprised. I had escaped from one jail and they put me in another jail in the country that stands for human rights and liberty. Finally, with the help of my pro bono lawyers, I was granted asylum and released from detention. I am now free. I am very grateful to all the people who helped me. I am also grateful to all the people in the government who want to help improve the way this great country treats refugees".

Mina Burhani* - Afghanistan (Story courtesy Human Rights First)

“I was a student in Afghanistan before I was forced to leave school when the Taliban ordered women out of the schools. The Taliban took a particular interest in me because some of my family members had converted to Christianity and because, together with one sister, I ran a school to teach young girls. Though I tried to keep the school secret, the Taliban discovered what we were doing. They raided the school and closed it down. They beat me and threatened to kill me. They said that my punishment would be a lesson to others. I was very frightened and knew that I had to flee from Afghanistan. When I left, I took only one extra set of clothes and some money. I did not bring identification with me because I knew that if the Taliban stopped me, it would be dangerous if they learned my identity, because my family is so despised by them.

I fled to the U.S. and arrived at JFK airport in October 1998. After the INS interviewed me, an officer ordered me to take my clothes off. When I hesitated, she ordered me to do what she said. I was confused and humiliated. Then they shackled me to a bench. I thought that they were going to send me back to Afghanistan. I was so scared that I fainted. As they took me to the hospital, I was still scared and told them “Don’t send me back. Please kill me here, but don’t send me back.”

I was eventually brought to Wackenhut, which is a kind of jail for asylum seekers like me. I was brought there in handcuffs and shackled to another person I did not know who was also seeking asylum. At the Wackenhut facility, they took away my clothes and gave me an orange prison uniform. I was treated like a criminal. I was kept in a room with 12 other women for 23 hours a day. There was no privacy. The toilets and shower were in the same room behind only a low wall – so that you could see someone’s upper body as they sat on the toilet. We were only taken out of the room for one hour a day; the outdoor recreation area was really like a cage – an internal courtyard with a fence for a roof. We could not see the trees or anything other than a small patch of sky through the fencing. Every day, guards woke us up at 6am and told to stand in a line to be counted. They searched us several times a week.

My pro bono lawyers tried to get me out of this terrible place. They applied for parole for me. I have one sister in this country and she is an American citizen. My sister signed an affidavit promising to house and support me if the INS would let me out. But they refused. We could not appeal to a judge or anyone outside the INS. It was very difficult for me to be detained. When my sister came to visit me on Christmas Eve, she was so upset, she begged an INS official to release me. Meanwhile, Human Rights First told some Members of the United States Congress about what was happening to me, and one of them raised my case with the INS. It was only because someone respected had compassion for me and intervened that I wasn’t detained for even longer. I was detained like a criminal for over three months, but many of the refugee women I met there were detained for even longer. One woman I knew who had fled from Uganda was detained for about 2 years before she was finally granted asylum. I am now attending college in the U.S. and received a scholarship for my studies”.

*For confidentiality reasons, this client’s real name is not being used.

Viktor Odnovyun and Oleksiy Galushka – Ukraine (Story courtesy Human Rights First)

“We arrived in the United States in March 1999, seeking asylum from our native Ukraine where we were persecuted by the police, security forces, and government-sanctioned vigilantes due to our activism in non-governmental organizations. When we arrived in the United States, we were detained upon arrival at the airport because although we were traveling on our own Ukrainian passports, we lacked visas for entry to the United States. We were detained first at the Wackenhut detention facility in Jamaica, Queens, then at York County Prison, and then again at the Wackenhut facility. In all, we remained behind bars for more than four years.

During our time in detention, we met with a representative of Human Rights First and received a team of pro bono lawyers who have continued to support us as attorneys and as advocates throughout our asylum cases.

In September 1999, an immigration judge granted us withholding of removal, but denied us asylum because he believed we had the right to reside in Argentina. After waiting through a long series of appeals, we learned that the Federal Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit had remanded our cases back to the Immigration Court, as part of a settlement agreement in which the INS agreed to release us on parole while our remand proceedings continued. As a result, in late August 2002, after over three years of detention, we were released from jail on parole. We settled in the town of York, Pennsylvania, where we had already made many friends and community ties during our time at the York County Prison. Both of us volunteered our time to the community – Oleksiy at York Hospital, and Viktor at the International Friendship House, a home for released asylum seekers where we had resided immediately after our release. Once we were granted work authorization, we both began working at a local restaurant. Viktor was finally able to start sending money home for the care of his teenage son, who has been battling cancer in Ukraine.

We drove from Pennsylvania to attend our immigration court hearings, which were held at the Wackenhut facility, appearing with our attorneys as we had promised to do. We attended our final hearing on June 17, 2003, expecting that after the hearing we would return to York, to our homes and our jobs. At the end of the hearing, the immigration judge granted us withholding of removal under the Convention Against Torture. The attorney for the government, however, announced that she would appeal this grant of relief, and we were both re-detained right there on the spot. Our attorneys had to move our car into long-term parking at JFK Airport until friends from Pennsylvania could come to get it.

Our attorneys re-doubled their efforts, and filed a new parole application – supported by 28 of our wonderful supporters in York, Pennsylvania, including employers, friends, and fellow parishioners. The New York Department of Homeland Security denied our parole application in late September 2003, in a letter in which we were collectively referred to as “she.” To quote, the letter said: “Based on the particular facts of your client’s case, including manner of entry, ICE cannot be assured that she will appear for immigration hearings or other matters as required.” This letter ignored the fact that we had appeared for all of our immigration hearings, as required by the immigration service.

In October 2003, we participated in a hunger strike at the Wackenhut detention facility, in which we each lost approximately twenty pounds. Finally, as the result of our lawyers’ steadfast persistence, we were granted parole in March 2004. We returned together to York, Pennsylvania, where we are living with a family who we call our “adopted American family.” We have both continued our work in York and, along with our lawyers, are awaiting the result of our case, which is pending before the Board of Immigration Appeals”.

Humphrey Makomva

“I am honored to have this opportunity to tell my story briefly about my experience in detention. After fleeing my country because of political persecution I arrived at JFK airport and immediately sought political asylum. I was unaware what the procedures would be so I was rightly surprised when five hours after my arrival and some questioning about my situation I was handcuffed [both hands and feet] and taken to the CCA in New Jersey. The realization of incarceration is devastating despite the fact that I had just come from another turmoil in my country. There is a damp feeling of helplessness. This was my first time to live behind bars and a lot of doubts overcame me. I began to wonder whether I had made the right decision or not. However after some time [two weeks to be precise] I began to seek the services of a lawyer. This was to be the beginning of my road to freedom. It felt so good when she agreed to represent me. Afterwards she asked me whether I wanted to see visitors from First Friends and I agreed and later one of the most wonderful person came to visit me. She was the most beautiful thing that happened to me from that time onwards and today as I reflect backwards I cannot cease to wonder at the kind of virtue that people like her possess. I cannot over emphasize the importance of those that visit people in despair but as for me I will forever be grateful to people like her and my great team of lawyers”.

Almost Dying in Detention, Posted: April 24, 2008

Detention Watch Network (<http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/node/797>)

Approximately 25% of asylum seekers in detention experience thoughts of suicide, according to the above report. Below is the testimony of a young woman, in her own words, interviewed about her attempted suicide.

Before detention, I had never thought of killing myself. I had never had such an idea. My goal was to save my life. It was when I got into detention, that I started losing hope and thought that it is useless to live. In my mind, I just kept thinking there is no reason to live and I thought about what would happen to me if I was sent back to my country—I thought I would be killed if I was sent back. So, I thought it would be better to just get it over with now rather than be sent back.

It was after seven months. I had never been in prison before in my life. I came to the US to save my life. When I left my country I was already suffering emotionally. I thought the US was a country of human rights that would protect me. I never thought about being detained here. I grabbed a bed sheet and tied it to a piece of metal between the television and the wall, there was a base of about three and a half meters, and using the toilet I was able to tie the sheet and it was easy to do. This way of committing suicide, in fact, we learned in detention. I had heard about a male who had killed himself in this way.

I was in a dormitory of six people. Fortunately, one of my friends, a roommate, saw what I was about to do. She came and calmed me down and said, “No, you have to stop.” She also let the others in the dorm know and they said the same thing, not to do this. They calmed me down and sat with me and advised me to take it easy. They said they wouldn’t go back to sleep, because they were afraid of what I might do. One of my friends brought out a bible, and we did some praying together. I became very relieved with all of the advice I was getting, and they also pointed out other detained immigrants who had spent even longer periods in detention and had still won their cases.

After that I never tried to kill myself again. I did nothing again, also because a woman who came every Sunday pointed out that God has forbidden people to kill themselves and that would be a sin.



A Word for Christian Faith Based Groups

Visitation programs can grow out of many sorts of groups, including human rights organizations, social service agencies, university social work programs, and so forth. Historically and presently, they also have grown out of faith communities because of those communities' emphasis on love of neighbor and of "the stranger."

For example, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures teach the great commandment of love toward God, our neighbors, and ourselves. Care for the stranger ("alien") is stressed because "you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19 NRSV). Immigrants are neighbors who are now living among us. Many of them arrive with hopes and dreams of new life and freedom, and find themselves in detention facilities. Christians have a Biblical mandate to care about them as brothers and sisters.

Christ commands His followers to "love the Lord your God" and "love your neighbor as yourself," adding that "there is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31 NRSV). These commandments can be obeyed through a myriad of service opportunities. In the service of immigrants, visiting asylum seekers and others in detention facilities allows us the opportunity to serve God and love our neighbors who have immigrated to the United States. "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Scripture provides us with various examples of imprisoned individuals in need of assistance. These individuals include Adam, Eve, Joseph of the Old Testament, Ruth, Mary, Joseph, Christ Himself, Paul, John the Baptist and Peter, among others. When Peter was thrown into prison it is recorded that "the church prayed fervently to God for him" (Acts 12:5 NRSV). This instance shows the compassion and concern demonstrated by Christians during the time of Peter's imprisonment and what they did to help. Further admonishment concerning helping those in prison is given by Christ Himself when He states, "I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36 NRSV). As followers of Christ, we have the current opportunity to do as these early saints did and serve those who are in prison by helping and visiting those immigrants, asylum seekers and others who are in detention facilities.

By visiting immigrants in detention facilities, congregations can administer friendship and love to their neighbors. As we strive to embody Christ's teaching to love our neighbors, we will improve the lives of others, experience blessings in our own lives, and set into motion a pattern of kindness and fellowship that will benefit generations to come.



A Word for Jewish Faith Based Groups

Visiting immigrants and asylum seekers in detention centers reflect Jewish values of kindness and redeeming the captive, as well as biblical mandates to love the stranger and visit those in need. In fact the mandate to love and protect the stranger is mentioned 36 times in the Torah, more than any other teaching. Care for the stranger is stressed in Judaism because “you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19).

Today a multitude of immigrants and asylum seekers spend their days in U.S. detention centers facing deportation. Too often, detained immigrants and asylum seekers are jailed thousands of miles from their families. These individuals are often kept in deplorable conditions without access to proper medical care.

The Jewish people are called upon to remember our own migration history and take action so immigrants and asylum seekers hoping to be part of American society don't languish alone in detention. Indeed the Talmud (Baya Batra 8b) says that captivity is worse than starvation or death.

Judaism places a high value on hospitality, or *hachnasat orchim*. The Sages of the Talmud praised Abraham not only for his monotheism but for his exceptional hospitality (see Genesis 18:1-8). One Talmudic sage, Rabbi Acha Bar Chanina taught, "One who visits the sick removes a sixtieth of his pain." Visiting individuals who are detained in our nation allows us to practice the mandates so often repeated throughout the Torah.

Maimonides has said that those who ignore those in captivity are in fact violating other Jewish commandments which say 'you shall not harden your heart' (Deuteronomy 15:7), 'you shall not stand idly by the blood of your brother' (Leviticus 19:16), and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Based on these core values, the Jewish community has – over the 350-years history of its presence on American shores – been actively engaged in the struggles of today's newcomers and been a staunch advocate for fair and human immigration and asylum reform. Many immigrants and asylum seekers who find themselves in detention centers are simply caught in the web of a broken immigration system. You can help by visiting immigrants and asylum seekers in detention facilities and showing our commitment to the Torah's teachings that instruct us to love our neighbors and to remember that we are our brothers' keepers.



A Word for Muslim Faith Based Groups

Faith can be an important catalyst for encouraging individuals to help others in their time of need. Islam offers several examples and anecdotes to encourage Muslim followers to reach out to their fellow citizens and help orphans, widows, impoverished individuals, detained immigrants, immigrants, and others in need. Moreover, the religion of Islam has a philosophical orientation towards social justice that commands followers to pursue justice.

With that in mind, we can draw many connections between the injustice that many immigrants in detention face and the moral imperative for Muslims to try to alleviate their situations. There are several verses in the Qur'an which address the issue of justice, and one which is particularly relevant to the issue of immigrant detention and the pursuit of justice in this context is one which states that: "Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and rebellion; He Admonishes you that you may be mindful." (16:90). Another verse from the Qur'an that helps buttress the notion of justice as well as the encouragement of compassion is a verse that goes as follows: "And what will explain to you what the steep path is? It is the freeing of a (slave) from bondage; or the giving of food in a day of famine to orphan, relative, or to a needy person in distress. There will he be of those who believe, enjoin fortitude and encourage kindness and compassion." (90:12-17). One final verse from the Qur'an to mention in consideration of Muslims' moral imperative to pursue justice, is a verse that states that: "Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein, and whoever recommends and helps an evil cause shares in its burden" (4:85). Given the unjust conditions that immigrants in detention are facing, conceptualizing these verses in the context of immigrant detention, gives urgency and agency to encourage Muslims to visit immigrants in detention and to advocate on their behalf.

Immigrant detention raises issues of justice, particularly as those in detention are often faced with extremely difficult circumstances such as past trauma, lack of medical care, inhumane treatment, abuse, and separation from friends and family. By visiting detained immigrants, Muslims can fulfill Islam's vision of justice, compassion, and kindness.



Commission on Immigration

A Summary of Complaint Processes for Immigration Detainees

See ICE Operations Manual Performance Based National Detention Standards
Standard 35 Grievance System

While you are being detained by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), you may have complaints about access to attorneys and legal materials, conditions of confinement, or other issues. This document will give you a very brief description of how to complain effectively to the proper government offices. **Please note that the procedures described below pertain to the 2008 Performance Based National Detention Standards¹⁶ (Detention Standards), which are not regulations and are not enforceable by law.**

How to complain effectively:

- Provide a **title** to each complaint or alleged event (for example “Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) failed to give me adequate medical care”).
- Provide all **relevant details** and **be specific**:
 - **When** and **where** did the event or problem happen? Give the time, date, and location of the event.
 - **Who** was involved? Give the names of all actors and witnesses, and include their Alien numbers (“A numbers”), country of origin, address, and phone number. Give the names and positions of the officials involved, and if you do not know them, give physical descriptions (such as height, weight, hair color, clothes, uniform color).
 - **What** happened? Describe in detail exactly what happened and the physical and mental impact it had on you. If you were hurt, did you receive any medical care? What was the doctor’s diagnosis?
 - If you have been hurt, ask officials (or contact an attorney) to take pictures of your injury.
- Always make **written complaints**, **keep copies** of everything you send, and write **LEGAL MAIL** on the envelope. If you complain to an official orally or informally, follow up by writing them about the complaint.

Informal or Oral Complaints (Grievances):

If you have a complaint, you can first try to resolve your problem by speaking with a staff member. The Officer-in-Charge (OIC) should establish procedures for you to complain orally, which should be outlined in your detainee handbook or should be available upon your request. You should **make your complaint as soon as possible after the event**. If you have trouble speaking English, you can ask for language assistance and have an interpreter or translator help you. You can end the informal grievance process at any time and begin with the formal procedures.

Formal or Written Complaints (Grievances):

The Officer-in-Charge (OIC) must allow you to submit a formal, written grievance to the facility’s grievance committee. You can also send a copy to the ICE Field Office Director. The grievance process at your facility should be described in the facility handbook; you may also request a grievance forms from the proper official at your facility. **Your written complaint should be filed as soon as possible after the actual event, or soon after the unsuccessful conclusion of an informal grievance.** Another detainee can assist you when you prepare your written complaint, and you can request the assistance of a translator.

Medical Grievance:

You may submit a formal medical grievance relating to the health care at the facility where you are detained. This grievance can relate to problems you are having with any treatment you are currently receiving, or the

¹⁶ The 2008 Performance Based National Detention Standards were developed to replace the prior 2000 National Detention Standards. The Performance Based National Detention Standards are to be implemented at all ICE facilities by January 1, 2010.

inability to receive treatment for your medical, dental, or mental health needs. To file a medical grievance, you may submit a formal written grievance, as described above, regarding medical care directly to the medical personnel designated to receive medical grievances at the facility, or you may submit to the other officials as described above.

Sensitive or Confidential Grievances and Medically Sensitive Grievances:

If you believe that the issue of the grievance is sensitive or confidential, or that you might be put in danger if someone found out about your grievance, you can describe on the grievance form why you believe there would be a problem, and then you can seal the grievance in an envelope marked “SENSITIVE” or “MEDICALLY SENSITIVE” and submit it directly to the facility administrator or facility health authority.

The Decision on Your Grievance:

The department head or shift supervisor will offer a decision on your grievance. If you do not accept the decision as a reasonable solution, you are guaranteed at least one level of appeal. You will always receive a written decision about your appeal within a reasonable and specified time limit.

Emergency Grievances:

An emergency grievance involves an **immediate threat to your safety and welfare**. You may present your emergency grievance directly to any facility staff member, or the ICE Field Office Director or an equivalent official.

Administrative Complaints

The complaint process described on the first page involves filing complaints with people who are directly involved with the facility (staff, the OIC, and ICE officials). That process is used to try to correct specific violations under the Detention Standards. In addition to the first process, there is also an administrative complaint process that involves filing complaints with other officials and agencies that are indirectly involved with ICE detention facilities. This process is used to establish a record of abuses by the agency that may lead to disciplinary action against an officer or more careful supervision. Please be aware that this process is different from filing a lawsuit—no money damages are awarded in administrative complaints (this means that even if the government is found at fault, they will not pay you any money for this type of complaint). Also, you may not be informed of actions taken as a result of your complaint.

Detention Conditions and Discrimination-Based Complaints

There are many federal laws against discrimination, which means treating someone differently than another because of a certain characteristic. If you have suffered from discrimination because of your race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability, you can send the complaints to the Department of Homeland Security’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (OCRCL).

This office reviews and assesses complaints in areas such as:

- Treatment, including medical treatment.
- Abuse of authority/color of law (that is, using an employment position to abuse a person or unlawfully take advantage of a situation).
- Conditions of detention, and violations of the Detention Standards.
- Due process and legal access problems.

Send your complaint to the OCRCL even if you are unsure about whether your complaint qualifies as discrimination. The OCRCL will direct your complaint to the appropriate office. Please note that detainees with HIV may qualify for various services.

**Department of Homeland Security
Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
245 Murray Drive, SW
Building 410
Washington, DC 20528-0800**
Toll free telephone: 1-866-644-8360
Telephone: 202-401-1474
Toll Free TTY: 1-866-644-8361
Fax: 202-357-8296
Email: civil.liberties@dhs.gov

For complaints involving misconduct/ abuse by ICE, border patrol (CBP), or a jail official involving a violation of a constitutional, civil, or statutory right, or issues of common courtesy, send complaint to:

**Department of Homeland Security
Attn: Office of Inspector General
245 Murray Drive, SW, Building 410
Washington, DC 20528**
Toll free complaint hotline: 1-800-323-8603
Fax: 202-254-4292
Email: DHSOIGHOTLINE@dhs.gov

For misconduct of immigration judges, file your complaint with:

**H. Marshall Jarrett, Counsel
Office of Professional Responsibility
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 3529
Washington, DC 20530**

AND you may also file any complaint with:

**Department of Homeland Security
Joint Intake Center, ICE/CBP
P.O. Box 14475
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20044**
Telephone: 1-877-2INTAKE. (1-877-246-8153)
Fax: 202-344-3390
Email: Joint.Intake@dhs.gov

When you write complaints to these agencies, remember the things mentioned on the first page about complaining effectively, be sure to make copies of your letters, and label the envelope LEGAL MAIL. Since some of these complaints may lead to future lawsuits, it is very important to be accurate about the statements you make (especially about the time, date, exact location, and the number of officers who were there). Be sure to send complaints as soon as possible.

Legal Actions Against Federal or State Officials Under Federal Torts Claims Act/ Bivens Claims

If your case involves significant injuries, it may be appropriate to file a lawsuit for money damages. **If you have been seriously injured, you should speak to an attorney before filing a lawsuit.**

If you have questions or experience problems related to the Detention Standards, please feel free to contact:
American Bar Association Commission on Immigration
740 Fifteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005-1022
Telephone: 202-662-1005
Fax: 202-638-3844

PLEASE DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS. NO COLLECT CALLS PLEASE.

Discrimination-Based Complaints

There are many federal laws against discrimination, which means treating someone differently than another because of a certain characteristic. If you have suffered from discrimination because of your race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability, you can send the complaints to the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (OCRCL).

Send your complaint even if you are unsure about whether your complaint qualifies as discrimination; the OCRCL will direct your complaint to the appropriate office. Please note that detained immigrants with HIV may qualify for various services.

Mailing Address (U.S. Postal Service):
Department of Homeland Security
Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
245 Murray Drive, SW
Building 410
Washington, DC 20528-0800

Telephone Toll Free: 1-866-644-8360
Toll Free TTY: 1-866-644-8361
Local: 202-401-1474
Fax: 202-357-8296
E-mail: civil.liberties@dhs.gov

For Package/Overnight Delivery
Please contact the Office for information on sending a package.

When you write complaints to these agencies, remember the things mentioned on the first page about complaining effectively, be sure to make copies of your letters, and label the envelope LEGAL MAIL. Since some of these complaints may lead to future lawsuits, it is very important to be accurate about the statements you make (especially about the time, date, exact location, and the number of officers who were there). Be sure to send complaints as soon as possible.

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If you have questions or experience problems related to the ICE detention standards, please feel free to contact:

American Bar Association
Commission on Immigration
740 Fifteenth Street, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20005-1022
Telephone: 202-662-1005 Fax: 202-638-3844

PLEASE DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS. NO COLLECT CALLS PLEASE.

United States Department of Justice
 Immigration and Naturalization Service

DETAINEE GRIEVANCE FORM

(A grievance must be filed within 5 days of original incident or issue)

Detainee Name: _____ A# _____ Grievance #: _____
 Complaint / Comments: _____ Housing Unit: _____

Action requested by detainee: _____

Detainee Signature: _____ Date / Time: _____
 Housing Unit Officer: _____ Date / Time: _____

INFORMAL [] Resolution is accepted by detainee: (to be completed within 24 hours and only if resolved prior to hearing)

This grievance has been informally resolved as follows:

Detainee Signature: _____ Date / Time: _____
 Staff Member: _____ Date / Time: _____
 Supervisory Review: _____ Date / Time: _____

FORMAL [] Informal Resolution is not accepted by detainee and the grievance has been assigned to the following Department for formal resolution: [] Deportation [] Detention [] Administration (Response to detainee within five (5) business days is required)

Departmental Findings/Actions Taken: _____

Dep. Head: _____
 Dep. Staff: _____ Date of Findings: _____
 Dep. Staff: _____ Date Returned to Detainee: _____

(Detainee return within five days of receipt and check the appropriate box)

I would like this matter:

- Referred to the Detainee Grievance Committee (DGC)
- I agree with the resolution

Detainee Signature: _____ Date / Time: _____
 Housing Unit Officer: _____ Date / Time: _____

Detainee Grievance Form

(A grievance must be filed within 5 days of original incident or issue)

Detainee Name: _____ A# _____ Grievance #: _____
 Housing Unit: _____
 Complaint / Comments: _____

Action requested by detainee: _____

Detainee Signature: _____ Date / Time: _____
 Housing Unit Officer: _____ Date / Time: _____

INFORMAL [] Resolution is accepted by detainee: (to be completed within 24 hours and only if resolved prior to hearing)

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Departmental Findings/Actions Taken: _____

Dep. Head: _____
 Dep. Staff: _____ Dep. Staff: _____
 Date of Findings: _____ Date Returned to Detainee: _____

(Detainee return within five days of receipt and check the appropriate box)

- I would like this matter:
- Referred to the Detainee Grievance Committee (DGC)
 - I agree with the resolution

Detainee Signature: _____ Date / Time: _____
 Housing Unit Officer: _____ Date / Time: _____

Helping Detained Immigrants Prepare for Release

Note: The following reflects the experience of visitors to asylum seekers at Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey. Expect variations facility by facility, and case by case (e.g. for detained immigrants who are in proceedings other than asylum proceedings).

Even when all testimony is completed in an asylum seeker's "final" hearing, the judge may reserve a decision, to be issued in writing later. The opposing attorney may also reserve appeal of a judge's grant. This could mean further waiting for days, weeks, or even months. If the case is denied, a detained immigrant has the right to file an appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals, which takes an average of eight to 12 months to issue a decision. If this is denied, the detained immigrant may have the right to appeal to a Federal Court of Appeals. Sometimes all efforts fail and the detained immigrant is given a final order of removal.

When a judge's grant of asylum or withholding of removal or protection under the Convention Against Torture becomes final, or if the detained immigrant is paroled, the individual goes through 'out-processing' which can take several hours before release. Individuals in detention are released with the clothes and belongings they had when they arrived. (If he or she arrived with no baggage, it is possible for an outsider to donate some clothing which is provided on release day.) Transportation and temporary lodging are not provided by the court, the immigration service or officials at a privately-owned detention center.

In close working relationships with local human rights groups, legal services providers and social service organizations, visitation projects can and should build in some emergency assistance for when detained immigrants - especially those without any friends or family nearby - are released. Visitors could be asked to provide such assistance, or a separate task group could be developed for this purpose. Specific needs that volunteers can help meet include:

1. Accompanying newly released immigrants from detention to their temporary residence, after making sure to double check that official documents contain the accurate date of birth, spelling of the detained immigrant's name and alien number.
2. Providing temporary housing (one to two weeks) and food. For a newly released individual who is alone, spending a week or two with a friend or someone he/she knows is invaluable.
3. Providing climate-appropriate clothing and other essentials, including some pocket money.
4. Helping newly released individuals (e.g. with bus fare) join family or friends elsewhere in the United States (important: be sure to confirm the person's right to relocate with immigration authorities and/or their attorney). For those who stay in your community, helping them find and furnish an apartment.
5. Connecting newly released immigrants with a caseworker at a local agency that provides social services for asylees. Try your local social service agency for services and/or a referral to services.
6. Being familiar with basic information about the rights and public benefits available to immigration detained immigrants upon release. Rights/benefits vary depending on whether a person is granted asylum or is released with (for example) "parole," "withholding of removal," or "under supervision." A local immigration attorney or social service agency (see point #5) should have such information. The Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC - www.cliniclegal.org) operates a National Asylee Information & Referral Line, which provides a single, centralized source of accurate information about service eligibility and programs across the country. The toll-free number should be listed in all asylum grant letters issued by the Department of Homeland Security and is posted in immigration courts. See "Asylee Eligibility for Resettlement Assistance," attached.

7. Assisting in navigating public transportation, and obtaining fare.
8. Assisting in applying for an Employment Authorization Document, Social Security card, state ID or driver's license, and Medicaid, as relevant.
9. Assisting asylees and other work-authorized former detained immigrants to find employment.
10. Assisting just-released detained immigrants to get medical exams and (as relevant) connect with services for torture survivors (see <http://www.survivorsoftorture.org/resources/-more-information/us-treatment-centers>).
11. Assisting with enrollment in English as a Second Language and other classes.
12. Extending social invitations, e.g. to dinner, outings, etc.

If you are considering helping an individual after his or her release from detention, it is encouraged that you critically evaluate your ability to commit. This is a big commitment and the individual will need a lot of support, so if this not something you can undertake, please consider partaking in the program in other ways or in supporting another individual who has helped a detained immigrant prepare for release. Also, talking with the person prior to their release is a good way to help them develop post release plans and to anticipate any challenges that may arise. This may be especially important in preparing former detained immigrants, especially asylum seekers for life in the United States for those who never been to the United States.

Another excellent resource for immigrants released from detention is Pocket Knowledge, published by the Detained Torture Survivors Legal Support Network. This resource includes general tips and information about the right to work, getting a social security number, finding financial support and navigating life in U.S. culture. In English, Spanish, French, and Arabic.

<http://www.lirs.org/What/programs/pocketknowledge.htm>

ASYLEE ELIGIBILITY FOR RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE

A Short Guide

The National Asylee
Information & Referral Line



A 10888 PRO-08/07 018



* Funding provided through a grant awarded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

ASYLEE ELIGIBILITY FOR RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE: *A Short Guide*

What is an asylee?

An asylee is legally defined as a person who flees his or her country and is unable or unwilling to return due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. The persecution may be on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a social group. Procedurally, a prospective asylee enters the United States as an alien in some other immigration category; even without inspection, is paroled into the United States for consideration of an asylee claim, or is placed in expedited removal proceedings at the port of entry. The person then applies for asylum and if successful, is granted.

About 51% of asylum grants are handled by the immigration courts, which are located in cities throughout the U.S. About 49% of asylum grants are handled by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or "USCIS," which has eight regional asylum offices throughout the U.S.



Riverside Sojourners Immigration Detention Center Visitor Project

**c/o The Riverside Church
Mission and Social Justice Department
490 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10027
sojourners@theriversidechurchny.org**

Founded in 1999, the Sojourners Detention Center Visitor Project recruits, trains, transports, and mentors volunteer visitors to asylum seekers and other non-criminal non-citizens held at Elizabeth Detention Center, a windowless converted warehouse near Newark Airport in New Jersey.

We match visitors with individuals in detention who do not have family or friends in the vicinity to visit them, for a sustained, one-to-one relationship. The purpose: to help break the isolation and boost the morale of detained immigrants, who may be held for months, even years before a final determination on their request for asylum is made and they are released or deported.

Visitors must complete a 90-minute training, which covers basic terminology, detained immigrants' needs and concerns, the role of the volunteer visitor, such ground rules as confidentiality, good communication, procedures for entering the detention center, "ten steps for a good visit," and FAQs ("Can I bring books/food/money for the person I visit?" "What if the person I visit doesn't have a lawyer?" "The person I visit is being released – where can he/she stay?" "The person I visit is really sick – how can he/she get the needed help?")

A first-time visitor accompanies an experienced "mentor" visitor, after which he/she may be "matched" with a detained immigrant he/she commits to visit at least twice a month. Most detained immigrants wanting a visitor are referred by other individuals in detention, and occasionally by their lawyers. Sojourners provides transport in Riverside Church-owned vehicles from both uptown and downtown Manhattan to Elizabeth Detention Center six times a month on a schedule (every Saturday morning, two Tuesday evenings). Management of notices and RSVPs for trips is handled by e-mail listserve.

Sojourners, whose volunteers come from all over New York City, works in collaboration with First Friends, whose volunteers are from New Jersey. David Fraccaro (812-454-2206) is Sojourners coordinator, and Carol Fouke-Mpoyo (646-258-8896) is Sojourners chair.

To access the Sojourner's Visitor Program blog go to <http://sojournersvisitorprogram.blogspot.com>

Sample Volunteer Interest Form

I would like to:

_____ Visit a detained immigrant at the Elizabeth Detention Center in Elizabeth, N.J. (at least twice a month; training required; transportation provided)

_____ Correspond with a detained immigrant ("Pen Pal Program")

_____ Collect stamped envelopes for detained immigrants (twice yearly "Stamp Out Despair" drive)

_____ Extend hospitality to former detained immigrants when they are released from detention

_____ Other _____

_____ I cannot volunteer at this time, but would like to be on the Sojourners e-mailing list

_____ Last Name

_____ First Name

_____ Mailing Address Street/P.O. Box + Apartment Number

_____ City State Zip Code

_____ Cell phone Home Phone E-mail (very important)

Any languages spoken besides English _____

Are you available to be a driver (license needed; SUV provided)? _____ Yes _____ No

I heard about this volunteer opportunity from: _____

_____ Signature

_____ Date

Formulaire de Bénévole

Je voudrais:

Visiter un/une détenu/détenue (au moins deux fois par mois; stage nécessaire; le transport est fourni)

Correspondre avec un/une détenu/détenue (“Pen Pal Program”)

Faire collection d’enveloppe timbrés (deux fois par an “Stamp Out Despair” campagne)

Offrir de la hospitalité envers des anciens/anciennes détenus/détenues

Autre _____

Je ne suis pas disponible en ce moment d’être bénévole, mais je voudrais faire partie de la liste courriel de Sojourners

Nom Prénom

Adresse rue, n°

Ville Province Code Postal

n° de portable n° fixe **Adresse e-mail (tres important)**

Langues parlés à part anglais _____

Je suis disposé(e) d’être chauffeur (permis de conduire nécessaire; voiture fournie)

Oui Non

J’étais reseigné(e) sur cette occasion de bénévole par _____

Signature

Date

Muestra de la Forma para el voluntario

Me gustaría:

_____ Visitar a un detenido/preso (por lo menos dos veces al mes; entrenamiento requerido; transportación disponible)

_____ Corresponder con un detenido (Programa de “pen pal”)

_____ Recoger sobres estampillados para los detenidos (campaña semestral de “Stamp Out Despair”)

_____ Ofrecer hospitalidad a los detenidos cuando estén liberados de detención

_____ Otro _____

_____ No puedo ofrecerme como voluntario en este momento, pero me gustaría estar en la lista de e-mail de Sojourners.

_____ Apellido _____ Nombre de pila _____

_____ Dirección Postal Calle/P.O. Box + No. de Apto. Ciudad Estado Código Postal _____

_____ Teléfono Celular _____ Teléfono en casa _____ Correo Electrónico (IMPORTANTE) _____

_____ Otros idiomas que se hable aparte de español _____

¿Estaría disponible Ud. para ser un conductor (licencia requerida; SUV disponible)?

_____ Sí _____ No

Llegué a saber de esta oportunidad voluntaria por medio de:

_____ Firma

_____ Fecha

Volunteer Contract

On behalf of the _____ Immigration Detention Visitation Program, we thank you for your decision to volunteer with us. This contract will serve to outline a set of agreements between the program and the volunteers.

We, the _____ Immigrant Detention Visitation Program agree to:

- Provide volunteers with consistent support and leadership throughout your efforts
- Provide relevant resources to volunteers
- Address any issues that arise while you are volunteering, be it from the detention facility, or otherwise

I, _____ (volunteer name) agree to volunteer with the _____ Immigration Detention Program. Further, I agree to:

- Be consistent in my visits to the individual in detention
- Keep confidential anything discussed in visits with the individual in detention
- Address any issues that arise from my volunteer efforts with the program leaders

Signature of Volunteer

Signature of Program Leader

Date:

Date:

Sample letter to detained immigrants from First Friends English, Spanish, and French

Dear Detained Immigrant:

We are providing the following information in the event you would like a volunteer to visit you in detention. The First Friends: Elizabeth Detention Center Visitor Project is a nongovernmental nonprofit organization dedicated to providing friendship to asylum seekers in ICE detention. We are not connected in any way with the ICE, CCA or the United States government. As part of our project, First Friends finds volunteers to visit detained immigrants who do not have visitors.

If you do not have family or friends who can come to visit you, please fill out the attached form and return it to:

- **Add Your Group's Address**
- **Add Name of Your Group** - will ask a volunteer to visit you and help boost your morale. The volunteer will NOT be a lawyer and will NOT be able to get you out of detention. The volunteer will be someone who is concerned about people in detention and would like to offer you their friendship.
- **Add your phone number** - Please call us at if you have any questions.
- **Add your signature**

Querido detenido:

Le ofrecemos la siguiente información por si acaso le gustaría recibir una visita de un voluntario mientras esté detenido. The First Friends: Elizabeth Detention Center Visitor Project es una organización sin beneficios y no gubernamental que se dedica a proporcionar amistad a solicitantes de asilo detenidos por ICE. No estamos afiliado de ninguna manera con ICE, ni CCA ni el gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Como parte de nuestro proyecto, First Friends busca a voluntarios para visitar a los detenidos que no tienen visitantes.

Si no tiene familia o amigos que vienen a visitarle, por favor llena este formulario agregado y devuélvalo a

- **Agregue dirección**
- Nosotros pedirá a un voluntario que le visite y le ayude a animarse. El voluntario NO será abogado y NO podrá sacarle de detención. El voluntario será alguien que este preocupado por las personas detenidas y le gustaría ofrecerle su amistad. Por favor llámanos a
- **Agregue número telefónico** si tiene preguntas.
- **Add Signature**

Cher Rochero,

On a entendu dire que vous aimeriez recevoir des visites d'une personne benevole (qui n'est pas payer pour vous render visite). Nous comprenons que votre situation et assez difficile , raison pour laquelle nous offrons ses visites. Pour non simplement tisser une amitie mais aussi allegger les moments difficiles. Nous n'avons aucun rapport avec l' ICE , ni avec CCA (la detention), ni avec le gouvernement des Etats Unis. Une raison pour ce projet est d'offrir de la visite a ceux qui n'ont personne pour visiter.

Si vous avez des amis veuillez leur remettre un formulaire afin qu'eux aussi puisse recevoir de la visite.

Nous esperons etablir un lien avec vous, nous attendons votre reponse, glissez simplement votre lettre dans l'enveloppe timbre.

Mes salutations les plus sinceres,

Add your Group's Address

Add your Group's Phone Number

Add your signature

Sample Visitor Request Form
Formulario Para Requerir Visitante
Forme de Requete de Visiteur
English, Spanish, French

Yes, I would like a volunteer to visit me at the _____ Detention Center.
 Si, me gustaria que una voluntario me visitara en el centra detencion de _____.
 Oui, je voudrais bien qu'un volontaire me rende visite au Centre de Detention _____.

_____	_____	_____
Last name	First Name	Detained immigrant number or A number
Apellido	Nombre	Numero de detencion
Nom de Famille	Prenom	Numero de detencab ou "A"

_____	_____	_____	_____
Sex (M/F)	Nationality	Mother tongue	Other languages spoken
Sexo (M/F)	Nacionalidad	Idioma maternal	Otros idiomas
Sexo (M/F)	Nationalite	Langue maternelle	D'autres langues

Check one: / Ceque uno / Cochez un choix:

I speak English	___fluently	___fairly well	___Not very well	___not at all
Yo hablo Ingles	___fluyente	___mas o menos	___no muy bien	___nada
Jeparle l'anglais	___couramment	___bien	___un peu	___pas du tout

Date of Arrival at Detention Center : _____

Fecha que llego al Centra de Detencion: _____

Date d'arrivee au Centre de Detention: _____

Signature

Date

Signature

Fecha

Firma

Date

Sample Visitor Request Form
Formulario Para Pedir Visita
English, Soomaali, Portuguese

English: Yes, I would like a volunteer to visit me at the _____ Detention Center
 Soomaali: Waan Jeclahay in xerada _____ la igu soo bogado
 Portuguese: sim, eu desejo que um voluntario me visite no Centre de Detenjao de _____

_____	_____	_____
Last name	First Name	Detained immigrant number or A number
Maga ca awowgaa	Maga caaga	Nama kaaga
Apelido	Pimeiro Nome	Numero de detencab ou "A"

_____	_____	_____	_____
Sex (M/F)	Nationality	Mother tongue(first language)	Other languages
Rag/Dumar	Wadan Kaad	Udhalatay Luqadhaatha	Laqado kalayaad kuhadasid
Sexo (M/F)	Nacionalidade	Lingua Primaria	Outras Linguas Que Fala

Check one: / Midh Sax / Indique um:

I speak English ___fluently ___fairly well ___not very well ___not at all

Ingiriisi waan: ___aqaqnaq ___aad ___si wanaagsan ___in yar ___ Eu falo ingles ___Muito bem
 ___Bern ___Nao muito Bem ___Mal

Date of Arrival at the Detention Center _____ Taarikh daad timi _____

Date de chegada ao Centre de Detencaao _____

 Signature
 Saxeex
 Assinatura

 Date
 Taarikh da manta
 Data

WHAT CAN YOU DO

- Pray for these families.
- Volunteer your time and expertise.
- Advocate for Justice.
- Sponsor an activity.
- Make a donation:
 - Sponsor a family \$150.00
 - Sponsor a Journey of Hope \$ 1,500.00



Families of the Incarcerated

Working on keeping families Together

Office of Restorative Justice
2049 S. Santa Fe Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90021

Phone: (213) 438-4828
Fax: (213) 439-7601
Email: aamolina@la-archdiocese.org



Amalia Molina
Office of Restorative Justice
2049 S. Santa Fe Ave.
Los Angeles CA 90021

Phone: (213) 438-4828
Fax: (213) 439-7601
Email: aamolina@la-archdiocese.org

Families of the Incarcerated

No family wants to see one of its members go off to prison. Mothers and fathers, husbands, brothers, sisters, and children are devastated when their loved one is incarcerated. Families who have a member in prison are a hidden and isolated group. As they try to deal with every day life on the outside, their fear of stigma means they suffer a silent sentence of their own and their needs to go unnoticed.

Families of the Incarcerated :

- Initiate, promote and coordinate programs and activities to achieve the inclusion of families of the incarcerated in parish ministry.
- Assist parish communities in reaching parishioners who have a loved one incarcerated.
- Advocate for Justice. For fair policies and legislation affecting the families of the incarcerated, especially children.
- Educate the Catholic Community using the USCC pastoral: Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration calling for new efforts in reaching out the families of the incarcerated.



phlet includes ***“Know Your Rights”*** and is distributed at jails and prison to those facing deportation and the ones who do not have a family or a place to go in their country of origin.

Healing Services

We host support groups and healing services to help the families to experience a moment peace, rest and to be reenergize for their journey



Our Activities Include

Monthly Masses

We celebrate monthly masses at different parishes where families gather and share their journey as a family with a loved one incarcerated.

Transportation

We organize **“Journeys Of Hope”** which is free transportation to different prison facilities to help families keeping together.

Project 4-1-1-

We assist families offering educational workshops about criminal and immigration law, in order to help them to advocate for their love ones.

“Para Ti Migrante”

We distribute the addresses and telephone numbers of different shelters at the Mexican border, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador . The pam-

One person can, and does, make a difference. Each of us has the power to love support and protect others that are just like ourselves.

We invite you to support this ministry, we are in need of volunteers.

Resources

ACTIVE IMMIGRATION DETENTION VISITOR PROGRAMS:

Families of the Incarcerated, Southern California: Amalia Molina-Cortina, (213)438-4820, Ext. 24, aamolina@la-archdiocese.org

First Friends, Elizabeth, New Jersey; www.irateweb.org/firstfriends.htm; contact Greg Sullivan, firstfriends2@juno.com In addition to its visitor program, First Friends' "Stamp Out Despair" campaign collects stamped envelopes, writing paper, and pens for Elizabeth Detention Center.

Nah We Yone, New York, NY, contact John Wilkinson at Massamba2@aol.com

Refugee Immigration Ministry, www.r-i-m.net: Ruth Bersin, ruth.rim@verizon.net

The Riverside Church Sojourners Immigration Detention Visitor Project, New York City. <http://sojournersvisitorprogram.blogspot.com>; contact David Fraccaro or Carol Fouke-Mpoyo: sojourners@theriversidechurchny.org. This group also is beginning assistance for asylum seekers post-release.

Sisters of Mercy, El Paso, TX, Kathleen Erickson, spiritual counseling of undocumented detained immigrants: katherickson@earthlink.net

OTHER PROGRAMS THAT USE VOLUNTEERS:

Eight federally operated detention centers (service processing centers) are to have Religious Services Programs under a 2009-2014 contract with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The RSPs provide spiritual care for immigration detained immigrants in their own faith traditions. A "coordinator" and "specialist" at each center enlist volunteer chaplains and other community volunteers. For more information, contact the following detention centers (service processing centers) directly: Aguadilla, Puerto Rico; Miami, Florida (Krome); Los Fresnos, Texas (Port Isabel); New York, New York (Varick Street); El Paso, Texas; Florence, Arizona; El Centro, California, and Batavia, New York (Buffalo).

RECENT DETENTION-RELATED NEWS ARTICLES

"U.S. to Reform Policy on Detention of Immigrants", *New York Times*, August 5, 2009.

"Administration Plans Overhaul of Immigration Detention System", *Washington Post*, August 6, 2009

"Officials Say Fatalities of Detainees Were Missed", *New York Times*, August 18, 2009. Updates to 104 the number of deaths in immigration detention since October 2003.

"Few Details on Immigrants Who Died in U.S. Custody", *New York Times*, May 5, 2008. An in-depth report detailing significant concerns regarding the medical treatment of detained immigrants and the lack of information surrounding individuals in detention who die while in custody.

"Careless Detention", *Washington Post*, May 11-14, 2008. A four-part investigative series by Pulitzer Prize-honored journalists on medical neglect of detained immigrants and the incompetence of health professionals and prison administrators.

“Immigration Agency Plans New Family Detention Centers”, *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2008, by Anna Gorman.

“A lethal limbo for migrants”, Lack of healthcare turns federal detention into a death sentence for some immigrants. *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 2008, by Sandra Hernandez
www.latimes.com/news/opinion/sunday/commentary/la-op-hernandez1-2008jun01,0,4800385.story

“Dying in Detention”, Editorial, *The New York Times*, June 11, 2008.

“Federal Report Recommends Improvements in Reporting Deaths of Immigrant Detainees”, *The New York Times*, July 3, 2008 by Nina Bernstein.

OTHER RESOURCES:

America, a Freedom Country, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
www.lirs.org/News/NewsReleases/20040112AsylumStorybook.htm a book that tells the stories of 10 asylum seekers who came to the United States seeking refuge from persecution. It is a powerful tool for church groups and advocates seeking to educate their communities about asylum and detention. Provides policy recommendations and suggests ways for individuals to help effect change.

The Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees. www.aviddetention.org.uk. They have a visitors handbook.

The Business of Detention, website. www.businessofdetention.com

“Chasing Freedom,” 2003 film in commercial release about an asylum-seeker’s arduous odyssey in the U.S. detention and deportation system.

“Deportation.” *Encyclopedia of Everyday Law*. Ed. Shirelle Phelps. 1, 2003. [eNotes.com](http://www.enotes.com/everyday-law-encyclopedia/deportation). 2006. 11 Nov, 2008
www.enotes.com/everyday-law-encyclopedia/deportation

Family Care Plan (Information on raids), Presbyterian Church USA.
www.pcusa.org/immigration/pdf/family-care-plan.pdf

GROUND ZERO: *The Laredo Superjail and the No Action Alternative*, Nicholas Hudson, July 2006
<http://www.grassrootsleadership.org/Articles.html>

Handbook for Visitors and Social Workers in Detention Centres. Jesuit Refugee Service Europe.
http://idc.rfbf.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/detention_training_manual-11.pdf

Interactive Map of U.S. Immigration Detention System, Detention Watch Network:
www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/dwnmap

Map and Directory of Free or Low-Cost Legal Services for Immigrants and Refugees, American Bar Association, Commission on Immigration:
http://www.abanet.org/publicserv/immigration/legal_services_directory_map.shtml

Monitoring Places of Detention, Association of the Prevention of Torture:
http://www.ap.t.ch/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,58/itemid,59/lang,en/

Pocket Knowledge for Those Released from Detention, The Detained Torture Survivors Legal Support Network has compiled general tips and information about the right to work, getting a social security number, finding financial support and navigating life in U.S. culture. In English, Spanish, French, and Arabic. <http://www.lirs.org/What/programs/pocketknowledge.htm>

“The Visitor”. This film speaks to the issue of immigrant detention and the official website has many resources and ways to get involved. www.thevisitorfilm.com/main.html

“The Visitor” Discussion Guide: www.takepart.com/videos/the-visitor-connect-with-others-by-exploring-the-issues/8321

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRATION:

“Welcoming the Stranger: A Toolkit for Christian Education and Action on Comprehensive Immigration Reform.” www.sojo.net/action/alerts/CCIR_toolkit.pdf

“I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me” Sermon Resources on Immigration www.sojo.net/action/alerts/080402_Serman_Booklet.pdf

Interfaith Worker Justice Handbook, “For You Were Once a Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. Through the Lens of Faith.” http://www.newsanctuarymovement.org/graphics/documents/ForYouWereOnceAStranger_LowRes.pdf

Church World Service resource “The Bible as the Ultimate Immigration Handbook: Written by, for, and about migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.” <http://www.churchworldservice.org/PDFs/refugees/Biblehandbook.pdf>

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS:

- American Friends Service Committee: <http://www.afsc.org/ImmigrantsRights/>
- American Baptist Churches: www.nationalministries.org/disaster_response/refugees.cfm
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network: www.cliniclegal.org
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): www.discipleshomemissions.org/RIM
- Christian Reformed Church: http://www.crcna.org/pages/osjha_issues.cfm
- Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org/immigration and www.churchworldservice.org/Immigration/religious-services.html
- Council on American Islamic Relations www.cair.com
- Episcopal Migration Ministries: www.episcopalchurch.org/emm
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society: www.hias.org
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition: www.interfaithimmigration.org/index.php
- Jesuit Refugee Service: www.jesref.org
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: www.lirs.org
- Muslim Public Affairs Council www.mpac.org
- New Sanctuary Movement: www.newsanctuarymovement.org
- Presbyterian Church (USA): www.pcusa.org/pda/faq/refugee.htm
- Reformed Church in America: www.rca.org
- Salvation Army: www.salvationarmy.org
- Sojourners Community, Wash, DC: www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=actioni.ccir&item=CCIR_main
- United Church of Christ: www.ucc.org/refugees
- United Methodist Church: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/refugees.stm>
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org/mrs>
- World Relief: www.wr.org

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS:

- **American Civil Liberties Union:** www.aclu.org
- **American Immigration Lawyer’s Association:** www.aila.org
- **Amnesty International:** www.amnestyusa.org
- **Breakthrough:** www.breakthrough.tv
- **Detention Watch Network:** www.detentionwatchnetwork.org
- **Families for Freedom:** www.familiesforfreedom.org
- **Human Rights First:** www.humanrightsfirst.org
- **Human Rights Watch:** www.hrw.org
- **Immigrant legal Resource Center:** www.ilrc.org
- **International Detention Coalition:** www.idc.rfbf.com.au
- **National Immigrant Justice Center:** www.immigrantjustice.org
- **National Immigration Forum:** www.immigrationforum.org
- **National Immigration Law center:** www.nilc.org
- **National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers’ Guild:** www.nationalimmigrationproject.org
- **Refugee Council USA:** www.rcusa.org
- **Refugees International:** www.refugeesinternational.org
- **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:** www.unhcr.org
- **U.S. Committee for Refugees:** www.refugees.org

Suggested Reading:

American Bar Association Commission on Immigration (2004). American Justice Through Immigrants’ Eyes. Washington DC.

Daniels, R. (2004). Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.

Dow, M. (2004). American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Fernandes, D. (2007). Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press.

Hing, B. (2004). Defining America Through Immigration Policy. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press

James, J. (2002). States of Confinement: Policing, Detention, and Prisons. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kanstroom, D. (2007). Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kassindja, F. (1999). Do They Hear You When You Cry? New York, NY: Dell Publishing.

Ngarui Kennedy, D (2008). Asylum Denied: a Refugee’s Struggle for Safety in America. CA: University of California Press.

Nguyen, T. (2005). We are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11. Boston, MA: Beacon Press

Physicians for Human Rights & Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture (2003). *From Persecution to Prison: The Health Consequences of Detention for Asylum Seekers*.

Welch, M. (2002). *Detained: Immigration Laws and the Expanding I.N.S. Jail Complex*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.