FREEDOM FOR IMMIGRANTS

ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020
Freedom for Immigrants is devoted to abolishing immigration detention, while ending the isolation of people currently suffering in this profit-driven system. We monitor the human rights abuses faced by immigrants detained by ICE through a national hotline and network of volunteer detention visitors, while also modeling a community-based alternative to detention that welcomes immigrants into the social fabric of the United States. Through these windows into the system, we gather data and stories to combat injustice at the individual level and push systemic change.

www.freedomforimmigrants.org
By Alonso Flores, detained in Tacoma ICE Processing Center

This poem was translated by David Golding. It originally appeared in IMM-Print, a publication by and for people affected by immigration detention. IMM-Print is a Freedom for Immigrants project.

FEELINGS OF A PRISONER

I wake up in the morning to another nightmare. The sound of keys wakes me up. Washing my face, I look at myself in the blurred mirror. I can smell food in the air. No, this isn’t a nightmare, it’s just breakfast in a cell again. Many men have been here for many years. I look around and see their fear and their frustration, and their spilled tears.

The feeling you get
When you miss your family,
But you don’t see them, they’re not there, nowhere near.
So I close my eyes and I say a prayer
In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He tells me not to be afraid,
It’s just a nightmare.
It’s not real and soon you’ll wake up.
You’ll do what you’ve set out to do,
Learn from your mistakes,
You’ll do the good you’ve set out to do in your life.
Because I’m real,
Who’s there to fear?
Dear Supporters and Friends,

Freedom for Immigrants’ work to abolish immigration detention is deeply rooted in a historical understanding that policing in this country is a direct result of slavery, white supremacy, and racism. Today, these legacies continue, as federal agents arrest immigrants at the border and in the interior, and as police aggressively confront protesters with immigration agents serving as ground forces alongside them.

This past year has arguably been the Trump administration’s most successful one, as it has illegally restricted asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border, expanded immigration detention to record high numbers (52,000 daily pre-pandemic), and continued to target poor people of color. However, these relentless attacks on our communities have only fueled a growing movement to abolish the immigration detention system.

We are stronger than we have ever been, and it is because of you!

With your support, we passed a bill, AB 32, with our partners in California to abolish private prisons. We took this work to D.C. and re-introduced the Detention Oversight Not Expansion (DONE) Act with Senator Kamala Harris and Rep. Pramila Jayapal to cut the detention population in half and invest in community-based alternatives. Our advocacy led to the House Committee on Appropriations passing a budget bill in June mandating that ICE reduce detention levels to 22,000 jail beds, with 12,000 of these unavailable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, 24,713 people are in immigration detention, the lowest number of people detained since the Clinton administration.

Freedom for Immigrants also sued ICE and won! We sued ICE to secure the National Immigration Detention Hotline, which ICE had terminated to target us for our work in violation of our First Amendment rights. The Hotline was restored in early 2020!

We also consulted on Season 7 of Orange Is The New Black, fueling an international conversation on the problems with immigration detention. And we were recognized for our work as honorees of the 2020 John F. Kennedy New Frontier Award.

No matter the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, we cannot lose this momentum. Now more than ever before is the time for us all to deepen our commitment to the vision of a world without immigration detention.

Thank you for believing in us and for continuing to stand alongside us.

In solidarity,

Christina Fialho,
Co-Founder/Executive Director
2020
John F. Kennedy
New Frontier Award

“Christina Fialho and Christina Mansfield have had extraordinary success. They were on the frontlines of this fight long before it hit the headlines. The progress they have made pushing for change from outside of government is truly extraordinary.

Freedom for Immigrants is an organization that has had impact well beyond California, and in California, their work has been truly groundbreaking. We are seeing now first-hand the importance of renewing our values and treating people with dignity and respect. This is a crisis situation, and I hope that everyone will spend some time thinking about this issue and about our own heritage.”

– Ambassador Caroline Kennedy

“The youngest man ever elected President, John F. Kennedy led a generation toward a New Frontier and to answer his call to service. Christina Mansfield and Christina Fialho have done the same outside of politics with years of dedicated service and advocacy on behalf of immigrants and immigrant communities. I’m honored to celebrate them with the 2020 New Frontier Award.”

– Jack Schlossberg, Chairman of the New Frontier Awards Committee and JFK’s grandson.
Freedom for Immigrants was selected as a 2019 Systems Change Accelerator by Social Venture Partners for our work on alternatives to detention.
Abolishing immigration detention starts with a vision for a world without this profit-driven system. Freedom for Immigrants not only envisions a world without detention, we are modeling what it will look like.

**THROUGH OUR NATIONAL IMMIGRATION DETENTION BOND FUND, WE ARE SECURING FREEDOM!**

Freedom for Immigrants raised and paid $1.1 million in immigration bonds to secure the freedom of 140 people from immigration detention as well as an additional 21 people on parole. We also fiscally sponsor four other bond funds, such as the Haitian Immigrant Bail Assistance Project, to ensure we maximize support to people eligible for release from immigration detention. Once released, we provide people with various forms of support, including housing, to begin to show that a community-based alternative to detention is viable.

**THROUGH OUR SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM, WE ARE PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS.**

Many people are only eligible for bond or parole if they have a sponsor.

Freedom for Immigrants has convened and supported a growing ecosystem of 34 community sponsorship groups, such as the Asylum-seeker Sponsorship Project (ASSP), who together have secured the release and provided long-term housing to at least 266 people.

We also have increased our volunteer sponsorship pool this year to over 2,000 volunteers, sending a message to legislators that no one needs to be detained.
THROUGH OUR SAFE HOUSE, WE ARE PROVIDING SHELTER.

Louisiana detains more people in immigration detention than any other state, except for Texas. In the last two years, we have seen a dramatic increase in detention expansion with now 11 very rural immigrant prisons in the state. Freedom for Immigrants launched a safe house in Louisiana and we have provided temporary housing to an additional 69 people, such as Abdul.

Abdul contacted Freedom for Immigrants through our National Detention Hotline from a privately-run prison in Louisiana. Abdul had been subjected to medical neglect and was living caged with an untreated hernia. We worked to secure his release, pick him up from the detention facility, and provide him with short-term housing at our safe house. We were able to provide him with clothes, food, and his own bedroom for his stay. We then connected him to a volunteer sponsor in California. The sponsor has provided Abdul not just with housing, but with a home. Within a few days, the volunteer sponsor had convinced a doctor to treat Abdul’s hernia at no cost to them.

As Freedom for Immigrants’ Sponsorship Coordinator Paula Kahn says, “It is inspiring to witness the path of post-release stabilization when we weave strong webs of relation for freedom, safety, and wellness.”

THROUGH OUR POLICY WORK, WE ARE PASSING A BUDGET TO SAVE LIVES.

In the last two years, Freedom for Immigrants has helped pass a series of four bills in California to phase out immigration detention in the state. This work started with the Dignity Not Detention Act, signed into law in 2018 and co-sponsored by Freedom for Immigrants and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. Now that we have successfully fought for the state to divest from detention, Freedom for Immigrants is working with immigrant rights and criminal justice allies to encourage the state to invest in alternatives to all forms of incarceration, particularly in sponsorship. We will be moving a bill forward in 2021!
LEGISLATION
Toward Abolition

DESPITE THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION’S LETHAL ATTACK ON IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES, FREEDOM FOR IMMIGRANTS HAS ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT POLICY WINS OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS.

2016
Dignity Not Detention Act (SB 1289) passes the California Legislature. Vetoed by Governor Brown.

2016
Freedom for Immigrants and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, drafters and co-sponsors of the Dignity Not Detention Act, launch the Dignity Not Detention Coalition with groups such as the California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance and Human Rights Watch.

2017
The Trump administration assumes office and begins to expand immigration detention nationwide to a record-high number of 52,000 people detained daily with California detaining a quarter of all people in immigration detention each year.

2017
Dignity Not Detention Act (SB 1289) passes in California. Signed by Governor Brown.
2017

**AB 103 Budget Amendment**

to put a moratorium on municipal jail expansion and create state attorney general oversight passes in California.

2017

**Federal Budget Amendment**

introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Pramila Jayapal to stop expansion of immigration detention. Freedom for Immigrants helped draft this amendment and 180 members voted in favor of the amendment.

2018

Five California municipal jails *end their contracts with ICE*, and three cities pull out of their contracts with ICE and private prisons.

“Christina Fialho, co-founder and co-executive director of CIVIC (now Freedom for Immigrants), who helped draft the measure, said the provision is going to add much needed oversight to conditions inside detention centers while stunting their growth.”

“While our ultimate goal is to abolish immigration detention nationwide, this is a powerful first step,” Fialho said. “California is saying that we’re not going to allow President Trump or his administration to expand the immigration detention regime in the state.”

- BuzzFeed
2018

*Detention Oversight Not Expansion (DONE) Act* introduced in House and Senate to stop expansion of immigration detention, decrease detention by 50 percent, and fund community-based alternatives.

2019

*Federal Budget Amendment* passes House of Representatives to prevent the Trump administration from re-purposing funds from FEMA and the Coast Guard for expanded ICE detention.

2019

DONE Act re-introduced.

“FREEDOM FOR IMMIGRANTS IS WORKING ALONGSIDE KAMALA HARRIS TO STOP ICE DETENTION.

Earlier in July, amid widespread public outcry about the inhumane conditions at ICE detention facilities, Democratic presidential hopeful Kamala Harris and Washington Representative Pramila Jayapal reintroduced the Detention Oversight Not Expansion Act. Harris and Jayapal have the support of dozens of immigrant rights organizations, among them Freedom for Immigrants, an L.A.-based group that’s embarked on its own #DoneWithDetention campaign.”

– Los Angeles Magazine
AB 32 passes and is signed into law by Governor Newsom in California to abolish private prisons in the criminal and immigration context.

2019

2020

Federal Budget Amendment passes House of Representatives to stop expansion of immigration detention and cut detention population in half.

June 2020

Immigration detention population is at its lowest since the Clinton administration with 24,713 people detained daily.

“Christina Fialho, co-founder of the California-based group Freedom for Immigrants, which advocates for the abolition of immigrant detention facilities, said she’s happy to see that ICE and private prison companies will be prevented from ‘undermining’ state laws in order to expand detention centers. The nonprofit launched an emergency fund Friday to pay for immigration bonds and support families affected by detention center closures.

‘AB 32 is the most progressive and far-reaching bill on immigration detention in this country,’ she said. ‘We hope to see other states and Congress follow our lead.’”

– Los Angeles Times
ICE RAIDS ARE STILL HAPPENING DURING #CORONAVIRUS

And last year more than 5,000 ICE detainees were quarantined because of mumps and chickenpox outbreaks – preventable diseases. My latest with @rebekahentralgo from @MigrantFreedom

LEADING
COVID-19 Tracking Nationwide

ON MARCH 19 AND MARCH 20, THE STATES OF CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK ISSUED EXECUTIVE ORDERS IMPLEMENTING STATEWIDE “SHELTER-IN-PLACE” POLICIES.

The next business day, March 23, Freedom for Immigrants launched a real-time map of COVID-19 practices in immigration detention across the country. The map is updated every 24 hours to reflect the latest news and media reports alongside real time updates from people inside detention, their loved ones, and advocates on the outside.

Three weeks later, on April 14, Freedom for Immigrants issued its first COVID-19 report, outlining how ICE responded, or rather failed to respond, in preparation for the virus. We documented precisely how the virus first appeared inside immigrant prisons, and how people in detention are organizing to protect themselves. Freedom for Immigrants has continued to publish these reports every two weeks, providing important documentation of ICE’s actions.

The reports are the most comprehensive real-time accounting of ICE’s failed responses, and the impact of the virus on people in detention, providing an important resource for advocates and policy makers at the state and federal levels.
“ICE’s abuse, neglect, and inability or unwillingness to implement proper public health protocols have cost lives,” said Sarah Gardiner, Policy Director at Freedom for Immigrants, in her Congressional testimony before a Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on June 2, 2020.

We have cut the detention population in half! The House Committee on Appropriations passed a budget bill in June 2020 mandating that ICE reduce detention levels from 52,000 to 22,000 jail beds. While this was not ultimately signed into law by the Trump administration, our movement’s advocacy for reduced detention levels has resulted in the lowest number of people detained since the Clinton administration. Currently, 24,713 people are in immigration detention.

Along with the National Immigrant Justice Center, Freedom for Immigrants organized over 200 nonprofits in Washington, D.C. to advocate for the introduction of the FIRST Act to provide urgent and critical restrictions on immigration enforcement. Large portions of this bill were incorporated into the HEROES Act COVID-19 relief legislation, which passed the House and is currently influencing the final Congressional relief package.

OUR REAL-TIME REPORTING HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SIGNIFICANT POLICY WINS!
The current model of immigration detention oversight by the U.S. government does not effectively address or prevent human and civil rights abuses. Freedom for Immigrants offers a consistent community presence inside the immigration detention system. Our network of 4,500 volunteers visit 69 of the largest immigrant prisons on a weekly basis.
And our National Immigration Detention Hotline offers free and confidential phone calls to people in all 200+ immigrant prisons. In partnership with people in immigration detention, Freedom for Immigrants documented and achieved the following:

“The guards have started spraying this chemical everywhere, all over everything, all the time. It causes a terrible reaction on our skin. [...] They are treating us like animals”

- A Hotline caller detained at Adelanto Detention Facility (CA)

**ENDING CHEMICAL USE IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION**

Freedom for Immigrants filed two federal civil rights complaints with partner organizations against ICE and GEO Group for the illegal use of toxic chemicals at the Adelanto Detention Facility (California) and the Glades County Detention Center (Florida). Officers were spraying HDQ Neutral every 15-30 minutes throughout housing units. The chemicals were coming into contact with individuals’ eyes, noses, mouths, skin, clothing, bedding, food and drinking water. People were experiencing nose bleeds and extreme difficulty in breathing.

In addition to filing these complaints, we also engaged Congressional representatives who sent ICE a letter demanding an end to the use of this chemical. And we partnered with Change.org on an accompanying petition signed by over 1.5 million people.

The company that makes HDQ Neutral, Spartan Chemical Company, released a public statement decrying the use of its chemical in immigration detention. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched an investigation, and a federal judge in *Hernandez Roman v. Wolf* ordered ICE to “immediately stop” using HDQ Neutral.
For immigrants languishing behind bars, a hunger strike is often the sole remaining means of protest against a dehumanizing and unjust system.

By Sarah Gardiner
Ms. Gardiner is the director of policy at Freedom for Immigrants.

Jan. 30, 2020

More than 100 people in Louisiana immigration detention were hit with pepper-spray in three incidents over four days. To challenge this abuse and their unjust imprisonment, multiple South Asian men went on hunger strike in Louisiana.

Freedom for Immigrants filed four federal civil rights complaints on behalf of these South Asian men on hunger strike in immigration detention in Louisiana. During the course of their hunger strike, they were subjected to force-feeding and forced-hydration.

Freedom for Immigrants collected over 26,000 signatures with the support of MoveOn, resulting in a federal investigation into force feeding. In addition, we were able to secure the release of two of the men to Freedom for Immigrants’ sponsors, and we are continuing to push for a federal ban on force feeding.
The Epidemic of Hunger Strikes in Immigrant Detention Centers

By one count, there have been 1,600 individuals participating in hunger strikes in the centers just since 2015. In one Louisiana center, three strikers are entering a dangerous phase.

By John Washington

“I have never in my entire life lived like this inside four walls nor am I accustomed to living in imprisonment. I do not know how long my asylum case will take, which is why I want to fight my case from outside this prison [...] I only have one demand: I want freedom and I want to fight my case from outside.”

— A statement from one of the men on hunger strike

“People in ICE custody demand protection from the new coronavirus and end up getting pepper-sprayed instead. Sofia Casini, the southern regional coordinator for the advocacy group Freedom for Immigrants, said, ‘Across the nation we are documenting instances of ICE retaliating against people in immigrant prisons for protesting medical neglect, virus exposure, and denial of release.’”

— Mother Jones, April 23, 2020
ADDRESSING PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE IN DETENTION

Access to culturally competent mental health care is one of the biggest barriers to achieving long-term success post release. Take Alex Lora’s situation. When Alex was detained, his two-year old son was placed in foster care. He was the primary caretaker of his son, and he fought to bring his baby home. But the effects of this separation had short- and long-term effects on both him and his child.

Freedom for Immigrants undertook an investigation into the mental health effects of the immigration detention system. In October of 2019 we published our findings in a report, *Immigration Detention is Psychological Torture: Strategies for Surviving Our Fight for Freedom*. Through a survey we conducted, we learned that nearly 80 percent of people who have been detained have not been able to see a therapist after they were released. Of the people who do see a therapist, over 70 percent of them are not seeing the therapist regularly. The top barrier to obtaining mental health care is the cost, followed by time, lack of language or cultural competency, or just not knowing where to start to even find one. And sadly, in addition to this reality, nearly 80 percent of family members of people who have experienced detention also have not seen a mental health professional.

To address this need gap and with the support of the Child Welfare Fund, we are about to launch a pilot program to provide culturally-competent mental health care to parents of young children released from immigration detention.
Since 2009, Freedom for Immigrants has convened the National Immigration Detention Visitation Network. When we started, there were only 4 visitation programs in the country. Today, there are 69! Freedom for Immigrants has worked to grow this movement of visitor volunteers, while educating the public about the need for oversight and policy change.
2020 REV. JOHN GUTTERMAN LEGACY AWARD

This year, Freedom for Immigrants awarded The Rev. John Guttermann Legacy Award to Advocate Visitors with Immigrants in Detention (AVID). AVID was reimagined in 2018. Previously called Las Cruces CIVIC, in 2016 they first began by visiting people detained at the El Paso Service Processing Center in Texas. They soon expanded to support people in immigration detention facilities in southern New Mexico and West Texas. Today, AVID is an entirely volunteer-run, abolitionist organization. They also operate a pen pal program, and soon, a local hotline run jointly with abolitionists and directly-impacted individuals in El Paso. AVID documents abuses and organizes with people in detention working together toward liberation and the end of immigration detention.
“You may know us as Daddy and CO McCullough on the Netflix series Orange Is The New Black. After playing an incarcerated person and a prison guard for years, we visited an immigrant jail with Freedom for Immigrants, a program referred to in Season 7 of our show that, as it turns out, is a real-life nonprofit.

The experience was both eye-opening and deeply troubling. Our hearts are hurting for these people and at the same time, full of hope and determination to spread awareness regarding this painful situation. Immigrant jails like the Hudson County Correctional Facility where we visited exist across the United States. Chances are there is one near you. Hudson is less than an hour from our home and, in a twist of irony, less than 10 miles away from the Statue of Liberty.

We are #DONEwithDetention. We invite you to join us.”

– Vicci Martinez (“Daddy”) and Emily Tarver (“CO McCullough”) excerpt from a Salon.com article.
National Immigration Detention Hotline: A LIFELINE

Less than two weeks after the premier of Season 7 of Netflix's *Orange Is The New Black* (*OITNB*), ICE shut down our hotline. Freedom for Immigrants consulted on Season 7, which includes a storyline in immigration detention with our hotline as a character. With the pro bono legal support of Hueston Hennigan, Freedom for Immigrants took ICE to court. In early 2020, Freedom for Immigrants won a victory against the federal government!

A federal judge forced ICE to restore our National Immigration Detention Hotline. Two days after restoring the hotline, ICE terminated all social visitation to immigration detention facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of now, the National Immigration Detention Hotline remains one of the only lifelines to the outside world for people severely isolated in immigration detention.

Since we launched our hotline, we have received **573,400 phone calls** from people in immigration detention. We have supported people from **148 countries** who speak **80 different** languages.

“*My character in this season’s OITNB helps portray how difficult it is for immigrants in detention to connect with the outside world and highlights the real-life hotline run by Freedom for Immigrants.*”

- Diane Guerrero (“Maritza” on OITNB)
“In immigration detention, I almost lost my mind. As a trans woman, I was discriminated against each day for the 900 days I was caged. I filed many grievances while I was in immigration detention, but ICE agents and their contractors are corrupt. They are very corrupt people and they cover up for each other. But now that I am on the outside, I have spent the last four years, fighting for the rights of immigrants. Thank you to all those who are joining the fight with Freedom for Immigrants. We see you and we thank you.”

– Gretta Soto Moreno, member of Freedom for Immigrants’ Leadership Council
Freedom for Immigrants believes that we must take direction from those who are directly impacted by immigration detention. Part of this work includes listening to people with lived experience and providing them with a platform to share their thoughts and solutions for change.

In a Freedom for Immigrants’ survey of 1,153 media sources, we found that immigration detention has become increasingly visible in the media. Yet, the lack of first-hand accounts combined with journalism that focuses more on problems rather than solutions within the detention system keeps the public both uninformed and apathetic.

Freedom for Immigrants is changing this reality with our news and culture platform, IMM-Print. This year, we published 108 original pieces with 64 articles by people directly impacted by detention. Our platform has helped shape mainstream media with multiple news outlets, including the Los Angeles Times citing back to IMM-Print as the original news source.

“I have not received one letter from a person in detention who says that the conditions are anything but physical and emotional torture,” said Cindy Knoebel, the volunteer editor of IMM-Print. “The letters that I have break my heart every time I open an envelope.” - Los Angeles Times
Freedom for Immigrants’ management practices ensure that operating funds raised in the current year are effectively put to use to support programs that further our mission of creating a world without immigration detention. The following figures represent sources and uses of operating funds for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. Freedom for Immigrants publishes detailed financial information in the form of its annual report and IRS 990 tax returns.

### USES OF FUNDS

- **Programmatic Expenses**: $2,390,822
- **Admin & Management Expenses**: $217,348
- **Fundraising Expenses**: $108,674

**TOTAL**: $2,716,844

### SOURCES OF FUNDS

- **Individuals**: $2,003,672
- **Foundations**: $1,554,731
- **In-Kind**: $7,666
- **Congregations & Corporations**: $101,389

**TOTAL**: $3,667,458
A SPECIAL AND PROFOUND THANKS TO OUR FOUNDATION PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

The James Irvine Foundation
The Jacob & Valeria Langeloth Foundation
The California Endowment
The Child Welfare Fund
Trinity Church Wall Street
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Jennifer and Jonathan Allan Soros Fund

Thank You to our Individual Champions
Freedom for Immigrants is honored to be the recipient of 5,956 donations from individuals this year. Our median donation is $52, and it is because of these individual champions that our work is possible. We would also like to take a moment to uplift and thank our donors who gave $5,000 or more:

Lucy Ainsworth
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Maura Werner

Every effort has been made to ensure a correct listing of donors and we apologize for any mistakes.

FREEDOM FOR IMMIGRANTS EXISTS BECAUSE OF YOU!
To learn more about how you can support, contact Sierra Kraft at SKraft@freedomforimmigrants.org

www.freedomforimmigrants.org/donate