



**ADDRESSING
ANTI-BLACK
RACISM IN
IMMIGRATION
DETENTION**



**FREEDOM
FOR IMMIGRANTS**

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INTRODUCTION



There are 4 million Black immigrants in the U.S.¹ However, Black immigrants face an immeasurably harsher reality inside Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities, with increased risks of deportation, solitary confinement, physical and emotional abuse, and more. In this report, Freedom for Immigrants seeks to compile the existing research and community-led efforts pointing to the problem of anti-Blackness in ICE detention facilities and how to use this data to help advocate on behalf of Black immigrants in our movement.



STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AS A TOOL TO MAINTAIN THE PERCEPTION OF BLACK PEOPLE AS THREATS

Black people, especially Black men, are often perceived as “thugs” and “brutes” in America.² This depiction of Black people translates directly to the mistreatment of Black bodies in many spheres of American society. Most prominently, the dehumanization of Black immigrants in the media directly impacts how Black immigrants are treated in ICE Detention centers.

One study found that media coverage aided in the reinforcement of immigrants as illegal people.³ This reinforcement contributes to the nefarious human rights abuses ICE officials inflict against Black immigrants inside immigration detention centers as Black immigrants are not seen worthy of humane treatment.

The structural violence that is endemic in US society has a profound and direct impact on how Black bodies are treated inside detention centers. According to the USC Equity Research Institute: **Detention centers foster structural violence as they often operate without accountability.**⁴ For example, the dehumanization of immigrants by the US government’s use of the term ‘illegals’ has enabled and empowered ICE officials to act with impunity inside detention centers.⁵ Given that Black people are already dehumanized by ICE officials’ implicit racial biases, Black immigrants continue to have their voices silenced inside detention centers as a result of systemic and institutionalized violence.

EXAMPLES OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE EMPLOYED AGAINST BLACK IMMIGRANTS INSIDE IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS

Access to Commissary

Commissary support strongly depends on socioeconomic status. However, as Black immigrants have a lower average income than all U.S. residents and all other immigrants, there exists a disparity in commissary access for Black immigrants in detention.⁶ This lack of access to commissary means that Black immigrants are less likely to have access to soap, bottled water, and deodorant. Their experience in detention, thus, is much harder.

Bond Payment Inequities

Black immigrants often face bond payments that are significantly higher than non-Black immigrants. For example, according to the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES), Haitian immigrants faced bonds that were 54% higher on average than other immigrants.⁷

Higher Asylum Denial Rates

Black immigrants face significantly higher asylum denial rates and release request denials. According to RAICES, asylum denial rates for Haitian immigrants from 2012 to 2017 were the second highest at 86%.⁸ Furthermore, the Southern Poverty Law Center found that African immigrants were 50% less likely than non-Africans to be granted their release request.⁹

Colorism and Racial Stereotyping

According to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, “Dark skinned individuals are more quickly and readily disciplined with long periods of solitary than their lighter skinned counterparts.”¹⁰

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASES FOR BLACK IMMIGRANTS DETAINED

BAIL BONDS HIGHER FOR HAITIANS

2018-2020

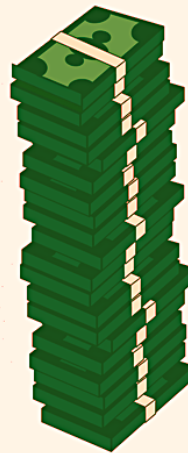
\$10,500

AVERAGE IMMIGRATION BOND



\$16,170

AVERAGE BOND FOR HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS



SOURCE: RAICES

ADAPTED FROM RAICES

THE CRIMINALIZATION-TO- DETENTION PIPELINE

Separate from the issue of overuse of police brutality in communities of color lies the issue of over-policing in Black communities. The over-policing of Black communities inside the US directly impacts the number of Black immigrants detained.

The dehumanization and demonization of Black people in American society, especially unarmed Black men, directly correlates with the mistreatment of Black immigrants inside detention centers. This mistreatment accounts for physical abuse, medical neglect, solitary confinement, and more.

Black immigrants make up only 7.2 percent of the noncitizen population in the U.S. yet make up 20.3 percent of immigrants in detention on criminal grounds.¹¹

Minor offenses such as broken tail lights and stop violations can have devastating impacts on the lives of Black immigrants. Black immigrants are 3 times more likely to be detained and deported because of an alleged criminal offense.¹² Furthermore, **having a criminal conviction increased the chance of being deported by 31% for Black immigrants** when compared to all immigrants with a criminal conviction.¹³

EGREGIOUS ABUSE INSIDE DETENTION CENTERS

Isolation as a tool to punish and discipline Black immigrants.

Black immigrants are 6 times more likely to face solitary confinement inside detention centers.¹⁴ Immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean are overrepresented in solitary confinement cases by 680%.¹⁵ Black immigrants are also more likely to not have attorneys, which then places them at an increased risk for solitary confinement.¹⁶ **Black immigrants face increased risk of unjust solitary confinement in private facilities.** The risk of being placed in solitary confinement without an infraction is 53% in private facilities.¹⁷

Moreover, **ICE is 22% more likely to record a disciplinary infraction as the reason for placing a person from an African nation in solitary confinement** as compared to other detained people.¹⁸ As **prolonged solitary confinement “amounts to psychological torture”** according to the United Nations, ICE’s chronic abuse in disproportionately placing Black immigrants in solitary confinement for disciplinary reasons has a significant long-term impact on Black immigrant’s mental wellbeing as Black immigrants.¹⁹ **One study found that people in detention who experienced solitary confinement are more likely to develop suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, and a variety of psychiatric syndromes.**²⁰

Medical Neglect and Abuse as a tool to control Black Immigrants

Black women experienced **forced hysterectomies**²¹ in a Georgia detention center according to a whistleblower in December 2020. **Forced sterilization is a human rights violation and is an act of gender-based violence.** Black women also experienced **systemic sexual assault** in El Paso Detention Center-- **mirroring the practice of routine sexual assault and rape of Black women during slavery.**²³

EXISTING HEALTH DISPARITIES COMPLICATE ICE'S CHRONIC MEDICAL CARE MISMANAGEMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The rampant health disparities that exist within the US poses an additional barrier for Black immigrants when they are detained. The immigration detention centers of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have been plagued with cases of medical neglect and abuse since their institution. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, ICE's chronic medical care mismanagement can be deadly for Black immigrants as they are more likely to have comorbidities that then place them at a heightened risk of mortality from COVID-19.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT PLACE BLACK IMMIGRANTS AT HIGHER RISK OF CONTRACTING COVID-19

HYPERTENSION

Black adults are 2 times more likely than white adults to develop high blood pressure (hypertension) by the age of 55.²⁴

DIABETES

Non-Hispanic Black individuals are 2 times more likely to die from diabetes than non-Hispanic white people. 2 in 5 people who died from Covid-19 in the US were diabetic.²⁵

HEART DISEASE

Black individuals are significantly more likely to get a heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases than white Americans.²⁶ Non-Hispanic Black Americans are 30% more likely to die from heart disease than non-Hispanic white Americans.²⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING BLACK IMMIGRANTS IN DETENTION

[FROM KICA MATOS AND NANA GYAMFI,
VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE]²⁸

- Combat the erasure of Black immigrants in the immigrant rights movement by **centering Black leaders in the decision making and agenda setting processes** for immigration reform.
- Challenge the anti-Blackness that has been normalized in the immigration rights movement by **calling out harmful rhetoric against Black immigrants** when you see it.
- **Support local efforts aimed at dismantling the criminalization-to-detention pipeline** that significantly affects Black immigrants and support efforts promoting racial justice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Famyrah Lafortune is a rising senior at Stanford University majoring in International Relations. She has been a FFI National Detention Hotline Volunteer since January 2021 supporting people currently detained documenting abuse and conditions and requesting support on behalf of callers. As an FFI Summer Intern through the HAAS Community-Based Research Fellowship Application at Stanford University, she submitted Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Complaints on behalf of Black immigrants, working in collaboration with medical professionals, attorneys, visitation groups, FFI staff, and reporters to write advocacy letters and create a safety plan for callers. In addition she gathered research and data from movement partners and finalized the fact-sheet “Anti-Black Racism in Immigration Detention.” Famyrah hopes to attend Medical School and become a Doctor to support other Black immigrants in her community.



Amanda Díaz was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her experiences as a child of undocumented immigrants incited a sense of obligation and commitment to detention abolition, liberation, and dignity for undocumented people. Prior to joining Freedom for Immigrants, Amanda worked as a community organizer for an immigrants’ rights organization in Seattle, Washington. Amanda built a powerful base of committed leaders that ran local campaigns in support of immigrant and Black and brown communities, including affordable childcare and achieving state-wide dual-language education in elementary schools.

ENDNOTES

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**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER.**

BLACK LIVES MATTE