

July 2018

Statements from Formerly Detained Families of the Berks County Detention Center

*"I do not agree with all the discrimination against us, immigrants, in this country. I do not agree with how cruel they are towards those of us that ask for safety from the delinquency of our countries. And I do not agree that the people who come here to seek refuge be treated in this way, separated from our children or incarcerated. I as an immigrant am in agreement that these detention centers being eliminated. (These centers) cause a lot of damage. I ask that the Governor be done with these cruel laws put upon us that this detention center be done with for all of us that are asking for our rights as human beings." - **Father and member of the Caravan***

*"Mr. Governor Wolf...perhaps in your life you have never felt that need that a father, a mother, feels when their rights are limited. And one of these kids' rights is the right to be with their parents, beings who gave them life, besides God. I really send this message to you Mr. Governor in protest to close, close House Berks, where many parents, many mothers have had their rights restricted and especially, much more those of children." - **Father and member of the Caravan***

*"For more than 600 days we were there and we have seen the reality of how the center works and it is not a safe house. It is a prison. We saw a mother crying, her 13-year-old son had fainted. She had already gone for a consultation twice and she was told it was nothing and they had to remove him from the emergency room. If they really had medical assistance available 24 hours, what happened with this boy wouldn't have happened. My ask to the Governor of Pennsylvania, is please, he has the power, he can call to have the center closed. He should do it so that no mother, no child, no father has to go through the suffering we went through in that place." - **Sofia, mother detained for nearly two years with her son***

*"My message for the Governor of Pennsylvania is to close the Berks Detention Center. It is unjust that the children and mothers and now fathers are in that place. And instead of finding protection, we find a prison. It is unjust. That is why I ask the Governor to please close the Berks center. My belief is that no family, regardless of their color, race, regardless of their country, of what part of the world they come from, they should not be put in prison." - **Lorena, mother held for nearly two years with her son***

*"For me, I'd like to send a message that no child should be detained. No child should be detained because they do not owe anything. No parent because it is unjust. I saw how my son suffered there and how I suffered next to him. To me the message I'd like to send is to close that center. No more children should be detained, no more parents should be detained. Because no one knows the pain, no one lives that pain more than we have. I was in that center with my son for two years, only I know the pain and suffering that is living in that center. The people who have the right and power to close that center, should close it so there are no more children detained." - **Delmy, mother detained for two years with her son***

“The first thing that I would ask him (Governor Wolf) is just to make the wrong right. There’s no need to say that a state would lose jobs because we are asking them to shut down this place. The same staff can provide human services for immigration. The same staff that you are using right now as guard in prison they can become human service providers. The same place that you have right now can break out their locks, open their rooms for people who really needs a place to live. Who really needs some medical assistance where they are fighting for their legal right. We don’t want to get anything illegal. We are not looking for charity. We are just looking for legal paths for our legitimate cases. Finally, I just want him to think for a moment if he were in the place of any one of those fathers or mothers, how would he like to be treated.” - Waddah, father detained for six months with his daughter