

MWD Presentation 4-13-25

Immigrant detention is a civil or administrative incarceration

Since New York's Castle Garden opened in 1855, the U.S. is imprisoning immigrants—not because they committed crimes or pose a danger, but simply to hold them while courts decide whether to let them stay or deport them.

Immigrant Detention surged in the 1980s with the rise of private prisons, and again in 1996 when a federal law mandated detention for many non-citizens, expanded deportation grounds for legal permanent residents, and required detention of asylum seekers who arrive without documents.

Today, the U.S. runs the largest immigrant detention system in the world with over 200 facilities, 80% of which are operated by private prison corporations which value profits over people and in order to increase their profit, cut costs on essential services.

This year, ICE has \$3.4 billion for 41,500 immigrant detention beds daily—a cost to taxpayers of \$225 per bed. The proposed budget for next year includes funding for up to 43,000 beds per day. Additionally, a two year \$45 billion detention infrastructure expansion project has already been initiated without Congressional approval.

This system is designed to punish and deter. Most detention centers are in remote areas, cutting immigrants off from family and legal help. Legal representation is not guaranteed and most people in detention must defend themselves, without legal knowledge, English skills, or access to their evidentiary documents. The conditions in detention are brutal and often fatal: preventable deaths from medical neglect, widespread abuse, inedible food, and retaliation against those who speak out.

Oversight is minimal—and now, even the Office for Civil Rights Civil Liberties and the Ombudsman Immigrant Detention Office have been closed.

Which brings me to the **Adelanto ICE Processing Center**, located in the high desert of San Bernardino County. Under contract with ICE, two facilities are operated by GEO Group—the world's largest private prison corporation—and together these facilities can detain up to 2,690 adults. However, a federal court order currently limits use of the largest facility.

Today, about 700 men—and no women—are imprisoned in Adelanto.

People detained in Adelanto come from all over the world, mostly from the Global South; but also China, Russia, and India. They include:

- Newly arrived asylum seekers
- Individuals with Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- People who overstayed or violated the conditions of their visas
- Undocumented residents—many of whom have lived here for decades
- Legal permanent residents

With mass deportation underway, we are seeing fewer newly arrived asylum seekers and more long-term undocumented residents with roots in Southern CA. Most have no criminal record or only minor infractions and were not targeted by ICE but got picked up as “collateral” arrests—caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I coordinate **AVAN Immigrant Services**—also known as the Adelanto Visitation and Advocacy Network—a volunteer coalition that has been visiting immigrants detained by ICE in Adelanto since 2011. At first visitors to offer moral support and reduce isolation and over time, our work expanded to include case management and post-release support.

From June 2023 to April 2025—a period marked by a high number of newly arrived asylum seekers—AVAN worked with 575 detained immigrants to help them secure release as quickly as possible, giving them a better chance to find legal representation and build their case while living with family and friends.

We assist families in identifying sponsors and preparing sponsor documents. When needed, we help them post bonds with assistance from the **National Bail Fund** partners. We also coordinate post-release travel, and when necessary, we cover expenses with assistance of **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance** funds.

Of the **575 individuals** we supported between **June 2023 and April 2025**,

- 49 remained detained in Adelanto;

- 107 were deported;

- 24 transferred;

- 2 won their cases;

- 1 was granted voluntary departure, not considered a deportation, and

- 392 were released from detention to continue their legal cases while living with their sponsors.

Of the 392 people released to the community,

- 147 did not have to post bond,

- 245 posted a collective total of \$1.3 million in bonds -

- This includes \$681,600 we helped secure for 127 people to be released from detention.

Once released from the facility, 185 immigrants had no way to get to their destinations and AVAN covered \$26,732 in travel expenses.

AVAN Needs Financial Support

Next Tuesday, Legal Orientation Programs, known as LOPs will end services in detention facilities. This funding cut by the Dept. of Justice is a major blow to Immigrants who are forced to represent themselves in court; about 80% of those detained.

At Adelanto, no longer able to count on LOP's orientation classes, individual consultation, help with completing forms, translating documents, etc.; we expect immigrants to call us; and AVAN will rise to the challenge.

We anticipate that our expenses will rise as we respond to more—and longer—hotline calls. Copying and mailing costs will increase, and we'll need to supplement our volunteer translators with professional phone interpretation services.

Please Support AVAN – Every Donation Helps

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Los Angeles, CA 90005

Want to Get Involved with AVAN or Stay Informed About Changes in Immigrant Detention?

To learn about volunteer opportunities or join our mailing list, text your name, email address, and the word "volunteer" and/or "mailing list" to: (310) 310-0790

We are always looking for volunteers to write or visit immigrants in Adelanto; but also for translators and people who can help pro-se litigants to complete forms and better present their cases in court.

ACTION ALERT

When prison beds exist, they will be filled. ICE plans to spend \$45 billion over 2-years to massively expand immigrant detention infrastructure. Bids are now being accepted although funds have not yet been approved by Congress.

Tell your elected officials: "No to detention expansion. Yes to dignity and due process."