



Shut Down Adelanto
Conditions and Updates Report
November 2023

Table of Contents

- I. Introductions
- II. Title 42, Asylum and the Impacts of Border Policy
- III. California Legislative Changes that Impact Adelanto
- IV. Conditions Inside Adelanto and Desert View
- V. Liberation of Ligaya and Jackie
- VI. Demands and Asks from SDA

Acknowledgements

This report was put together by The Shut Down Adelanto Coalition (“SDA”), a coalition of organizations ranging from legal service providers, grassroots organizations, and directly-impacted individuals focused on shifting the narrative about detained immigrants, advocating for the safety and release of all immigrants, and advocating for the Just Closure of the Adelanto ICE Detention Center (“Adelanto”) & Desert View Modified Correctional Facility, also known as the Desert View Annex (“Desert View”).

Methodology

This report presents information gathered and obtained from community advocates, legal service providers, government and news reports, and most importantly, the voices of those currently detained at Adelanto and Desert View. Their stories can be found in the appendix alongside information about their cases or their interviews. Additionally, many of the sections in this report provide information about the facilities, which was based on the ongoing communication and contact among those detained.

I. Introduction

The United States operates the world's largest immigration detention system with a network of over 200 detention centers across the country. The system, run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”), continues to be cruel, inhumane, and deadly as shown by an extensive and well-documented history of abuse and neglect. People in detention, their loved ones and communities, as well as local and national organizations have been fighting for the shutting down of detention centers across the country. As the COVID-19 pandemic shut down several countries, the detention centers remained open and operating under unsafe conditions adding an additional 245,000 COVID-19 cases to the already alarming rates.

Adelanto and Desert View combined hold the largest number of ICE detention beds in the west coast with a total of 2,690 beds. Desert View, which opened in late 2020, increased the detention capacity in Southern California by adding an additional 750 beds right next to Adelanto. This is of ever-increasing concern for the Shut Down Adelanto Coalition because the current detention capacity for all of Southern California, including in the San Diego area, stands at a total of 3,440 beds. [If you build it, ICE will fill it.](#)

In our previous quarterly reports, we have discussed issues from toxic water conditions to lack of COVID-19 prevention in Adelanto and Desert View. We also shared testimonies from directly-impacted individuals who experienced first-hand the horrors of Adelanto and Desert View. In this report, we will highlight impacts of border policy on Adelanto and Desert View, pending legislative changes that will impact ICE detention in the state of California, the continued conditions inside the facilities, and the stories of two women impacted by detention in Adelanto.

II. Title 42, Asylum and the Impacts of Border Policy

In 2020, the Trump Administration invoked Section 265 of Title 42, granting the administration exceptional emergency powers to block migrants from entering the United States under the pretext of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a detrimental impact on the U.S. asylum system, as the immediate expulsion of individuals who were unable to voice their fears of persecution or receive deportation orders put these individuals at risk of being subject to dangerous migratory paths and trafficking. While the federal government cited its inability to safely process asylum seekers in group settings, many border officials neglected protective measures and vaccination, which raised questions about the administration’s true commitment to public health. Throughout the obscure era of Title 42, more than 1.87 million expulsions took place through April 2022, compelling asylum seekers into vulnerable situations. The policy came to an end on May 11, 2023.

Following the termination of Title 42, the Biden Administration implemented an asylum ban, drawing parallels to policies reminiscent of the Trump era. This ban operates on the presumption of asylum ineligibility for individuals who fail to seek protection in countries they transited while en-route to the United States. Under this policy, asylum seekers face expulsion under Title 8, accompanied by a five-year ban on re-entry. This policy has been met with strong opposition. Partners in the #WelcomeWithDignity campaign for asylum rights are showing that the opposition is passionate, strong, and unrelenting. Nearly 33,000 people sent a message opposing the asylum ban through the online portal NoAsylumBan.US, and nearly 10,000 people submitted comments through portals created by movement partners. Despite the ban being deemed unlawful in July, it remains in effect pending a decision from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals after hearing oral arguments on November 7, 2023.

Furthermore, in January 2023, the Biden Administration introduced the mobile application known as CBP One, which is now the primary means for migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border to pre-schedule appointments for asylum processing at designated ports of entry. Nevertheless, the implementation of CBP One has raised significant concerns, underscoring the disparities of the digital divide. Currently, the app is accessible in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole, with additional factsheets in Portuguese and Russian, indicative of an initial lack of language inclusivity. Moreover, the app's incompatibility with older cellphone models, the privacy-related concerns, the absence of a desktop counterpart, and established support channels for addressing technical challenges collectively paint a disconcerting picture.

With the end of Title 42, SDA has also seen cruelty and inhumanity evolve into open-air prisons for asylum seekers and refugees. The Southern Border Communities Coalition has been assisting and providing resources to thousands of migrants and they have reported the depravity of the situation from interviews conducted by the U.S. Immigration Policy Center:

- 100% of migrants believed they were detained, and most believed that if they tried to leave, they would be arrested or would die in the desert.
- 100% said border agents were not giving them enough food and 53% said they were not giving them enough water for the day.
- 100% said border agents were not providing adequate sanitation, such as toilets, and 47% said there were not adequate trash cans or waste removal.
- 100% said agents were not providing adequate shelter, like protection from the sun, and 93% said agents had not provided blankets to keep warm at night.

This survey offers us a glimpse into the situation at the border, however the impacts reverberate to the Inland Empire and Desert View which is now holding hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees.

Detention of Asylum Seekers at Desert View

Due to the end of Title 42, we have seen the local and devastating impact of asylum seekers being detained at Desert View. The count of asylum seekers fluctuates between 100-300 which has caused tremendous pressure on the local organizations to provide support pre- and post-release. Many are held on bonds of up to \$15,000, which is nearly impossible for asylum seekers to pay without any outside assistance. SDA members have been supporting with finding transportation, temporary housing, finding a sponsor, and relocation assistance.

Black migrants have historically experienced disproportionate ICE transfers and detention. In July of 2023, over 100 Mauritanian asylum seekers fleeing enslavement, forced statelessness, and ethnic cleansing were transferred from the border to Desert View. ICE provided an arbitrary \$5,000 bond to each Mauritanian asylum seeker. Additionally, because of racial persecution, many of the Mauritanian asylum seekers do not read or write, making interpretation services nearly impossible. The Director of Immigration Services and Social Services for the Mauritanian Network for Human Rights in the United States says, "...Black Mauritians are seeking asylum, crossing borders to find refuge and embracing the arms of compassion and justice in a world that stands united against the chains of oppression. Instead of detaining these individuals, the United States must provide them with freedom and safety." SDA members mobilized their rapid response networks and immediately started working on releases of the Mauritanian asylum seekers. To date, there have been around 150 Mauritians released from Desert View.

The end of Title 42 highlights the depravity of humanity and dignity in our border and immigration policies. The clear lack of preparation by the Biden Administration led to open-air prisons, reliance on a phone application that is spotty at best and does not have all languages present at the border, and ICE detaining more people while they repeatedly violate human rights. The cyclical system of border imperialism demands more funding for CBP and ICE and every year our federal government gives into those demands. Yet, the issues continue to persist and worsen. We cannot continue relying on systems and policies built on settler-colonialist ideologies that will continue harming the marginalized and oppressed communities around the world who we then see at our borders escaping the conditions created by these ideologies. Our following list of demands is what we believe to be a step in the right direction towards real progress, and creates solutions based on care, human dignity, and the social well-being of all immigrant communities.

III. California Legislative Changes that Impact Adelanto

This year in California there were a series of legislative proposals aimed at supporting immigrants and communities across the state who are impacted by the harms of

incarceration. Such proposals would greatly impact the state of the ICE Detention in Adelanto.

Mandela Act (AB 280)

The Mandela Act, AB 280, authored by Assemblymember Holden, presents a comprehensive framework for defining solitary confinement, and effectively establishes clear boundaries for the use of solitary confinement across all correctional facilities in California. The bill defines solitary confinement as any period of confinement that exceeds 17 hours in a cell; mandates that facilities document any instance in which solitary is used; places limits on the duration any person can be held in this manner; and bans the use of solitary confinement entirely for certain vulnerable populations.

The Mandela Act's comprehensive framework for defining solitary confinement signifies a watershed moment in how such practices are understood and regulated, instigating a transformation in the treatment of people in detention within facilities like Adelanto and Desert View. By delineating solitary confinement as any period of confinement that exceeds 17 hours in a cell, The Mandela Act furnishes a clear and unequivocal standard for its application, which diminishes ambiguity and curbs the potential for arbitrary or abusive use. Furthermore, the mandate requiring facilities to meticulously document instances of solitary confinement introduces a crucial layer of transparency and accountability, which ensures that the reasons for employing such measures are recorded and open to scrutiny.

The Mandela Act's imposition of limits on the duration of solitary confinement affords additional protection to people detained, which mitigates the physical and psychological harm associated with prolonged isolation while fostering a more equitable disciplinary approach at facilities like Adelanto and Desert View. The prohibition on using solitary confinement for certain vulnerable populations, including those who recently gave birth, have disabilities, or fall within specific age limits, also reflects a profound commitment to human rights and compassion, which should compel the detention center to develop alternative, humane disciplinary strategies for individuals within these groups. Consequently, the Mandela Act would reshape the operational landscape at Adelanto and Desert View and mandate a shift towards a more ethical, human rights-based approach to the treatment of detainees.

HOME Act (AB 1306)

The Harmonizing Our Measures for Equality (HOME) Act, AB 1306, authored by Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo, would ensure that Californians are not excluded based on where they were born from benefiting from criminal justice reforms that were passed by this legislature. The HOME Act would prevent the California Department of Corrections

and Rehabilitation (CDCR) from transferring to federal immigration authorities individuals who have earned release through these reforms.

The HOME Act's framework is centered on prevention of immigrants from entering the prison-to-deportation pipeline that exists in our state. A significant portion of individuals inside our state prisons are funneled into ICE custody upon their completion of their state prison sentence. Ending or severely limiting this funnel would have a significant impact in ultimately reducing the population and numbers of individuals who are being doubly punished simply for being non-citizens.

HEAL & Just Transition of Adelanto's Economy

The Dignity Not Detention (DND) Coalition passed a budget initiative called Healthy Economies Adapting to Last (HEAL) to put money aside to incentivize cities to divest from immigration detention by providing them funding to invest in new industries and jobs. This approach is adapted from "Just Transitions" frameworks used by environmental justice advocates which focus on transitioning economies away from "extractive economies" into renewable, green sustainable development that center the needs of workers and residents. DND is a coalition that is made up of community-based organizations across California formed to harness our statewide power to end immigration detention and reimagine a better future. DND won \$5 million for HEAL in the 2023 budget, which will go through the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) over the next three years. HEAL presents a new tool in our coalition's advocacy toolbox to close detention centers once and for all.

This effort would greatly help Adelanto's current unsustainable detention-based economy. On April 14th, 2023, GEO Group laid off 112 workers from Adelanto, estimated to be half of the workforce at the facility. This massive layoff happened just two-and-a-half years after GEO Group expanded their detention capacity. Furthermore, the City of Adelanto has a history of operating under a budgetary deficit and unsustainable economic development, starting with the closure of the George Air Force Base in 1991, which devastated the regional economy. Extractive entities like Amazon and GEO Group have filled in for the military base. And though these entities are billion-dollar corporations, the vast majority of economic benefits leave the region forcing the city to continue to struggle with a high unemployment rate above 20%.

HEAL presents a unique opportunity for advocates to present an alternative vision of what is possible in the City of Adelanto without a reliance on ICE detention. With HEAL, the City of Adelanto has the opportunity to release themselves from the grip of GEO Group and create long-lasting, high wage, environmentally-friendly jobs for generations to come.

IV. Conditions Inside Adelanto and Desert View

There have been significant updates at both facilities since our last report published in October of 2022. As of October 2023, we report that Adelanto is down to only detaining seven individuals for a facility that has a capacity of 1940. We welcome this drastic population decrease as good news, and urge the immediate release of the remaining seven individuals, including the release of Ligaya Jensen, the last remaining woman at Adelanto.

Desert View unfortunately does not share the same good news as Adelanto. As a result of the Biden administration's continued effort to criminalize asylum seekers as described above in Section II, Desert View has seen a drastic upturn in population numbers estimated somewhere around 400 people. SDA started visiting individuals detained in Desert View, and in this section we will provide first-hand testimony from two individuals about the current conditions that they are facing inside the facility. We will also summarize some of the broader issues around detention center conditions that have come to light in recent news.

Stories from Desert View

"I traveled one year and three months from Ecuador to the Tijuana border to seek asylum. I was experiencing unimaginable forms of violence in my country due to my sexual orientation and identity. I was immediately detained and transferred to the Desert View Annex in Adelanto, CA. At this facility, I experienced gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination again from both the detained men and guards. I was physically attacked, called names and was not allowed to shower. Although I did submit reports, I never saw justice. I also witnessed a guard frequently put an unknown substance into our drinking water. Months into my sentence, I was diagnosed with diabetes despite never having it before - I was then not given the medical attention I needed."

- DC, who identifies as transgender woman and who was detained with men for five months in Desert View.

"I am missing vital memories of my children's lives. I am missing basketball games and birthdays. All I can think about is being reunited with my children and making up for the time I have been missing. Here, I am sleeping under walls that leak water when it rains. The wall I sleep next to smells like mold and I have to constantly clean it myself because GEO does not address the issue. I know this is not healthy for me and I can not wait to get back to the comfort of my home and family."

- Oj was transferred to the Desert View Annex after being released from state custody on good behavior. Although he was promised to return to his wife and four children after serving his sentence, ICE picked Oj up. Oj is one of the

many undocumented immigrants who have been doubly punished by this country's justice system.

NPR Investigation of Detention Conditions

In August of 2023, National Public Radio (NPR) reported on the results of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit against DHS's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL). The FOIA contained records revealing what we at SDA knew and the reasons that we call for the abolishment of immigration detention and the shutting down of Adelanto and Desert View: that individuals detained in facilities across the United States are subjected to excessive force, negligent medical care, racism, filthy conditions, and staff who show an utter disregard for the human lives within ICE's walls.

NPR reports that the most serious problem in immigrant prisons across the country relates to negligent medical care, and highlights a person in Aurora, Colorado who died after receiving incorrect medical treatment. Another key takeaway from the investigation was that the Biden administration is failing in its promise to end for-profit immigration detention, as about 91% of people detained are still in privately-run facilities.

One shocking incident that shows just how indifferent to human life detention center staff can be is the recording of a 9-11 phone call that NPR highlights in its report. The call reveals that a detention officer at Aurora, Colorado "gave the dispatcher the wrong address for the facility where he worked; he placed the dispatcher on hold when asked how paramedics could access the building and he did not know any of the specifics of the medical emergency." The detention officer also gave the dispatcher the incorrect age of Melvin Ariel Caldero-Mendoza, who was the subject of the 9-11 call and who subsequently died.

The full investigation report can be found [at the link here](#), and includes two CRCL reports from March of 2016 and November of 2017 about conditions in Adelanto. Both reports found:

- The facility did not provide adequate language interpretation during the intake and screening process;
- The facility did not provide adequate mental health care for individuals housed in segregation units;
- Individuals had long stays in segregation units;
- Significant healthcare concerns were not being addressed;
- Staff misconduct including verbal harassment, mistreatment, disrespect, racial and sexual identity discrimination, retaliation, and excessive use of force;
- Retaliation when individuals voiced grievances;
- Lack of access to resources in the law library;
- Long visitation wait times for families and attorneys;
- Lack of access to attorneys;

- Inadequate access to language services as required by federal law.

Although the Adelanto CRCL reports are from incidents occurring in 2015 through 2017, the conditions in Adelanto and around the country have not improved since. "If anything, conditions have probably gotten worse," says Eunice Cho of the American Civil Liberties Union, who noted "widespread reports of poor treatment and increased use of solitary confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Use of Solitary Confinement and Segregation

The practice of prolonged solitary confinement represents one of the most severe and destructive measures witnessed within carceral institutions today. This viewpoint is endorsed by prominent international bodies such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations, with the latter ratifying the Nelson Mandela Rules in 2015, which specifically denounce as torture any segregation exceeding 15 days. Despite mounting global pressure for the eradication of prolonged solitary confinement, the practice continues to persist in an alarming number of California's jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers. The misuse of isolation within California's correctional facilities prompted legal action in 2012, revealing that nearly 10,000 incarcerated individuals were subjected to solitary confinement, with 1,557 enduring such conditions for a decade or more.

The impact of prolonged solitary confinement extends beyond traditional carceral settings to affect immigrants in private, for-profit detention facilities such as Adelanto and Desert View. Alarming cases of individuals being subjected to extensive periods of isolation, in clear violation of mental health and welfare protocols, highlight the urgent need for intervention at facilities like Adelanto and Desert View.

In the November 2017 report provided to NPR discussed above, the CRCL office investigated the length of time that individuals spent in segregation. The longest length of time an individual was in segregation at the time of the investigation was 904 days. Although the report states that the reason for segregation was the individual's own safety concerns, the report also notes that "no detainee should be held in the SMU [Special Management Unit, otherwise known as segregation] for this amount of time." The report notes: "Isolation alone can create physical safety concerns and can result in mental decompensation." In particular, the report found that Adelanto did not have the proper mental health strategies to address the needs of those held in segregation long-term: "[S]egregation is used at [Adelanto] because there is no other housing location within the facility that allows for close observation of detainees with serious mental disorders, which is both inhumane and in violation of ICE Directive 1106.51[.]"

V. Liberation of Jackie and Ligaya

At the beginning of 2023, SDA launched the #FreeTheLast2 campaign to demand the release of Ligaya Jensen and Jacqueline (“Jackie”) Vanbooyzen, the last two women in ICE custody at Adelanto.

Jackie, age 58, had been detained by ICE at Adelanto since 2019 - for over three years. She came to the United States from Germany over 55 years ago, when she was two years old, and is the mother of three U.S. citizens: Andrew, Victoria, and Hillary. She is also a grandmother. During her years detained at Adelanto, she developed serious medical conditions including diabetes and major depression.

Ligaya, age 47, has been detained by ICE at Adelanto since 2018 - for over four years. She came to the United States from the Philippines over 25 years ago and is the mother of two U.S. citizens, Christian and Alexander. She has close family members in several parts of California, including Stockton and San Diego. During her years detained at Adelanto, she has developed serious medical conditions including potentially cancerous tumors. She had courageously contributed to the SDA May 2022 and October 2022 reports, despite the justifiable fear of retaliation from ICE and GEO staff, and in March 2023 became the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit against the GEO Group regarding toxic chemicals.

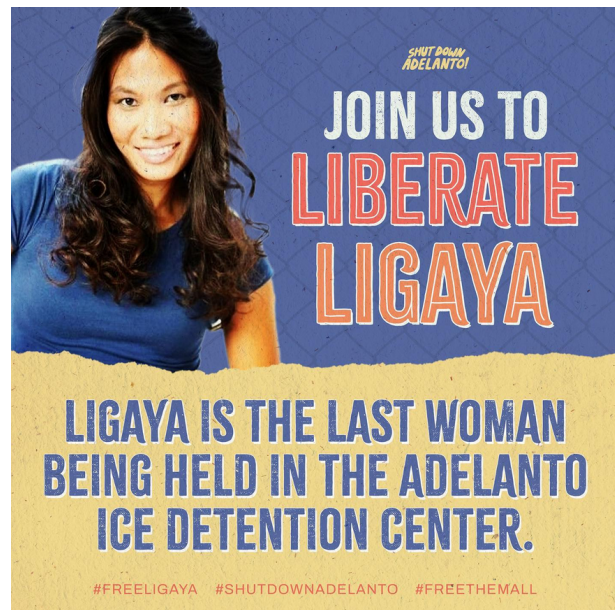
In April 2023, 60 local, state, and national organizations and 221 community members across California submitted a [powerful letter to Senator Alex Padilla's office requesting that he submit a congressional inquiry to ICE requesting their releases](#). On Mother’s Day, the Shut Down Adelanto coalition held a [phone banking session](#) where community members called Senator Padilla’s office to ask for a response to our collective letter and wrote cards to Ligaya and Jackie.

At the end of May, Ligaya was granted a bond hearing in front of an Immigration Judge due to a powerful habeas corpus petition that she had filed. SDA organized over 40 people to attend virtually and in-person; the latter group, including Ligaya and Jackie’s previously detained comrade Miriam, bravely fought for their right to be present at the hearing. Unfortunately, Adelanto Immigration Judge Curtis White, who used to be an ICE attorney and has a 96% asylum denial rate, cruelly refused to grant Ligaya a bond despite the overwhelming showing of community support.

In July, SDA planned a joint birthday party for Ligaya and Jackie, who share the same exact birthday of July 27th. [Dozens of community members gathered outside of the local ICE office](#) to eat cake, write birthday cards, and celebrate Jackie and Ligaya’s strength and resilience.

On August 25, Jackie was finally released from Adelanto after an Immigration Judge decided to dismiss her deportation proceedings. While overjoyed by Jackie’s liberation, SDA

has remained committed to fighting for Ligaya's freedom as well. Since Jackie was released, Ligaya has now spent approximately two months alone in conditions of solitary confinement as the sole woman at Adelanto. Ligaya has shared that this has been the most difficult period she has experienced in her nearly five years of ICE detention. She tries to solve logic puzzles to help her pass time and keep herself occupied but always ends up sobbing so hard that her vision is too blurred to see the page in front of her. Still, she remains steadfast in fighting for her freedom in collaboration with SDA.



Ligaya Jensen:

“The food inside has been horrible. It has not changed in the five years I’ve been here. The dietitian gives me cake EVERYDAY. I am forced to eat lots of processed meat items with high amounts of salt. The dietitian does not care to ensure that the food that is provided for me is healthy for me. Since the food is not edible, I am focused on buying from the commissary - but even the commissary’s food is also processed. Commissary prices have increased dramatically during my time here. Some individuals have wide feet, like myself, but the shoes are too tight. They have been causing calluses on my toes. I have been asking for wider shoes ever for years and they have not acknowledged my needs. ICE collects money by not doing any kind of preventive care. I am in need of a crown but ICE refuses to invest in my health until something traumatic happens. Living here is not human and no one should live here.”

Jackie Von:

“Food was an ongoing issue. I knew I was not receiving the nutrients I needed. I had to fight for over a year to receive fresh fruit as part of the meal plans. We had to continuously meet with the dietitian and request she add fruit. At one point, I think they got tired of asking for fruit that they finally gave in. At one point, ICE decided that my diabetes medicine was too expensive for them to pay. They put my medicine on hold for three days before they decided they should continue giving me my medicine. I knew ICE and GEO Group were trying to hide the fact that they gave me the incorrect medicine that led to me becoming unconscious. They did not review my medical record before giving me medicine for an infection I developed while being detained. This medicine did not react well with my diabetes medicine and made me extremely sick. They detained me. They needed to take care of me and they did not.”

VI. Demands and Asks from SDA

We demand the immediate closure of Adelanto and Desert View, as a first step towards the abolition of the inherently cruel and unjust immigration detention system. These facilities exemplify the egregiously poor conditions and culture of violence that plague the entirety of ICE detention that results in system-wide abuses, including death. ICE has been jailing immigrants at Adelanto for ten years now. During that time, ICE and the GEO Group have capitalized on the city’s economic instability to expand the hazardous detention center to one of the largest in the country. However, ICE’s immigration detention system does not need to exist, and communities across the country are organizing to end it and to build a better future.

Below are some actions Members of Congress can take:

1. Send letter of support for Ligaya Jensen’s release and the release of the remaining 6 men inside the detention facility.
2. Conduct unannounced inspections of the facilities.
3. Support measures and initiatives to create a federal revenue stream to provide grants to communities transitioning away from economies dependent on federal detention.
4. Support the following bills that seek to reduce the impact of detention and deportation in the United States:
 - a. H.R. 1511 & S. 2606 - registry reform bills
 - b. H.R. 536 - New Way Forward Act
 - c. S.1186 - Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act of 2021
 - d. HR 8433 - Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929

The Shut Down Adelanto Coalition

The Shut Down Adelanto Coalition consists of Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles, Center for Community Action & Environmental Justice, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice, Freedom for Immigrants, Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective, Anabayan-IE, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Nikkei Progressives, Immigrant Defenders Law Center, Centro Del Inmigrante, Amnesty International, Social Justice Legal Foundation, and, among others.