

**Spring 2019 U.S. Immigration Alert!**  
A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network  
Spring 2019 Issue, Volume 66  
No Immigrant Bashing! Support Immigrant Rights!



<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

\$3.00/Copy

# Trump's Racist Immigrant Detention Camp: Child Sex Abuse, Lies, Chaos and Abuse

**In This Issue:**

HHS docs show thousands of alleged incidents of sexual abuse against unaccompanied minors in custody (Pg 1)  
Lies, Chaos and Abuse at ICE Contractor Lockup (Pg 2)  
Missing Migrant Children Being Funneled Through Christian Adoption Agency (Pg 4) | Hundreds of Educators Hold 'Teach-In' to Protest Detention of Immigrant Children (Pg 6) | Washington Trained Guatemala's Mass Murderers—and the Border Patrol Played a Role (Pg 7) | US says 2nd Guatemalan child has died in immigration custody (Pg 9) | Please Support NISN! Subscribe the Newsletter! (Pg 10) | September-October, 2019 US Activist to China Delegation: Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing and Witness the 10/1 China's Nation Day! (Pg 10)

**Please Support National Immigrant Solidarity Network!**

**All Donations Are Tax Deductible!**

Make check payable to NISN/AFGJ and it will be tax deductible! Send your check to:  
National Immigrant Solidarity Network  
P.O. Box 751, South Pasadena, CA 91031-0751

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00    \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00    \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 35.00    \_\_\_\_\_ Other Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(\$35 or more will receive 1 year free subscriptions of the Immigration Alert! Newsletter)

**May Day 2019 Call to Action! More Updates Please Check**

**[www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org/MayDay2019/](http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org/MayDay2019/)**

**Send Your May Day Announcements to: [ActivistWeb@GMail.com](mailto:ActivistWeb@GMail.com)**

**5/4 Saturday New York, NY: National Immigrant Solidarity Network  
Regional Conference!**

**Saturday May 4TH 9:00AM-3:00PM**

**The Solidarity Center 147 West 24th St, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011**

**(Between 6 & 7 Ave, 1 block from 23rd St stop on Subway # 1, F, M, and NJ PATH Train)**

## 2/26: HHS docs show thousands of alleged incidents of sexual abuse against unaccompanied minors in custody

**Sophie Tatum - CNN**

The Department of Health and Human Services received more than 4,500 complaints of sexual abuse against unaccompanied minors from 2014-2018, according to internal agency documents released Tuesday by Florida Democratic Rep. Ted Deutch.

In addition, 1,303 complaints were reported to the Justice Department during that same time frame, according to the documents.

Deutch addressed the documents during a high-profile House hearing Tuesday on the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy that resulted in thousands of immigrant children being separated from their parents.

He said that the documents "demonstrate over the past three years, there have been 154 staff on unaccompanied minor, let me repeat that, staff on unaccompanied minor allegations of sexual assault."

"This works out on average to one sexual assault by HHS staff on unaccompanied minor per week," he added.

Axios first reported the documents.

"I am deeply concerned with documents that have been turned over by HHS that record a high number of sexual assaults on unaccompanied children in the custody of the Office of Refugee and Resettlement," Deutch said. "Together, these documents detail an environment of systemic sexual assaults by staff on unaccompanied children."

Jonathan Hayes, acting director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, accused Deutch of lying in a statement Thursday night.

"Congressman Deutch mischaracterized data on allegations of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behavior made by minors at care facilities operated by HHS grantees. He even went so far as to level the unfounded assertion that members of the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) federal staff were the subjects of sexual abuse allegations. This was totally false," Hayes said.

"His knowing mischaracterization of the data -- and his impugning of the ORR federal staff -- was an immoral and indecent insult to all of the career civil servants who are dedicated to ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the children in the unaccompanied alien children (UAC) program," Hayes added. "We request that he apologize to these career civil servants for his untoward and unfounded comments."

Hayes said the vast majority of the incidents were between unaccompanied minors. He said there were 178 incidents of alleged sexual abuse involving facility-staff-on-minor misconduct in the last four years, but those staffers were not federal employees.

"None of the allegations involved ORR federal staff," Hayes said. "These allegations were all fully investigated and remedial action was taken where appropriate."

HHS spokesperson Caitlin Oakley addressed the reports in a statement, saying minors' safety is a "top concern," and noted that there are "rigorous standards" in place for employees, which include mandatory background checks.

"These are vulnerable children in difficult circumstances, and ORR fully understands its responsibility to ensure that each child is treated with the utmost care. When any allegations of abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect are made, they are taken seriously and ORR acts swiftly to investigate and respond," Oakley said.

At the hearing Tuesday, HHS' US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps commander, Jonathan White, defended his agency against accusations of sexual abuse when asked by Rep. Tom McClintock, a California Republican, to respond to allegations that they were all "but serial child molesters" during a "drive-by slander a few minutes ago."

"We share concern that I think everyone in this room feels. Anytime a child is abused in the care of ORR is one too many," White said.

He added that "the vast majority of allegations prove to be unfounded when they are investigated by state law enforcement and federal law enforcement and the state licensure authorities to whom we refer them."

"It is important to note that I am not aware of a single instance anywhere of an allegation against the ORR federal staff for abuse of a child," White said. Some of the incidents that were reported to the Justice Department included allegations against staff members who were accused of having relationships with minors, unwanted sexual touching and showing the minors pornographic videos, according to Axios. Axios also reported that of the thousands of complaints, there were 178 accusations against the adult staff.

=====

## **1/28: Lies, Chaos and Abuse at ICE Contractor Lockup**

**Robin Urevich – Capital & Main**

**Immigrant-detainee suicides indicate that the Stewart Detention Center and ICE are out of step with a trend in corrections to keep seriously mentally ill people out of solitary confinement.**

## **Efrain de la Rosa was the 184th detainee to die in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement since 2003.**

On the last day of his life Efrain de la Rosa, a 40-year old Mexican citizen detained as an undocumented immigrant, told a social worker he didn't need medication for his schizophrenia. He would die soon, he said. Later that day, de la Rosa knotted together his prison-issue orange socks, fashioned them into a noose and hanged himself from the top bunk in his solitary confinement cell at Georgia's Stewart Detention Center.

De la Rosa spent four months at Stewart, which is operated by the private prison firm CoreCivic. While incarcerated, he repeatedly predicted his own death, reported hearing voices, and refused medication. He was briefly placed on suicide watch and was sent to an outside mental health facility for five weeks. Upon his return to Stewart, he continued to refuse medication and to dwell on death in his conversations with healthcare staff and detainees.

De la Rosa's suicide followed that of another mentally ill man, JeanCarlo Jimenez Joseph, who hanged himself after 19 days in solitary confinement.

Stewart is indistinguishable from a prison even though the detainees are held only to compel their attendance at immigration hearings or to await deportation there, and not as punishment. At the time of his July 10, 2018, death, de la Rosa had been alone in a 13-foot by 6-foot cell 23 hours a day for three weeks. It was his second stint in solitary confinement.

De la Rosa's suicide came just 14 months after that of JeanCarlo Jimenez Joseph, a 27-year-old man who was also mentally ill and hanged himself after 19 days in solitary confinement. He was the 184th detainee to die in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement since 2003, and the third to die at Stewart since May 2017.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation found no criminal wrongdoing in de la Rosa's death, but its report, which includes findings from the detention center's internal investigation, along with ICE's detention death report, shows that Stewart Detention Center staff made a series of mistakes in de la Rosa's care, beginning with his placement in solitary confinement and ending with a chaotic emergency response when he was found unresponsive in his cell.

The report shows that detention center staff repeated some of the same errors in de la Rosa's care that they made in Jimenez Joseph's. The failure to correct such mistakes — which can prove fatal to vulnerable detainees — is common in ICE detention centers, concluded a Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General report entitled ICE's Inspections and Monitoring of Detention Facilities Do Not Lead to Sustained Compliance. "ICE does not adequately follow up on identified deficiencies or consistently hold facilities accountable," inspectors found.

In de la Rosa's case, CoreCivic made an attempt to suppress the release of the GBI report, which exposes some of those errors, arguing that making it available to the public would violate federal law.

"We had another death at the facility last year where the GBI released records and video to the public as part of OR [open records] requests," wrote Stephen Curry, a CoreCivic attorney. "...it is our request that there not be a release of information contrary to federal law."

The GBI initially acquiesced, but last month largely reversed course and released a first batch of documents after attorneys and media outlets, including Capital & Main, challenged its decision. The agency plans to redact audio and video evidence before making it available to the public, beginning at the end of January. The GBI continues to refuse to release some solitary confinement records and other information that it maintains are federal documents.

In both de la Rosa and Jimenez Joseph's suicides, the reports show:

- Both men were in prolonged solitary confinement, despite their serious mental illnesses.
- Health care professionals recommended both men receive additional mental health care, but both died before it could be provided.
- Detention officers failed to perform every half hour checks in the hours before each man died to ensure their well-being.
- Both men's cells contained suicide hazards, including a bunk bed in de la Rosa's one-person cell.

The social worker who met with de la Rosa on the day that he died had noted he "would benefit from a referral to a higher level of care mental health facility" after he once again refused medication and predicted he would die. Terry Kupers, a psychiatrist who has written extensively about prison mental health care, suggested that was a mistake.

"One would think provisions would be made to immediately place him in some form of observation in a safe place awaiting transfer to the location of that higher level of care," Kupers wrote in an email.

De la Rosa, however, remained in isolation.

Moreover, detention officers failed to look in on de la Rosa for nearly two hours before finding him unresponsive in his cell later that evening.

Stewart officials found that detention officer Rodney Dent falsified records to cover for his failure to check on de la Rosa, and he was fired.

Dent had falsely claimed he looked in on de la Rosa at 10:04 p.m. before he finished his shift. Security cameras showed that his relief, Officer Jamorris McCoy, was doing rounds when he found de la Rosa unresponsive and hanging from the top bunk in his cell at 10:34 p.m.

Dent, however, may not have been the only officer who was negligent on the night of de la Rosa's death.

Detainee Eduardo Corado Martinez, who was also in segregation when de la Rosa died, told a GBI agent that he tried to alert guards that something was wrong in de la Rosa's cell when he heard noises that night. But he said they didn't immediately respond. Jorge Caballero Ramos, who was also in a neighboring cell, told the GBI that he woke up to the sound of Corado Martinez pushing on his own door to get the guards' attention, but he said they didn't act until it was too late.

CoreCivic spokeswoman Amanda Gilchrist said in an email that she could not reveal details of de la Rosa's death, including why the detention center's investigation didn't include statements by Corado Martinez and Caballero Ramos, because of a "pending claim" and an ongoing ICE investigation.

"The safety and well-being of the individuals entrusted to our care is our top priority, and we take seriously our obligation to adhere to federal Performance Based National Detention Standards in our ICE-contracted facilities," Gilchrist wrote.

At the time of this story's deadline, ICE public affairs staff were unavailable to comment on the lapses the reports showed because of the government shutdown.

However, it appears that the Stewart Detention Center and ICE are out of step with a trend in corrections to keep seriously mentally ill people out of solitary confinement. Kupers said that prisons are moving away from the practice "because of the high risk of suicide and in even larger part because we have such clear evidence from much research that solitary confinement exacerbates serious mental illness."

He cited state laws in New York and Maine that prohibit solitary confinement for people who are seriously mentally ill, and federal court orders in at least three states that require more stringent screening for inmate placement in solitary.

The reports also describe a haphazard emergency response on the night de la Rosa was found unresponsive in his cell.

Two nurses who rushed to help discovered that their medical bag was missing a defibrillator and working oxygen tank, slowing the attempt to revive him. The detention officer assigned to the medical unit didn't hear the emergency call for medical assistance. Another officer had to alert them several minutes after the initial radio call.

The lack of adequate lifesaving equipment at Stewart is puzzling given CoreCivic's healthy bottom line. In the third quarter of last year, the company's revenues were up 4.5 percent from the year before and it netted \$41 million for the quarter.

ICE is also better funded than ever before, with a \$4.1 billion Congressional appropriation for its Enforcement and Removal Operation, but it is unclear whether it is taking steps to hold detention centers more accountable. The agency is scheduled to report to the Inspector General on its progress by June 2019.

Rep. Lucille Roybal Allard (D-CA), newly appointed chair of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Appropriations, said in a call with reporters last month that she would demand greater accountability from ICE and its contractors for detention conditions. De la Rosa's family and his attorneys have not filed a lawsuit, but say they are exploring their legal options.

=====

## **2/5: Missing Migrant Children Being Funneled Through Christian Adoption Agency**

**Michael Stone - Patheos - Progressive Secular Humanist**

The Trump administration says it can't reunite missing migrant children with their families; instead, many of the children are being shipped to a Christian adoption agency with ties to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

Earlier this week the Trump administration told a federal court that it would require too much effort to reunite migrant children with their parents. Associated Press reports:

The Trump administration says it would require extraordinary effort to reunite what may be thousands of migrant children who have been separated from their parents and, even if it could, the children would likely be emotionally harmed.

According to the Associated Press report, the Trump administration is also concerned that reunification would “present grave child welfare concerns” because the children would be removed from their “sponsor” homes:

Jonathan White, who leads the Health and Human Services Department’s efforts to reunite migrant children with their parents, said removing children from ‘sponsor’ homes to rejoin their parents ‘would present grave child welfare concerns.’ He said the government should focus on reuniting children currently in its custody, not those who have already been released to sponsor homes.

The entire situation is horrific. Commenting on the horror, and expressing the feelings of many, Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley tweeted:

This is what evil looks like

As for the fate of the thousands of children the Trump administration does not want to reunite with their parents, Progressive Secular Humanist previously reported that many of the migrant children ruthlessly separated from their family by the Trump administration are being shipped to Bethany Christian Services, a Christian adoption agency with ties to the family of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

Last year Rewire News reported on the condition of some of those children separated from their parents, linking the migrant children to Bethany Christian Services:

Migrant children in Michigan who have been separated from their parents by the Trump administration are attending “a special school” run by Bethany Christian Services, an anti-choice organization with a record of coercive adoption practices that has yet to receive instructions about how to reunify these children with their detained parents.

Fact checking website Snopes confirms the well established links between the DeVos family and Bethany Christian Services:

The links between the extended DeVos family and Bethany are undeniable. Tax filings archived by ProPublica show that between 2001 and 2015, the Dick and Betsy DeVos Foundation (the philanthropic organization run by DeVos and her husband) gave \$343,000 in grants to Bethany Christian Services.

Between 2012 and 2015, Bethany received \$750,000 in grants from the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation, which is run by the Education Secretary’s father-in-law, the billionaire founder of Amway Richard DeVos, and his wife Helen.

Furthermore, Brian DeVos — a cousin of Betsy DeVos’s husband Dick — was the Senior Vice President for Child and Family Services at Bethany as recently as 2015, and Maria DeVos — who is married to Dick DeVos’s brother Doug — has served on the board of Bethany.

Democratic Underground explains the nefarious methods of the “radical Christian adoption trafficking mill” being run by Bethany Christian Services, noting:

They have no intention of trying to find, much less uniting parents with their children. It’s a radical Christian adoption trafficking mill.

In fact, there is already in place a huge and thriving business in the trafficking of children via Christian adoption agencies like the DeVos connected Bethany. In her 2013 book, *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking, and the New Gospel of Adoption*, Kathryn Joyce documents this alarming trend of conservative Christians adopting children removed from their natural parents via nefarious means to feed the business of Christian adoption and serve the agenda of Christian theocracy.

Bottom line: The Trump administration says it can’t reunite missing migrant children with their families; instead, many of the children are being funneled through Christian adoption trafficking mills like the DeVos connected Bethany Christian Services.

To repeat Senator Merkley: This is what evil looks like.

## 2/18: Hundreds of Educators Hold 'Teach-In' to Protest Detention of Immigrant Children

### Madeline Will - Education Week

Hundreds of educators protested the United States' treatment of immigrant children in a "teach-in" on Sunday, saying that as mandatory reporters, they are obliged to speak out against detainment and family separations.

The teach-in, held in El Paso, Texas, was organized by Mandy Manning, the 2018 National Teacher of the Year, who teaches newly arrived refugee and immigrant students in Washington state. Educators from Mexico and across the U.S.—the goal was one from every state—joined for a day of speeches, songs, and lessons on immigration. Former U.S. Secretary of Education John King and American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten were also there to speak.

"I think that as an educator particularly, any time a kid comes into my classroom—any child from wherever they are, whoever they are, wherever they were born, or who their family is—I love them and welcome them and see the endless potential in them," Manning said in an interview. "I don't really see [this event] as political. I see it as demanding that we treat everyone with dignity and respect and honor them and welcome them."

Teachers are mandatory reporters, meaning they're required under U.S. law to report suspected child abuse to authorities. Manning said she can't remain silent about the fate of immigrant children who have been detained by U.S. immigration authorities. Last year, the Trump administration began enforcing a "zero tolerance" immigration policy, which led to about 3,000 children being separated from their parents or other adults who had accompanied them in crossing the border. Those children were detained in federal detention facilities.

Many believed the separation was tantamount to child abuse, since trauma can cause lasting psychological damage. Trump reversed the policy in June after public outcry, and a federal judge ordered all separated children be reunited with a parent. But a government report released in January said that the exact number of children still separated from their families is "unknown." Two migrant children have died in U.S. custody—a 7-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy, both from Guatemala.

"Teaching what I teach and knowing what I know about our immigrant community and how much they bring into our communities, both economically and socially, it was appalling to me what was happening," Manning said. "I felt really helpless because I thought, 'I have this really great platform, how do I use it appropriately to talk about what's happening, and to help people understand that this is a huge human rights violation, and it's abuse, and we need these kids to be in our classrooms.'"

Those feelings led to the teach-in. The teachers have three main demands: that immigrant children in U.S. custody remain together with their families, be held in smaller residential settings rather than institutional facilities, and be released to their sponsors within 20 days. Children should also receive six hours of classroom instruction, with the appropriate language services, each school day, they say. (That's also mandated by Department of Health and Human Services policy.)

Manning said she hopes this becomes a movement, rather than a one-day event. Teachers, she said, will not stop until all children are safe.

Ivonne Orozco, the 2018 New Mexico Teacher of the Year, who also helped organize the teach-in, said teachers prepare children to be productive citizens—and that often means speaking out about what's going on in the world.

"When a community is wondering what to do, what to think, they often turn to the first person in power and authority that they can find, and those people are often teachers," she said. "So when teachers stand up and say, 'This is what we believe in. This is what we know is right,' it matters for our communities because we are sending the message of inclusion."

The teach-in was originally slated to be held outside the Tornillo temporary detention facility, which held up to 2,800 migrant children. But the shelter closed last month, so Manning moved the teach-in to El Paso, which is separated from Mexico by a border wall. President Donald Trump recently gave a speech there to push for border wall funding.

"I see the closing of Tornillo as the beginning because it shows that our government has the ability and the capacity to close these facilities," Manning said, adding that there are still several more detention facilities holding children. "There's a lot of work to do, and Tornillo just proves that it can be done."

Manning has been outspoken in her support for immigrant rights. When she met Trump at the White House last May,

Manning gave him a stack of letters from her immigrant students. (She also wore buttons supporting women's rights, LGBTQ rights, and other political causes in a silent rebuke.)

In some of the letters, students shared their path to the United States with the president. Others were more "pointed" with advice, Manning said: One young woman from an African country wrote that other students were using Trump's inflammatory rhetoric against immigrants in the hallways. "She said that there are very real consequences for the president's language, because he's representative for other people and a model," Manning said.

Orozco, the 2018 New Mexico Teacher of the Year, immigrated from Mexico as a child and then received protection from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

"If it wasn't for these policies of giving Dreamers an opportunity to work, I would have never been teacher of the year," Orozco said. "When we have these policies of incarcerating children, we are taking away that potential. We're taking away that future that they can have."

## **1/3: Washington Trained Guatemala's Mass Murderers—and the Border Patrol Played a Role**

**Now two Guatemalan children have died under Border Patrol custody. But the agency's role in Latin American oppression has a long history.**

**Greg Grandin and Elizabeth Oglesby – The Nation**

John P. Longan was an agent with the US Border Patrol in the 1940s and '50s, working near the Mexican border, where two Guatemalan migrant children fell mortally ill last month in the custody of the Border Patrol—7-year-old Jakelin Caal Maquín, who died on December 8, and 8-year-old Felipe Gómez Alonzo, who died on Christmas Eve. Longan had a reputation for violence, as did many patrollers. Since its founding in the early 20th century, the Border Patrol has operated with near impunity, becoming arguably the most politicized branch of federal law enforcement—even more so than J. Edgar Hoover's FBI.

As the Cold War heated up in Latin America, following the 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution, Longan, who started his career as a police officer in Oklahoma, moved on to work with the CIA, providing security assistance—under the cover of the State Department—to allied anti-communist nations. Put simply, Longan taught local intelligence and police agencies how to create death squads to target political activists, deploying tactics that he had earlier used to capture migrants on the border. He arrived in Guatemala in late 1965, where he put into place a paramilitary unit that, early the next year, would execute what he called *Operación Limpieza*, or Operation Clean-Up. Within three months, this unit had conducted over 80 raids and multiple extrajudicial assassinations, including an action that, over the course of four days, captured, tortured, and executed more than 30 prominent left-opposition leaders. The military dumped their bodies into the sea while the government denied any knowledge of their whereabouts.

Longan's *Limpieza* was a decisive step forward in the unraveling of Guatemala, empowering an intelligence system that through the course of the civil war would be responsible for tens of thousands of disappearances, 200,000 deaths, and countless tortures. (Greg Grandin describes Longan's work in *The Last Colonial Massacre*.)

The US role in that civil war wasn't, of course, limited to the covert operations of one former Border Patrol agent. Throughout the Cold War, Washington intervened multiple times in Guatemala, funded a rampaging army, ran cover for the death squads that its own security agents, like Longan, helped create, and signaled that it would turn a blind eye to genocide. Even before Ronald Reagan's 1980 election, two retired generals playing prominent roles in his campaign traveled to Central America and told Guatemalan officials that "Mr. Reagan recognizes that a good deal of dirty work has to be done" (for this quote, see Allan Nairn's 1980 "Controversial Reagan Campaign Links with Guatemalan Government and Private Sector Leaders," *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, October 30, 1980). In office, Reagan supplied munitions and training to the Guatemalan army to carry out that dirty work (despite a ban on military aid imposed during the Carter administration, since existing contracts were exempt from the ban). Reagan was steadfast in his moral backing for Guatemala's génocidaires, calling de facto head of state Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt, who seized power in a coup in the spring of 1982, "a man of great integrity" and "totally dedicated to democracy."

The civil war that the United States drove forward in Guatemala hit the home regions of Felipe Gómez and Jakelin Caal—the two children who just died in US custody—hard. In an earlier *Nation* essay, we described the waves of land theft, terror, and

immigration that, for much of the 20th and all of the 21st centuries, have washed over Caal's Alta Verapaz, in the country's north.

Felipe Gómez Alonzo was born in the western highlands, in the department of Huehuetenango, in an isolated village called Yalambojoch, a 10-hour drive from Guatemala City and not far from the Mexican border. The village sits in a sunken valley surrounded by pine-tipped hills. In the middle of this valley is a knoll, looking like a baby in its mother's womb. In Chuj, the Maya language of this region, this knoll is *unin witz*, the child hill.

Where Jakelin was Q'eqchi', Felipe was Chuj, part of a community of former tenant farmers with a long history of fighting for their land. As in the Q'eqchi' region, the US-orchestrated 1954 coup in Guatemala, which overturned agrarian reform, kicked off decades of political strife in Huehuetenango, pitting local landowners allied with the military against impoverished Maya peasants desperate for land and a better future. Many communities in this region were influenced by the Catholic social-justice doctrines of liberation theology that swept through Central America in the 1960s and '70s. When the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres) entered Huehuetenango in the mid-1970s, large numbers of villagers greeted them as allies in the struggle against the "army of the rich," and by 1980, the province was in open rebellion against Guatemala's corrupt and violent military government.

On June 17, 1982, Guatemalan soldiers under the command of Ríos Montt entered the San Francisco cattle estate immediately adjacent to Yalambojoch. The estate's owner, a military colonel, had fled because of guerrilla activity in the area. Soldiers went house to house rounding up workers and their families, whom they accused of supporting the guerrillas. They separated children from their parents and killed them by slashing their stomachs or smashing their heads against poles. Women were raped and then burned alive. The soldiers killed the men with bullets or by beheading. After a day of slaughter, 350 people were dead. A lone survivor made his way into Mexico, where Guatemalan anthropologist and Jesuit priest Ricardo Falla interviewed him. The San Francisco massacre was highlighted in Guatemala's 1999 Truth Commission report.

After the massacre, Yalambojoch residents fled along with thousands of others, leaving the border corridor between Guatemala and Mexico completely depopulated, as government troops razed their villages. Some were captured and killed by the army as they fled. Others ended up in refugee camps or dispersed throughout Mexico's southern states. Still others continued on to the United States, beginning the great movement of Guatemalans to "el Norte." All told, 1.5 million people were displaced by the Guatemalan army's scorched-earth campaign in 1981 and 1982. Guatemala's Commission for Historical Clarification called the violent displacement in the Maya-Chuj region an "act of genocide." Young Felipe Gómez Alonzo's father, Agustín Gómez Pérez, was a child of 11 during that exodus. Yalambojoch's villagers stayed away for 14 years, returning only after the signing of the peace accords in 1996.

Already, Huehuetenango was the one of the top migrant-sending regions. Why couldn't these returnees survive in postwar Guatemala?

One explanation is the genocide's legacy: The army's broad purpose was not just to beat back the guerrillas but also to destroy hope for a different future in Guatemala. People from Yalambojoch were scattered in Mexico after 1982. Only half of the community returned to Guatemala, and those who did were strangers to each other. Young adults who had fled as children didn't know much about the land or how to farm it. When Mexican and US labor recruiters arrived in Huehuetenango to hire Maya youth for jobs in US agriculture and poultry plants—as Mexican workers unionized, the Guatemalan workers were seen as more pliable—these youth jumped at the chance to go. As Ricardo Falla and Elena Yojcom describe in *El sueño del Norte en Yalambojoch* (The Dream of the North in Yalambojoch), remittances rebuilt these war-ravaged communities. With few exceptions, international migration was the only reparation they had, as Guatemalan anthropologist Ruth Piedrasanta shows.

Residents of Yalambojoch subsist on plots of only a few hectares of marginal land per family. The peace accords didn't change the inequitable land-tenure structure or the concentration of political and economic power in the country. That chance was lost with the 1954 coup and the counterinsurgency of the early 1980s, as, time and again, the US government tipped the balance of power in favor of the status quo in Guatemala. Elites in Guatemala are only too happy to see people emigrate, as banks controlled by the oligarchy reap financial dividends from the transfer of remittances, and beginning in the 1990s international development banks began to promote the idea of remittances as development.

Instead of pursuing a people-centered rural development, the Guatemalan government's postwar strategy, backed by international development loans, has been to open up large swaths of the country to foreign investment in megaprojects like mining and hydroelectric dams. As Guatemalan economist Luis Solano notes, there is not a single Maya name among the list of investors in these projects, where the profits go to international conglomerates in association with elite family networks in Guatemala.

One such project is the Northern Transversal Highway, a project initiated by Guatemala's military governments to open up the northern reaches of the country to oil drilling and other forms of extraction. Guerrilla sabotage halted the project during

the war, but since the peace accords it has returned with a vengeance. The Transversal now spans the whole region from northern Huehuetenango, where Felipe Gómez Alonzo lived, to Alta Verapaz, where Jakelin Caal Maquín's grave is. In Yalambojoch, people banded together to stop construction of the highway through their village, not because they don't want a road, but because the Israeli company contracted to build it threatened to cut down hundreds of trees in a protected forest reserve next to the community's only supply of fresh drinking water. A few kilometers away, community and environmental activists opposing the megaprojects have been jailed, attacked, or killed, and Guatemalan security forces have militarized the zone once again. The most recent killings in this region occurred the day before Felipe and his father crossed the US border.

Finally, there is climate change. While it is too simplistic to claim that Central American migrants are "climate refugees" (the claim is dangerous, too, since it ultimately justifies even more apocalyptic border-enforcement policies), there is evidence that in some regions, climate change may be eroding people's ability to stay on their lands. In Huehuetenango, including in Yalambojoch, the potential to earn cash by growing coffee on small plots is being undermined by the spread of a plant-choking fungus called *la roya*, or coffee-leaf rust, which some scientists attribute to climate change.

There are circles within circles, all spinning forward to this dismal moment: A Border Patrol agent began working with the CIA, and helped put into place a death-squad regime that accelerated a civil war that produced biblical levels of displacement; when refugees from that civil war, including families from Yalambojoch, tried to return home, many found they couldn't survive in the society created by war. According to news reports, Felipe's father was drowning in debt. Suffering yet more violence, more displacement, and more dispossession, doing their best to fend off the worst social and environmental effects of resource extraction and grinding poverty, many try to escape, with the only viable route being north, to a militarized border, where, in a way, it all began.

According to Stuart Schrader, in his forthcoming *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*, it was common practice during the Cold War to send former Border Patrol agents, like Longan, to train foreign police through CIA-linked "public safety" programs, since they were more likely to speak Spanish than agents from other branches of law enforcement. In countries like El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, they did the "dirty work" that Reagan's envoys said needed doing. Until the early 1970s, the United States, according to a 1974 *Los Angeles Times* report, was flying its Latin American death-squad apprentices up to the Border Patrol academy in Los Fresnos, Texas, to receive "training from CIA instructors in the design, manufacture, and potential use of bombs and incendiary devices." Longan himself, in 1957, clearly described what he thought he was doing at the border: "we're fighting a war" on a "wide battle front." As the Drive-By Truckers wrote in a 2016 song—about a murderous Border Patrol agent who went on to lead the NRA into its current militant, right-wing phase—"It all started with the border. And that's still where it is today."

---

## **12/25: US says 2nd Guatemalan child has died in immigration custody**

### **Associated Press**

EL PASO, Texas: An 8-year-old boy from Guatemala died in government custody early Tuesday, U.S. immigration authorities said, marking the second death of an immigrant child in detention this month.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a news release that the boy died shortly after midnight Tuesday.

The boy showed "signs of potential illness" Monday and was taken with his father to a hospital in Alamogordo, New Mexico, the agency said. There, he was diagnosed with a cold and a fever, was given prescriptions for amoxicillin and Ibuprofen and released Monday afternoon after being held 90 minutes for observation, the agency said.

The boy was returned to the hospital Monday evening with nausea and vomiting and died there just hours later, CBP said. The agency said the cause of the boy's death has not been determined and that it has notified the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general and the Guatemalan government.

CBP promised "an independent and thorough review of the circumstances."

## **Please Support National Immigrant Solidarity Network!**

### **All Donations Are Tax Deductible!**

Make check payable to **NISN/AFGJ** and it will be tax deductible! Send your check to:

**National Immigrant Solidarity Network**  
P.O. Box 751, South Pasadena, CA 91031-0751

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00    \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00    \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 35.00    \_\_\_\_\_ Other Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(**\$35 or more will receive 1 year free subscriptions of the Immigration Alert! Newsletter**)

## **Please subscribe to our NISN Immigrants Daily-Info E-mail List!**

Send e-mail to: [isn-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:isn-subscribe@lists.riseup.net) or web: <http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/isn>

### **Please join our Following NISN E-mail Lists**

#### **Asian American Labor Activism Alert!**

send-e-mail to: [api-la-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:api-la-subscribe@lists.riseup.net)  
or visit: <http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/api-la>

#### **New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania areas immigrant workers information and alerts**

send e-mail to: [nyc-immigrantalert-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:nyc-immigrantalert-subscribe@lists.riseup.net)  
or visit: <http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/nyc-immigrantalert>

#### **US-Mexico Border Information and Action Alert!**

send e-mail to: [Border01-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Border01-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)  
or visit: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Border01/>

#### **Virginia state-wide immigrant organizing E-mail list**

send- e-mail to: [va-immigrantrights-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:va-immigrantrights-subscribe@lists.riseup.net)  
or visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/va-immigrantrights>

#### **May Day 2017 national organizing e-mail list**

send e-mail to: [mayday2017-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:mayday2017-subscribe@lists.riseup.net)  
or visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/MayDay2017>

### **About National Immigrant Solidarity Network**

NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:  
<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

#### **Contact Information:**

E-mail: [info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org](mailto:info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org)  
(213) 403-0131 (Los Angeles)  
(202) 595-8990 (Washington D.C.)

Please donate to NISN! (All donations are tax deductible!)

Check pay to: **NISN/AFGJ**  
Send to: **National Immigrant Solidarity Network**  
P.O. Box 751  
South Pasadena, CA 91031-0751

### **Please subscribe to the U.S. Immigration Alert! A Monthly Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network**

**1 year subscription rate (12 issues) is \$35.00**

It will help us pay for the printing costs, as well as funding for the NISN projects (additional donations to the ISN is tax deductible!)

Check pay to: **NISN/AFGJ**

#### **National Immigrant Solidarity Network**

**P.O. Box 751**  
**South Pasadena, CA 91031-0751**

## **September-October, 2019 US Activist to China Delegation: Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing and Witness the 10/1 China's Nation Day! (12 Days, 9/24-10/4, 2019)**

<http://www.ChinaDelegation.org>

**Cost: \$1550USD (Plus US-China Airfare)**

**More Info Call: (213)403-0131 e-mail: [ActivistWeb@Gmail.com](mailto:ActivistWeb@Gmail.com)**

A 12-days US activists to China solidarity delegation, going to Shanghai, Nanjing and Beijing, will witness the dynamic county and celebrate the 70th Anniversary of People's Republic of China (October 1st), the tour starts 9/24 at Shanghai, meeting with activists and city tour, then high-speed train to Nanjing for history tour. Finally arriving Beijing at Sep 29th for official and activist meetings, joining their Oct 1st China national day celebration, and Beijing tour.

**Projects of National Immigrant Solidarity Network (NISN) and Action LA Network**

**Fiscal sponsorships of Alliance for Global Justice. All Proceeds will support NISN and Action LA Network**