

Summer 2020 U.S. Immigration Alert!

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Justice for George Floyd, Black Lives Matter! Multi-Ethnic Unity Against Racism & Police Brutality!

In This Issue:

What Do We Mean Justice for George Floyd, Black Lives Matter! Multi-Ethnic Unity Against Racism & Police Brutality? (Pg 1) | A Letter from a Yale student to the Chinese American Community (Pg 2) | In Six Weeks, STOP AAPI HATE Receives Over 1700 Incident Reports of Verbal Harassment, Shunning and Physical Assaults (Pg 4) | Citing coronavirus, Trump officials refuse to release migrant kids to sponsors — and deport them instead (Pg 5) | COVID-19 Exposes Migrant Worker Conditions Amounting to Modern Day Slavery in Florida Agriculture (Pg 9) | Latinos and Asian Americans hit hardest by early COVID-19 job losses (Pg 10) | GOP memo urges anti-China assault over coronavirus (Pg 11) | Please Support NISN! Subscribe the Newsletter! (Pg 12)

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6/15: What Do We Mean Justice for George Floyd, Black Lives Matter! Multi-Ethnic Unity Against Racism & Police Brutality?

Lee Siu Hin National Coordinator National Immigrant Solidarity Network

Weeks after weeks, hundreds of communities around U.S. and the World, with millions of people, all together protests justice for George Floyd, fight against racism & police brutality, with demand abolish & defend the police!

It's a powerful movement, and we need to actively unite different community and ethnic groups united to join for fighting the common cause. Because police brutality, racism and oppression aren't only targeting blacks, but also brown, Asian, Muslim and indigenous people.

Behind police brutality, is the continuation of racism from hundreds of years of western-white supremacists-capitalist neo-colonialism legacy.

In-order to win our fight for abolishing the police power, we need to think bigger!

Regardless any types of racial discrimination, we must establish a strong alliance with other peoples, including progressive white activist, to build black-brown-Asian-Muslim-indigenous and any other oppressed people unity.

The real source of American social conflicts is not only racial discrimination but also class struggles. American people are distorted by elite propaganda. Only horizontal class union can finally solve the problem. The 1% always will play divide and

conquer game, at the crisis will throw bi-partisan reformist agendas to mobilize the one group to fight against the other groups in-order to vertically divide the 99% oppressed people of color.

There's no such thing, and we shouldn't fall into ruling class tactics on divide us: black against brown, back against Asian, "legal" against "illegal" immigrants, or anti-"terrorism" against Muslims.

Forget reformist agendas, unite every corner of the society; together we smash the imperialism, capitalism and white supremacists that build the police, military, and ICE terror against our communities!

That's no secrets that domestically, police brutality, "War Against terror" is in fact oppressions against immigrant communities. However, the government obviously doesn't really want to get rid of all undocumented workers, because it would be the simplest thing in the world to find them. Everyone knows where undocumented workers work. No, we want them here...as long as they don't ask for a living wage and thereby threaten our ongoing massive accumulation of wealth.

From the latest protest, if everyone can actively linking our issues with different struggles: racism with economic justice; wars in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria Palestine & Korea with sweatshops exploitation in Asia as well as in Los Angeles, New York; international arm sales with hunger, child labors and child soldier; AIDS and COVID-19; as well as multinational corporations and economic exploitation with poverty at home—then we can win the struggle together!

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5/31: A Letter from a Yale student to the Chinese American Community

Content warning: White supremacy, racial stereotypes, violence

To the Chinese American Community:

My name is Eileen Huang, and I am a junior at Yale University studying English. I was asked to write a reflection, maybe even a poem, on Chinese American history after watching Asian Americans, the new documentary on PBS. However, I find it hard to write poems at a time like this. I refuse to focus on our history, our stories, and our people without acknowledging the challenges, pain, and trauma experienced by marginalized people—ourselves included—even today. In light of protests in Minnesota, which were sparked by the murder of George Floyd at the hands of racist White and Asian police officers, I specifically want to address the rampant anti-Blackness in the Asian American community that, if unchecked, can bring violence to us all.

We Asian Americans have long perpetuated anti-Black statements and stereotypes. I grew up hearing relatives, family friends, and even my parents make subtle, even explicitly racist comments about the Black community: They grow up in bad neighborhoods. They cause so much crime. I would rather you not be friends with Black people. I would rather you not be involved in Black activism.

The message was clear: We are the model minority—doctors, lawyers, quiet and obedient overachievers. We have little to do with other people of color; we will even side with White Americans to degrade them. The Asian Americans around me, myself included, were reluctant—and sometimes even refused—to participate in conversations on the violent racism faced by Black Americans—even when they were hunted by White supremacists, even when they were mercilessly shot in their own neighborhoods, even when they were murdered in broad daylight, even when their children were slaughtered for carrying toy guns or stealing gum, even when their grieving mothers appeared on television, begging and crying for justice. Even when anti-Blackness is so closely aligned to our own oppression under structural racism.

We Asian Americans like to think of ourselves as exempt from racism. After all, many of us live in affluent neighborhoods, send our children to selective universities, and work comfortable, professional jobs. As the poet Cathy Park Hong writes, we believe that we are “next in line ... to disappear,” to gain the privileges that White people have, to be freed from all the burdens that come with existing in a body of color.

However, our survival in this country has always been conditional. When Chinese laborers came in the 1800s, they were lynched and barred from political and social participation by the Chinese Exclusion Act—the only federal law in American history to explicitly target a racial group. When early Asian immigrants, such as Bhagat Singh Thind, attempted to apply for citizenship, all Asian Americans were denied the right to legal personhood—which was only granted to “free white persons”—until 1965. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, Japanese Americans were rounded up, tortured, and detained in concentration camps. When the Cold War reached its peak, Chinese Americans suspected of being Communists were terrorized by federal agents. Families lost their jobs, businesses, and livelihoods. When COVID-19 hit the US, Asian Americans were assaulted, spat on, and harassed. We were accused of being “virus carriers”; I was recently called a “bat-eater.” We are made to feel

like we have excelled in this country until we are reminded that we cannot get too comfortable—that we will never truly belong.

Here's a story of not belonging: On June 19, 1982, as Detroit's auto industry was deteriorating from Japanese competition, Vincent Chin, a 27-year-old Chinese American, entered a bar to celebrate his upcoming wedding. Ronald Ebens, a laid-off White autoworker, and his stepson, Michael Nitz, were there as well. They followed Chin as he left the bar and cornered him in a McDonald's parking lot, where they proceeded to bludgeon him with a metal baseball bat until his head cracked open. "It's because of you motherf—ers that we are out of work," they had said to Chin. Later, as news of the murder got out, Chinese Americans were outraged, calling for Ebens and Nitz's conviction. Chin's killers were only charged for second-degree murder, receiving only charges of \$3,000—and no jail time. "These weren't the kind of men you send to jail," County Judge Charles Kaufman said. Then who is?

Watching Asian Americans, I was haunted by the video clips of Chin's mother, Lily. She is a small Chinese woman who looks like my grandmother, or my mother, or an aunt. Her face crumples in front of the cameras; she pleads and cries, in a voice almost animal-like, "I want justice for my son." Yet, in all of Lily's footage, she is surrounded by Black civil rights activists, such as Jesse Jackson. They guard her from news reporters that try to film her grief. Later, they march in the streets with Chinese American activists, holding signs calling for an end to racist violence.

Though we cannot compare the challenges faced by Asian Americans to the far more violent atrocities suffered by Black Americans, we owe everything to them. It is because of the work of Black Americans—who spearheaded the civil rights movement—that Asian Americans are no longer called "Orientals" or "Chinamen." It is because of Black Americans, who called for an end to racist housing policies, that we are even allowed to live in the same neighborhoods as White people. It is because of Black Americans, who pushed back against racist naturalization laws, that Asian Americans have gained official citizenship and are officially recognized under the law. It is because of Black activism that stories like Vincent Chin's are even remembered. We did not gain the freedom to become comfortable "model minorities" by virtue of being better or hard-working, but from years of struggle and support from other marginalized communities.

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, was accused of using a counterfeit 20-dollar bill at a deli in Minneapolis. In response, Derek Chauvin, a White police officer, tackled Floyd and knelt on his neck for seven minutes. In videos that will later circulate online, for three minutes, in a pool of his own blood, Floyd is seen pleading for his life, stating that he can no longer breathe. Instead, Chauvin continues to kneel. And kneel. Meanwhile, in the background, Tou Thao, an Asian American police officer, is seen standing by the murder, merely watching. And watching. And saying nothing as Floyd slowly stops struggling.

I see this same kind of silence from Asian Americans around me. I am especially disappointed in the Chinese American community, whose silence on the murder of Black Americans has been deafening. While so many activists of color are banding together to support protesters in Minneapolis, so many Chinese Americans have chosen to "stay out" of this disobedience. The same Chinese Americans who spoke out so vocally on anti-Asian racism from COVID-19 are suspiciously quiet when it comes to Floyd's murder (as well as Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray and countless other Black Americans who were killed merely for existing). I do not see us sharing sympathy for Black mothers who appear on television, begging, like Lily Chin, to see justice for their sons. I do not see us marching with Black protesters. I do not see us donating to Black-led organizations.

I do not see our outrage as White murderers, such as Vincent Chin's killers, receive no jail time for killing innocent Black Americans. I do not see us extending any solidarity toward the Black protesters who have been sprayed with tear gas and rubber bullets—only a couple weeks after White COVID-19 "protesters," armed with AR-15s, were barely even touched by policemen. Instead, I see us calling them "thugs," "rioters," "looters"—the same epithets that White Americans once called us. I see us, such as members of my own family, merely laughing off President Trump's tweet about sending the National Guard to Minnesota, as if it were a joke and not a deadly threat.

I imagine where we would be if Black Americans did not participate in Asian American activism. We would still be called Orientals. We would live in even more segregated neighborhoods and attend even more segregated schools. We would not be allowed to attend these elite colleges, advance in our comfortable careers. We would be illegal aliens. We—and everyone else—would not remember stories like Vincent Chin's.

I urge all Chinese Americans to watch media such as Asian Americans, to seriously reflect not only on our own history, but also on our shared history with other minorities—how our liberation is intertwined with liberation for Black Americans, Native Americans, Latinx Americans, and more. We are not exempt from history. What has happened to George Floyd has happened to Chinese miners in the 1800s and Vincent Chin, and will continue to happen to us and all minorities unless we let go of our silence, which has never protected us, and never will.

Our history is not only a lineage of obedient doctors, lawyers, and engineers. It is also a history of disrupters, activists, fighters, and, above all, survivors. I think often of Yuri Kochiyama, a Japanese American survivor of internment camps who later became a prominent civil rights activist, and who developed close relationships with Black activists, such as Malcolm X. "We are all part of one another," she once said.

I urge you all to donate to the activist organizations listed below. I refuse to call for the racial justice of our own community at the expense of others. Justice that degrades or subordinates other minorities is not justice at all. At a time when many privileged minorities are siding with White supremacy—which has terrorized all of our communities for centuries—I want to ask: Whose side are you on?

All of those who have signed below have pledged to address/end anti-Blackness in our Asian American communities by committing to the following actions:

- Donating to Black-led organizations and Black Lives Matter activists in MN
- Protesting (either in person or on social media) against White supremacy and anti-Blackness
- Engaging in uncomfortable/difficult conversations with Asian Americans/non-Black people on anti-Blackness in our own communities
- Committing to educating yourself on anti-racist theories, actions, and histories that can help dismantle White supremacy

Eileen Huang, Yale University; Isabelle Rhee, Yale University; Biman Xie, Yale University; Saket Malholtra, Yale University; Lauren Lee, Yale University; Adrian Kyle Venzon, Yale University; Michael Chen, Yale University; Lillian Hua, Yale University; Dora Guo, Yale University; Kevin Quach, Yale University; Pia Gorme, Yale University; Alex Chen, Yale University; Emily Xu, Yale University; Avik Sarkar, Yale University; Evelyn Huilin Wu, Yale University; Angelreana Choi, Yale University; Cindy Kuang, Yale University; Karina Xie, Yale University; Tulsi Patel, Yale University; Kayley Estoesta, Yale University; Renee Chen, Wellesley College; Sara Thakur, Yale University; Eui Young Kim, Yale University

5/13: In Six Weeks, STOP AAPI HATE Receives Over 1700 Incident Reports of Verbal Harassment, Shunning and Physical Assaults

The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action(CAA)

LOS ANGELES—Since its official launch on March 19, 2020, the STOP AAPI HATE reporting center has received over 1700 reports of coronavirus discrimination from Asian Americans across the country. The reporting center was founded by the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) and San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies Department.

The following patterns emerged over the course of six weeks:

- STOP AAPI HATE received 1710 incident reports.
- Nine out of ten respondents believed that they were targeted because of their race
- Thirty-seven percent of incidents took place at public venues, including streets, parks and transit
- Reports came from 45 states across the nation and Washington DC.

We encourage individuals who have experienced hate as a result of COVID-19 to continue to report at www.a3pcon.org/stopaapihate. The incident report form is available in twelve languages, including English, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and Khmer, Hmong, Hindi, Punjabi, Thai and Tagalog. The lead organizations are working with public, private and other community-based organizations to provide resources for impacted individuals and to advocate for policies and programs dedicated to curtailing racial profiling.

The following incidents were emblematic of the over 1700 reported to Stop AAPI Hate:

- Professor sent an email to all of his students in the English class and called the COVID 19 the "Wuhan virus."
- We were holding a public webinar in Chinese on COVID-19 and families. In the last minutes, we were zoom-bombed by a group and participants were exposed to racist and vulgar images, curses, harassment and name-calling.
- A couple walked by our street with a white dog in tow and the male took out a marker and tagged my parents' car with the word COVID 19 on the driver side door.
- I was walking my dog at night and a car swerved toward me on the sidewalk, two guys started shouting, "Trump 2020, Die Chink Die!"
- White man in his 50s, approximately 6 feet tall, dragged an elderly Asian man out of the store by the arm and proceeded to

shove him outside the store, causing the elderly man to fall on his head and back. Victim was a 92-year old Asian man.

"The steady pace of incidents of anti-AAPI hate being reported from across the country, unfortunately, tracks with the recent IPSOS poll which found that 30% of all Americans witnessed someone blaming Asian Americans for COVID-19 and 60% of Asian Americans witnessed this behavior," said Manjusha Kulkarni, executive director of Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON). "This scapegoating of AAPIs is leading to harassment, civil rights violations and in some cases, acts of physical violence against our communities."

"What concerns me is the open hostility and animus that our community is encountering and with concerted efforts to blame China and the Chinese government, Asian Americans will be subjected to more hate," states Cynthia Choi, Co-Executive Director of Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA). "This new wave of racism is reminder of our conditional status and the need to challenge racism and inequality that has been exposed as a result of this pandemic."

Russell Jeung, Ph.D., chair and professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University, added, "The incidents reflect a disturbing trend, that Americans are blaming Asian Americans for a biological virus. Instead, we need to hold our American government accountable to controlling the disease and to safeguarding our public health. Both the virus and racism are dangerous threats to the Asian American community."

** The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) is a coalition of more than forty community-based organizations that serve and represent the 1.5 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the greater Los Angeles area, with a particular focus on low-income, immigrant, refugee and other vulnerable populations.

** Chinese for Affirmative Action was founded in 1969 to protect the civil and political rights of Chinese Americans and to advance multiracial democracy in the United States. Today, CAA is a progressive voice in and on behalf of the broader Asian American and Pacific Islander community. We advocate for systemic change that protects immigrant rights, promotes language diversity, and remedies racial and social injustice.

5/12: Citing coronavirus, Trump officials refuse to release migrant kids to sponsors — and deport them instead

Molly O'Toole, Cindy Carcamo - Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON -- The 17-year-old Guatemalan boy has been in a California detention center for migrant children for more than 400 days.

He's one of the longest-held of the roughly 1,800 minors in the U.S. immigration detention system — the largest in the world, and one now riddled with the novel coronavirus.

Federal detention of immigrants is civil, not criminal, and migrant children have special protections under a decades-old legal settlement known as the Flores agreement, which requires the government to hold them in "safe and sanitary" conditions and make "prompt and continuous" efforts to release them and reunify families. Two federal judges in recent weeks have ruled that the administration has violated the terms of that agreement in its handling of migrant children.

The Guatemalan teen — detained at the center in Fairfield, in Solano County — has been held by the Trump administration far longer than intended conceived under Flores.

It's not for lack of someone wanting to take him. When Bryce Tache and James Donaldson read on social media about the teenager, whom they call Mariano to protect his identity, the Minneapolis couple quickly applied to sponsor him, which would allow him to be released.

That was six months ago.

Now they fear the administration is using the pandemic to try to keep the boy until he turns 18, when officials can more easily deport him.

Officials at the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees the detention of unaccompanied minors, denied making any policy changes amid the pandemic to prioritize enforcement actions against migrant children and parents.

"HHS is a child welfare agency, not a law enforcement agency," spokesman Mark Weber said Friday. "If there is a delay in unification, it is for public health reasons."

Across the country, however, lawyers who represent migrant kids say the administration is refusing to release children to ready sponsors. Court documents and lawmakers back them up.

Trump administration attorneys have argued in court that children are safer from COVID-19 in custody — even as the government quietly ramps up efforts to deport them. In recent weeks, officials have pulled scores of children and parents from detention in secretive operations to remove them from the U.S., according to lawyers, migrants' affidavits and the receiving countries. Some were sick. A number were challenging administration policies in court.

Since March, when Trump declared a national emergency over the coronavirus, the administration has cut the population of detained kids and families by about 2,400, according to data from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, or ORR, the agency in the HHS department that Congress charged with the care and placement of unaccompanied migrant minors, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which detains migrant kids with their parents.

But releases of kids to sponsors, already slowed under Trump, have nearly stalled during the same time period, recent litigation shows.

After the administration essentially sealed the U.S. border in March as part of its coronavirus response, few new children and families have entered the system: The number of unaccompanied migrant children turned over to the refugee resettlement office has dropped roughly 97%.

At the same time, ORR has released far fewer kids to sponsors than in previous months, and those left behind are being held longer.

Since March, the agency lists about 50 children as having been removed from the U.S. and roughly 180 more as having been transferred to ICE custody. ICE wouldn't say how many minors it had deported.

The U.S. data appear to conflict with numbers from the countries receiving U.S. deportees. From March through May, Guatemala's immigration officials, for example, report that the U.S. has deported 417 minors to that country alone.

"We don't get notice from the government when families get dragged from their rooms in the middle of the night," said Shay Fluharty, director of the Dilley Pro Bono Project, a legal clinic at an ICE detention center in Dilley, Texas, that holds kids with their parents.

Laura Peña, a former ICE attorney, now works as pro-bono counsel with the American Bar Assn.'s Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project, which helped represent an unaccompanied 16-year-old recently deported to Honduras.

"It's outrageous, trying to deport this child and deny them rights during a pandemic," Peña said, a few hours before the girl was removed from the U.S. "Why?"

The Times reviewed extensive court records and spoke with more than 20 officials, lawyers, potential sponsors and immigrants for this story. Many spoke on condition of anonymity for fear the administration would retaliate against children and families in custody.

In one case, officials in the ORR blocked a detained teen from speaking to a reporter, despite the permission of the teen, her parent and her legal representatives. The "individual risk posed to the minor seems to far outweigh the benefit" of an interview, the agency said.

ICE provided data on families and COVID-19 cases in custody but did not respond to questions about its policies.

Lawyers across the country said that under the cover of the coronavirus, the ORR is coordinating with ICE to target kids in custody for removal.

"Just as all of this craziness happened with the coronavirus," said A'Kiesha Soliman, a lawyer with the unaccompanied minors program at Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services in El Paso, Texas, "it seems like they're ramping up deportations of children who we'd normally have more time to find relief for."

Soliman warns young clients that despite legal rules designed to protect them, "they can be removed at any time."

In Mariano's case, the ORR has refused to consider the Minneapolis couple's application because they aren't legal guardians or immediate relatives and didn't have a prior relationship with the teenager, according to Ricardo de Anda, the boy's attorney.

Mariano's parents gave permission in an affidavit for him to be released to the Minnesota family. Grinding poverty in the Guatemalan highlands led them to abandon Mariano when he was a boy, de Anda said. They gave him to another man who tried to pass him off as his biological child while entering the United States last spring, court documents say.

Federal rules require additional checks for victims of trafficking as well as for potential sponsors who didn't know a minor before he or she arrived in the U.S. — but neither disqualifies a child from being placed with a family.

De Anda helped Mariano sue, arguing that the government was violating his rights by denying him sponsorship and protections.

"You have good-hearted Americans who take this child under their wings," de Anda said. "But it's like pulling teeth."

Tache and Donaldson and their two teenage sons have moved into a larger home so that Mariano would have his own room. The couple hopes to win guardianship of Mariano by attesting that as a trafficking victim, he is eligible for a Special Immigrant Juvenile visa.

With the government restricting transportation of migrant children amid the crisis, they said they are prepared to drop everything and drive to California to pick Mariano up.

For now, they talk with him at least once a week by phone. The teen describes some detention staff as wearing masks but not practicing social distancing. He's increasingly depressed.

"What if he gets sick tomorrow or the next day?" Tache said.

"I personally believe the government's end goal is to send everyone back to their country of origin," he said. "The right thing and safe thing for him right now is to be with a family who can help him."

Late last month, two federal judges — including District Judge Dolly Gee in Los Angeles, who oversees the Flores settlement — ruled that the administration's actions toward migrant kids and parents amid the pandemic violate the agreement and federal law.

That same week, a third federal judge threw out a suit to force nationwide releases from detention facilities that health experts and judges have called "tinderboxes" for the virus.

Almost all the kids are being held significantly longer than the Flores settlement allows, according to the recent litigation. The vast majority, as well as the parents detained with them, are asylum seekers, and many have legal orders in place known as stays of removal, intended to protect them from deportation. Most have relatives in the U.S. ready to sponsor them. The government has not provided evidence that they are flight risks or a danger, Gee noted in her ruling.

Administration officials say they are following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Migrants, their advocates, health experts and lawmakers, however, have documented a lack of sanitation, personal protective equipment and medical attention.

Government attorneys argue that the minors are safer detained.

Dr. Amanda Cohn, a CDC official, submitted a written declaration in the case before Gee that releasing unaccompanied children, "likely increases risk of exposing [them] to COVID-19 relative to remaining in custody."

As of Monday, ICE had reported 869 coronavirus cases among migrants in custody, with more than 50% of those tested coming up positive. About 6% overall have gotten a test.

April Grant, an ICE spokeswoman, said Friday there were no cases of the virus in its three family detention centers but declined to say how many kids and parents had been tested. Families at the sites have undergone tests and are currently quarantined, lawyers told The Times.

About 1,500 unaccompanied migrant kids are held at nearly 200 federally contracted facilities across the U.S. supervised by the ORR. From late March to May, confirmed cases of COVID-19 among those minors increased from four to 68, according to agency data. About one in three children tested were infected, but the government has tested only 12% of those in the agency's custody.

Every time Esvin talks with his 4-year-old daughter, she cries.

It's been nearly six months since officials separated them at an immigration detention facility in Raymondville, Texas, he recounted.

"Why did you leave me here?" she asks him over the phone.

"I didn't leave you," he explains. "They took you away from me."

Esvin, who asked that his full name and the identity of his child not be published for fear of reprisals, left Guatemala in November because of violence, he said. After a week of detention in Texas, officials told him they were taking away his child, citing a roughly decade-old charge in Guatemala for which he was never convicted.

Esvin spent months at three immigration detention centers in two states before he was released on bond in early March from a Mississippi facility that now has 15 confirmed coronavirus cases. He currently lives with his aunt, uncle and their two children at their home in New Jersey.

He has tried to reclaim his daughter but has been met with repeated roadblocks.

First, his application was delayed for a month because officials said they were not conducting home visits during the pandemic. Then a social worker told him the agency had forgotten to take the fingerprints of everyone in the New Jersey home.

"The government just keeps giving me excuses," Esvin said in Spanish. "They want this document. I give it to them. Then they ask for something else."

Since March, the ORR has issued orders to stop placements in California, Washington state and New York and more recently has limited out-of-state releases or transfers.

The agency also reinstated a policy requiring fingerprints for most potential sponsors and sharing the information with the Homeland Security Department — a practice Judge Gee noted wasn't required and that other officials warn discourages families from coming forward. The agency also demanded home studies, then discontinued doing them, despite the possibility of virtual visits.

Officials also delayed the release of minors from detention facilities that have cases of COVID-19, which a medical expert testifying for migrants suing the government likened to "leaving them in a burning house rather than going in to rescue them."

Gee agreed the government shouldn't rush to release migrant kids "en masse" or stop vetting potential sponsors amid coronavirus. But the government's policies have unnecessarily delayed kids' release, she ruled.

"Under the current extraordinary circumstances in the midst of a pandemic, ORR's obligation to release minors without unnecessary delay requires moving with greater speed ... where a suitable custodian exists," Gee wrote.

Lawyers say the government is neglecting the specific needs of detained children.

In some cases, babies and toddlers have been provided adult-sized masks, if any. In others, according to court filings, outbreaks have led officials to stop classes or activities for young children or impose isolation, which medical experts and judges assess as traumatic.

"Just put yourself in my shoes," said Esvin. "She is my daughter. She's not an object to be played with. She is a human being."

At the ICE facility in Dilley — the largest detention center in the United States — one Honduran mother had been vomiting and coughing for weeks before she lost consciousness in front of her 4-year-old son.

The woman fled Honduras with her son to seek asylum in the United States. Immigration officials initially detained them in Arizona, where she first started showing symptoms. In the early hours of April 17, guards sent the sick woman and her toddler straight from Dilley's small medical clinic to a deportation flight.

"Señora, get up, time to leave," one guard said, grabbing her roughly by the arm, according to the woman's legal declaration.

Ultimately, the Honduran woman was so ill that ICE officers pulled her and her son off the flight. An ambulance brought them and another sick family to a tent clinic, where the woman was tested for the coronavirus. Then they were driven back to Dilley and put into quarantine with other families who lawyers say are being held incommunicado.

In recent weeks, ICE has moved to deport dozens of these kids and parents, despite many being plaintiffs in existing lawsuits, according to the lawyers.

No one has told the woman her coronavirus test results; they didn't test her son. After spending almost 24 hours a day in isolation, he has started kicking the walls, becoming "inconsolable and aggressive," she testified. "My son is losing his mind."

Said Fluharty, director of the Dilley legal clinic: "It really is a prison for these kids, and still they're not safe."

6/12: COVID-19 Exposes Migrant Worker Conditions Amounting to Modern Day Slavery in Florida Agriculture

Jim White - emptywheel.net

My home county, Alachua County in Florida, has been rocked by news that came out just after noon yesterday, that, as of that time, 76 agricultural workers in the county had tested positive for COVID-19. Today, that number appears to have grown even more, as the Florida COVID-19 dashboard shows 91 new cases of the disease being added on June 10 and 11, bringing the total to only 506. That means that this outbreak in only two days has grown the total for the county by about 20%.

Although the particular farm where the outbreak occurred is not identified, this report appears to confirm my first suspicion, which is that due to the time of year, this outbreak almost certainly had to be among migrant workers harvesting watermelons, which are at the height of their season now locally.

The problem of migrant agricultural workers living and working under conditions conducive to an outbreak of the virus is not localized to Alachua County, of course, as we have been aware for some time of a severe outbreak in Immokalee. As AP reported today:

Immokalee is among several immigrant communities in Florida — and numerous rural areas across the U.S. — that have recently experienced outbreaks of the coronavirus. Once thought likely to be spared because of their remote locations and small populations, such communities have seen spikes in infections while having fewer resources to deal with them.

The secluded town of 25,000 north of the Everglades has reported more than 1,000 cases, outpacing in recent weeks the rate of infection in Orlando, which has a population 10 times bigger and is home to a busy international airport. The number of total cases in Immokalee has surpassed those in Miami Beach, with more than 900, and St. Petersburg, which has more than 800, according to state health department statistics.

Meanwhile, the percentage of tests that have come back positive in Collier County, home to Immokalee, is the highest in the state among counties that have tested more than 5,000 people.

Because they initially couldn't get the attention of state officials in Florida, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers enlisted Doctors Without Borders to help them with testing and treatment. But that is not enough. See their website for their very simple demands and how you can lend your name to their call for help. Here is Greg Asbed of the Coalition in a New York Times Op-Ed published back in April:

Picture yourself waking up in a decrepit, single-wide trailer packed with a dozen strangers, four of you to every room, all using the same cramped bathroom and kitchen before heading to work. You ride to and from the fields in the back of a hot, repurposed school bus, shoulder-to-shoulder with 40 more strangers, and when the workday is done, you wait for your turn to shower and cook before you can lay your head down to sleep. That is life for far too many farmworkers in our country today.

Those conditions, the result of generations of grinding poverty and neglect, will act like a superconductor for the transmission of the coronavirus. And if something isn't done — now — to address their unique vulnerability, the men and women who plant, cultivate and harvest our food will face a decimating wave of contagion and misery in a matter of weeks, if not days.

Yes, Greg told us so. The conditions under which migrant agricultural workers are forced to work in the US are horrific and incredibly conducive to disease outbreaks.

Returning to the story here in Alachua County, I want to share information I received today from the farmer who runs the CSA from which our family gets its produce for much of the year (today was coincidentally our final pickup for a while, as production pauses during the hottest part of the summer). It turns out that some of the footage (but not the watermelon harvest footage) in the TV story above was shot, without permission, at his farm, presumably because his farm is very close to town and media outlets tend to contact him about any agricultural story. He shared with us his response to the media organizations that contacted him regarding the outbreak:

Our produce has always been safe. We have always practiced good hygiene and field work is by nature socially distanced work.

The problem is when people work and live and travel in groups. The American system of farming depends on mobile low wage workers who are are powerless to poor conditions. I've seen 15 people living in a single wide mobile home that another local farm pays for. The workers don't make enough to live elsewhere and their work is transient because our American model of production is based on the efficiency of monoculture.

People will get sick when they live in crappy conditions. You should do a story that brings modern day slavery to light in Alachua county. Don't put our farm in with all the rest. We have a safe normal job with benefits for our workers. We pay a living wage and retain employees for years. That is not the norm for agriculture in the United States. People demand cheap produce and people in the shadows pay the price. That should be the theme of your story.

And don't call it a community. A community is when people live stably together. These people travel up and down the east coast. Their children miss school or they are separated from their parents. They have no home and their families are split up for economic reasons. Calling it community is just more ignorance for the general public who have no idea where food comes from.

Wow. That is just so damning in how our country goes about producing food. These migrant workers really are trapped in a modern version of slavery with virtually no chance of escape. They are forced into cramped living and working conditions that put them much more at risk than those affluent citizens whom they feed. And our media mostly misses the true impact of those conditions and the fact that it doesn't have to be that way. My CSA costs are a bit higher than buying the same items at the local grocery store, but the difference is very small. When you factor in the cruelty of the modern slavery system and the cost to society when outbreaks like this hit workers, our current system can be characterized as nothing less than heartless evil.

Oh, and one last note in parting. The Gainesville Sun article on the outbreak opened with this gem:

One farm worker who traveled to Alachua County from Miami-Dade County unknowingly infected at least 76 additional workers with COVID-19.

A total of 98 people traced back to the worker were tested for the virus Saturday evening, said Paul Myers, administrator for the Department of Health in Alachua County. Eight tested negative, and 14 tests are still pending.

Hmmm. So one person coming here from South Florida managed to infect over 70 (and likely now around 90) people with COVID-19. And yet, our esteemed governor is hell-bent on "opening" the University of Florida this fall. Yes, there are plans to "screen" students before they're allowed on campus. And students don't live with 15 or so people in a single wide trailer. But student living groups like fraternities, sororities and dorms do wind up with many students in close quarters. And does anyone really think that student parties or even student bars downtown will follow social distancing guidelines?

This will not end well.

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4/5: Latinos and Asian Americans hit hardest by early COVID-19 job losses

Unemployment rate jumps in April

Masao Suzuki - Fight Back!

San José, CA - The headline news that the unemployment rate for March jumped by almost a full percentage point, to 4.4%, was bad enough. The actual unemployment rate was much higher by the end of March, given that the more 10 million people who lost their jobs and filed for unemployment insurance benefits in the last two weeks of March were not counted. Adding in these workers would have increased the unemployment rate by more than 6%, raising the total rate at the end of March to about 10.5%.

The official government unemployment rate also understates the number of jobless workers, as you have to be out of work and looking for work. With so many businesses shutting down and schools closing, many workers who were laid off didn't look for work. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment report released on Friday, April 3, more than 1.5 million people stopped looking for work. If these workers were counted, the actual unemployment rate at the end of the month would have been another percentage point higher, at 11.5%.

The employment report also showed a big jump in workers who are working part time because they can't find a full-time job. This group of workers increased by almost 1.5 million just in the first half of the month. The rise in part-time workers also dragged down the average number of weeks worked in March. While they are still counted as employed by the Labor Department, they and their families are feeling the economic stress of the economic crisis.

Latinos and Asian Americans saw their unemployment rates jump by 1.6%, more than twice the increase of white Americans. This reflected the high concentration of these oppressed nationality workers in food services, the hardest hit industry in the beginning of the month. Latino workers have the highest percentage going without health insurance, putting them at greater risk during a pandemic. Latinos and Asian Americans also have the highest percentages of immigrants and undocumented - many of whom are restricted from getting any aid from the federal relief money going out to individuals starting next week.

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4/20: GOP memo urges anti-China assault over coronavirus

The Senate Republican campaign arm distributed the 57-page strategy document to candidates

Alex Isenstad - Polotico

The National Republican Senatorial Committee has sent campaigns a detailed, 57-page memo authored by a top Republican strategist advising GOP candidates to address the coronavirus crisis by aggressively attacking China.

The memo includes advice on everything from how to tie Democratic candidates to the Chinese government to how to deal with accusations of racism. It stresses three main lines of assault: That China caused the virus "by covering it up," that Democrats are "soft on China," and that Republicans will "push for sanctions on China for its role in spreading this pandemic."

"Coronavirus was a Chinese hit-and-run followed by a cover-up that cost thousands of lives," the April 17 memo states.

The document urges candidates to stay relentlessly on message against the country when responding to any questions about the virus. When asked whether the spread of the coronavirus is Trump's fault, candidates are advised to respond by pivoting to China.

"Don't defend Trump, other than the China Travel Ban — attack China," the memo states.

Republicans have indicated they plan to make China a centerpiece of the 2020 campaign. Trump's reelection campaign recently released a web video painting Joe Biden as cozy with the authoritarian country. The pro-Trump super PAC America First Action has launched several TV commercials tying Biden to China.

Advisers to the president say polling shows China-focused attacks would be effective, and the reelection campaign has weighed a major TV ad campaign focused on the topic.

The NRSC memo shows that Republicans are also eager to make China an issue in down-ballot races. It was distributed by the Senate GOP campaign arm, though it was not explicitly drafted by or for the committee. It was authored by the political consulting firm of Brett O'Donnell, a veteran Republican strategist who has advised Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton.

Jesse Hunt, an NRSC spokesman, said: "We routinely send campaigns different documents and sources of information dozens of times per week. That's the role of the party committee, especially in these volatile times."

O'Donnell declined to comment.

The memo includes guidance on what Republican candidates can say when asked whether blaming China for the pandemic incites racism. Candidates are urged to respond by saying that, "No one is blaming Chinese Americans. This is the fault of

the Chinese Communist Party for covering up the virus and lying about its danger. This caused the pandemic and they should be held accountable.”

“No one has suffered more from the murderous Communist Chinese Party dictatorship than the people of China,” the memo adds. “We stand with them against their corrupt government that caused this pandemic.”

The GOP’s planned China-focused assault, however, is complicated by Trump’s occasional praise for President Xi Jinping. The liberal organization American Bridge recently launched a commercial which plays a clip of the president praising Xi and declares that Trump “gave China his trust.”

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