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RESISTANCE ARCHIVING

Reflections on the IMM Print Detention Stories Project

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OUTSIDE OF THE THEO LACY Jail in Orange County, California, a crowd gathered on a sunny November day in 2016 to protest the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention of community members at the jail, and the horrific conditions facing all who were imprisoned there. Wielding signs reading “ICE out of OC” and “#Not1More Deportation,” local immigrant and LGBTQ+ rights organizations, lawyers, and family members chanted demands to speak with the facility’s deportation officer, and called for the release of their loved ones (figure 20.1). Several news vans arrived in time for a planned press conference; gaining media attention was part of the strategy. A young woman named Andrea, whose brother was detained at the jail and facing deportation, held a written statement she had prepared.¹ But when a local television news anchor put a microphone before her and asked, “What did your brother do to get arrested?” Andrea froze. Her hands began to tremble, and the anchor moved on to speak to someone else. Consoling Andrea afterward, an advocate said, “This is why we need to make our own media.”

This interaction is one example of how communities facing immigration enforcement can experience trauma when sharing their stories with the public. The reporter’s question also shows how presumptions of criminality permeate discourse on immigration and shape legacy media reporting. One week after the protest at Theo Lacy, Donald Trump was

elected president on a platform of hate, and community members' fears of speaking out, as well as retaliatory conditions in detention, worsened.

As abolitionist scholars and organizers, we reflect in this essay on our efforts in resistance archiving, defined here as the intentional practice of documenting stories that counter the violent logics of prisons and borders, during the Trump era. Through a discussion of the creation of IMM Print, a digital archive of immigration detention stories launched by Tina during her time as a Soros Justice Fellow at Freedom for Immigrants in 2016–18—and drawing also on Jamila's work as founder and former executive director of the Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP)—we reflect on the challenges of resistance archiving within the “cramped political spaces” of the immigrant rights movement and the process of navigating the continuities and ruptures of Trump-era enforcement violence.²

A report by Freedom for Immigrants found that although media coverage of immigration detention tripled between 2010 and 2017, migrant voices remained largely missing.³ Instead, news reporting has privileged the perspectives of ICE, other officials, and U.S. citizen actors, who often get both the first and last word. More egregiously, respectable news outlets continue to cite anti-immigrant organizations such as the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), which has been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and immigration scholars.⁴ Even coverage that is sympathetic to migrants focuses primarily on abuses that take place within the detention system. Although accurate, such reporting centers on themes of suffering, victimhood, and dependence, rather than on the agency of affected communities and the alternatives to incarceration they advocate for.

In a landscape rife with trauma and retaliation, documenting stories from detention is a fragmented and dangerous process. Stories are critiqued for foregrounding their singularity, and for sensationalizing trauma as “tragedy porn,” contributing to tropes of migrant victimization. As Sujatha Fernandes cautions, stories can also fuel neoliberal agendas, especially if “reconfigured on the model of the market to produce entrepreneurial, upwardly mobile subjects.” And individual stories lacking context can “shift the focus away from structurally defined axes of oppression and help to defuse the confrontational politics of social movements.”⁵ In effect, they can detract from systemic understandings

of state-sanctioned border and carceral violence. Speaking out can also mean retaliation, persecution, and even death—effects that fall disproportionately on illegalized, racialized, and criminalized groups, especially Black, Indigenous, queer, or trans people, as well as women and children. Even if done anonymously or in relative safety, telling one’s story often exacts a toll by reanimating trauma.

However, as prison abolitionist Mariame Kaba argues, “The work of abolition insists that we foreground the people who are behind the walls—that we listen to them, that we take their ideas seriously.”⁶ First-hand stories from detention illustrate anatomies of migrant detention and escalating state violence under Trump: isolation from communications with the outside; routine denials of due process, medical care, and adequate nutrition; physical and psychic assaults; and retaliation against resistance inside and out. Despite the challenges surrounding storytelling, IMM Print and other efforts in resistance archiving can help map abolitionist imaginaries—alternatives to escalating border and carceral violence in the Trump era and beyond.⁷

Conceived and launched as the Trump administration took office in 2017, IMM Print is “a publication by and for people affected by immigration detention.” It is produced through inside-outside organizing, a strategy prioritizing the leadership and knowledge of incarcerated people with support from collaborators on the outside.⁸ This chapter culminates in a series of short stories and artwork from detention—an archive in itself—to illustrate how IMM Print became a platform for mobilizing freedom campaigns and actions countering the violence and retaliation endemic in the U.S. carceral state, and the Trump administration’s escalating war on migrants.

SOWING HATE AND FEAR: ORIGINS OF TRUMP’S WAR ON MIGRANTS

Today, migrant detention has become fully entrenched within the landscape of racially targeted mass incarceration in the United States. Originating in nineteenth-century exclusionary violence targeting Asian and Latinx migrant groups, detention’s foundational logic has become normalized, especially since Ronald Reagan’s administration.⁹ We assert that detention must be understood as a function of U.S. imperialism,

a mechanism of white nationalist state-making at the intersections of processes of policing, criminalization, and terror, which play out both within and beyond U.S. state borders. A core feature of detention is its retaliatory nature, its operation as a form of counterinsurgency waged against those deemed enemies of the state, meant to render migrants—and their voices—invisible.¹⁰

In *The Borders of AIDS*, Karma R. Chávez defines a “logic” as “a structure of thinking that thereby structures expression,” whereas alienizing logic is “a structure of thinking that insists that some are necessarily members of a community and some are recognized as not belonging, even if they physically reside there.” Chávez lists the myriad manifestations of alienizing logic throughout U.S. history: “genocide, lynching, the plantation, the reservation, the ghetto, the internment camp, the prison, the hospital, quarantine, ban, or deportation.”¹¹ This section traces important precursors to Trump-era immigration enforcement violence, focusing especially on their narrative and rhetorical attendants.

THE TANTON NETWORK

In the 1980s and 1990s, a hostile public sphere of propaganda accompanied immigration enforcement violence, targeting immigrants in the United States. Anti-immigrant advocates had become more sophisticated in their media strategies and tactics by this time, and they sought to strip undocumented Latinx migrants of their social, political, and civil rights. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, John Tanton was a major force behind the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment and propaganda in the United States.¹² Tanton strongly shifted public perception of immigrants, laws, and policies in the country.

Tanton, an ophthalmologist from upstate Michigan and founder of the Tanton Network, sought strict migration reform to build his goal of a white United States. He launched a slew of restrictionist immigration think tanks and lobbying groups, now deemed hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center. These include CIS, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the Immigration Reform Law Institute, and NumbersUSA.

In a letter to Roy Beck, executive director of NumbersUSA, dated January 1996—the same year that Bill Clinton’s administration passed a sweeping

set of new laws criminalizing migration and expanding detention—Tanton wrote: “I have no doubt that individual minority persons can assimilate to the culture necessary to run an advanced society but if through mass migration, the culture of the homeland is transplanted from Latin America to California, then my guess is we will see the same degree of success with governmental and social institutions that we have seen in Latin America.”¹³ Seeing the Latinx migrant community as a racial and cultural threat to the U.S. nation-state, Tanton built an anti-immigrant machine via his network of dozens of organizations, which were generously funded by some of the wealthiest people in the United States, including Mellon heiress Cordelia Scaife May. Tanton and May also frequently asserted that immigrants threatened the environment, citing fears of overpopulation in the United States.¹⁴ According to Reece Jones, “even as the Tanton Network of anti-immigrant groups including FAIR, CIS, and Numbers USA eventually distanced themselves from Tanton’s racist writings and affiliations, . . . May’s funding dramatically increased their influence in Washington, DC, and around the country.”¹⁵ Through the anti-immigrant narrative of the Tanton Network in the 1980s and 1990s, immigrants were effectively scapegoated as a threat to the economic, environmental, cultural, and national security of the United States.

Posing as a credible think tank, CIS has strategically infiltrated media narratives over the past four decades to sow disinformation and skewed statistics linking migration to crime and taxpayer expenditures, effectively pulling the immigration debate further to the right. Lacking in scholarly credentials, CIS director Mark Krikorian has become a frequent immigration commentator and is often featured in left-leaning news outlets ranging from PBS to the *Los Angeles Times*.¹⁶ During the Trump administration, Tanton Network organizations enjoyed exceptional access to White House policymaking, including the appointment of Julie Kirchner, former executive director of FAIR, as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) ombudsman.¹⁷

FROM OBAMA TO TRUMP

New mandates for detention put in place by the George W. Bush administration, as well as Barack Obama’s compromising approach to immigration politics and recommitment to enforcement, caused detention

numbers to swell under the Obama administration.¹⁸ After 9/11, the war on terror reframed migration control as a national security issue, as seen in the formation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its immigration enforcement arms: ICE, USCIS, and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). As Leisy J. Abrego and Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales conclude, “While credited with the passage of DACA, [Obama] also oversaw a period of mass deportations that both rivaled those of previous administrations and created the institutional infrastructure that laid the groundwork for Trump’s immigration enforcement machine.”¹⁹ According to a 2014 report by the Center for Migration Studies, in the five years since the Obama administration had announced its 2009 detention reform initiative, the number of noncitizens detained by DHS each year had increased by nearly 25 percent.²⁰ Obama’s expansion of immigration detention included a return to detaining families in response to a Central American child migration “crisis” in 2014 and, importantly, a reassertion of the long-standing trope of the “criminal immigrant,” whose legacy carried into the Trump era and continues under Joe Biden’s administration.²¹

In the first six years of Obama’s presidency, he built on growing crim-migration trends (the melding of criminal and immigration enforcement systems) by expanding his predecessor’s Secure Communities and 287(g) programs, heightening local law enforcement cooperation with ICE, and using detainers to feed those with criminal charges or convictions into the deportation pipeline. The overcriminalization of Black people throughout the rise of racially targeted mass incarceration in the modern era also resulted in an explosive number of Black migrants being subjected to detention and deportation under Obama.²² As Jack Herrera recounts: “Decades of overcriminalization of Black communities had resulted in higher rates of conviction for Black people, which, when paired with Obama’s emphasis on people with criminal records, led in turn to higher rates of deportation for Black migrants.”²³ When Obama left office, he had deported more people than any other president in the history of the United States—in fact, his total numbers would exceed those of the four years of the Trump administration.

However, as Carolina Valdivia argues, the Trump era also ushered in a “new historic reality,” with “changes in immigration policy and enforcement that yield a qualitatively different experience of what it means to be undocumented in the United States.”²⁴ With violence and white

supremacy emboldened, hate crimes against immigrants and new attacks on queer and trans people began to escalate.²⁵ In our work, we also noted a rollback of the narrative progress made by the immigrant rights movement in recent years, with the term “illegal immigration,” for example, becoming common in public discourse. Heightened enforcement violence was accompanied by an increase in media reporting on immigrants being forced “back into the shadows.”²⁶

The Trump administration quickly defined the “bad immigrant” that the U.S.-Mexico border wall would “protect Americans” from. On the campaign trail, Trump openly named Latinx people affected by migration restrictions as “rapists” and “criminals.” Upon taking office, Trump issued two executive orders signaling heightened crimmigration. The first, “Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements,” on January 25, 2017, included a mandate for new U.S.-Mexico border wall construction. Days later, Trump signed the so-called Muslim Ban, an executive order banning foreign nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries from visiting the United States, heightening anti-Blackness and Islamophobia.²⁷ In effect, Trump’s anti-immigrant rhetoric made every migrant a target.

Broadening the criminalization of all people who migrated over the U.S.-Mexico border as well as those living without papers across the United States, the Trump administration picked up where Obama left off and moved to rapidly expand the detention system, including family and private contract facilities. By early 2020, detention levels reached an all-time high, with nearly sixty thousand in detention on any given day. Trump’s plans to continue detention expansion were curbed only by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁸

As COVID-19 tore through prison and detention sites over the next two years and exacerbated already extreme conditions of medical neglect, death rates in detention grew even as detention numbers decreased.²⁹ In early 2021, detention numbers reached their lowest in two decades, but they have been rebounding under the Biden administration in tandem with a sharp and disturbing rise in e-carceration—new forms of digital surveillance including the use of ankle monitors and geolocation tracking.³⁰ The pandemic also prompted a new spate of hunger strikes and uprisings across detention sites, and calls for abolition. Echoing past exclusions based on perceived public health risks, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and

the HIV/AIDS immigration ban (1987–2010), the Trump administration weaponized Title 42, an aspect of U.S. health law, to target and exclude at the U.S.-Mexico border asylum-seeking migrants deemed a “health risk.” Haitians, who largely migrate through the El Paso–Juárez and San Diego–Tijuana ports of entry and who have historically faced exceptional exclusion, especially during the HIV/AIDS crisis, have again been targeted by Title 42—which the incoming Biden administration kept in place until May 2022. According to a report by the Haitian Bridge Alliance, the Quixote Center, and the UndocuBlack Network, more Haitians were deported under Title 42 in the first month of the Biden administration than in all of 2020.³¹ Under Trump and now Biden, Haitians have been continually deported into a growing political and ecological crisis in Haiti. Although deportation rates declined under the Trump administration, Trump’s expanded use of detention and legacy of hateful rhetoric continue as many Trump-era enforcement policies remain in place.

DREAMS AND DESERVINGNESS

Although some organizers hold radical anticapitalist, abolitionist, or antistatist political views, narrative tactics have varied across the immigrant rights movement. As Austin Kocher and Angela Stuesse argue, deportation defense campaigns (DDCs) have had to grapple with “questions about when and how to challenge dominant discourses and institutions while also achieving short-term goals.”³² The sanctuary movement of the 1980s, as well as the new sanctuary movement that emerged in the late 2010s, has also grappled with movement strategy and the divisiveness caused by narratives of immigrant “deservingness.”³³ This narrative framing has been largely shaped by the Democratic-led fight for comprehensive immigration reform, and especially the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act—first introduced in 2001 but yet to become enacted as legislation. The DREAM Act would provide permanent protection from deportation for certain immigrants, primarily those who came to the United States as children, attended school, and do not have a criminal record.

These campaigns have generated a narrative binary, in which immigrants are either good/deserving or bad/undeserving. R. A. Moffitt

specifies, “in the eyes of the American voter, those who are deserving are those who work, who are married or at least widowed, and who have children. Those who are undeserving are those who do not work, who are single parents, and who do not have children.”³⁴ This binary causes substantial harm to those deemed the “bad immigrant,” who are often Black, Muslim, poor, queer, or trans, or of a criminalized community in the United States. Below, we discuss how we have unfortunately witnessed and navigated tensions surrounding this narrative binary in participating DDCs and storytelling work.

Dylan Rodríguez argues that the rise of the U.S. prison-industrial complex has been “enabled and complemented” by a growing nonprofit-industrial complex, defined as “the industrialized incorporation of pro-state liberal and progressive campaigns and movements into a spectrum of government-proctored non-profit organizations.” Fueled by an “industry of fear,” many nonprofit organizations’ reluctance to critique the state (and its foundational logics) head-on, and their need to obtain operational funding, has led to the promotion of legislative reforms that proliferate new modes of state surveillance, policing, and incarceration.³⁵ The “good immigrant” narrative has been utilized by the so-called Beltway immigrant rights movement, which has coalesced around a goal of advocating in Washington, D.C., for legislative reform. However, as Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales argue, “the nonprofit industrial complex, DC lobbying groups, journalists, and researchers” have also played a role in solidifying this binary.³⁶

Advocacy for the DREAM Act adopted a narrative strategy with a “tight discursive frame,” emphasizing American values of hard work and economic contribution, assimilation, and pure innocence. This strategy aimed to make this small group of undocumented youth deserving of remaining in the United States, and, according to Walter Nicholls and Tara Fiorito, to “exonerate them of their ‘illegality’ by stressing their status was ‘no fault of their own.’”³⁷ In 2015, Obama invited six DREAMers, undocumented youth held up as exceptionally deserving, to visit him at the White House.³⁸

Not acknowledging the material conditions for the most marginalized people seeking to migrate to or live in the United States, the narrative of the deserving immigrant is steeped in anti-Blackness, racism, classism, Islamophobia, queerphobia, and transphobia. Ultimately, those

excluded by race, class, and gender identity experience the violence of border enforcement disproportionately. By holding up this binary, the Obama administration effectively scapegoated marginalized and overpoliced migrant communities to justify ICE and CBP violence against those who were criminalized or deemed undeserving of citizenship privileges. In 2014, in part as a way to deflect criticism of the administration's return to the use of family detention, Obama infamously announced a change in enforcement priorities with his "Felons not Families, Criminals not Children" reform speech, in which he falsely claimed that ICE would focus only on deporting migrants deemed to have been guilty of serious crimes.³⁹ The Obama administration's "felons, not families" enforcement guidelines still led to the deportation of three million people.

DESERVINGNESS IN THE QUEER AND TRANS IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The queer and trans immigrant rights movement's resistance has always been openly abolitionist, long before the rise of the Beltway movement. Queer and trans organizing has pushed the boundaries of respectability politics with demands that were often deemed "too radical," making it a critical piece of this history. Notably, grassroots queer and trans groups were a part of the #Not1More campaign, which later grew into the call to #AbolishICE.⁴⁰ However, in the Obama and Trump eras, DDCs, bond campaigns, and letters of support to ICE proving people's deservingness became a "necessary evil": this work meant engaging in exploitative systems and narratives, but it was a way to free people from immigrant prison, to obtain community and governmental support, and to acquire funds to keep the work moving forward. In this section, we reflect on strategies employed during the Obama and Trump eras to demand the freedom of those incarcerated in immigrant prisons, and the multiple problematic facets these strategies had, including pinkwashing, which is the propping up of gay rights in ways that deflect from other harmful practices.

It is critical to maintain an understanding of the material conditions for queer and transgender people in the U.S. nation-state. Queer and trans people are still rendered as "alien" and thus "undeserving" in the U.S. public sphere, and they face deep-seated homophobia, transphobia, and

pos-phobia (a fear of people who are HIV positive).⁴¹ Queer and trans folks who migrate to the United States experience layered alienation, Othering, and perceived undeservingness. Many detained migrants who are queer and transgender are also BIPOC, and sometimes HIV positive. The U.S. nation-state was constructed and bolstered to exterminate and exclude the Other, those who do not exemplify whiteness, heteronormativity, or citizenship, all that is the American dream. Labeling this phenomenon in the U.S. public sphere as alienizing logic, Chávez asserts that “disease becomes one of many opportunities.”⁴² Since the Reagan era, those who are HIV positive have been depicted as less deserving. It is no coincidence that U.S. responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis, including the HIV-positive immigration ban and the confinement of Haitian migrants suspected of being HIV positive in quarantine camps at Guantanamo Bay in the 1990s, helped facilitate the expansion of the modern detention system.

Unfortunately, the use of narratives of deservingness often became necessary to ensure the freedom of those inside the walls and to stop deportations—and to be clear, queer and transgender people do deserve freedom and a place in the United States. As a result, many queer rights campaigns reinforce such narratives, like that surrounding advocacy for DREAMers. While our discussion here does not take away from the radical impacts and contributions of these movements, it is crucial to reflect on how these narratives prevail and why they are deemed necessary.

First, messaging that focuses on the deservingness of freedom from the grips of ICE for queer and trans folks has resulted in local and national campaigns that played into the alarming nature of “tragedy porn.” Tragedy porn can be defined as narratives that emphasize harms endured to prove why people should be freed from ICE custody and “allowed” to exist in the U.S. nation-state. It is commonplace for mainstream queer and trans immigrant rights organizations to disclose and highlight childhood, intimate partner, and adult sexual violence, as well as childhood abandonment, substance misuse, “criminal” charges, trafficking, and HIV status, to expound on the deservingness of specific individuals to merit release.

Second, the ways in which the mainstream immigrant rights movement plays into heteronormative U.S. family values has also become part of the strategy. This includes campaigns that emphasize monogamous romantic relationships, nuclear family ties, and notions of “home” that prop up citizenship rights in the U.S. nation-state as a legitimate form

of protection for queer and trans people—even as homophobic violence across U.S. society has continued to escalate. As the Obama administration ended, GLAAD reported that 2016 was the deadliest year thus far for transgender people in the United States.⁴³

Finally, mainstream immigrant rights organizations working on queer and transgender migration have often refrained from discussing the legacies and reality of Western evangelical Christian colonialism, militarism, or U.S. global imperialism—in sum, the root causes of migration. Although people frequently flee countries that have a long history of U.S. state and capitalist intervention, Beltway organization messaging has primarily focused on propping up the U.S. nation-state as a place of freedom. The negation of the material conditions that result in legislation and violence against the queer and transgender community and forced migration is also a negation of the lived experiences of many queer and trans people locked in ICE prisons, and has been a disservice to the movement.

Over the past decade (since the early 2010s), Democrats have picked up the cause of gay rights across the country, posturing support for the queer and trans movement, such as through congressional briefings on ending transgender detention, for which large immigrant rights organizations partnered with grassroots queer and trans organizations. However, in the end few tangible gains have been made. Time and time again, we have found compromises to be necessary for ICE engagement, digital organizing campaigns, foundation funding, accountability reports to individuals who wanted to support the work, legislative attention, and, later, the creation by ICE of gay, bisexual, and transgender (GBT) detention pods at such sites as the Santa Ana Jail in California and Cibola in Arizona. As Chávez argues, identity-based appeals that demand review and accountability within the detention system's existing structures—such as a 2011 petition by the National Immigrant Justice Center on behalf of thirteen detained queer and trans individuals—may divert resources away from abolition and toward pinkwashing reform efforts such as the GBT pods.⁴⁴

Narratives of tragedy porn and family values have also leaked into smaller, grassroots trans and queer organizing, such as that of the Queer Detainee Empowerment Project. Often, our digital messaging on Twitter and Facebook focused on the tragic realities of the violence that people

were forced to endure, and their deservingness to remain in the United States. Although resisting narrative frames of respectability remained a priority for many organizers, this work often unintentionally played into narratives of criminality and heteronormativity. For example, the display of brutal physical, sexual, and psychological violence in immigrant prison, along with an appeal to family values, was critical to what we will call here the #FreeVeronica campaign.⁴⁵

Focusing on Veronica, a transgender woman incarcerated by ICE, the #FreeVeronica campaign highlighted the sexual violence she was forced to endure to demonstrate that she needed to be freed. The dynamic fed into the tragedy porn narrative, took away her humanity, and contradicted organizers' beliefs that no one should be locked in a cage by the carceral state. News media headlines and the digital messaging of organizations involved in the campaign stated language such as, "Trans immigration detainee and rape survivor deserves safety," "petition launched to . . . [free] a trans immigration detainee raped in custody," and "transgender woman raped . . . ICE refuses to ensure her safety," and often included images of Veronica. The campaign also highlighted the fact that ICE demanded that she sign a release form claiming that the rape was consensual. When she refused to do so, she was forced into solitary confinement as punishment for the physical and sexual violence that she had been forced to bear.

The #FreeVeronica campaign was ultimately successful, but this messaging and digital activism enforced two problematic narratives. First, the campaign's demands that ICE provide "safety" for Veronica contradicted organizers' beliefs that no cage could ever conceivably protect anyone, and that ICE exists only to continue the colonial violence of borders through punishment and terror. And second, media headlines associating trans migrants with sexual violence furthered public notions that people in immigrant prisons are violent, negating the reality that the violence of border enforcement and prisons themselves manifest violent material conditions for those subjected to them. #FreeVeronica narratives focusing on violence and victimhood were attempts to achieve due process and basic human rights through claims to deservingness, yet at the same time they also reinforced notions of criminality and sexual deviance affirmed by Obama's stated intent to target "felons" and Trump's claims that people who had migrated to the United States from Latin

America were “rapists.”⁴⁶ As Mariame Kaba puts it, “the contradictions of demanding protection from the state that also targets and kills us have proved irreconcilable.”⁴⁷

The alienizing logic of the U.S. nation-state has created a dynamic of having to overly prove the deservingness of queer and trans people through DDCs, bond campaigns, letters of support, and fundraising work. The reproduction of such portrayals in varying forms (for example, in annual reports for foundations and donors’ consumption) is a problematic dance: if we do not present these narratives and imagery, people may not be released and could be subjected to expulsion, and there would be no way to pay for our work. At the same time, discussing such personal and intimate details about people’s lives, even with their consent, remains exploitative.

In some ways, annual reports exist as their own form of resistance archive. But the goal of annual reports is to ensure funding to continue the work; they don’t just highlight organizing and campaign victories, they discuss personal and intimate details about people’s lives. Even with the consent of folks, they are exploitative. To mitigate this harm, some organizational approaches to annual reports have shifted from merely writing “about” people and their tragedies, to allowing people to write their own letters and provide their own images.⁴⁸

VULTURE JOURNALISTS AND RESEARCHERS

Another strategy to sidestep the gaze of the nonprofit-industrial complex has been to seek more direct access to legacy media outlets for people in and affected by detention, including through the publishing of op-eds. However, although many journalists and researchers covering immigration proceed with trauma-informed approaches and expressions of movement solidarity, many others have often acted as vultures, regularly expecting access to those affected by migration restrictions and the horrors of U.S. immigrant prisons. Reporters and scholars seeking to profit, either financially or professionally, from people’s trauma need to proceed with awareness of the harms this can cause. Regularly, we have found ourselves playing interference, demanding compensation from predatory journalists for the labor, time, and renewed trauma for those incarcerated by the state. This became our way of attempting to ensure people could

maintain agency over their stories and their lives. Journalists would frequently refuse, arguing that they did not have to compensate anyone in the past, so why should they now?

The ongoing struggle to explain to journalists that the time, emotional labor, and trauma of people incarcerated in immigrant prisons did not exist for their consumption became a constant conversation that ended in a statement by us that “you are not entitled to someone else’s trauma.” Such arguments with vulture journalists clearly illustrate that many journalists see those who have migrated to the United States and been incarcerated as not equal to the rest of the U.S. population and not deserving of agency. Mainstream journalism demonstrates the necessity for platforms for people in detention to tell their stories in ways that provide them with agency and autonomy.

Several questions arise from these configurations of resistance archiving: Do people feel that they have options in when and how to tell their stories? Do people feel they could say no, or do they fear not having access to services or support if they refuse? Is it truly consent? Reflecting, we feel that many storytelling efforts, DDCs, bond campaigns, letters of support, and even annual reports that play into tragedy porn tropes to prove deservingness can be a form of coercion that is at best regrettable. Therefore, as an open-access forum for people affected by migration restrictions to tell their own stories, IMM Print also created a digital archive of critical systemic analysis to accompany stories in a way that did not exist anywhere else in the immigrant rights movement.

RESISTANCE ARCHIVING

IMM Print originated with the primary purpose of providing a space for people in detention to share their experiences of displacement, incarceration, and survival on their own terms, without mediation. A secondary purpose was for their stories to be preserved under community rather than institutional ownership, kept in a digital format so as to be editable upon request, as storytellers’ wishes and personal and political circumstances change over time (although their being housed within a non-profit organization yields its own set of challenges and critiques). In line with emerging praxis in critical refugee studies, our small team of visitor

volunteers, students, and community members adopted a participatory approach, employing a process of informed consent to center the direct knowledge and expertise of people in detention.⁴⁹ Our aim has been to shift narrative focus from damage to desire, so as to move beyond suffering to what happens next: survival, political education, the building of communities of care, and liberation.⁵⁰

Our conception of resistance archiving builds on histories of radical resistance through community-based storytelling. Ranging from the feminist collective newspaper *Off Our Backs* and sanctuary movement newsletters such as *Basta!* to the DIVA TV video documentary project by queer rights group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) protesting HIV-positive Haitian incarcerations in New York and at Guantanamo Bay, “marginalized communities have always created their own media to tell stories about themselves from their own perspectives,” as Chávez asserts.⁵¹ Through inside-outside organizing and with the support of collaborators on the outside, detention storytelling efforts have had both problematic and liberatory results.

Reflecting on the importance of “participatory” defense campaigns, Mariama Kaba urges for storytelling efforts to be guided by an ethic of care and conducted in solidarity with incarcerated people. Defense campaigns are “essential for educating the public, including prison reformers and abolitionists, about the racial and gendered terror of criminalization and incarceration,” and “necessary for popular education to strengthen our movements: both by informing and improving overall movement strategies, and by challenging false binaries.”⁵² However, Kaba continues, individual, short-term campaigns are “most effective as abolitionist strategies when they are framed in a way that speaks to the need to abolish prisons in general . . . individual cases should be framed as emblematic of the conditions faced by thousands or millions who should also be free.” In other words, discussions of interpersonal violence should be accompanied by a discussion of state violence—without a critique of state power and capitalism, stories are “at best incomplete and at worst reifications of oppressive structures that are constitutive of interpersonal violence.”⁵³

IMM Print attempts to achieve this by inviting affected community members, historians, and other scholars to participate in a collaborative and self-reflective process to place stories in an expanding digital archive, alongside other crowd-sourced educational materials such as the

#ImmigrationDetentionSyllabus.⁵⁴ While IMM Print runs into some of the same narrative challenges as nonprofit reporting, legacy journalism, and DDCs, its sole purpose is for firsthand accounts to exist outside of these institutional constraints, to be stored long term, and to be shared without mediation. It is also a platform for political and public education, with a tandem end goal of liberation for individuals, and the abolition of systems of abuse and exploitation.

IMM Print's digital format is inspired by the long-standing power of creative online activism within the immigrant rights and prison abolition movements. Digital organizing and activism have been crucial means to win campaigns across movements, from the Zapatistas, who used the internet in the 1990s to coordinate their protest in Chiapas against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to United We Dream, which has used it in the 2000s to form the largest undocumented immigrant youth movement in history.⁵⁵

Another crucial campaign leading the immigrant rights movement into the Trump era, as discussed above, was the #Not1More campaign, which later became the #AbolishICE movement. In 2014, when #Not1More sprang up, it was abolitionist to its core. Tania Unzueta recounts that #Not1More “was a direct challenge to the strategy, even then, to continue to focus on lobbying Congress and not anger the President with our demands.”⁵⁶ #Not1More grew into #AbolishICE, alongside the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, with the shared goals of unveiling and diminishing the prison-industrial complex in its varying forms, fighting police violence, and abolishing government agencies that terrorize and harm BIPOC communities. The resistance of the movement was crucial, shifting away from the “deservingness” strategy to focus on those most vulnerable to the brutality of the deportation machine: criminalized people living with migration restrictions.

A combination of digital formats—hypertextual, hypernarrative, and archival—connects IMM Print to broader audiences by encouraging exploration throughout the site and offering a range of ways to engage. Users are guided to move through story content in the ordering of blog posts. While any arrangement choice forms its own argument, site visitors are also free to navigate as they see fit and come to their own conclusions. Our use of hyperlinks within stories that link to archived content in original and long formats (useful for students, researchers, or anyone seeking more information), as well as to relevant community discussion

and educational materials, allows users to jump around or home in on topics of their choosing. These materials also encourage audiences to engage with project content in various public educational and community settings. As an archive, the project is designed to be preserved and ever-expanding, but stories can also be taken down or edited upon request. We also include a space on the site for visitors to contact us and contribute their own stories and media, along with guidance for doing so.

Other challenges that we have continued to face include navigating the impacts of trauma on communities (and in many cases, the impacts of vicarious trauma on ourselves), obtaining funding to maintain the project and compensate storytellers, and meeting deep needs in communities in which we work.⁵⁷ Another lingering tension inherent in all digital history projects—a tension that is both scholarly and political—is the question of shaping and presenting an argument versus honoring the words and narratives that people wish to share in their own right. In other words, what should you do when you disagree with narratives you are presenting? For example, in conversation, people in and affected by immigration detention often liken their experiences to being treated “like a criminal” or make an appeal along the lines of, “I am not a criminal.” Narratives also often appeal to themes of deservingness: a sense of national belonging, patriotism, sacrifice, hard work, heteronormativity, and compliance. These narratives are divisive—harmful to communities who are criminalized and illegalized—and they run counter to the project’s larger aims. We have tried to address these tensions in a variety of ways: through conversing with storytellers, editing or making omissions (which is problematic in itself), presenting stories with annotation and disclaimers, and including a mission and values statement on the IMM Print “About” page.

IMM PRINT

The following is a series of abridged stories posted to IMM Print during the Trump administration—a resistance archive in itself—to illustrate the pitfalls and potentials of resistance archiving, and to reflect on how we attempted to navigate the changing terrains of resistance and state retaliation during these years. These stories range from individual deportation defense and bond campaigns, to friendships and solidarities built through pen pal programs, art, and newsletters, to collaborations with

allied journalists to support hunger strikes and to abolish a local ICE contract; we also note where IMM Print provided space for full stories to be told and for critical systemic analysis.

DEPORTATION DEFENSE AND BOND CAMPAIGNS

When a community member was re-detained by ICE in Orange County, California, in November 2016, the same month Trump was elected, advocates launched the #FreeKapi campaign (figure 20.1). We staged actions outside the Theo Lacy Jail, and collaborated with Kapi while he was detained to publish an op-ed written by him in a local newspaper, in which he emphasized his contributions to his community and called detention the “shame of America.”⁵⁸ Kapi was aware of the risks of retaliation he faced and we acted at his direction, although after Trump’s election we witnessed an escalation of retaliation that tragically resulted in Kapi’s deportation.



Figure 20.1. A protest at the Theo Lacy Jail in California, November 2016. Signs read “Free Kapi Now” and “Department of Homeland Security Out of OC.” Photo posted by Salvador Sarmiento (@sg_chambita), “Protests erupt,” Twitter, November 3, 2016. Image courtesy of Salvador Sarmiento.

IMM Print also became a platform for people to share their own stories in support of bond campaigns to free them. Individuals shared photos of themselves, personal hopes, and creative writing. Here, J. writes about his childhood in Namibia and the bullying he faced for being different:

My neighborhood could be volatile. It was a scary place for me at times and for various reasons too, but here in particular some kids our age were desperate for a way to pass time like having a human punching bag; I'm talking about bullies.

So being a *zoba,* an outcast or nerd, I was a pretty good bully magnet—did I mention I named my dog after a cartoon character? I was pretty different. I was sensitive, even delicate at times. I really couldn't rely on any ability to *swana,* fight, or *duka,* run.⁵⁹

In support of his own bond campaign, Victor Perez shared his story and image on IMM Print. We shared these across Twitter and social media to successfully raise money to bond him out of the Adelanto Detention Facility after three and a half years in detention. "I'm the One Who's Been Here the Longest," he said, and wrote about combating the stigma of mental illness and drawing pictures to cope with incarceration.⁶⁰

PEN PAL PROGRAMS, ART, NEWSLETTERS

Detention visitation and pen pal programs, the sharing of artwork, and the production and dissemination of newsletters created by detained migrants were all ways to combat the isolation and barriers to communication with the outside world that people in detention faced, and to express friendship and solidarity. IMM Print, in collaboration with visitation programs like the QDEP, also provided critical analysis alongside stories.

In response to the Trump administration's creation of a new agency, VOICE (Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement), intended to distort crime statistics and encourage the public to report on undocumented immigrants, IMM Print launched a series of stories called "VOICE: Victims of ICE" to flip the narrative and call out crimes committed by ICE, "the real perpetrator of human and civil rights violations," against people in detention. Tina also published an op-ed in *Truthout*, a publication

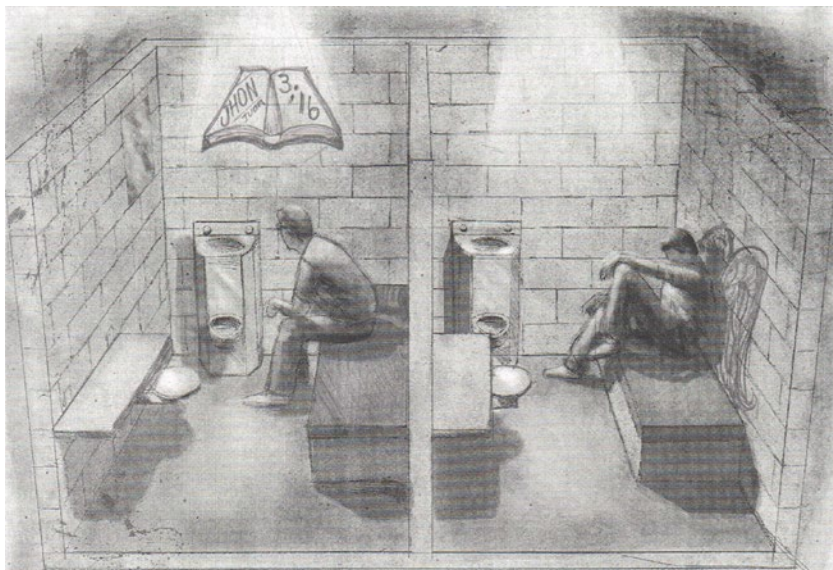


Figure 20.2. A drawing of conditions of solitary confinement at the Theo Lacy Jail in California, sent by Adolfo to Freedom for Immigrants, 2017. Freedom for Immigrants, “VOICE: Victims of ICE,” IMM Print.

allied with IMM Print’s mission, to amplify the story and provide historical context to the Trump administration’s lies.⁶¹ We included the artworks in figures 20.2 and 20.3 in a piece on solitary confinement. Artwork exchanged with us via visitation pen pal programs shows how people experienced solitary confinement, as well as how they envisioned freedom. A group of migrants detained at Adelanto in 2017 also mailed Freedom for Immigrants a newsletter they created, *Breaking Chains Ministries*, with hand-drawn artwork by Bad Boy Art. Upon their request, we formatted the newsletter and mailed copies to the prison (figure 20.4). With people detained at Adelanto as the newsletter’s only intended audience, we did not publish *Breaking Chains* online.

IMM Print also made space for grassroots and radical organizations on the outside to provide critical analysis in response to Trump’s escalating war on queer and trans people. In response to Trump’s transgender military ban, Jamila wrote an open letter on behalf of QDEP to critique the public discourse of deservingness that normalizes war and U.S. empire. Clarifying QDEP’s antiwar, anti-imperial stance, they write, “the US Military Machine has resulted in the forced migration of our people;



Figure 20.3. A drawing of a red rose with the inscription “Thanks for Being A Friend.” Sent by Lalo at the Adelanto Detention Facility to Freedom for Immigrants, 2017. Freedom for Immigrants, “VOICE: Victims of ICE,” IMM Print.

why support pitting oppressed people against other oppressed people?” The letter, posted to IMM Print, continues: “The number of LGBTQ/HIV+ immigrants that we work with that are detained in immigration detention and that are refused asylum is huge. It’s telling of a larger issue of refusing some of the most marginalized people in this world seeking safety after their long journey to the United States, where they are held in cages and experience medical neglect, physical violence, sexual violence, and deplorable conditions, in the ‘Free World.’”⁶²



Figure 20.4. *Breaking Chains Ministries*, a newsletter created by migrants detained at Adelanto and mailed to Freedom for Immigrants. The newsletter included hand-drawn artwork by Bad Boy Art. June/July 2017. Photo by Tina Shull.



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WORKING WITH ALLIED JOURNALISTS: HUNGER STRIKES AND JAIL CLOSURES

IMM Print also published lists of demands shared by migrants waging a wave of hunger strikes at the Adelanto Detention Facility in Southern California. Many of these migrants had traveled with refugee caravans in the spring of 2017 and throughout 2018. In addition to reporting on abuses happening inside Adelanto in real time and helping raise funds to support the Adelanto Bond Fund, IMM Print coordinated with supportive journalists to serve as an archive of organizational press releases and complaint documents that legacy reporting would not publish in full but could cite (figure 20.5).⁶³

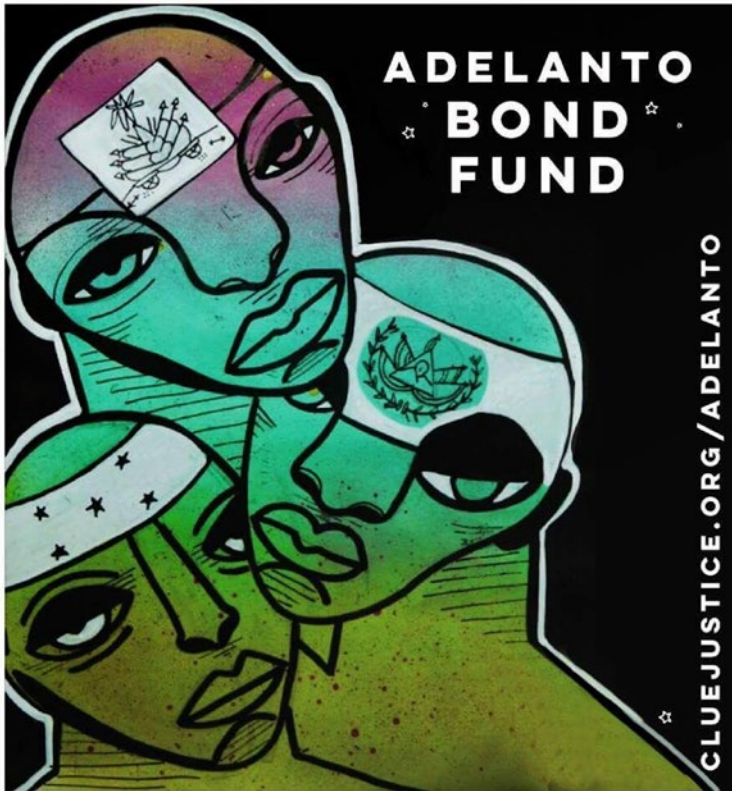



Figure 20.5. Artwork created by Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE Justice) in support of the Adelanto Bond Fund, 2017. Posted by Alex Mensing (@alex_mensing), “Generous donations,” Twitter, August 18, 2017. Image courtesy of CLUE Justice and Alex Mensing.

We did this again in the fall of 2017, as IMM Print raised public awareness of the horrific conditions at the West County Detention Facility in Richmond, California, publishing a list of women's complaints in collaboration with media reporting that led to the eventual cancellation of the facility's ICE contract in 2018 (figure 20.6). Allying with journalists who have the right politics and intentions to share news from inside helped support a successful campaign to close a jail.⁶⁴


U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

DETAINEE CONTACT WITH ICE OFFICER/AGENT REQUEST FORM
(CONTACTO DEL DETENIDO CON LA FORMA DE LA PETICION DEL OFICIAL/AGENTE DEL ICE)

DATE: _____
(FECHA)

DETAINEE NAME: _____
(NOMBRE DEL DETENIDO) LAST (APELLIDO) FIRST (PRIMER NOMBRE) MIDDLE (MEDIO NOMBRE)

DATE OF BIRTH: _____
(FECHA DE NACIMIENTO)

BOOKING NUMBER: _____
(NUMERO DE LA RESERVACION)

HOUSING UNIT: _____ YUBA CONTRA COSTA (WCDF)

IMMIGRATION NUMBER: A _____
(NUMERO DE LA INMIGRACION)

DO YOU SPEAK / READ / WRITE ENGLISH?
(PUEDE HABLAR, LEER, ESCRIBIR EN INGLES?)

IF NOT, WHAT LANGUAGE? _____
(SI NO, QUE LENGUA?)

NATURE OF REQUEST:
(NATURALEZA DE LA PETICION)

We are being treated differently. A county inmate asked to use a book to study for the GED & that inmate's request was granted. When I asked to borrow another copy of the book for the same reason, Ms. Astke Denied my request. When we are on lockdown and a county inmate needs to use the restroom, she is unlocked so that she can use it, when an ICE inmate asks, we are always told to either hold it, or to use a "RED BAG" Bio-Hazard Bag. This is unacceptable. Over-

ACTION TAKEN / RESPONSE:
(ACCION TOMADA / RESPUESTA)

OFFICER / AGENT: _____ BADGE #: _____ DATE: _____ TIME: _____

Figure 20.6. Copy of migrant women's complaint written on a ICE detainee contact form, drafted at the Contra Costa County Jail in California and mailed to Freedom for Immigrants, 2017. Freedom for Immigrants, "We Are Being Treated Differently," IMM Print.

NOTES

1. These events are recounted from author Shull's witnessing. Andrea's name has been changed to protect her identity.
2. Kocher and Stuesse, "Undocumented Activism and Minor Politics."
3. Shull, *Immigration Detention in the Media*.
4. Southern Poverty Law Center, "Center for Immigration Studies." For more on the history of CIS (as well as the Tanton Network, to which it belongs, and which is discussed later in this chapter), see Jones, *White Borders*; Denvir, *All-American Nativism*; Goodman, "Unmaking the Nation of Immigrants."
5. Fernandes, *Curated Stories*, 3–4.
6. Kaba, "Towards the Horizon of Abolition."
7. Shull, "QTGNC Stories from US Immigration Detention and Abolitionist Imaginaries, 1980–Present."
8. IMM Print, "About Us."
9. D. Hernández, "Carceral Shadows."
10. Shull, "Reagan's Cold War on Immigrants," 5–7.
11. Chávez, *The Borders of AIDS*, 5, 4.
12. C. Goodman, "Unmaking the Nation of Immigrants."
13. Southern Poverty Law Center, "John Tanton."
14. Denvir, *All-American Nativism*, 33. Daniel Denvir discusses the broad societal influence of Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne Erlich's 1968 book *The Population Bomb*, which itself draws on 1920s-era eugenicist white supremacist ideology.
15. Jones, *White Borders*, 8.
16. See, e.g., Do, "For Asians in the US Illegally, 'There Is More Shame and More Quiet.'"
17. Plot Against Immigrants, home page; Ndulue et al., *The Language of Immigration Reporting*.
18. A growing body of historical scholarship traces continuities across presidential administrations in the post–World War II rise of immigration enforcement and detention in the United States, as well as the way exclusionary measures were shaped by notions of race, class, gender, political ideology, and dis/ability. See Cullison, "Valley of Caged Immigrants"; A. Goodman, *The Deportation Machine*; Lindskoog, *Detain and Punish*; Ordaz, *The Shadow of El Centro*; Shull, *Detention Empire*; Young, *Forever Prisoners*.
19. Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales, introduction, 16.
20. Center for Migration Studies, "Immigration Detention."
21. For more on historical conceptions of the "criminal alien," see K. Hernández, *Migra!*; A. Goodman, *The Deportation Machine*; Young, *Forever Prisoners*; Ordaz, *The Shadow of El Centro*.
22. State of Black Immigrants, home page.
23. Herrera, "Black Immigrants Matter."
24. Valdivia, "Undocumented Young Adults' Heightened Vulnerability in the Trump Era," 128.

25. Okeowo, "Hate on the Rise After Trump's Election"; Southern Poverty Law Center, "Ten Days After."
26. Arroyo, "In the Age of Trump."
27. Trump, "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements"; Trump, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States."
28. Zukowska, "The Cost of Freedom."
29. Terp et al., "Deaths in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention."
30. Just Futures Law, "ICE Digital Prisons." As of July 2023, just over thirty-one thousand people were being held in ICE detention; see Transactional Records Action Clearinghouse, "Immigration Detention Quick Facts."
31. N. Phillips and Ricker, *The Invisible Wall*.
32. Kocher and Stuesse, "Undocumented Activism and Minor Politics," abstract.
33. Shull, "Reagan's Cold War on Immigrants," 27–28; Yukich, "Constructing the Model Immigrant"; Paik, "Abolitionist Futures and the US Sanctuary Movement."
34. Moffitt, "The Deserving Poor, the Family, and the U.S. Welfare System," 745.
35. Rodríguez, "The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," 21. See also Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*
36. Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales, *We Are Not Dreamers*, 9.
37. Nicholls and Fiorito, "Dreamers Unbound."
38. Holst, "Meet the 6 DREAMers the President Met with in the Oval Office Yesterday."
39. Obama, "Address to the Nation on Immigration Reform."
40. Unzueta, "We Fell in Love in a Hopeless Place."
41. Hammami, "Bridging Immigration Justice and Prison Abolition."
42. Chávez, *The Borders of AIDS*, 43.
43. Schmider, "2016 Was the Deadliest Year on Record for Transgender People."
44. Chávez, "Protecting LGBT Immigrant Detainees."
45. Veronica's name has been intentionally anonymized to not continue the disclosing of survivors' tragedies for the consumption of others.
46. A. Phillips, "They're Rapists."
47. Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*, 113.
48. Queer Detainee Empowerment Project, *Queering the Immigration Dialogue*.
49. "The Critical Refugee Studies Collective believes that refugee storytelling allows for new forms of knowledge to be produced." See Critical Refugee Studies Collective, home page.
50. Tuck, "Suspending Damage."
51. Chávez, *The Borders of AIDS*, 54.
52. Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*, 116.
53. Kaba, 111, 117.
54. Freedom for Immigrants, "The #ImmigrationDetentionSyllabus."
55. Daly, *Humans R Social Media*, chap. 6, "Activism"; United We Dream, home page.
56. Unzueta, "We Fell in Love in a Hopeless Place."

57. Lipsky, *Trauma Stewardship*; Brown, *Emergent Strategy*.
58. Kapijimpanga, "Kapijimpanga."
59. J., "Stand By or Cry?"
60. Perez, "I'm the One Who's Been Here the Longest."
61. Freedom for Immigrants, "VOICE: Victims of ICE"; Shull, "Why Trump's Agency, 'VOICE,' Should Stand for 'Victims of ICE.'"
62. Hammami, "A Letter from QDEP's Executive Director on Trump's Transgender Military Ban."
63. Freedom for Immigrants, "Private Prison Guards Threaten Women in Immigration Detention"; Freedom for Immigrants, "#Adelant09 Launch Hunger Strike in California."
64. Freedom for Immigrants, "We Are Being Treated Differently." See also Knoebel, "Spotlight"; Van Niekerken, "Contra Costa Immigration Uproar."

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