DETENTION 101
& CAMPAIGN CASE STUDY: SHUT DOWN ETOWAH
Immigrant Detention in Context: The Mass Incarceration System

How many people are locked up in the United States?

The United States locks up more people, per capita, than any other nation. But grappling with why requires us to first consider the many types of correctional facilities and the reasons that 2.3 million people are confined there.

PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE

Sources and data notes: See https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2018.html
Immigration offenses put over 60,000 people behind bars

- U.S. Marshals Service: 13,000
- Bureau of Prisons: 13,000
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):
  - In ICE facilities: 3,400
  - In private prisons contracting with ICE: 22,300
  - In local jails contracting with ICE: 8,600

Source: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2018.html
IMMIGRATION DETENTION

DHS CURRENTLY DETAINS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE EACH DAY, AND 70% OF THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE UNABLE TO BE RELEASED ON BOND BECAUSE FEDERAL LAW SUBJECTS THEM TO MANDATORY DETENTION.

A CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS GRAPHIC

Detention means big money for for-profit prisons

Nearly two-thirds of all immigrant detainees are held by the Corrections Corporation of America, or CCA, and the Geo Group Inc.

25 lobbyists represented CCA the year the quota was enacted

200 allegations of sexual abuse and assault since 2007

AT LEAST 129 ICE detainees have died while in custody since October 2003

50% of this bed space is provided by private, profit-making companies

THIS SYSTEM COSTS TAXPAYERS ABOUT

$2B / YEAR!

FUNDING FOR DETENTION BEDS HAS INCREASED BY 89% IN THE PAST 10 YRS

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN DETENTION HAS GONE FROM ABOUT 70,000 PEOPLE PER YEAR IN 1996 TO SOME 500,000 PEOPLE IN 2012

CCA annual revenue from federal contracts

$752 million

Money spent on lobbying by CCA and Geo Group Inc. since 2005

$15.8 million

Increase in CCA company value since quota was enacted about doubled


Center for American Progress

View hi-res graphic at: www.unitedwedream.org/detentioninfo
How long are people in detention?

Immigrants fighting their cases are detained the longest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Average Stay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average stay</td>
<td>31 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average stay for asylum seekers</td>
<td>102 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average stay for people legally entitled to remain in the United States</td>
<td>334 days</td>
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Average wait time for a case in immigration court

577 days

Number of people in ICE custody for six to eight years: 12

Immigration Detention – Basic Facts

- In 2013, US government detained approx. 441,000 people in over 200 immigrant jails
- Detention budget: $2.3 Billion (FY 2016)
- Detention system is overseen by ICE
- 62% of facilities are run by private corporations (CCA, GEO Group); many also run by local governments (like Etowah County)
- Detained population includes men, women, and children; undocumented immigrants (visa overstays and individuals who crossed the border), asylum seekers and individuals fleeing torture, persecution, and economic deprivation, documented immigrants, including Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs)
- Anyone who is not a U.S. citizen can be subject to deportation and detention
- Harsh immigration and criminal laws passed in 1996 and post-9/11 counterterrorism mentality led to huge spike in immigrant detention
- Immigration detention is civil detention, intended to last a few days or weeks at most
- There have been 155 recorded deaths in detention since 2003
Terminology

- ECDC = Etowah County Detention Center (a.k.a. Etowah County Jail)
- DHS = U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- ICE = U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE is a component of DHS, responsible for enforcing immigration laws in the interior, overseeing detention and deportation system)
- IGSA = Intergovernmental Service Agreement (a contract between the federal government and a local government entity to house ICE detainees)
- FOIA = Freedom of Information Act
The Detention Bed Quota

- Language introduced into 2009 DHS Appropriations Act requiring minimum of 33,400 immigrant detention beds at any given time – increased to 34,000 in 2013
- Private prison companies and local governments pressured Congress and ICE to create the quota
- National quota is bolstered by local quotas (i.e., “guaranteed minimums”) in individual detention contracts
- No other law enforcement agency operates under such a quota
- CIVIC short film: https://youtu.be/7iwO1AskwPM
DHS Civil Rights Office “super-recommends” Etowah’s closure

• In its Fiscal Year 2015 report, DHS’s own Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) recognized the repeated past failures to implement recommended reforms at Etowah, and acknowledged that it had issued a “super-recommendations memorandum” to ICE leadership recommending that ICE terminate its contract to house detainees at Etowah.

• #ShutDownEtowah member organizations filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the memorandum. Recently, some of the documents have been released with redactions.
About Etowah (The Facts)

- Etowah is an IGSA (Intergovernmental Service Agreement) facility – ICE contracts with Etowah County to house immigrant detainees in county jail
- Etowah is ICE's warehouse for prolonged detainees – many have been detained for months or years, and may never be deported
- Currently holds about 300 male detainees – from all over the U.S.,
  - many nationalities
  - longtime U.S. permanent residents
  - asylum seekers and those who fear persecution in their home countries
  - stateless individuals and detainees from countries that lack repatriation treaties with the U.S. or routinely do not accept deportees
- Etowah charges ICE one of the lowest per diem in the country - $45 per detainee per day;
- AL law allows Sheriff to pocket additional savings (For now)
- Extremely isolated – hours from nearest major urban center and hundreds or thousands of miles from detainees’ families, support networks, and lawyers (if they have one)
- Numerous reports of systemic abuses and violations, facility has promised reform but failed to deliver
About Etowah (The Stories)
About Etowah (The Stories)

Advocates, independent monitors, and detainees have made numerous reports of grave, systemic abuses at Etowah:

- Meager, rotten, and barely edible food
- Denial of essential medical and mental healthcare
- Isolation and deprivation, no access to the outdoors - *never*
- Minimal to no programming
- No legal orientation program or other legal services
- Loved ones can only visit by video monitor, exorbitant phone rates
- Physical and verbal abuse by ICE and county officers
- Excessive and retaliatory use of solitary confinement
- Extremely prolonged detention – many detained over a year, some for over four or five years
Meager Portions

• “imajinate, yo entre pesando 180lbs, y ahora solo peso 149lbs, buen lla sabes que de las tres comidas que se nos siruyen, si las juntamos los 3, solo se hace una sola, como si solamente comiernos una vez al dia” - PR
Poor Food Quality

• “… the food quality is so poor that sometimes I wonder if it’s the intention of Alabama to punish immigrants for coming into the United States… The detainees here believe that their food quality and quantity are purposefully intended to be poor just so we buy commissary.” - MD

• “…the one thing I hate about this Etowah is the food. Sometimes I wake up in the morning with tears on my face, the food they give here is very bad. To be honest, with you even your dog you will not giver her the type of food we eat here…” - ST
Recreation / Outdoors

• “... I have been here in Etowah for 5 months and I have never seen a sun with my eye. All I see in this facility is wickedness and heartless people. I am leaving [sic] with peoples who leave [sic] all they life in jail.” - ST

• “We don’t go outside unlike some detention centers I’ve been to. Some detainees have been here for over a year, without getting sun rays! Only God knows the amount of hurt that brings to our souls.” - M
Lockdown

• “During lockdown hours, detainees are to remain in their cells. Our time spent here couldn’t be any more depressing during lockdown hours! That’s when most of us “beat ourselves” for endeavoring to come to America to pursue freedom in the first place.” - MD
Campaign Goals

1. End immigrant detention at the Etowah County Detention Center in Gadsden, AL
2. Secure release of individual Etowah detainees subject to prolonged detention and civil rights abuses
Campaign Tactics

• **Organizing tactics:**
  – Build a network of Alabama residents, social justice organizations, faith communities, and detainees’ family members committed to supporting campaign
  – Media advocacy (press and social media) to publicize abuses and humanize detainees
  – Direct actions at the detention center (vigils, concerts, protests, marches, sit-ins)
  – Public campaigns calling for a detainee’s release
  – Pressure DHS/ICE and county officials to terminate contract through public letters, petitions, and in-person meetings

• **Legal tactics:**
  – Civil rights litigation and administrative complaints
  – Habeas corpus petitions for prolonged detainees
  – Legal support for direct action and public pressure strategies
#ShutDownEtowah
The Shut Down Etowah campaign is made up of individuals and civil, immigrant, and human rights organizations based in Alabama and across the country that are committed to ending the human rights abuses at the Etowah County Detention Center.
Father’s Day Serenade
CHANT DOWN THE WALLS
June 2015

Los Jornaleros del Norte
DJ Paco
Real Life Poets
Angel Rather Unique
& former Etowah detainee Sylvester Owino

Etowah Immigration Detention Center
827 Forrest Avenue, Gadsden, AL 35901
Saturday, June 20th 2-6pm
Vigil to Restore Visitation
August 2015
Protest against Hunger Strike Retaliations

November 2015
Memorial Service for Teka Gulema
February 2016
“Super-recommendations memo” FOIA Press Conference at 16th Street Baptist Church September 2016
Day of the Dead Processions
November 2016 & 2017
Easter Vigil
April 2017
Rally against Criminalization
May 2017
Darkness into Light
vigil
July 2017
Etowah People’s Tribunal
April 2018
OUR KIDS
How can I get involved?

- Write a letter to a detained person
- Visit a detained person w/ the Etowah Visitation Project
- Attend a vigil or direct action at the jail
- Host a community meeting like this one at your home, church, business or organization
- Etowah Co. residents: call and write to your commissioner and attend County Commission meetings
- Follow @ShutDownEtowah on social media and sign up for our email list
- Learn more: visit www.shutdownetowah.org/Resources