

¡Ya basta con niños encarcelados!

— Kenia Galeano



A press conference on April 14th, 2015 called by RAICES in San Antonio, TX demanded the release of women and children incarcerated at the Karnes Detention Center. Pictured are Kenia and her son who spoke to the press: "No somos criminales y no somos amenaza a este país/We are not criminals or a threat to national security." Some women at this "family" detention center were placed in solitary confinement away from their children. Others were told they will lose their children if they continue their hunger strike calling attention to the inhumane and militarized practices in these prisons.

—Photo & Caption by Lilliana Patricia Saldaña

Mi nombre es Kenia Galeano. Yo soy una madre que tuve que estar en esa prisión de Karnes City durante 5 meses (150 días) con mi hijo de 2 años de edad. Se muy bien cuales son las condiciones en ese lugar, sobre todo para los niños. ¿Cómo es posible que encarcelen a niños? Unos llegan de 6 meses—y salen ya cuando tienen más que el año de edad. El niño que salió el día que salí yo, había entrado en la cárcel cuando tenía 6 meses, y salió de año y medio. El pobre estaba sorprendido—con la boca abierta de lo que veía: carros, vacas, caballos. A esa edad empezó a descubrir lo que desde pequeño hubiera podido hacer. También mi hijo cumplió sus 2 años de edad allí en el Karnes City. Yo quería celebrar su cumpleaños fuera de allí, no adentro.

Gracias a Dios, mi hijo y yo salimos de ese horrible lugar, por la unión y solidaridad de todas las madres que decidimos comenzar un ayuno o huelga de hambre hace 15 días. Gracias a ello logramos llamar la atención de ICE y algunas madres recibimos una fianza para salir de ahí. Fianzas muy altas—en mi caso pagamos fianza de \$7500. Y gracias a ello, hoy mi hijo está libre de nuevo, y feliz—comenzando una nueva vida, pero desafortunadamente aún hay otras madres con sus hijos en ese lugar y por eso le pido a la Señora Sarah Saldaña, Directora de ICE, que haga los cambios necesarios para que no haya más niños encarcelados.

Mi hermana Olga de New Jersey me dijo ayer: "Nosotros aquí, tu familia, estábamos dispuestos a recibirte desde que llegaste en noviembre, a cubrir con todos los gastos de ti y Alejandro hasta el final del proceso. Pero no, te encarcelaron allí en Karnes City." ❖

La Virgencita Speaks to Immigrant Children

Hijos míos
milagritos
I am here for you
though the train's
danger is real
I am here for you
though your journey
will be bleak
I am here for you
though your parents
left behind
I am here for you
though you have
no shoes
I am here for you



From the *La Verdad* section of *Te Prometo* (Paloma Press, 2015)

Victoria García-Zapata Klein

It was supposed to be more humane....cont'd from p.3

detailed women, was anything but humane. Though ICE officials publicly denied any knowledge of a hunger strike at Karnes, three women claimed they were locked in an unlit medical room on the first day of their protest, according to the legal aid group RAICES. At least one woman has been charged with insurrection for allegedly chanting with a group of detainees and lifting up signs that spelled "Libertad" as a helicopter passed over the facility's open-air courtyard.

Others were told by GEO staff they'd be deported for their actions, or declared unfit mothers and have their children taken from them. When asked about this by *The New York Times*, a spokeswoman for Homeland Security (DHS), that oversees

ICE, replied by email: "ICE has been in constant communication with the residents at the facility. This communication has included discussing the negative health effects of not eating and how the decision of parents to stop eating may affect the care of their children."

At the end of the five-day hunger strike, more than half the participating women had dropped out—a result, the women's advocates said, of retaliation and threats. The DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties is now investigating these allegations.

The women of Karnes have said they will resume their hunger strike if ICE does not release them.* For now, they say they are waiting to see what the U.S.

government will do.

Karnes has become a new symbol for the Obama administration. It no longer heralds a gentler approach to immigration detention; now, it forms part of a U.S. deterrence policy meant to visibly punish asylum-seeking women and children in order to discourage others from coming to the U.S. for help. It shows us that family detention is never, and can never be, humane.

***Update: On April 14th, the women resumed their hunger strike at Karnes. They have said they will not stop striking until they are released.**

Bio: Victoria Rossi, a writer & paralegal living in Austin, was recently banned from the Karnes detention center after publishing an article about the facility—*Texas Observer*, Feb. 2015.