

Maryland Says ICE and camps have got to go

written by Andre Powell

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On two consecutive weekends, Maryland residents came out to say “No!” to another U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center.

Members of Youth Against War and Racism, the Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly, Migrante and many others held a news conference to announce the newly formed ICE Out Of Baltimore Campaign. They initiated the campaign after an article appeared in the Baltimore Sun papers revealing that ICE has advertised on a federal contracts forum seeking locations to build a detention center in Maryland that would house 600 to 800 men and women in the Baltimore metropolitan area.

There are currently three listed ICE detention centers already in the state of Maryland, located inside the Howard County Detention Center, in Frederick, Md., and on the eastern shore in Worcester County.

The Aug. 4 news conference was held on the grounds of the Howard County Detention Center in Jessup. Over a hundred people braved temperatures in the high 90s and represented folks from all over the central portion of the state, encompassing Baltimore city and county, Carroll, Howard and Prince George's counties, as well as the Washington, D.C., suburbs of Takoma Park in Montgomery County. The Howard County Detention Center houses approximately 149 people in the section reserved for ICE detainees.

Speakers at the press conference represented a well-rounded group of area activists from Youth Against War and Racism, the Peoples Power Assembly, Friends of Latin America, Migrante Youth, the Green Party, the Baltimore Poor People's Campaign, Struggle-La Lucha newspaper, and the Brown/Black Alliance for Liberation, among others.

Leslie Salgado of Friends of Latin America presented an excellent statement outlining the years of U.S. foreign policy that have created the conditions that are now resulting in a tremendous influx of migrant refugees seeking to escape from the

economic and political terror of some Latin American countries.

Echoing similar sentiments, a representative of Migrante Youth of Washington, D.C., gave an extremely moving account of Filipinos who have come to the U.S. to flee repression of the Duterte dictatorship, only to end up being exploited and trafficked in substandard jobs in the hotel industry.

Linking the struggles between ICE detention camps and prisons in the U.S., Marilyn Barnes and her lawyer, Alec Summerfield of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, spoke of the Truth and Justice for Marilyn Barnes campaign. They are fighting a battle against the Harford County Maryland Sheriff's Department to get the truth about her son's death while in their custody.

The death of this African-American man in his early twenties has been labeled a suicide. The family disputes this since Barnes was due to be released in the morning. The Sheriff's Department has put up every roadblock and the Maryland State Medical Examiners Office will not release the autopsy report to the family.

The second activity was held a week later on Aug 11, again at the Howard County Detention Center. The rally called by Jews United For Justice numbered over 250 people. Both Jewish and non-Jewish participants came together in one strong voice demanding the portion of the detention center used by ICE be shut down.

The talks were interspersed with songs, prayers, and readings in Hebrew and English, as well as chants in Spanish. The organizers targeted the newly elected Howard County executive, Calvin Ball, the first African-American person elected to this position, demanding he show ICE the door. ICE is paying Howard County over \$144,000 a year to house the detainees.

Amid chants of "Shut down ICE!" and "Every deportation is family separation!" nearly 30 of those in attendance sat down to block the driveway that leads to the

part of the building that houses ICE detainees. The Howard County Police, however, decided not to arrest any of them.

At both the press conference and the rally, speakers addressed the plight of those caught up in the regulations of the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and TPS (Temporary Protected Status) programs ended by Trump's executive order. Individual cases were raised, one of a cook at a local restaurant who was taken into ICE custody even though he has all his legal documents. Another youth spoke of his mother being taken into custody by ICE, in addition to how the new DACA regulations affect him and his brother differently with regards to potential deportations. Both adults are awaiting hearings at the Baltimore ICE Regional Office.

