

## Arrival in the United States

It is hard to get permission to immigrate to the United States legally. In the best case, the waiting period may take five to ten years, and is usually much longer. Persons fleeing from high crime areas or repressive regimes, or who cannot find employment to feed their families, cannot wait that long. So they just come anyway.

Most do not try to “sneak in.” Our southern border is already heavily fortified in most places and impassably mountainous or desert in the rest. Many migrants simply present themselves at the border crossings and ask for asylum. If they do this, they are sent to detention centers.

Most of the detention centers are run by private businesses, who operate them as cheaply as possible so as to make a profit. A recent government investigation found that their inmates endured “long waits for provision of medical care, poor conditions in bathrooms and insufficient hygiene supplies.” The investigators also observed “expired, moldy, and spoiled foods in the kitchen in four facilities.”<sup>1</sup> The two largest private prison companies have donated millions to elected officials’ campaigns, because they are paid per inmate per day. In response, the government’s 2017 goal was to arrest and detain 85,000 illegal immigrants *per day*, which increases these companies’ profits. It also costs taxpayers money. It costs \$20,000 per year to detain one person in the Butler or the Boone County detention centers.<sup>2</sup>

Women who are detained at the border are also separated from their children. New data from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) shows that more than 700 children have been taken from adults claiming to be their parents since October, *including more than 100 children under the age of 4*. These children are taken to shelters where workers try to identify a relative or guardian in the United States who can take over the child’s care. But if no such adult is available, the children can languish in custody indefinitely, separated from their parents.<sup>3</sup>

If an undocumented immigrant manages to get across the border without being detained, they and their families are not safe – even if they have lived many years in the United States. Of the 11.3 million undocumented immigrants currently in this country:

- 66% have lived here more than ten years
- 71% are currently in the workforce, paying taxes and FICA (which they will never be able to collect themselves)
- 92.5% have never been convicted of a crime<sup>4</sup>

Many now have children who were born in the United States are therefore citizens. But they may still be deported. We all remember Maribel Trujillo, an active member of her parish in Fairfield Ohio, who was separated from her husband and children last fall and deported to one of the most violent areas of Mexico, which she had fled in 2002.<sup>5</sup> There have been similar cases since.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/14/570984026/federal-investigation-finds-significant-issues-at-immigrant-detention-centers>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.endisolation.org>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/20/us/immigrant-children-separation-ice.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/apr/06/ice-immigration-maribel-trujillo-deportation-mexico>