



Stewart Detention Center is one of the largest immigration detention centers in the US. It has a capacity to hold almost 2,000 people. Some of them are apprehended by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the Southeast and sent to SDC. A large number of individuals at Stewart are asylum seekers detained at the US/Mexico border.

El Refugio is collecting hand-written cards or letters to send to detained immigrants at Stewart Detention Center. We know that detained immigrants face many challenges, especially the uncertainty of not knowing if they will be free and reunited with loved ones. With your help, we can send a message of solidarity and hope to immigrants and help ease their isolation.

How to Participate

1. Write messages of hope and encouragement on a card.
2. You can make multiple cards for our friends detained at Stewart, in Spanish and English.
3. Refer to the sample messages in this toolkit and/or use your own words.
4. Be creative! Share a poem or a drawing; use color. (Stickers, glitter **or other items that have adhesive** are not allowed).
5. Sign your first name if you would like.
6. Put each individual card or letter in an envelope. Do not write the mailing address on each individual card; we will do that for you. Make a small mark or clear division of cards in different languages.
7. Add a stamp to each envelope.
8. Place the cards in a large envelope.
9. Mail the large envelope to: El Refugio Ministry "Message of Hope and Solidarity" PO Box 3996 Decatur, GA 30031.
10. Please send us your full name and email address. Please print the contact spreadsheet and make sure to send it to us along with the cards.

We also invite you to donate to El Refugio to support our work. Go to this link to donate:
<https://www.elrefugiostewart.org/donate/>

Sample messages

English

Dear friend,

Greetings from (city/state). My name is (first name)

It is difficult for me to understand all the challenges you face in detention but I want to let you know that you are not alone or forgotten. I stand in solidarity with you, your family, and all immigrants who are facing detention and discrimination.

I celebrate the love and strength of immigrants like you.

*Warmly,
Your friends from El Refugio*

Spanish

Querido amigo,

Saludos desde (ciudad / estado). Mi nombre es (primer nombre)

Es difícil para mí entender todos los desafíos que enfrenta durante la detención, pero quiero que sepa que no está solo ni olvidado. Me solidarizo con usted, su familia y todos los inmigrantes que enfrentan detención y discriminación.

Celebro el amor y la fuerza de los inmigrantes como usted.

*Afectuosamente,
Tus amigos de El Refugio*

Contact sheet



Please fill out this form and return it to the address below along with your cards by December 12, 2018. If you do this with a group friends or church members, please make sure to send us all their information too.

Full name	Group/Congregation	Email address

Important info when sending letters/cards to Immigrants in detention

Your Role as a Letter-Writing Volunteer

Living inside of an immigration detention center isn't easy. Some people have said they felt lonely, confused, bored, afraid. Being separated from family, friends, and all that is familiar is stressful. Being treated like a criminal, while awaiting an unknown outcome, can take a tremendous psychological toll.

Cards and letters can provide an important means of support for detained immigrants who may have little contact with the outside world. Your role is one of friendship, goodwill, and concern for the detained individual's welfare. Receiving mail is very important in detention and means a lot to the person that you write to.

Guidelines

- **Know your boundaries.** We advise you to **not to share your personal phone number, mailing address or pictures of yourself.**
- **It is important to give people hope but not make false promises.** Please be especially careful not to give any false hopes about the possible outcome of their immigration case.
- **Keep your promises. Don't make commitments you can't keep.**
- **Do not romanticize detained immigrants** or victimize them to the point of taking power away from them. Many have been successful business people, survived horrendous situations due to their own resourcefulness, traveled the world to arrive here, learned to speak several languages, attended university, and been leaders in their families, towns and schools.
- **Keep in mind your letters may be read by a guard.** Be mindful and conscientious. For example, if you talk about immigration or the detention system with anger or disgust, it may be the detained person that will be the one who will suffer from your words, not you. We are here to be compassionate friends and to love everyone.
- **Be sensitive to the fact that the person reading your letter may be inferring messages differently** than you mean due to their current circumstances. Loneliness, power differences, and language differences could play into the person being detained misunderstanding you, or feeling more intimately connected to you than you intend.
- **It is not appropriate to try to convert anyone to your religion.** Some people may have faced death due to their beliefs, making it even more inappropriate to try to convince them to adopt your religious beliefs. People detained at Stewart come from different faith backgrounds and it is important to respect their beliefs. Remember that you are a friend to uplift detained individuals through their own beliefs, not as a proselytizer seeking to convert.
- **We fully support with different gender identities.** Some people have fled their country because of attempts on their life due to their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.