INNOVATION LAW LAB



# INTEGRATED RURAL STRATEGIES GROUP

## NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

# Freedom to Thrive

12.11.24


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# Together our communities can end the abuse of immigration prisons and thrive







# Key Takeaways

1. The cruelty is by design
2. The moral argument is only as effective as our economic argument
3. We have to care about the wellbeing of rural communities
4. Decision makers won't do the right thing unless we make them

# Freedom Campaigns & Thriving Communities

# Prison closures threaten rural NM economies

"When prisons close in rural areas, there's a domino effect throughout the community," an advocate said

# Company plans to close private Estancia prison, lay off 200

By Phaedra Haywood | The New Mexican Jul 25, 2017 Updated Jul 26, 2017 0

# Closing an ICE jail in South Georgia would cheer activists but harm a rural community's economy

By Jeremy Redmon and Lautaro Grinspan

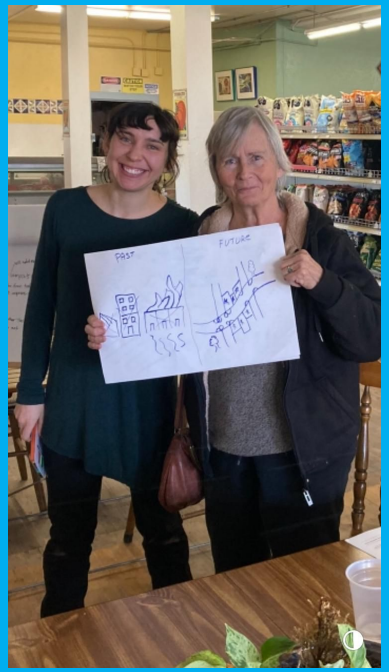
# The Torrance County Detention Facility & Torrance County, New Mexico






TORRANCE COUNTY
LISTENING PROJECT





# This historical moment & context of the work

**Integrated Rural Strategies Group**
**Lindsay + Stephan**

# Defining the problem: ICE Detention







**Figures 1 and 2. Detainee Washing His Face (left) and Detainee Filling a Bowl (right) from a Housing Unit Floor Mop Sink**

*Source:* DHS – Still images taken from Torrance surveillance video footage for February 1, 2022

## Torrance Had Security Lapses throughout the Facility

The 2011 PBNDS provide standards for observation, supervision, and personal contact between staff and detainees to ensure facility safety, security, and good order.[11] Specifically, the standards require that the security officer posts must be located in, or immediately next to, detainee housing units because officers must interact with detainees and quickly respond to detainee emergencies. Further, the facility must also staff a secure control center at all times to monitor and coordinate facility security, safety, and communication systems.[12] Based on our observations, the requirements for effective security are not being met at Torrance.

# In immigration prisons, we see

- ➔ Medical neglect
- ➔ Mental health abuses
- ➔ Torturous use of solitary confinement
- ➔ Staffing and safety failures
- ➔ Contract violations
- ➔ Dilapidated infrastructure
- ➔ Misuse of public funds
- ➔ Discretionary incarceration of asylum seekers

August 21, 2023

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**RE: Ongoing Due Process Violations and Human Rights Abuses at the Torrance County Detention Facility**

To Whom It May Concern,

The undersigned submit this complaint on behalf of noncitizens held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody at the Torrance County Detention Facility (TCDF) in Estancia, New Mexico. This complaint extensively details systemic due process violations, ongoing human rights abuses and mistreatment, and retaliatory behavior against noncitizens and their legal advocates.

This complaint provides a summary of dozens of violations committed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its contractor, CoreCivic, at TCDF since the facility was repopulated in 2019, and repeated failures of DHS to meaningfully address ongoing problems at the facility. Rather than address those problems reported by people in ICE custody, advocates, and the DHS Office of the Inspector General, DHS repurposed TCDF in January 2023 to conduct rapid Credible Fear Interviews (CFIs) and swiftly transfer noncitizens in and out of the facility. In so


ABOLISH
I.C.E!
DIGNITY
NOT
DETENTION
DIGNITY
NOT
DETENTION

**Ariel Prado, Innovation Law Lab**



# Class-action lawsuit alleges unsafe conditions at migrant detention facility in New Mexico




FILE - The Torrance County Detention Facility is seen, Sept. 29, 2022, in Estancia, N.M. A lawsuit on behalf of four migrants accuses U.S. immigration authorities of disregarded indications of unsanitary and unsafe conditions at the immigrant detention center in New Mexico to ensure the facility would remain open, in violation of federal standards. A coalition on advocates for migrant rights on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023, announced the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Albuquerque, N.M., regarding oversight of the Torrance County Detention Facility. (AP Photo/Andres Leighton, File)

“Since I got here it’s been a traumatic experience. I don’t feel safe in this place. There are racist officers. It’s a daily torture.”

“We are abused psychologically, verbally, and the deportation officers lie to us.”

“I ask you all for help with human rights because they deprive us of our rights here in this detention center.”

“Please close this place that ends our dreams and mistreats us psychologically; one is left broken; one comes asking for help, and they imprison us.”

**Immigration prisons, like the Torrance County Detention Facility (TCDF) in rural New Mexico, harm the people detained within their walls, and the communities surrounding them.**

# Organized Abandonment and Rural Prison Jobs

“I wish I could have had a job that didn’t hurt my soul so much.”

- Anonymous South Georgia resident and employee at the Irwin County Detention Center, November, 2020

“It was either this or the paper plate factory, and everybody I know working at the paper plate factory is missing at least a finger. I figured this way at least I get to keep all my fingers - though now I’m feeling like maybe it isn’t worth it.”

- Anonymous South Georgia resident and employee at the Folkston ICE Processing Center, April, 2021

“I had to ask to be moved out of the dorms - I kept hearing all the awful stories and the crying from the moms and their children. It was just too much, you know? It messed with my head. It’s easier working up front where at least I don’t have to think about how unfair this whole place is.”

- Anonymous South Texas resident and employee at the South Texas Family Residential Center, March, 2017

“People get cornered into working there. It pays well for what else is here, but it isn’t a good job. It’s a bad place to work and it isn’t good for young people.”

- Anonymous Torrance County resident, October, 2024

“I wish I could have had a job that didn’t hurt my soul so much.”

- Anonymous South Georgia resident and employee at the Irwin County Detention Center, November, 2020

“When you think about how much money they spend on this place...it really isn’t the best way to spend it. If it were up to me, I’d use it to fix up main street - put in bed and breakfasts and set people up with local guides to go hunting and hiking in the mountains.”

- Anonymous Torrance County resident and employee at the Torrance County Detention Facility, April, 2022

# 2025 PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR TORRANCE COUNTY

1. We want to **protect the water** that makes life possible in the Estancia Valley.
2. We want **good jobs with good pay**, opportunities to learn new trades, and time to rest and be with our families.
3. We want **accessible healthcare and emergency services** including primary care, substance abuse treatment, and EMS and fire fighting equipment and personnel.
4. We want to be able to **afford to live in our communities** and pay reasonable prices for housing, utilities, healthy food, and transportation.
5. We want **vibrant and welcoming communities** with social outlets for people of all ages, fully funded senior centers, and after school programs.
6. We want to **keep the things that make rural life beautiful** - to be able to see the stars and keep our open spaces.

Do you live in Torrance County? We want to hear from you. How do each of these points show up in your life? Email us at TCListeningProject@gmail.com

Learn more about the Torrance County Listening Project and A People's Platform for Torrance County @tclp.nm on Instagram.

@TCLP.NM

# 2025 PLATAFORMA POPULAR PARA EL CONDADO DE TORRANCE

1. Queremos **proteger el agua** que hace posible la vida en el Valle de Estancia.
2. Queremos **buenos trabajos con buenos salarios**, oportunidades para aprender nuevos oficios y tiempo para descansar y estar con nuestras familias.
3. Queremos **servicios de salud y emergencia accesibles** incluso atención primaria, tratamiento por abuso de sustancias y EMS, y equipo y personal de extinción de incendios.
4. Queremos **pagar precios razonables** por vivienda, servicios públicos, alimentos saludables y transporte.
5. Queremos **comunidades vibrantes y acogedoras** con espacios sociales para personas de todas las edades, centros totalmente financiados para personas mayores y programas extracurriculares para los jovenes.
6. Queremos **mantener las cosas que hacen hermosa la vida rural** - poder ver las estrellas y mantener nuestros espacios abiertos.

¿Vive usted en el condado de Torrance? Queremos saber de usted. ¿Cómo se manifiesta cada uno de estos puntos en su vida? Envíenos un correo electrónico a TCListeningProject@gmail.com

Obtenga más información sobre el Proyecto de Escucha del Condado de Torrance y la Plataforma Popular para el Condado de Torrance @tclp.nm en Instagram.

@TCLP.NM

# The villains and their playbook

# For Trump 2.0 to carry out a mass deportation campaign, it will require:

1. Stigmatization and scapegoating of immigrants
2. Massive detention infrastructure
3. and the wide scale erosion of due process - no lawyers, no courts, no rights.

# The Decision Makers:

- **DHS/ICE**
- **Private Prison Companies**
- **Rural County Governments**

# Prisons inherently incentivize decision makers to serve the mass deportation machine

- **Control**
- **Maximized profits**
- **Proliferating Anti-immigrant Rhetoric**
- **Economic Dependence**

**If the interests of one or more of the decision makers become compromised,**

**we undermine the ability of the ICE prison to continue operation**



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**Lindsay + Stephan**

# Freedom Campaigns & Thriving Communities

# 2025 People's Platform for Torrance County

## WE WANT TO PROTECT THE WATER THAT MAKES LIFE POSSIBLE IN THE ESTANCIA VALLEY.

*While the water in the Estancia Valley Basin isn't infinite, responsible stewardship can ensure we have what we need now and for future generations.*

- ***We support initiatives to provide funding, training, and technical assistance for farmers to adopt water conservation techniques**, including more efficient irrigation methods and tools, less water-intensive crops like barley and white beans, and techniques to promote healthy soil.*
- ***We need responsible water management in the Estancia Valley Basin**, which requires an accurate reckoning of how much water we have, how quickly the aquifer is depleting, and how much of our water is taken outside the basin.*

## WE WANT GOOD JOBS WITH GOOD PAY, OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW TRADES, AND TIME TO REST AND BE WITH OUR FAMILIES.

*We should be bringing jobs into our communities that pay livable wages and provide opportunities to give back, so that our community can thrive.*

- ***We support state and federal investment in programs and services that we need, to create jobs that allow us to take care of our communities.***
- ***When Torrance County hosts large projects, county residents should be prioritized for paid apprenticeship and job opportunities.** Torrance County is hosting a segment of the largest electrical infrastructure project in the history of the United States. **We want these large-scale projects to commit to hiring locally,** including through partnerships with apprenticeship programs in New Mexico.*
- ***We support programs that allow Torrance County residents to teach and learn trades.** This could look like a training facility where local tradespeople and artisans teach certified training programs to help prepare Torrance County residents to find gainful employment.*

## WE WANT ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES INCLUDING PRIMARY CARE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT, AND EMS AND FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL.

*Our communities should be well resourced to lead healthy lives, respond to emergencies, and support our neighbors in recovering from addiction and other health challenges.*

- ***State and federal policies should incentivize healthcare professionals, including home-care workers, to work in Torrance County**.*
- ***We support establishing a treatment center** for people struggling with addiction in Torrance County.*
- ***We support investments in infrastructure and staffing to strengthen our emergency services**, including urgent care facilities, ambulances, helicopters, and emergency medical responders.*
- ***We want functional fire fighting equipment for our land grant communities**, who play a crucial role in preventing wildfires in the Manzano mountains.*

## WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD TO LIVE IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND PAY REASONABLE PRICES FOR HOUSING, UTILITIES, HEALTHY FOOD, AND TRANSPORTATION.

*Rising costs have made it hard to make ends meet. As the largest electricity project in the country's history is built in our valley, our utility costs keep rising. Affordable housing, utilities, healthy food, and transportation are necessary for healthy families.*

- ***We are in favor of legislation to stabilize and decrease rent and utility bills.***
- ***We support local, state, and/or federal investment in a grocery store in Estancia**, as well as other methods of providing fresh and healthy food.*
- ***Our governments should collaborate to establish transportation services within Torrance County** for people who cannot drive and **provide a shuttle between Torrance County and Albuquerque** for greater access to jobs, healthcare, recreational activities, and other services.*

## WE WANT VIBRANT AND WELCOMING COMMUNITIES WITH SOCIAL OUTLETS FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, FULLY FUNDED SENIOR CENTERS, AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

*A vibrant social life is necessary for healthy, engaged communities. We have community spaces, and with additional funding, these spaces can host events, classes, shared meals, and more.*

- ***Students should have access to after school programs**, including cultural and artistic programming.*
- ***Government funding should assist small businesses** that serve as community gathering spaces.*
- ***Local governments should invest more time and money in our parks and pools.***
- ***Seniors need well-resourced senior centers and fully-funded programming**, including healthcare and education, social gatherings, meals, transportation, and more.*

## WE WANT TO KEEP THE THINGS THAT MAKE RURAL LIFE BEAUTIFUL, TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE STARS AND KEEP OUR OPEN SPACES.

*We want to protect the qualities that make our valley beautiful. We do not want big parking lots, tall buildings, and flood lights blocking out the stars at night.*

- ***We want a say in the future of our communities.** We support participatory budgeting programs, transparency initiatives for public funds in Torrance County, and accessible government office hours.*
- ***We support revitalization programs to lift up the local businesses** that give our main streets character.*

## *ABOUT THIS PLATFORM AND THE TORRANCE COUNTY LISTENING PROJECT*

The priorities laid out in this platform reflect a year of conversations between residents of Torrance County and members of the Torrance County Listening Project. People shared what they enjoy about living in the Estancia Valley, the real problems facing their communities, and ideas for solutions to those problems, ideas that could improve their lives.

The Torrance County Listening Project (TCLP) is a community effort of residents of Torrance County and communities throughout New Mexico supported by Innovation Law Lab and Volunteers for Immigrants in Detention - Albuquerque (VIDA). TCLP's goal is to foster healthy and vibrant communities throughout the Estancia Valley. Our work is motivated by the belief that we all prosper when we look out for one another.

# Call to action

# Support the Anticarceral Legal Organizing Program



# Testimonies from Torrance County Detention Facility



# Torrance County Listening Project



# Q & A

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# Thank you!

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