

Interview with Daniel Mejia  
Detainee at Winn Correctional Center  
Interview by Ryan Fatica, Perilous Chronicle  
Translation by Anonymous  
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Ryan: Can you hear me?

Daniel: Yes hi, my name is Daniel Mejia. I'm calling to see what could be done about my case, because several of the people here in my unit have called, and wanted to see what could be done for me with respect to my case.

Ryan: OK. What I'm doing is writing an essay about the demonstration that happened on Friday, and the police response there. So, I can't help with legal cases or anything like that, but if you want to explain to me what happened I can include your words in the story. Is it OK if I use your name and also your voice?

Daniel: Yes, of course.

Ryan: What's happening there?

Daniel: What was happening, what we were requesting, was information regarding our cases. More than anything I am requesting—I speak for myself—many people here have...here it happened...I don't know if you have received calls from others here. There was a protest, let's say, on Sunday night. It was a protest to demand, from ICE, information about how our cases are proceeding, with deportation. Because there are many people here that have deportation orders. And they've been waiting 8 months to a year, waiting for their deportation, and they haven't been deported. In my case, there's been no progress for two months. But I have a lot of time, one year and one month, waiting to be deported.

I need to be deported, in my case, I need to be deported as soon as possible, because I have my mom who is old, and she is very sick, and I need to travel, leave here. Do you understand me? I am fighting inside here with immigration. Not fighting a case, but rather...Its not a serious case that I committed. And separately, I've had so much time living in the US, I've lived here 20 years. And here I am fighting for bond. They denied me at first. And I said, well if you're going to deny me then I want a deportation order because I have already been waiting a month for the deportation papers and they have not arrived still. So I need to know about my bond, or know about my deportation. Whichever of the two things. I don't know. I made a mistake stepping foot in this country because I am not from here. But at the same time, I lived here so long, and like so many people, as a right, as the human I am, I have my rights. I need an answer about being able to leave the country or being able to stay and live here legally.

Ryan: You said the protest was Sunday. Or was it?

Daniel: Monday at night was the protest.

Ryan: Tell me what happened?

Daniel: We were protesting, were protesting since the day before, peacefully. It didn't get out of hand. We made a ruckus like in all the protests. We were shouting. We are fighting for our rights. I'm going to repeat again, fighting for our cases. There are many people here waiting their deportations that have waited a long time for them, and that have family outside, spouses, children. In regard to my case I have my mom who is very sick and we were protesting because we want to know about our cases. Do you understand me?

Ryan: Yes, and there was also a protest on Friday, or ?

Daniel: Yes, on Friday, there was something, there was almost a similar thing on Friday. But Sunday there was something but it was a bit less serious. The truth is that they don't consider them very serious. But also it was because they threw tear gas , many of us now have throats...I don't know if you can hear me but my throat is not well, from the gas that got in my throat, and that almost made me end up crying. I am, it's not that I am the representative, but I am the translator of the jail where I am, of my bunker. I'm in charge of translating to Spanish, because not everyone speaks English. So, to look me up, my name is Daniel Mejia, my ID number is 201942885.

Ryan: You said you were doing translations. In what language?

Daniel: English to Spanish.

Ryan: You speak English?

Daniel: Yes.

Ryan: Tell me in English what happened during the protest?

Daniel: [Speaking English] Alright. Was not much. We make a lot of loud...

Ryan: A lot of noise?

Daniel: Yeah a lot of noise. The showers were destroyed. And that's it. And this is happened.

Ryan: The showers were what? What about the showers?

Daniel: Yea, only in the showers, that's it. They don't do it too much. Plus, this night it happened, they want to know what happened, these people they ask me, people want to see the ICE man. So we went and we got in a conversation with the ICE and what happened what's going on and everybody right here. [switches back to Spanish]. So, this is all that happened really, it was not too much.

Ryan: OK. And I wanted to ask you about Covid. Are there sick people there?

Daniel: People yes, that are sick...no. We are sick from other sicknesses.

Ryan: But you haven't seen Covid cases there?

Daniel: No, no I can tell you in my unit there's no one with coronavirus.

Ryan: That's good.

Daniel: I can tell you that. Those in quarantine, we don't know, because they are in quarantine, they aren't here by us. In bunker, supposedly there is no one sick with it.

Ryan: ICE is negotiating with you, with you all?

Daniel: No, no one is negotiating no, no one is negotiating. Because...I don't know why because they should be negotiating with us. Because me, just me, what I want is...I talk to many people that are Guatemalan. I am the only person from Honduras here. I'm Honduran. I'm the only Honduran. So, I just want my deportation or rights to a bond. Do you understand me? And so, many people here have been waiting for their deportation orders for more than a year, year and three months, [switches to English] 14 months, 10 months, something like that, ya know? This is too much. People wait for the deportation from the country.

Ryan: Do you know anything about what other ICE detainees are doing in other parts of the jail? Are you all able to talk to people in other parts or no?

Daniel: Yes.

Ryan: Are they protesting as well?

Daniel: Yes, them too, we all have the same thoughts. Awaiting deportation. Everyone, or the majority, except some from Cuba or some of whom are waiting for responses about parole requests or bond or asylum. Many who are here have spent so much time locked up. And as a human right, we have, we have, we are not obligated to be locked up for more than a year, nor more than 3 months, according to the law, legally, that we don't have rights...[inaudible]. Do you understand? At least while fighting a case. If you are just waiting for a deportation order you aren't supposed to be locked up more than 3 months.

This is what I'm saying. For my part, I need to be deported. And many have been waiting 6 months, more waiting for their deportations. So I don't know if you can help with this case. You and the organization you're a part of? Others told me that you helped them, really...I ask you from the bottom of my heart, I need to see my mom, I haven't seen her in 20 years, and she is really sick and in the hospital right now and I need to, I need to get out of here because it's been so long since I've seen her. I need to see her, these are her last days.. Do you understand? [inaudible] So I don't know if you all can do something with my case... [inaudible]

Ryan: Hello? Hello? Repeat the last thing you said.

Daniel: I'm asking if you can help with my case because I need to see my mama, I'm asking from the bottom of my heart.

Ryan: There isn't much I myself can do. What I can do is write about what is happening there. And we can see what happens. Is there anything more you want to say?

Daniel: Ok. Well thanks so much. My name is Daniel Mejia, my ID number is 201942885.

Ryan: OK thank you Daniel. Good luck.

Daniel: To you too, sir.

Ryan: Bye.

Daniel: Bye.