

Testimony of Selvyn Lima
Detainee at Winn Correctional Center
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This is Selvyn Lima, I'm detained in Winn Correctional Center. It happened last Friday. We, those detained here in Winn Correctional Center, were peacefully protesting. We're locked up, practically the only thing we can do is shout. We shouted, asking for them to give us a response regarding our cases, because what they're doing here is an injustice to us. Personally, I've been detained for fifteen months. I lost my asylum [request] and for 96 days, I've basically been a deportee but they haven't deported me, they keep telling me I have to wait. What they're doing to us is a business, they're not giving us answers, many people here lost their asylum cases and are waiting and they're not giving us any answers, not even when we will be deported or when they will review our case. They [immigration attorneys] simply come, we pull together money to talk to them, and they never give us an answer, they just say, "OK, we're going to review your case." And that's it. They don't tell us anything.

The guards come; they shout at us. It's not necessary to speak English to know what they are trying to say. They're racist, they're always trying to humiliate us. Here in the unit, there are microwaves that we use to cook and sometimes they take them away. The same with the TV, the other day they cut off the cable so we couldn't know what's going on. Basically, it's an injustice to us. We're trying to find someone to help us, to give us an answer. During the fifteen months I've been here, most people have been here for a year and three months or a year and four months. It's not just us suffering, others are fleeing our country, looking for help. And I think that if we had known, we wouldn't have come and ended up in this hell we're living in. It's a nightmare, day after day, twenty-four hours a day. Sometimes we're sleeping and they come in at scream at us; that we can't lay down and can't be asleep at that time just because they say so. They don't give us yard time, they don't give us rec time, they have us here locked in. When we say something to the guards that they don't like, they put the AC on as cold as possible so that we have to endure the cold. We have to endure hunger. Sometimes they bring us dinner really late. Breakfast is at four AM, lunch at eleven AM, sometimes they don't bring us dinner.

What happened on Friday was that we were protesting peacefully and they sprayed us with gas. And here inside the bunker there are elderly people, people with asthma, people with high blood pressure. On Friday, people passed out here inside. We asked them to look, that people had passed out, that they couldn't breathe, and they just laughed about how we were rolling around on the floor. They put pepper spray in the air vents and it went into the entire unit, there wasn't a way to avoid it. Some people were vomiting, some down on the floor. It's an injustice what they're doing to us here inside this prison.

What we're looking for is for them to give us a resolution. We've put up with this suffering for so long.

Those of us inside the unit told them that we needed an official from ICE so that at least they could address our questions. The ICE officials say that every forty-five days, ICE officials

change prisons, but here they've never shown their faces, we've never seen an official from ICE. What we wanted was at least for them to come to tell us what was going to happen, if they were going to deport us, if they were going to let us leave. The conditions here because of the pandemic, everyone's in here, there aren't masks, we aren't in adequate conditions to survive, practically. And what we were doing was just banging on the bars, shouting, making noise. There's nothing here to cause a scene with. We were hitting the plates we eat off of with spoons, just trying to get their attention. And they came and sprayed us with pepper spray, they put it in the air vents, that was their way of quieting us down. They could have done it a different way, but they preferred to do it that way.

I'm in Elm Unit. In the unit, there are forty-four people, but of those that protested...there are Elm, Ash and Birch [unintelligible] and 8 units, and every unit has forty-four people. In the eight units, we were shouting, making noise, because there's nothing else we can do here except for shouting. And what they did was pepper spray us all. They pepper sprayed all eight units.

My name is Selvyn Lima, I'm Guatemalan, and I've been detained in this prison nearly fifteen months. I just want to ask for your help, really. That you help us in some way. It's unjust what they're doing here to all of us.