

## TASKFORCE FOR THE CENTER ON RACE, IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

August 7th, 2019

To the CalPers Board,

On behalf of the Taskforce for the Center on Race, Immigration and Social Justice (CRISJ) at Sacramento State, we urgently request that CalPers divest all funds from private detention centers. Calpers must cease investing in private security corporations who operate multi-million dollar contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain Central American families, unaccompanied children, and single mothers under inhumane and torturous conditions. These migrants are escaping dire conditions of poverty and violence in their home countries and are lawfully seeking their right to asylum in the United States. Yet, private security corporations show a void of moral compass and inhumane coldness as they seek profits by detaining impoverished and vulnerable asylees.

Currently, more than 41,000 immigrants are held in detention daily by ICE; and more than 11,000 children, in custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). These immigrants are detained within the U.S. and along the U.S.–Mexico Border and includes adults and children. The Trump administration still seeks to increase the daily detention capacity to 52,000<sup>1</sup>. Over 60% of immigrants are detained in privately-run detention centers and the two largest are GEO Group and CoreCivic<sup>2</sup>. Together, they detain more than 18,000 immigrants per day<sup>3</sup>, and make close to \$1 billion in ICE-related revenue<sup>4</sup>.

The cruel conditions of detention centers that immigrants face have been thoroughly described by journalists, doctors, lawyers, and even lawmakers. Detention centers are overcrowded, neglected, filthy, inhumane, and violent. Doctors describe these centers as “deplorable,”<sup>5</sup> and lawyers document “scenes of tearful, malnourished children reeking in filth and jammed into frigid overcrowded quarters.”<sup>6</sup> This July, US-Representative from New York, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez visited detention facilities in the El Paso border-area and described her tour experience as horrifying and haunting. She stated, “People drinking out of toilets, officers laughing in front of members of Congress,” a situation described by detained women as “psychological warfare—waking them at odd hours for no reason, calling them wh\*es, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite cameras not being allowed in the detention centers, U.S. lawmakers and news reporters have observed the inhuman conditions that Central American migrants are subjected to, and have loudly denounce such acts as human rights violations. These detention centers are modern concentration camps, and immigrant activists have protested against them around the country. Even the Office of the Inspector General has called for the Department of Homeland Security to “take immediate steps to alleviate the dangerous overcrowding and prolonged detention of children and adults in the Rio Grande Valley.”<sup>8</sup> And the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has stated that the U.S. government is violating international law, given that “border management measures must comply with the State’s human rights obligations and should not be based on narrow policies aimed only at detecting, detaining and expeditiously deporting irregular migrants.”<sup>9</sup>

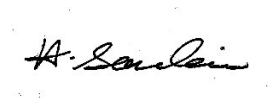
Given the national and global outrage, we argue that divesting from private security corporations who violate human rights is one way the nation’s moral compass gets fixed. This step in the right direction for social justice has precedents. Big banks have begun to divest from private prisons. Bank of America announced it will cease lending to detention centers and private prisons<sup>10</sup>, as well as JP Morgan<sup>11</sup> and Wells Fargo<sup>12</sup>.

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In light of the abuses perpetrated at detention centers, the members of the CRISJ taskforce recommends that CalPers follow suit as have other companies, such as Bank of American, JP Morgan, and Wells Fargo, as well as governments, from California to Virginia<sup>13</sup>, and divests all the money from CoreCivic and GEO Group. We are at a juncture in history, where will CalPers stand in these difficult times? We hope you side with human rights and social justice, and make a strong and clear statement that detention and incarceration of migrants is unacceptable, that cruelty in private detention centers is unacceptable, that separating families is unacceptable, that any form of violence against vulnerable people on the move is unacceptable, that negligence of children by the U.S. government and their contracted parties is unacceptable. Take the right stand and divest all the investments that support these oppressive conditions at private detention facilities.

Make the just, moral, and human decision and divest from CoreCivic and GEO Group.

Sincerely,



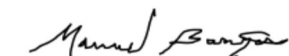
**Heidy Sarabia**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology  
CSU Sacramento  
heidy.sarabia@csus.edu



**Maria Vargas**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Ethnic Studies  
CSU Sacramento  
vargas@csus.edu



**Manuel Barajas**

Professor  
Department of Sociology  
CSU Sacramento  
mbarajas@csus.edu

**Taskforce for CRISJ's allies in support of this letter**

CLFASA

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<sup>1</sup> --. 2019. "Immigrant Detention: An American Business." *WorthRises*.

<sup>2</sup> Luan, Livia. 2018. "Profiting from Enforcement: The Role of Private Prisons in U.S. Immigration Detention." *Migration Policy Institute*.

<sup>3</sup> --. 2019. "Detention by the numbers." *Freedom for immigrants*.

<sup>4</sup> --. 2019. "Immigrant Detention: An American Business." *WorthRises*.

<sup>5</sup> Christensen, Jen. 2019. "Doctors describe black box of medical care in detention facilities: 'That is not medical care. That's malpractice.'" *CNN Health*. Published, Jul 3.

<sup>6</sup> Rose, Joel and Bobby Allyn. 2019. "Scenes of Tearful, Flu-Stricken and Underfed Migrant Kids Emerge In New Accounts." *NPR*.

<sup>7</sup> McCarthy, Tim. 2019, "Ocasio-Cortez details 'horrifying' conditions at migrant detention facility." *The Guardian*.

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Inspector General. 2019. "Managements Alert—DHS Needs to Address Dangerous Overcrowding and Prolonged Detention of Children and Adults in the Rio Grande Valley (Redacted)." *Department of Homeland Security*. Published by the NYT online: <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/1358-ig-report-migrant-detention/2dd9d40be6a6b0cd3619/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>

<sup>9</sup> --. 2019. "UN rights chief 'appalled' by US border detention conditions, says holding migrant children may violate international law." *UN News*.

<sup>10</sup> Telford, Taylo, and Renae Merle. 2019. "Bank of America cuts business ties with detention centers, private prisons." *The Washington Post*. Published June 27.

<sup>11</sup> Pauly, Madison. 2019. "The Private Prison Industry Just Suffered a Major Blow. And It Could Just Be the Beginning." *Mother Jones*.

<sup>12</sup> --. 2019. "Wells Fargo Divests From Private Prisons & Immigrant Detention Industry." *The Center for Popular Democracy*.

<sup>13</sup> Adams, Lora. 2019. "State and Local Governments Opt Out of Immigrant Detention." *Center for American Progress*.