

Indiana AID

THE INSIDE VIEW

July 2023 / Vol 6

W's Story*

**The name has been changed to protect the individual's identity who shared his story with one of our volunteers to be told here.*

I was born in a rural town in Jamaica, West Indies, to parents of strong Christian faith. My father would work odd jobs to make sure the family had food and clothing. Life was pretty hard at times so my mother applied for a visa and was accepted as a housekeeper here in the USA. My childhood years were average to say the least. We had a tv and I would always find myself dreaming of coming to America, going to school, seeing the snow fall, being in the military and being happy. I never knew that I would be given a chance to live out my dream, and never once thought my life would end this way.

As always, if you're not careful, new places aren't always good because sometimes you encounter the same faces. In my case it didn't take long for news to travel that I was in America. A family friend came to visit me and he brought along the devil and all his sins: drugs, guns, etc.

Continued on page 2 -->

The full range of feelings

In our last newsletter, we provided a further look into the stories of two of our partners whom our volunteers had supported during their stays at the jail. We shared both the positive news of an asylum case that was won and the terrible but common news of a case that was lost, which resulted in deportation.

Over the past couple months, our team of volunteers has experienced high highs and some truly strong lows as we partner with the individuals being detained in the Clay County jail. We received the wonderful news that two different partners won their asylum cases and were released from the jail. What a happy moment to hear from a partner once they're outside! We celebrate with them wholeheartedly and look to see how we can support their transition as they re-enter their lives.

Our team also recently received

heart-breaking news about a past partner. A volunteer heard from the wife of one of our past partners who had lost his case and was deported back to his home country. The gentleman's wife shared with our volunteer that, just as the partner had feared, after being deported back to his home country, he was soon after murdered. His wife shared that he would often talk about the calls our volunteer had with him, and she wanted to make sure we knew. He leaves behind his wife and three children whose lives have been forever changed.

This reinforces why we do what we do. Our immigration system is deeply broken and real lives hang in the balance. While we aim to highlight areas where we can call for systemic changes, we also lift up these stories of our partners - people who deserve to be seen, heard, and remembered.

Monthly reports from the last few months

May

- Commissary totals: \$3,673.60
- Books: at least 15 sent
- Visits: 15+

June

- Commissary totals: \$2,060.80
- Books: at least 8 sent
- Visits: at least 6

July

- Commissary totals: \$1,187.20
- Books: at least 4 sent
- Visits: at least 11 so far

Adjusting and Stretching

One of the core components of what we do is the 20-minute weekly video visits with our partners. As we have heard from various partners, that time of human connection, care and recognition is deeply valued. We also provide partners with money on their commissary regularly so that they can contact loved ones and buy extra food, as we often hear that what they get is not sufficient.

One of the challenges that we face in what we do is that we are entirely volunteer run and 100% donation-based. There is no budget beyond what we receive from generous supporters. We always include our monthly reports of how donations are spent to be entirely transparent; in May, we were close to averaging \$1,000 per week with the influx and turnover of detained individuals in the jail.

We knew this was not sustainable without a regular influx of donations, and we came extremely close to running out of funds. Indiana AID's coordinating committee met to make some adjustments. We were exceedingly grateful that a few supporters generously donated for us to continue for the next couple months to support our partners without interruption. We also implemented the change that, rather than paying \$20 weekly commissary as we had been, we would need to reduce it to every other week in order to stretch our funds further. We communicated that need for adjustment to our partners in the jail and they understood, stating their gratitude for the help they receive, for the ongoing visits and that time of connection.

The adjustment in our payments can be seen over the last few months and it has allowed us to stretch our funds for the next month or two. We believe in the importance of what we're doing and attempt to share that impact with you through these newsletters. If you feel similarly about supporting immigrations being held in detention, we would encourage you to go to Indiana AID's website for information on how to donate.

<https://www.indianaaid.org/donate>

Every amount helps, however small or big, whether a one-time gift or a regular monthly contribution. Thank you for considering and for your ongoing support of Indiana AID.

Continued from page 1 -->

Before you know it, I was deep in the streets, and once the streets got ahold of me there was no letting go. The bad choices I made from there on just started to pile up one after another. Before you know it, I was shot and after that, I was sent to prison for the rest of my life. While in prison, I would eventually lose my oldest brother in 2007 to cancer, later my mother passed also in 2018, alone in a nursing home and finally my dad died on Dec. 28, 2022 at age 94.

In prison I started seeking answers from God, which led me to attend one faith group after another, looking for that one I could call my own. In 2009, I was converted to Islam. I started praying to Allah for forgiveness for the things I've done and the things I haven't done, but only thought about and asked for deliverance from this nightmare. 35 years later, my prayers were answered. It might not happen when you want it to, but if you have faith and believe in your heart, God will answer your prayers. I am a great testament to that.

Thank you.

An In-Person Visit to Clay County Jail

A group of Indiana AID volunteers will have the opportunity toward the start of August to attend an in-person meeting and tour of the Clay County jail. It has been a multi-year process to get to this point, with the pandemic closing the jail to all outside visitors; previous requests being denied; and engaging an ICE official to assist in the coordination. This Community Stakeholder tour is an important step for Indiana AID as it shows both our partners and the jail staff how invested we are in what happens to the individuals detained there. We look forward to sharing with you more about the experience in our next newsletter.

A poem by one of our dedicated volunteers.

Clay County Jail

Securus allows 20 minutes for \$14 dollars.
Banner saying the call is being recorded
My face in the lower corner of the screen
Crackling and the jarring ring of a phone
His eager face, "Saludos, hermana"
My window into his life
Now

Orange and grey jumpsuits walk past
Men doing pull-ups on the open stairs
The skylight- all the daylight
He has seen in seven months
He came seeking freedom from torture
Now, return to that torture
Almost his best option

The screen shows 1:20 left
You don't hurry farewells in Latin America
If we don't hurry, the video goes off

Jeanne Smucker

Immigration Snapshots

National

- The total number of people in ICE custody has increased by 39 percent since the end of the Title 42 asylum ban in early May.
- The asylum transit ban, or "Circumvention of Lawful Pathways Rule (CLP)" went into effect on May 11, 2023. A federal judge in California [vacated this regulation on July 25, 2023.](#) The order is stayed for 14 days, and the Biden Administration has appealed.
 - In the meantime, the CLP remains in place.
- Reminder of the "new" asylum ban (CLP) that went into place at the termination of Title 42. If a person tries to circumvent lawful pathways:
 - Enter without inspection – barred
 - Fail to apply for/ receive final denial of asylum in third country – barred
 - Present at a port of entry without appointment via the "CBP One" app – barred
- USCIS is shifting a significant portion of its finite resources to the southern border, which will impact the processing of other immigration applications
- Canada and the United States expanded their safe third country agreement to apply to individuals crossing between ports of entry caught within 14 days.

Regional

- The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) recognized Hannah Cartwright, Executive Director of Mariposa Legal in Indianapolis, IN, with the 2023 Advocacy Award for outstanding efforts in support of AILA's advocacy agenda.
- The immigration court planned for Indianapolis is expected to open by summer 2024
 - "We expect to have seven courtrooms and about 40 employees at the facility, including immigration judges and other court staff. The Indianapolis Immigration Court will be located in the Minton-Capehart Federal Building, an existing federal building." - EOIR written statement

Volunteer

Currently, our greatest needs are for...

- Spanish-speaking visitation partners
- Visitation partners who speak languages other than English and Spanish
- Financial support
- Volunteer drivers (add your name to an "on call" list to consider transportation requests)
- Website and social media specialists

Contact Us

- Email: indianaaid.contact@gmail.com
- Phone (voicemail only): 317-721-4044
- **Donate:** <https://www.indianaaid.org/donate>

Follow Us

- <https://www.facebook.com/IndianaAID/>