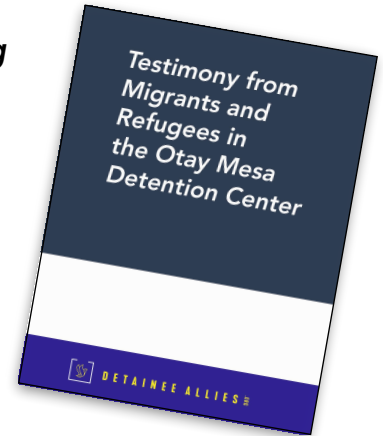




How To Host a Letter/Postcard Writing Event

- 1** *Get a group of friends together or organize a letter writing event for your school, church or community organization.*
- 2** *Learn about immigration detention and the life of detained refugees and migrants in the U.S. You can read our report on the Detainee Allies website.*
- 3** *Review the Letter Writing Guidelines below.*
- 4** *After your event, send your letters and postcards to us and we will distribute them to individual detainees. Detainee Allies, 6549 Mission Gorge Road #219, San Diego, CA 92120*



Letter Writing Guidelines

Language

- The majority of our current detained friends speak Spanish. A handful speak English. A few speak Portuguese, French, and other languages.
- If you are a weekly letter writing volunteer, your assignment notification email will include the preferred language.
- If you do not know Spanish or the preferred language, use Google Translate to translate from English into Spanish or the preferred language.

Postcards and Artwork

- No crayons, glitter, stickers, or oil paints (colored pencil, marker are great)
- Postcards should be size 5×7 or smaller; 1/3 page (8.5 × 3.3) fits easily in our standard-sized envelopes.
- Encouraging messages in Spanish welcome: "Estamos contigo/a/xs;" "No estas solo;" "Solidaridad y corazón;" etc.
- Send directly to our mailbox and we will distribute it to detainees. You can also email scanned images with the subject line "TO OTAY" to DetaineeAllies@gmail.com and we can print black and white copies for distribution.

(Cont. on next page/back)

Letter Writing Guidelines (cont.)

Do

- Introduce yourself as a member of a group of local citizens concerned about asylum seeking detainees.
- Emphasize that you are not there to offer legal counsel or any other kind of professional services.
- Tell the individual that you do not believe asylum seekers should be held in detention.
- Tell your story, share your interests, and invite them to share their story as well. Our detained friends say they love hearing about all the good things in life and in the world.
- You can also include photos or art (see guidelines for art below), Spanish-language news clippings, poems, or inspirational materials.
- Ask if there are parts of their story and experience they would like to share with others/ publicly and reiterate that you will do so using only a first name and country of origin and no other identifying information (or whatever level of disclosure they are comfortable with).
- If they ask about accessing legal services, encourage them to request to attend the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) inside the detention center.
- Ask about conditions inside the facility, including visits, phone access, medical care, food, and staff.
- Provide encouragement, and even diversion. It helps affirm a detainees humanity to have the chance to discuss things they enjoy, including sports, art, food, music, and so forth.
- Ask if there is anyone else they know in detention who would like to receive letters.
- Keep good boundaries to protect both the asylum seeker and yourself. We coordinate mail centrally and redact personal identifying information to provide the most secure communications possible for asylum seekers and allies. We do not recommend engaging financially beyond monthly commissary/phone contributions, or getting involved in the legal details of a case. Contact the organizing committee if you have questions or concerns.

Do Not

- Pry into the details or backgrounds of their case, or traumatic events they may have experienced.
- Initiate a conversation about your own religious beliefs, though it is good to be receptive to and supportive of their expressions of belief.
- Volunteer your home address, phone number, or other highly personal information.

Remember

- Not all detainees are able to write back due to extreme stress or indigence. But we know letters are getting inside. Please keep sending them.
- Weekly letter writing volunteers are given digital access to read scanned copies the letters sent in return. Highlights are publicly accessible on the Detainee Stories page and our social media channels.

