

#FreeThemAll Mother's Day Letter Writing Toolkit

Project Overview:

The purpose of the #FreeThemAll Mother's Day project is **to write letters and cards to people in the Tacoma Detention Center to be delivered in a caravan on May 8, 2021.** Write individually or gather by Zoom (or safely in person) and write with friends. Since the letters will be delivered on Mother's Day weekend, we are suggesting a bright, beautiful flower theme.

Who the Project is For:

This project can be thought of as reaching three audiences.

- We are writing to the people in detention with messages of hope and encouragement.
- We are creating a social media presence. We want to remind the public that detention is still an urgent issue, which needs to be ended.
- We are letting people who have loved ones in detention know that we hold them in our hearts and our thoughts.

How to Participate as a Letter Writer

1. Write messages of hope and encouragement on a card.
2. You can make multiple cards for our friends detained at the Tacoma Detention Center.
3. Refer to the sample messages in this toolkit and/or use your own words.
4. This toolkit includes a message in Spanish and English. We are hoping to make other languages available and will send them through this network when they are.
5. The proposed **theme is flowers!** Use color to express hope, joy, and love. Feel free to add butterflies!
6. Be creative! Share a poem or a drawing. **(Note: Stickers, glitter or other items that have adhesive are not allowed by the detention center).**
7. Sign your first name.
8. Put each individual card or letter in a separate envelope. Do not write the mailing address on each individual card; project organizers will do that for you. Make a clear division of cards in different languages or write the card language in pencil on the envelope flap.
9. Deliver your letter to a project organizer. If you don't know who that is, contact Nancy at 541-990-2370.
10. Take photos and share on social media. We will send out hashtags and contacts you can use within the next week.

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How to Participate as a Local Organizer

1. #FreeThemAll Coordinators are holding Zoom trainings for people who want to organize a letter-writing project in their community. Links are included in the email that came with this toolkit.
2. Attend a zoom to briefly walk through the project.
3. Create a plan for letting people know about the project (quickly, as it's a short timeline).
4. (Optional) Organize your own letter writing zoom or safe and socially distanced in-person event for people to write and decorate cards together.
5. Gather the cards and letters in your community to deliver to someone participating in the May 8 caravan to Tacoma. For help doing this contact Nancy at 541-990-2370.

Sample Message in English

Dear friend,

Greetings from (city/state). My name is (first name)

It is difficult for me to understand all the challenges you face in detention but I want to let you know that you are not alone or forgotten.

I stand in solidarity with you, your family, and all immigrants who are facing detention and discrimination.

I celebrate the love and strength of immigrants like you.

Warmly,

Sample Message in Spanish:

Querido amigo,

Saludos desde (ciudad / estado). Mi nombre es (primer nombre)

Es difícil para mí entender todos los desafíos que enfrenta durante la detención, pero quiero que sepa que no está solo ni olvidado.

Me solidarizo con usted, su familia y todos los inmigrantes que enfrentan detención y discriminación.

Celebro el amor y la fuerza de los inmigrantes como usted.

Afectuosamente,

Samples in additional languages will be emailed as they become available.

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Project Guidelines:

- **Know your boundaries.** We advise you to not to share your personal phone number, mailing address or pictures of yourself.
- **It is important to give people hope but not make false promises.** Please be especially careful not to give any false hopes about the possible outcome of their immigration case.
- **Keep your promises. Don't make commitments you can't keep.**
- **Do not romanticize detained immigrants or victimize them to the point of taking power away from them.** Many have been successful business people, survived horrendous situations due to their own resourcefulness, traveled the world to arrive here, learned to speak several languages, attended university, and been leaders in their families, towns and schools.
- **Keep in mind your letters may be read by a guard.** Be mindful and conscientious. For example, if you talk about immigration or the detention system with anger or disgust, it may be the detained person that will be the one who will suffer from your words, not you. We are here to be compassionate friends and to love everyone.
- **Be sensitive to the fact that the person reading your letter may be inferring messages differently** than you mean due to their current circumstances. Loneliness, power differences, and language differences could play into the person being detained misunderstanding you, or feeling more intimately connected to you than you intend.
- **It is not appropriate to try to convert anyone to your religion.** Some people may have faced death due to their beliefs, making it even more inappropriate to try to convince them to adopt your religious beliefs. People detained at Tacoma come from different faith backgrounds and it is important to respect their beliefs. Remember that you are a friend to uplift detained individuals through their own beliefs, not as a proselytizer seeking to convert.
- **We fully support people with different gender identities.** Some people have fled their country because of attempts on their life due to their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.
- **People's emotions vary towards Mother's Day.** We have birth and chosen families that include a broad variety of members. In writing, try not to make assumptions about who someone's family includes.

Questions? Contact Karen at 541-223-5411 karen.stephenson42@gmail.com or Nancy at 541-990-2370

Expression of Gratitude:

This packet borrows heavily from the work of El Refugio in Georgia. We are grateful to them!