

## **My Story: I Got COVID-19 Because of ICE**

*January 29, 2020*

The unimaginable happened today. ICE agents took my uncle. ICE had come at 5 in the morning this past Sunday. Luckily, after my uncle had opened and closed the door, they left. My uncle has been living in this country for 25 years and has been living with me, my mom, my dad, and my sister since. It's unfair. At least my parents are still here. When ICE was here, I told them to go into the back room, lock themselves, and to not make a single noise. I have heard a lot of stories of ICE visiting houses to take a single person and they end up taking everyone that is undocumented.

As I'm ready to go to bed I hope everything goes well. I worry about the expenses. New York City is very expensive. My uncle has been that economic help to the expenses. Hopefully he gets out soon and everything goes back to normal.

My sister, Catherine, has asked me if I am going to cancel my Super Bowl watching party this Sunday. I told her no because our lives have to go on.

*February 7, 2020*

My uncle's master hearing is on Monday and we still haven't found an attorney for my uncle. Catherine has reached out through many organizations for pro bono representation and they are all working together to assign an attorney for my uncle. Today me and mom went to go see a private attorney recommended us by Father Jorge. Father Jorge is the pastor of St. Brigid Church in Bushwick. My uncle and Father Jorge have been friends for years now. They meet with my uncle joined Father Jorge's Mexican Ministry to help organize the Diocese's annual feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. My uncle is the main reason why my family became involved in church. It started with my uncle and my uncle pulled my mom, who pulled me, I pulled Catherine, and then my dad had no other choice but to join because he would be all alone at home while we all are in church.

Anyways, Father Jorge recommended us to go see a private attorney who will give us a free consultation. When we went, the attorney told us that the best option for my uncle is to ask for a voluntary departure because, there is no law that would allow him to stay. That really got me upset. My uncle gave Catherine power of attorney. She said that she'll go for the pro bono services because it's going to be free and hopefully, he can stay with us longer.

The Super Bowl was fun. Everyone came over. The Chiefs won and Shakira's and Jennifer Lopez's Halftime Show was amazing! Catherine couldn't be with us because she went to go see my uncle at Bergen County Jail, the detention center he was taken to wait for his trial. We think it might be dangerous for mom to go visit him. We've heard stories of undocumented immigrants going to ICE, USCIS, and DHS offices and getting detained. At least me and Catherine can go see him and mom can talk to him over the phone. He calls throughout the day. He's made friends. I hope he's doing good. I'll visit him next week.

*February 19, 2020*

Hey. Nothing new has happened since the last time I wrote. I went to visit my uncle at Bergen County today. He looks good. Catherine is just stressing about the past due bills he left.

There's this talk about a virus that came from China spreading around the world. A case was already confirmed in the United States but nothing in New York. Probably just another swine flu, ebola, and zika virus stuff. It'll pass.

*March 3, 2020*

A lot has happened since the last time I wrote and that was a little over a week ago. The first case of COVID-19, that is the name of the virus that came from China that I was talking about, was confirmed in New York. Everything seems to start to shut down. Mom and Dad had told me and Catherine that no one is allowed to come over anymore, shoes must be taken off before entering the house, and wash our hands first before doing anything.

Yesterday, mom and dad went shopping in Sunset Park to buy stacks of food. Everything is frozen in our other fridge. I've never seen them buy so much canned foods. Mom also said that the prices of everything is starting to go up.

My uncle is doing good. We're telling him to stay safe and wash his hands often.

*March 8, 2020*

Everything is not good. Everything is going completely bad. New rule from Mom and Dad: anyone leaving the house must wear gloves and mask. Whenever we come inside, we must throw the gloves and mask away in the little trash that they put outside the front door. I get why they have these new rules, it seems like mom is a vulnerable person because she has type 2 diabetes.

Mom said that this past Sunday, Father Martin, the priest in our local church, told everyone to prepare ourselves because what is about to come will not be good. I think that freaked mom out even more. Everything at church is even different! There's no holy water in the fonts and in the entrance. Everyone is asked to receive communion by the hand. There is no distribution of the Blood. We can't even give the sign of the peace!

Catherine is going to start working from home. She got the ok from her boss and now we just have to go to her office and bring all the files home. Paul, my boss, hasn't been in the office. Everyone at work is wondering if he went on vacation. Could it be because he doesn't want to get COVID? He is a germ freak. We're asked to avoid having clients coming into the office

My uncle is the same. Having fun with his other inmates. He spends his time watching TV and playing chess. I guess that's all you can do if you're locked up inside. Catherine went this past

Sunday to visit him. She told him that she isn't going to come anymore because of COVID. Traveling from Brooklyn to Hackensack is too much of a risk right now.

I underestimated this thing. They mayor and governor are starting these daily media conferences where they update us on what's going on.

*March 13, 2020*

Everything is different. Slowly businesses are closing, and more and more people are starting to wear masks. Mom and dad made the decision that they will not be going to church anymore. The Diocese announced that Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio is dispensing us from mass obligation until further notice.

Dad also told his boss that he will be working less days so that his chances of getting contaminated are lower. I don't know if that is a good idea. My family and I depend on his income and if he works less, we might need to make certain budget cuts. Well, everything is closing so we won't be able to spend money on unnecessary things so, maybe we can survive. Just me rambling.

In the beginning of the year, I went to the Mexican General Consulate Office in New York City to get my double citizenship. Luckily, I was able to get an appointment for it for March 20<sup>th</sup> but, I received an e-mail from the Consulate Office advising that they will be closed for all in-person activities therefore, my appointment was cancelled. I was really excited to get my passport.

Yesterday at work, one of my coworkers was walking around with a mask and gloves. Mom and dad told me to do the same thing but, it's just awkward and weird to do so. Not a lot of people are doing it. I think that until it becomes mandatory, people will be start wearing them. There is a rumor in the office that the attorney cannot afford paying everyone if we're closed. I thought about taking the disinfecting wipes that we received and even taking the bottle of hand sanitizer that is on my desk. Luckily, we have some at home.

Me and Catherine are responsible for a youth group in a catholic church nearby. We meet every Monday and just hang out and talk about social issues, God, and other stuff. Well, we use to meet every Monday. The priest told us that we can't continue meeting because of the increasing COVID cases. I hope to see those kids soon.

My uncle is doing good. Nothing new with him.

*March 16, 2020*

My manager from work called me. She told me to apply for unemployment. I should of have taken those disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer. We can't seem to find any in the stores and the ones we find are crazy expensive.

Me and Catherine teaching Sunday school in our local church. On Sunday, the Director of the Religious Education Program told us that that Sunday was going to be the last day of class until further notice. The Diocese also announced yesterday that there was going to be no public mass.

My uncle is doing fine, he doesn't call us often anymore. He only calls us once a day. That's because Bergen County is limiting the free time the inmates have in an attempt to avoid any spread. Now that I am thinking about it, well mainly because the other day there was a news report about it, jails are considered a ticking bomb. If 1 person gets COVID, rest assure that everyone in there will too. As always, we tell him to wash his hands and just stay safe. We pray for him and he prays for us. My uncle has asthma and if he gets COVID, he might not live to tell it. Catherine spoke with my uncle's attorney to see if she can get him released on a bond because he's at high risk. The attorney told us that she will get his medical records and get that process started. All we can do is prepare for the worse and hope for the best.

*March 18, 2020*

Almost all my professors have e-mailed me to tell us that there will be no in-person classes. Cases are starting to rise. Maybe CUNY will finally decide to move to remote learning. I mean like public schools closed days before, so it only makes sense for public colleges to close too.

The City's St. Patrick's Day Parade was cancelled. I've never went but it seems interesting and fun to go see. I'll probably go next year when this is all over.

Catherine has been mailing my uncle bible passages so he can use for the religious education classes he's teaching the other detainees. Before getting detained, my uncle was the RCIA catechist in our local church. RCIA is a program for adult faith formation. It helps non-Catholic convert to Catholicism and helps adult Catholic receive their sacraments. My uncle asked for permission to the local priest to be able to teach and he has been teaching the other detainees how to pray the rosary and Catholic theology. I feel like every time he calls it's just to ask for us to send us the lesson plans he uses to teach. Overall, he's doing well.

*March 19, 2020*

CUNY moved to remote learning. My uncle was told he can no longer gather with the other detainees to teach because of COVID. Mom and I have told my uncle that he should have stopped awhile back ago. I guess he thinks he's safe because he's locked up instead of being out here. I guess he's right. He also told us that he spoke with Father Jorge and Father Jorge sound sick. When my uncle asked if he was ok, Father Jorge said he was feeling a little under the weather but that he will continue praying for him and us, his family. My uncle advised him to go to the hospital.

*March 23, 2020*

Catherine got a called from Eli, he's Father Jorge's right-hand man and a good family friend, Father Jorge has tested positive for COVID. He's the first person we know that has COVID. The

Vatican announced that this Friday Pope Francis will be giving a special Urbi et Orbi. A Urbi e Orbi is a blessing that the pope gives o certain occasions. This occasion, the pope will pray for the end of the COVID pandemic. I hope this all ends quick.

My uncle isn't allowed to go out more then 30 minutes now. In those 30 minutes my uncle literally has to do everything. He has to shower, get snacks, pick up his mail, and even call us. Mom told him to only call to advise he's ok. No more long conversations with him anymore. Catherine told him that if he needs anything, or if the conditions aren't clean, to let her know and she'll tell his attorney.

*March 27, 2020*

Pope Francis just finished the Urbi et Orbi. It was just heart breaking. Catherine took and break from work to sit with me and mom and watch from out TV. Just seeing Saint Peter's Square empty really breaks my heart. All I kept thinking was, "I was there last year. It was packed with people and now, empty."

While Pope Francis held up the Blessed Sacrament and blessed the entire world, I prayed for the wellbeing of my family, to keep my uncle safe and to get him out of there quick, for Father Jorge's and everyone who has COVID's recovery, I prayed for everyone out there fighting this war. Our daily lives are changing by the second. New York City is becoming the epicenter of COVID in the nation and I'm pretty sure, of the world.

The New York Times released a video a few days ago about how it is inside a NYC hospital struggling with COVID. In the video you can see the struggle and the desperation that exists. Can you believe that there are people who don't believe in this virus? They need to see the video.

*March 27, 2020 (at night)*

We just received news that Father Jorge has died due to COVID-19 complications.



*April 6, 2020*

It's been a while since I wrote. It's not like I have something important going on in my life now. Everything is closed. The hospitals are overflowing with patients. Cases keep rising. Death rates keep rising. Unemployment keeps rising. Yet, gas prices are at an all-time low. I've never seen gas this cheap! Hospital beds keep decreasing and so do the number of the ventilators that the hospitals have. It just shows to prove how COVID is messing up the world.

Mayor Bill DeBlasio and Governor Cuomo do these daily COVID press conferences to update the people on how the situation is getting worse. Sometimes we don't even want to watch the news anymore because that's all they play. All you see is images of hospitals, the coolers hospitals use to store the bodies of the deaths, the charts of how numbers rise.

I haven't even seen the outside world in weeks! I'm just desperate to go out with friends and hang out. We keep FaceTiming to check in on each other. Just to make sure we're all safe. Since we can't hang out in person, we do it virtually. I just feel bad for my friend Michelle. She is the first generation of her family to graduate from college and she won't have the blessing to walk the stage. Many people are in that situation, first college graduates and they won't have that one special moment.

Since we can't get together and go to the movie theater or simply go out for dinner, we do everything virtually. There are these new apps that came out to help people be together virtually. For example, whenever we want to have a movie night, we use this app called Rave. The way it works is that someone hosts a "viewing party," and shares a link with friends so we can all watch at the same time. We can speak and send messages to each other while watching the movie from our phones. There's also this app called House Party where can video chat and play games together. At least we're having fun – virtually.

Today is mom's birthday. Catherine bought a small cake just for us. She says that although we're living in a very difficult time, we should still have some type of joy in our life.

*April 12, 2020*

It's Easter and this year's holy week was a very different one. We saw everything from home. There was no public mass. The priest kept saying in his homily that we must do our part in "flattening the curve" and stay home. There's a lot of talk about "flattening the curve." It's basically lowering the infection rate. So, there's this idea that if we all do our part, by social distancing, wearing out masks, and staying home the rising numbers of cases and deaths will reach a peak and then fall down.

We're running out of food so, we will need to go out soon. I don't know if I should be excited or if I should be worried. Excited because it's been a while since I've been outside. I sometimes think about going outside at like 2 in the morning to just walk to the corner and back. That's how desperate I am to go outside. Do other people feel like me? I think yes because my friends tell me they look outside their windows and have this urge to go outside.

I've spoken to my uncle recently. Mom and Catherine tell me not to tell him about Father Jorge because they're afraid that he will have some type of emotional break down and no one would be able to help him. The local Spanish news make reports on his death. My uncle tells me that he's in his cell the entire time and the TV is one so the detainees can listen to it. He told me he heard about a Brooklyn Mexican priest died because of COVID and he asked me if I knew anything about him. I told him that I would tell Catherine to find out. I don't think we can hide this secret any much longer. Overall, he's doing fine. The ICE agents don't wear masks and my uncle is still allowed only 30 minutes to go out.

*April 18, 2020*

Today we went to do some grocery shopping. We had to wait on a line outside. As people came out, people were allowed in. It's good because that way the store can manage overcrowding. The only downside is that we had to wait in line for about an hour.

The most important thing is, that I went outside for the first time in forever. What a relief.

*April 22, 2020*

After trying to lay everything off, we had to tell my uncle about Father Jorge. We all agreed on mom to be the one to break the news to him. Mom told him yesterday about it. She put him on speakers to tell him and after a few seconds of silence, he asked if he got COVID. He didn't sound sad, he simply sounded surprised. My uncle spoke with him a few days after his death and it was a surprise to him. Catherine called my uncle's attorney to see if she can get him some counseling because of the news and help so he won't go crazy for being literally locked up for such a long time.

There is nothing more to add.

*May 4, 2020*

Nothing new. Everything keeps going up and up.

Dad had stopped going to work for about 3 weeks and now he's back. He works as the delivery guy for a supermarket so he's an essential worker. He didn't want to go back to work but I told him he had to as a service to his customer. My dad has a lot of elderly people as his customers. I told him that his elderly customers cannot go to the supermarket and do their grocery shopping because they're the most vulnerable at this moment. I guess that really touched him because after I told him that, he went back to work the next day.

I think that quarantine has really messed my dad up. I don't mean it in a physical sense, I mean mentally. Dad has insomnia and anxiety attacks. When he gets the anxiety attacks, he thinks he has COVID. Several times he has woken me up at night to tell me he can't sleep. I think everyone's sleep scheduled is messed up, but he goes days without sleeping. Me and my friends sometimes stay up until 3 in the morning on FaceTime or House Party. On the nights that my friends and I aren't virtually together, I stay up watching Netflix. But dad, he stays up watching

YouTube video and texting his church friends all night. He sometimes just sits on the couch at night and just stares into the blank TV. It's kind of creepy to be honest.

He has woken me, mom, and Catherine up several nights to tell us he can't sleep. He mainly does it to Catherine because I tell him not to wake me up. The New York State Department of Mental Health has set up a hotline for people to call if they're mentally struggling. Cat has had enough of it so she called the hotline for him. It's really sad because my dad started crying to the person on the phone that all he wants to do is sleep.

Dad was assigned a social worker and she's getting him health insurance through the New York State Market Place. I'm not so sure how health insurance works so I just let Catherine deal with it.

At first, my dad was against getting mental help. He has this idea that mental health isn't a thing. That's usual in Latinx families. They don't believe in mental health. Catherine ended up convincing him to do it. Well, I don't know if its convincing, she basically told dad it's this or go "sleep" somewhere else. That really did the trick.

If only dad believed in mental health, it would have been the good way.

*May 25, 2020*

Happy Memorial Day!

Dad is getting his therapy sessions and is getting treated regularly at a doctor's office. He finally sleeps at night and he looks healthier.

There's talks about a reopening going on soon. We are slowly flattening the curve. Hopefully everything will do back to normal.

My uncle is doing fine. He's finally allowed more time to go out. I think we're going to reach normality soon, something that seemed to be a dream. We're still awaiting trial for him.

*June 18, 2020*

Phase 1 of reopening started on the 8<sup>th</sup>. That included construction and manufacturing jobs. The city announced that offices, outdoor dining, and barber shops can reopen on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I'm so excited because I will finally have something to do to keep me entertained. That was the bad part about being in quarantine, eventually you don't know what to do to keep you entertained.

As far as my uncle, the judge denied him bail even when the attorney proved that my uncle is an at risk-person because of his asthma. What his attorney ended up doing is requesting a voluntary departure, which was granted to him. Now we just have to wait and look for flights to take him to Mexico City. The little village where my family is from is about a 10-hour bus ride from Mexico City. My uncle knows his way from Mexico City to home. Although, I don't know if he



would be able to get to the bus terminal to leave, it has been ages since he's been in Mexico and Mexico City has changed drastically.

*June 22, 2020*

My uncle's attorney gave us a call to tell us that ICE is not allowing him to leave in a commercial flight due to the risk of COVID that exists in commercial flights. If only they considered that in his bail hearing. This is bad because my uncle doesn't know how to get home from a border town. The Mexican border towns are one of the most dangerous places in Mexico. We've heard stories that many times the deportees get assaulted by people in Mexico.

He will be taken to Laredo, TX on July 7<sup>th</sup>. My uncle's attorney told us that she doesn't know when exactly he will be sent over the border because sometimes, they send the detainees the same day or they have them cross the border the next day.

I spoke with Catherine about this and we've decided that I will travel to Laredo, TX and cross over to Mexico, since I have the Mexican citizenship, and find my uncle and go to a hotel together. On the next day, we fly out to Mexico City, where we will meet Catherine, to go home.

I'm going to be leaving on the 7<sup>th</sup> so hopefully ICE send my uncle to Mexico the next day.

*July 6, 2020*

Tomorrow I leave for Laredo and I'm afraid. I keep looking up the chances of getting COVID in a commercial flight. I have everything prepared. I will be wearing the KN-95 masks, face shields, and gloves. I have about 10 bottles of travel-size hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes.

Last week we went to the ICE offices in New York to drop off a bag for my uncle. We packed him a t-shirt, pants, sneakers, socks, \$50, KN-95 masks, and a burner phone with my number, Catherine's number, mom's number, and the attorney's number saved on it.

I prepare for the worse and hope for the best.

*July 8, 2020*

Hold on because this will be a lengthy one.

So yesterday, everything was fine. No issues. I left from Newark Airport, made a stop in Houston, and then landed in Laredo. When I landed in Houston, I got a call from my uncle's burner phone. And yes, ICE made him cross the border the second he landed. We gave him strict instructions to wear his mask 24/7 and to only take it off when he's in the hotel.

I made the arrangements for the hotel to allow him to stay one day earlier.

I was supposed to arrive to Mexico today but, my Mexican birth certificate isn't enough proof for me to cross the border. The US-Mexico's land border is closed for all nonessential travel. US

Citizens are allowed to travel into the US and Mexican Citizens are allowed to travel into Mexico. I'll fly out tomorrow to Dallas, then to Phoenix, then to Hermosillo, and finally to Mexico City where I will meet up with Catherine. My uncle will be in Nuevo Laredo, the Mexican side of Laredo, until his flight to Mexico City on Friday.

*July 10, 2020*

Last night Catherine and I arrived in Mexico City. Today we're expecting to pick up my uncle from the airport. Catherine and I decided to get a rental to easily travel throughout Mexico. When we pick up my uncle at the airport, we're going to go directly to the a small town in the state of Puebla called San Andres Cholula. We'll leave to home on Saturday and drive back to San Andres Cholula on Saturday, because our flight back to NY is scheduled for Sunday.

*July 12, 2020*

Sorry for not writing. These past few days have been very busy and we've literally been traveling throughout Mexico nonstop. Right now, we're waiting to board the flight back home. I'm literally exhausted and my body is all sore. Once I get on that flight I'm going to sleep.

After months of not seeing my uncle or having physical contact with him, was a very special moment. It was a very touchy moment. When we got to our rental in San Andres Cholula, he started talking about his other inmates and how each inmate had their own hidden talent. One inmate knew how to make bracelets out of worn out t-shirts. Another one knows how to do sketches. When he told us about the sketches, he pulled out some of the pieces that the detainee drew. The most special one was a sketch of Roger, our dog. It makes sense why a few months ago he asked us to mail him a picture of Roger.

*July 13, 2020*

I woke up with a fever. Mom put me into quarantine so, I'm in my room. I feel worse than before.

Yesterday, when I woke up from sleeping throughout the whole flight (I mean literally throughout the whole flight. The second I sat on my seat, I feel asleep and didn't wake up until I landed). I went to take the COVID test, but I have to wait about 10 to 14 days for my results. For the meantime, the doctor told me to stay home for 2 weeks. Hoping for good results.

*July 15, 2020*

Fever check: 109 degrees. Catherine is sick too, 110 degrees. Catherine, mom, and dad went to get tested for COVID too. Dad is having chest pains and is having a bit trouble breathing. Mom is having fevers and body aches. I still haven't gotten my results I hope it isn't COVID.

Whenever we use the bathroom, it gets a deep clean. Only mom is allowed in the kitchen, because she cooks.

I will keep you updated about anything. Right now, I'm too sick to write.

*July 20, 2020*

I feel better. The house is a disaster. We have plastic taped everywhere and no one is allowed to be in the same room as each other. If we want to leave our rooms, we have to wear our masks and gloves.

Mom and dad got their COVID results already. They're positive. I still haven't gotten mine but, you for damn sure know we're all positive. I was the first one to feel sick. My aunt is doing our grocery shopping. She leaves everything in our front door, leaves, texts Catherine to tell her the food is outside, and Catherine uses Venmo to pay for the groceries.

So, the thing about dad – he has pneumonia and I've told him to go to the hospital to be checked in because that could be deadly. His response was, "I don't want to die alone. I'd rather die in my house." Catherine and I feel better so, Catherine is in charge of mom and dad's medical care, she gives them the medicine, vitamins, and checks their temperature. I cook. We'll make it through.

*July 28, 2020*

I got my COVID results yesterday. Positive. I feel much better. No fever for the past 8 days. No body aches and no drowsiness. I went to get retested today because I need a negative result to go back to work.

Back in Mexico, no one is sick. No fever, but out of precaution they're in quarantine too. I'm just worried about grandma. She's at risk because she's old and COVID can be deadly for her. Luckily, she's doing fine. My aunt checks her temperature often and is keeping her away from everyone in the house.

*August 2, 2020*

Mom and dad are feeling better. They went to get retested and mom came back negative. Dad is still positive. Now, he's the only one in quarantine and not allowed to go out. Mom is the only one who can walk around the house. I feel better but not until I get a negative result, can I actually be in the same room as mom. Catherine is also waiting her results from her retest.

The other day I was looking up to see why the results were taking forever. Supposably, CityMD, the place me and Catherine went to get retested, is prioritizing the region where there is a high COVID rates. NYC is not as bad as it was before, so it makes sense. I can't wait to go back to work.

*August 16, 2020*

Catherine and I got our results back – negative. I immediately called my job and I'm back on schedule starting next tomorrow! Finally, once again, I get to go out.

We're just waiting for dad to test negative. He went a few days ago and we're expecting a result tomorrow.

Everyone in Mexico is good. Since me and Catherine have been there, no one got sick and grandma, after 2 weeks, can now go out of her room. When mom was talking to her, she sounded relieved.

*August 17, 2020*

Good news! We're all negative. COVID clean.

This time that we were sick, it really taught me a lot. To really appreciate life and those around us. I've never felt this sick before. Michelle would call me "to see if I'm still alive." If it wasn't for ICE deporting my uncle, I would of never need to fly – I would of never gotten COVID.

If we all do our part, we can actually stop the spread of the virus. By wearing masks, social distancing, and avoid group gatherings we can save lives. The future is literally in our hands!

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#### END NOTE

When the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly arrived in the United States, due to the nation's stagnant and careless response, it caused the rapid spread of the virus throughout every city and town. COVID-19 has impacted each community in its own unique way. While many people emphasized the drastic impacts that the pandemic caused to the lower-class community, essential workers, and the unemployed. We seem to forget, or choose not to talk about, the inmates in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers.

In the year 2020 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, most commonly known as ICE, reported that a total number of 19,068 people were detained in detention centers (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, n.d). Many detainees that were released from the detention centers during the pandemic have described the unsanitary horrors they lived being in the detention centers. ICE had kept the inmates in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. ICE did not even test the inmates (Trincia, 2020). Living in these conditions created ICE detention centers a ticking time bomb for a rapid, and even deadly, COVID-19 spread. ICE distributed masks to detainees late, failed to report infections, pressured staff and guards to work regardless of their health, irresponsibly failed to enforce mask wearing to their agents, and even denied the release of high-risk people (Washington, 2020) (Trincia, 2020).

Not only were living conditions not safe in the detention centers, but ICE continued to transfer inmates between detention centers amid the pandemic. This helped the spread of COVID-19 from one detention center to another. In early May, the first COVID-19 related death of an inmate in an ICE detention center was reported. His name was Carlos Escobar-Mejia, a 57 year old Salvadoran man. Weeks before Escobar-Mejia's death, on April 21, four detainees from Butler County Jail were transferred to the detention center where Escobar-Mejia was being kept

(Glaun, 2020). On April 13, The Butler County sheriff's office reported the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Butler County Jail (Butler County Sheriff's Office, 2020).

ICE was not only transferring detainees between detention centers, but ICE continued to deport people to their country. From the beginning of 2020 to the month of August of the same year, ICE had approximated 450 deportation flights to fifteen different countries in Latin American and the Caribbean. For the 15 countries, eleven of the fifteen countries reported that deportees from ICE have arrived in their country with COVID-19 (Trincia, 2020). These deportations have contributed to the global spread of the virus especially to a region that lacks the necessary resources to fight a global pandemic. At one point, 20% of the total number of known COVID-19 cases from Guatemala were people who were deported from the United States (Washington, 2020). ICE's exportation of COVID-19 was so severe that the Honduran Ministry of Health required all deportees to be tested for COVID-19 upon arrival. Many of the deportees that tested negative later developed symptoms and even tested positive (Glaun, 2020).

Just like the federal government response, ICE's management of their detention centers during the pandemic was irresponsible, horrific, and inhumane. "By August 1, almost 5.5 percent of total U.S. [confirmed COVID-19] cases...were attributed to spread from ICE detention centers" (Washington, 2020). ICE transported COVID-19 on a national and international scale, worsening the situation. Between May and August, over 245,000 COVID-19 cases were from detainees of ICE's detention centers. If ICE was its own country, ICE would have ranked at 16 in the global case rate (Washington, 2020). To date, ICE has only reported the deaths of eight COVID-19 related deaths. The number of confirmed cases and deaths due to ICE's detention centers is underreported because ICE only reported the number of cases and deaths of those who were in detention centers. ICE did not report the cases and deaths of those who were tested positive or died after being released. Let us not forget the names of the eight people who died due to ICE's mismanagement of their detention centers:

Carlos Escobar-Mejia (57, Salvadoran)  
Santiago Baten-Oxlaj (34, Guatemalan)  
Onoval Perez-Montufa (51, Mexican)  
James Thomas Hill (72, Canadian)  
Jose Guillen-Vega (70, Costa Rican)  
Fernando Sabonger-Garcia (50, Honduran)  
Cipriano Chavez-Alvarez (61, Mexican)  
Romien Jally (56, Marshallese)

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