

From Levi Cruz:

“Prepare for the worst. Hope for the best.”

Hello, how is everybody doing? I hope everybody is in the best of health. Before we move on, I want to thank everybody who attended this art gallery. It really means a lot to most of us, especially to Elizabeth, Jared, Walter Cruz, William Nickel and myself, Levi Cruz. It's been an amazing experience working with Elizabeth and Jared. Under the circumstances we are in, 2020 was one of the worst years in our modern history, and it's amazing how we were able to make this show happen.

I have been in Mesa Verde since April 8, 2020 in C-unit. Before Mesa Verde I was housed in Pelican Bay State Prison. State Prison and Mesa Verde are 2 different things. C.D.C.R. is where we are housed due to the fact that we have already been charged with a criminal case, and we have been convicted and we have a release date. Mesa Verde is a federal facility where we have to fight our immigration case, and our only crime is being in this country illegally. Most of us don't have a release date and we don't know when we are going to see our loved ones.

In April of 2020 this facility used to house 100 people per dorm, 400 people all together. I came in the middle of a hunger strike. This strike was organized to stop I.C.E. from bringing more people to replace the empty beds of those who get deported or choose not to fight their immigration case. It wasn't until the second week of May that I.C.E. started releasing people thanks to those hunger strikes. Along with ACLU we were able to convince I.C.E. that we fear exposure to COVID-19.

Once I.C.E. started reviewing cases, 75% of the population in Mesa Verde were granted release. Even after the number of people in Mesa Vere dropped to 25 people per dorm, I.C.E. was still bringing people from prison with no 14-day quarantine. In late July, 10 detainees arrived in Mesa Verde. One of those 10 detainees had COVID-19. After Mesa Verde found out about their mistake, they decided to mix 2 dorms and prevent the deadly disease from spreading. The result of this just made the situation worse.

The whole month of August we tested positive for COVID-19. When we started to ask for medical attention, all they would say is that they are sorry, but they can't help us. All they could do is give us Ibuprofen. Also during this time we were still forced to clean. When we clean we get paid \$1.00 per day. Mesa Verde didn't help us with the cleaning.

Also, the food is the worst. We didn't even get any type of vitamins and until this day the food has always been a problem. There is so much that happens inside Mesa Verde, and we have found ways to keep on moving forward. We are all looking for a better tomorrow and to put this experience in the past. We would like for the whole world to see what we are going through, and see how it is to be in a place where I.C.E. doesn't even care about us. All they want is to make money out of us by all means. Mesa Verde and I.C.E. also have policies on the resources we can

get to make our time go fast. We have to find things to do throughout the day, and keep ourselves busy, and try not to think negative and stay positive. Being in a place like this, not knowing our future and the outcome of our cases is the worst thing in life.

In the meantime, myself (Levi Cruz) along with other detainees and with the support of others out there, hope to pass the message down and show people out there how I.C.E. makes money out of us “detainees”. We all as humans make mistakes and bad decisions. But not all of the people in Mesa Verde are bad. We all hope to get the opportunity one day to prove that we have changed, and we are ready to get our freedom back and continue living life.

On behalf of all the detainees in Mesa Verde, I would like to thank you all for attending our art gallery. We appreciate you taking the time to see some of our work. Enjoy the art and have a nice day.