



Grappling with Hostility and Trauma at the U.S. Southern Border

As the humanitarian crisis at the U.S. Southern border remains a crucial point of focus in national policy and current affairs, Americans remain divided on the nature of the crisis itself. Most are well aware that thousands of vulnerable people have fled immediate violence in their home countries in Central America, Venezuela and Cuba to seek safety and a better future in the United States. Still, many struggle to agree on how the U.S. should respond. Mincing no words, President Trump and his administration have taken a firm stance: to block access to asylum. The

administration has emphasized that the number of migrants and asylum seekers at the border is staggering enough to warrant a national emergency, and should be addressed by reducing the number of individuals admitted and placing more restrictions on the processes that make it possible.

At CVT, we see things differently. In our view President Trump has created a humanitarian crisis under the guise of fixing a nonexistent national security one. “There is,” states Curt Goering, CVT executive director, “an ongoing humanitarian tragedy fueled by the president’s policy choices.” These choices ultimately dehumanize a diverse canvas of identities, vulnerable but tireless in their pursuit of obtaining the safety and freedom that should be guaranteed to all.

This past summer, Andrea Cárcamo, CVT senior policy counsel, met face-to-face at the Southern border with some of those individuals, Central American and Cuban asylum seekers who have been

detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). She visited the El Paso Processing Center—a facility she recalls as seeming “just like a prison”—to assist with the asylum cases of torture survivors, one of whom feared for his safety at the detention center because he was gay. A whistleblower recently uncovered that ICE subjects immigrant detainees to solitary confinement for reasons other than misconduct, like when a detainee openly identifies as gay. As Andrea quickly learned, however, the abuse of LGBTQ+ immigrant detainees by ICE did not end there. A complaint recently signed by CVT in partnership with other humanitarian and advocacy organizations asserts that the mistreatment of LGBTQ+ detainees and people with HIV is pervasive and well-documented, and calls on ICE for better oversight and accountability.

Women and LGBTQ asylum seekers awaiting entry at the U.S. Southern border are also

(see page 4)



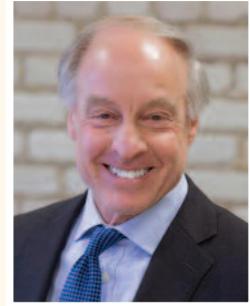
Andrea Cárcamo being interviewed by Voice of America.

Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

INSIDE

- 2 Letter from the Executive Director
- 3 Expanding Healing Care for South Sudanese Survivors in Bidi Bidi
- 4 A Profile in Compassion and Passion

Letter from the Executive Director



Curt Goering

Dear Friend,

In late September the Trump administration announced its intention to reduce the number of refugees to be admitted to the U.S. in fiscal year 2020, which began October 1, to an abysmal 18,000 people—the fewest number of refugees resettled here since the program began some 40 years ago.

Given the steady and relentless efforts of this administration to end the refugee resettlement program, this latest blow comes as no surprise, but its impact on the many refugees who have survived torture and trauma will be immediate and brutal: The announcement extinguishes the hope of thousands upon thousands of people who pictured resettlement to the U.S. as their path to survival.

There are currently nearly 26 million refugees in the world, according to United Nations statistics, and at CVT we know that far too many of them have survived the worst imaginable acts that one human being can inflict upon another. In fact, our research shows that as many as 44 percent of refugees living in the U.S. today are torture survivors.

The refugee survivors of torture we work with abroad now can barely dare to dream of a future in a new country where they will have safety and a chance to establish a future for their families. Survivors need safety; they need care.

Last year, the president set the admissions cap at 30,000—an all-time low, with pre-Trump administration norms being around 95,000 refugees per year. This year, CVT joined with rehabilitation and humanitarian organizations in calling on the administration to bring in at least that many refugees in 2020.

Instead, the number announced by the president is an outrage. It's cruel, it's irrational, and it's profoundly harmful in so many ways. It's xenophobia-fueled politics, plain and simple. The U.S. long served as a symbol of hope and the promise of a safe, stable future. We must not let the refugee admissions program be obliterated.

We're grateful to you for standing with CVT and holding fast to the values we share, for being the moral beacon needed so badly today. You're helping us be the voice of reason and compassion in advocating tirelessly for refugee survivors and an end to torture worldwide.

With my thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Curt" and "Goering" being capitalized and prominent.

Curt Goering

Expanding Healing Care for South Sudanese Survivors in Bidi Bidi

The refugee crisis is felt in only a few places on earth as acutely as in Uganda, a country which hosts more than one million refugees and asylum seekers from Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. CVT is expanding our work in Uganda and now extending rehabilitative

The clients were so appreciative of being treated with dignity and given the skills to help themselves and their families.

care to South Sudanese refugee trauma and torture survivors in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement.

Our new healing initiative joins our existing initiative in Gulu, northern Uganda, serving victims of the Lord's Resistance Army, where CVT has operated since 2009.

To most effectively serve vulnerable refugees in the Bidi Bidi settlement who are struggling with torture or trauma, CVT is now offering both psychological first aid to those in need of immediate

stabilization and 10-week group counseling sessions for adults who would benefit from longer-term mental health care. CVT will also eventually incorporate basic physiotherapy along with mental health care in Bidi Bidi to assist clients with pain management and physical coping skills.

“We just wrapped up the first group counseling cycle in Bidi Bidi and the excitement of the clinical staff is palpable. In session 10, the clients reported significant improvement in their symptoms, functioning, relationships and overall well-being. The clients were so appreciative of being treated with dignity and given the skills to help themselves and their families. Many had been isolated previously and the support of the group meant a lot to them,” said Veronica Laveta, international services clinical advisor for mental health.

Clients and potential clients are identified through community outreach efforts in the Bidi Bidi settlement which increase awareness of CVT's services, making it possible for women and men who have



Photo by Delphine Sherwood

survived trauma to find the help they need to begin healing. In addition, CVT's clinical staff have trained members of the refugee and host communities in torture and trauma awareness, increasing referrals to CVT.

In tandem with rehabilitative care extended to clients, CVT also offers staff care workshops for humanitarian workers in the Bidi Bidi settlement, to improve and maintain staff effectiveness and decrease risk of burnout and secondary traumatization.

Planning Your Legacy

You can extend your support for CVT and leave a legacy of hope for torture survivors with a bequest in your will or another planned gift. You don't have to be wealthy to make a meaningful gift, and there are many ways you can personally benefit as well as spare your loved ones from complex probate procedures and costly taxes. For more information on making a planned gift to the Center for Victims of Torture, please contact Fawn Bernhardt-Norvell at (612) 436-4888 or giving@cvt.org.



Gift of the
United States
Government

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(from page 1)

particularly vulnerable, as they face an increased risk of sexual violence. In an effort to address the root causes of the Central American refugee crisis, Andrea recently produced an art exhibition in Washington, D.C., with the support of the Organization of American States (OAS) to help diplomats and the public in general better understand and communicate the experiences of women who have fled Central America. Artists and panelists came together for this one-day event to discuss and reflect on

why Central American women flee, and how policies by the U.S., Central America and Mexico affect their choices (or lack thereof) and what we can do to make things better.

Artist Gerardo Camargo felt inspired to participate because he connected with the plight of women who flee not just to save their own lives, but often their children's lives too. "I would like people who experience my art to be more sympathetic to the reality of the women portrayed, but not just to view them as victims. We want to demonstrate the magic in how

hopeful, strong and brave they are." Fellow featured artist and collaborator Alison Lee Schroeder agrees. "Something that really struck me about the Central Americans who have fled their homes to seek asylum in the U.S., particularly in the 'migrant caravan,' is the energy of the group," she explained. "While the conversation about this issue in the U.S. is often emotional, it doesn't include much hope or faith." CVT is thus actively working to inject strength and resilience into the national narrative surrounding migrants and asylum seekers at the U.S. Southern border, and to advocate for a more responsible and compassionate response from citizens and policy makers alike.

A Profile in Compassion and Passion

A special tribute to Barbara Forster

by CVT's Director of External Relations, Peter Dross

A very active civic leader in the Center for Victims of Torture's community in Minnesota, Barbara Forster is a tireless advocate, taking every chance to raise the visibility of organizations she cares about, including CVT.

The list of organizations Barbara has helped in our community includes some of our most well-known institutions. The Junior League. The Minnesota Medical Foundation. The Guthrie Theater. The Carlson School of Management. The Women's Foundation of Minnesota.

CVT has been the grateful beneficiary of what has been described as Barbara's "full throttle"

approach to volunteerism and philanthropy. Barbara has hosted events. Made phone calls. Brought people to visit. Introduced us to community leaders. Twisted arms—gently, of course—but firmly, and raised substantial funds. She has served on CVT's Board. Served, and serves, on our Emeritus Board. Made philanthropic contributions that have helped to transform our organization. Barbara has led with compassion and with passion.

For an organization with the scary-sounding name like the Center for Victims of Torture—a name that conjures up images that don't do justice to the type of human cruelty CVT encounters in our

work—one of Barbara's most important contributions has been her credibility and her reputation. With Barbara Forster involved, your organization has instant credibility.

Barbara took a chance on CVT, and that's how a small organization with a scary-sounding name became the largest organization of its kind in the world. We could not be more thankful for her extraordinary commitment to CVT and our healing work with torture survivors worldwide.



Barbara Forster



The
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VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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