



national network for immigrant and refugee rights

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100 STORIES PROJECT

HURRICANE: Human Rights Immigrant Community Action Network
An initiative of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Interviewee: Juana Villegas

Interviewed by: Laura Rivas

Date: Thursday, October 9, 2008- 8am

Fechas/ Timeline

- Thurs, 7/3/08: Juana was arrested by Davidson County police and detained at the Metro Nashville jail (TN). Police records indicate she was stopped for “reckless driving,” highly unlikely for a pregnant woman days away from giving birth driving with 3 other young children in the car.
- Sat, 7/5/08: Juana’s water broke while in Nashville jail custody. None of the jail staff spoke Spanish, so they solicited the help of one of the inmates, who translated for Juana. They shackled her hands and feet, and transported her to the hospital, where two armed sheriff deputies were on guard until she delivered the baby.
- Sun, 7/6/08: Juana gave birth to her baby boy at 1am.
- Tues, 7/8/08: Juana was discharged from hospital at 4pm.
- Wed, 7/9/08: Juana went to court where she was represented by a public defender, and pled guilty for driving w/o a license. She was taken back to the jail after her court hearing around noon. Then she was turned over to ICE custody.
- Thurs, 7/10/08: Juana was released from ICE custody at 2am.

While in the hospital, Juana was able to spend time with her newborn baby, from 7/6 to 7/8. Juana was separated from baby from the time she was discharged from the hospital until she was released from ICE custody.

Que le dijeron los oficiales cuando la pararon?! What did the officers say when they stopped you?

“Ibamos yo y mis tres hijos a la casa de mi ultima sita de cuidado prenatal cuando me paro el policia. Inmediatamente me pidio mi licencia de manejar y la registraci3n del carro. Le di la registraci3n del carro y le dije que no tenia licencia, que solo tenia la matricula consular de Mexico. Me tuvo esperando en el carro con mis hijos en pleno calor por 45 min a 1 hora mientras revisaba mis datos. No me decia nada. El oficial solo me dijo que llamara alguien para que fuera a recoger la camioneta por que yo me tenia que ir con el. Me detuvieron el 3 de Julio a 12:40pm- a los 8 dias fui a corte, el 10 de Julio que fue cuando me di cuenta de que me acusaban. Hasta ese punto yo no sabia por que me tenian detenida si yo no habia hecho nada.”

“My three children and I were headed back home after my last prenatal doctor’s visit, when I was stopped by the police. The officer immediately asked for my driver’s license and registration. I gave him

the registration and told him I do not have a license; that I only have the ID given to me by the Mexican consulate. He had me waiting in the hot sun with my 3 children for 45 min to 1 hour while he checked my documents. He wouldn't tell me anything, like why he had stopped me. The officer simply told me to call someone to go pick up the vehicle because I would be going with him. I was arrested on July 3rd at 12:40pm- 8 days later I went to court; on July 10th was when I learned about the charges against me. Until that point, I did not know why they had detained me since I had not done anything wrong."

"Mis hijos se quedaron llorando. Ellos de ver lo que me estaba pasando pue se quedaron bien asustados. Mis hijos tienen 14, 12, y 2 añitos."

"My children were crying. They were so frightened with everything they saw happening to me. My children are 14, 12, and 2 years old."

En la cárcel/ In detention

"Me llevaron al centro donde te toman huellas, tomaron declaración, y me llevaron a la cárcel- a la celda. Allí te tienen igual que a cualquier presa. No había ningún trato especial, ni por que no había hecho yo nada malo, ni por que estaba yo embarazada. Me pusieron en una celda con 3 personas. Había baños dentro de la celda."

"They took me to a center where I was fingerprinted, interviewed, and taken to the jail cell. There you are treated just like any other prisoner. There was no special consideration, not because I was 9 months pregnant, or because I had not committed any crime. They placed me in a cell with three other detained women. There was a bathroom inside the cell."

Dando a luz/ Giving birth

"El Sábado a las 10pm de la noche se me reventó la fuente- ya estaba yo acostada en la cama cuando me di cuenta que se me había reventado la fuente. Le avisé al guardia que estaba de turno allí y él fue y llamó a una de las mujeres guardias para que me atendieran. Después me llevaron a la enfermería de la cárcel y estuve allí por una media hora antes de que llamaran a la ambulancia para que me llevaran al hospital. A mí no me dijeron a dónde me iban a llevar ni nada. Llegué al hospital como una hora después de que se me rompió la fuente. Ninguno de los oficiales de la cárcel, ni de la enfermería hablaban español. Tuvieron que pedirle a una de las muchachas de otra celda que me tradujera."

Solo me preguntaban que si tenía dolores- yo les decía que no. En todos mis partos no me dan dolores hasta que ya estoy a punto de tener al bebé. Yo no les pregunté nada- y tampoco sabía dónde me iban a llevar ni nada- le di mi número de teléfono a la muchacha que me estaba traduciendo para que le llamara a mi esposo y le avisara que ya estaba yo a punto de dar a luz pero seguramente no la dejaron que le llamara por que él no se vino enterando hasta unos días después de que naciera nuestro bebé."

"On Saturday at 10pm my water broke- I was already lying in bed when I realized my water broke. I told the guard who was on duty at the time and he went to call one of the women guards so she could assist me. They took me to the clinic in the jail, where I was held for about 30 minutes until they called the ambulance to take me to the hospital. I was not informed what hospital I would be taken to. I arrived to the hospital about one hour after my water had broken. None of the jail staff spoke Spanish. They asked one of the other detained women to translate for me."

All they asked me was if I felt pain- I told them no. In all of my children's births I have only experienced contraction pains right before delivery. I did not ask them anything- nor was I informed as to where I would deliver the baby- I gave my home phone number to the young woman who translated for me and asked her to call my husband and let him know I was about to give birth but surely they did

not allow her to make this call because my husband did not learn about our child's birth until days after the baby was born."

Camino al hospital/ *On the way to the hospital*

“De la cárcel al hospital me llevaron esposada de pies y manos- llegando al hospital iban dos sheriff conmigo. Cuando llego el tiempo de que tenía que cambiarme para ponerme la bata del hospital, las enfermeras les pidieron que se salieran para que me pudiese yo cambiar. Pues en lugar de salirse cuando me estaban cambiando la bata- solamente se voltearon como para no ver, pero se rehusaron salir del cuarto. Ya cuando me cambiaron a la cama me amarraron de la mano y de un pie... me tuvieron así como por 20 min- despues cambiaron de turno y llego otro oficial y el si me desamarró de la mano y seguí amarrada de un pie hasta momentos antes de que naciera mi niño.”

“I was shackled at my hands and feet all the way from the jail to the hospital- and was escorted by two sheriff deputies. When it was time for me to change into the hospital robe, the nurses asked the deputies if they could exit the room so I could change comfortably. Rather than exit the room as I attempted to change into the robe, they simply turned around facing the wall, refusing to leave the room. Then when I was placed on the hospital bed, the deputies shackled one foot and one hand to the hospital bed- I remained this way for about 20 minutes, until they switched shifts and the other officer who came in removed the shackle from my hand, but I remained shackled by the foot until just moments before my child's birth.”

En el hospital/ *At the hospital*

“Cuando tuve a mi bebe, nomás me dejaron verlo (las enfermeras)- se lo llevaron a limpiar- me lo entregaron el domingo a las 5 de la tarde. No me dijeron si me iban a volver a llevar a cárcel ni nada. Me tuvieron amarrada todos esos días- les tenía que hablar para que me desamarraran cuando quería ir al baño. Se imagina como me sentía?”

“When I gave birth, they (nurses) only allowed me to see him, not hold him right away- they took him to get cleaned up- then they brought him to me at 5pm on Sunday. No one told me whether I would be taken back to the jail or anything. I was shackled the entire time I was at the hospital- when I had to go to the bathroom I had to call the guards to remove the shackles. Can you imagine how I felt?”

Su familia sabia donde usted estaba?/ *Did your family know where you were?*

“Yo les pedía que por favor me dejaran hablar a mi esposo y me dijeron que no y hasta quitaron los teléfonos de los cuartos para que yo no pudiera llamar. No fue hasta después que las enfermeras del hospital llamaron para decirle que ya había nacido su bebe. Mi esposo no se entereó que había nacido el bebe hasta el lunes como 2pm.

“I pleaded with them to please let me call my husband and they refused and even removed the phone in the room I was staying so I could not call. It wasn't until days later that the hospital nurses called him to tell him his child had been born. My husband did not learn about our baby's birth until Monday at about 2pm [birth was 36 hours prior].”

Regreso a la cárcel/ *Returning to jail*

“Yo les pedí una pompa para sacarme la leche a las enfermeras en el hospital, pero cuando llegamos a la cárcel los oficiales no me dejaron llevármela a la celda. En la cárcel llegaba un doctor que va a darles

cuidado a los detenidos– y a el le pedí que si me daba Tylenol para el dolor de mi pecho por que me dolia mucho y ya no aguantaba. Me dijo que no. Solo me dio la vitamina prenatal que me habian resetado. Esa noche no pude dormir del dolor de mis pechos que los tenia llenos de leche y sin poder darle a mi bebe. Al otro dia fui a corte y fue como sali.”

“I had asked the nurses for a breast pump to avoid the pain of engorged breasts, but when I got to the jail the deputies did not allow me to carry it into the cell. Once a week, a doctor arrived to the jail to offer health care to the detainees- I pleaded with him to give me Tylenol for the pain in my breasts because I could not stand the pain any longer. He refused. He only gave me the prenatal vitamins that the doctors had prescribed at the hospital. That evening I could not sleep from the pain of having my breasts filled with milk and unable to feed my newborn child. The next day, I went to court and that’s how I got out of jail.”

Reflections

“No quisiera que a otra persona le pase lo mismo. Que no anden maltratando a las mujeres. Me senti maltratada. En realidad fue una cosa muy fea.”

“I wouldn’t want this to happen to anyone. They shouldn’t be mistreating women this way. I felt mistreated and violated. Truly, it was a horrible experience.”

- Juana Villegas y su marido tienen cuatro hijos ciudadanos/ *Juana and her husband have four U.S. citizen children.*