



## Immigrants Denied Visitation - Activists Hope To Restore Programs

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SANTA ANA (CNS) - Activists have called on Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to restore suspended programs that allow visits with immigration detainees at three Southern California detention centers, including the Santa Ana city jail and James A. Musick Facility in Irvine.

Representatives of Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement, or CIVIC, claim ICE shut down the visitation programs July 24 when its coexecutive director, Christina Fialho, published a blog item criticizing the way ICE treats detainees who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

"Visitation programs have always feared speaking up when they see injustices and abuses in immigration detention facilities for fear of retaliation from ICE or the facilities," Fialho said.

"The suspension of these three programs confirms those fears.

"In the past, CIVIC has witnessed people in detention thrown into solitary confinement and transferred away from communities of support when we speak up about basic conditions and human rights abuses. We have seen individual visitors who have spoken up prevented from entering detention facilities, but this is the first time we have seen ICE take the drastic step of suspending three visitation programs in their entirety."

ICE officials apparently objected to the way the organization brought in reporters without clearing it with the agency, according to one official.

ICE officials were reconsidering whether to restore the visitation. "U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials are conducting further review of the Friends of Adelanto Detainees program and plan ongoing discussion with the group's leadership on how the program can be most beneficial to those in ICE custody," said Lori K. Haley of ICE.

"U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is committed to transparency and community engagement.

Through the agency's Community Outreach Program, ICE has built robust relationships with community stakeholders at the national and local levels including the public, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, attorneys, and advocacy groups.

"Each and every day, ICE Community Outreach coordinates and conducts numerous community stakeholder tours and visits in one of our many immigration detention facilities

across the country."

An American Civil Liberties Union attorney warned that shutting down the visitation could be seen as a violation of First Amendment rights.

"There's no question that the visitation programs would still be operating today had CIVIC publicly praised ICE, rather than criticized ICE's treatment of detainees," ACLU attorney Michael Kaufman said.

"The suspensions raise grave First Amendment concerns, and give the clear appearance that ICE is trying to silence its critics and shield the public's awareness of detention conditions."