

# The Injustices of “Alligator Alcatraz”

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## I. Introduction

Since the United States reelected President Donald Trump to office in 2024, Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) has detained almost sixty thousand individuals as of September 21, 2025.<sup>1</sup> Of that number, 71.5% of detainees had no criminal convictions.<sup>2</sup> As part of his platform, President Trump ordered ICE to conduct countless immigration raids, where officers storm areas they expect undocumented individuals to be present and they arrest the inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> The line between border security and inhumane treatment has sparked political debate in the U.S. regarding these practices. One recent development in June 2025 captured the nation’s attention: President Trump’s creation of an immigration detention facility located in South Florida dubbed “Alligator Alcatraz.” In the prison-like facility, eyewitness accounts have exposed some of the darker conditions like contamination, issues with attorney-client connection, and missing detainees.<sup>4</sup> These recent incidents have caused many to question the authority and legality of this camp. Due to its inhumane living conditions and practices, “Alligator Alcatraz” is endangering the lives of many individuals and must be shut down.

## II. Racial Stereotyping and Profiling in Immigration Raids

Before analyzing why Alligator Alcatraz should be shut down, it is important to understand why the current administration created this camp and what purpose it serves. During

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<sup>1</sup> TRAC Immigration, *Immigration Detention Quick Facts* (Nov. 2025), <https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Noem v. Perdomo*, 222 L. Ed. 2d 1213 (2025).

<sup>4</sup> Ben Wieder & Shirsho Dasgupta, *Hundreds of Alligator Alcatraz Detainees Drop off the Grid After Leaving Site*, *Mia. Herald* (Sept. 2025), <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article312042943.html>.

his 2024 election campaign, Trump promised mass deportations if reelected to office.<sup>5</sup> He hosted multiple political rallies where he used hateful rhetoric against minorities. Trump described Venezuelan immigrants residing in Aurora, Colorado as “an army of illegal alien gang members and migrant criminals from the dungeons of the third world” who will “prey upon innocent American citizens.”<sup>6</sup> In an interview with conservative host Hugh Hewitt, Trump stated that migrants are more likely to be murderers because “it’s in their genes.”<sup>7</sup> This terminology vilifies immigrants and paints them as an enemy. Although White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt claimed President Trump was speaking of “murderers, not migrants,”<sup>8</sup> he later expressed xenophobic views of one particular group of immigrants: Ohio’s Haitian community. President Trump falsely claimed Haitians in Ohio should be deported because they were eating pets.<sup>9</sup> President Trump’s statements before and after his reelection make sweeping, racially motivated generalizations as justification for deportations.

It is for these stated reasons that there is not only an increase in immigration detentions but also in raids. Over the past year, immigration raids have been arbitrarily conducted on a larger scale. One nationally covered example is the raids in Los Angeles, California, where the treatment of migrants and arrestees was so severe that on October 14, 2025, county supervisors declared a state of emergency.<sup>10</sup> Attendance numbers in work dropped as a result of residents’ fear of detention.<sup>11</sup> As of September, 1,600 people had been detained in L.A., with a single raid

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Holland et al., *Trump Headlines Madison Square Garden Rally After Vulgar, Racist Remarks from Allies*, Reuters (Oct. 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-kick-off-final-week-campaign-with-madison-square-garden-rally-2024-10-27/>.

<sup>6</sup> Myah Ward, *We Watched 20 Trump Rallies. His Racist, Anti-Immigrant Messaging Is Getting Darker*, Politico (Oct. 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/10/12/trump-racist-rhetoric-immigrants-00183537>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Michelle L. Price, *Watch: White House Denounces Trump’s ‘Bad Genes’ Comment*, PBS News, (Oct. 2024), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-live-white-house-holds-news-briefing-as-biden-marks-anniversary-of-oct-7-attacks>.

<sup>9</sup> Ward, *supra* note 6.

<sup>10</sup> Leah Sarnoff, *Los Angeles County Declares State of Emergency over Immigration Raids*, ABC News (Oct. 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/los-angeles-county-declares-state-emergency-immigration-raids/story?id=126531481>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

detaining two hundred people.<sup>12</sup> These numbers are likely higher now. President Trump even deployed the California National Guard to L.A. on June 7, 2025 after protestors criticized the increased policing of migrant and minority communities.<sup>13</sup> Minorities risk being detained outside when protesting,<sup>14</sup> walking, or attending school.<sup>15</sup> The Supreme Court has recently even allowed racial profiling in raids, particularly in *Krisi Noem v. Pedro Vasquez Perdomo* (2025). In a six-to-three vote, the Court decided that if ICE has “reasonable suspicion,” they can then detain an individual based on factors including race, ethnicity, foreign accent, occupation, and bus riders.<sup>16</sup> Allowing race and ethnicity to be a “relevant factor” leads to dangerous outcomes like even detaining U.S. citizens and perpetuating problematic stereotypes about Hispanic and Latinx communities.<sup>17</sup>

When eighteen-year-old Cristian Benavides told ICE agents that he was a U.S. citizen and that he had the right to speak, the agent replied: “[Y]ou got no rights, you’re an amigo, brother.”<sup>18</sup> Instead of asking for documentation, ICE just forced him to the ground. In another instance, Jason Gavidia was stormed by armed agents while working at a car shop.<sup>19</sup> Despite repeatedly stating that he was a citizen, ICE asked what hospital Gavidia was born at.<sup>20</sup> When

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<sup>12</sup> L.A. City Comm’r, *100 Days of ICE in LA* (Sept. 2025), <https://cd13.lacity.gov/news/100-days-ice-la>.

<sup>13</sup> Juliana Kim, *Trump Says National Guard Will Soon Go to New Orleans. Here’s the Latest*, NPR (last updated Dec. 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/10/nx-s1-5567177/national-guard-map-chicago-california-oregon>.

<sup>14</sup> Stephanie Wade & Lissette Nuñez, *Group of 14 ‘Suburban Moms’ Among 16 Arrested During Protests Outside Broadview Ice Facility*, ABC 7 (Nov. 2025), <https://abc7chicago.com/post/ice-chicago-news-sheriffs-deputies-remove-group-suburban-moms-broadview-protest-today-immigration-enforcement/18126098/>.

<sup>15</sup> Cate Cauquiran, *Elgin Community College Student Taken into Ice Custody, School Says*, ABC 7 (Sept. 2025), <https://abc7chicago.com/post/student-taken-ice-custody-parking-lot-main-campus-elgin-community-college-says/17843338/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Noem v. Perdomo*, 222 L. Ed. 2d 1213, 1219 (2025) (Sotomayor, J., dissenting).

<sup>17</sup> Nicole Foy, *We Found That More Than 170 U.S. Citizens Have Been Held by Immigration Agents. They’ve Been Kicked, Dragged and Detained for Days*, ProPublica (Oct. 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/immigration-dh-s-american-citizens-arrested-against-will>.

<sup>18</sup> Cristian Benavides, *Immigration Agent Told 18-Year-Old U.S. Citizen “You Got No Rights Here” During Arrest*, CBS Evening News (July 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPis6lmDk64>.

<sup>19</sup> Jennifer Medina, *‘I’m an American, Bro!’: Latinos Report Raids in Which U.S. Citizenship Is Questioned*, N.Y. Times (June 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/15/us/hispanic-americans-raids-citizenship.html>; see also *Perdomo*, 222 L. Ed. (Sotomayor, J., dissenting).

<sup>20</sup> Medina, *supra* note 19.

Gavidia could not remember, ICE kept his arm twisted and against a fence until Gavidia himself offered identification. ICE's first move in a raid was not to verify his ID but to use physical force. Had Gavidia not offered his ID, he would likely have been taken away on the spot. Moreover, ICE has still detained non-citizens even if they have a clean record. A police officer conducted a traffic stop on a nineteen-year-old nursing student and the police officer commented on her accent.<sup>21</sup> Despite having no criminal record, ICE then held her for fifteen days.<sup>22</sup> ICE also detained and separated a fourth grade boy from his father.<sup>23</sup> The Department of Homeland Security stated that President Trump is attempting "to remove the worst of the worst."<sup>24</sup> However, ICE detains law-abiding Hispanic civilians based on factors like an accent, not crime. It is after this prejudice is executed that detention camps like Alcatraz are constructed, where detainees will be held until their case is resolved—which may never happen.

### **III. Inhumane Conditions**

Reports of overcrowding, sanitation, and obstruction of attorney-client privilege have raised concerns regarding where the line is drawn between a facility and an "internment camp," as stated by Congressman Maxwell Frost. Congressman Frost referred to Alcatraz as this when he walked through a "sanitized visitation."<sup>25</sup> Florida Governor Ron DeSantis invited Congressmembers to tour Alcatraz, but officials cleaned the facility in advance. On July 12, 2025, Frost recounted what he witnessed during his visit to the facility to news network MS NOW, alongside other congressmen.<sup>26</sup> Frost stated that he saw thirty-two detainees placed in a

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<sup>21</sup> Nicole Acevedo, *How Ice Detained a Utah College Student After a Brief Traffic Stop*, NBC News (June 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/ice-detains-utah-university-student-traffic-stop-colorado-rcna213231>.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> Vivian Chow, *California 4th Grader Detained by Ice at Immigration Hearing*, Oklahoma's News 4 (June 2025), <https://kfor.com/news/california-4th-grader-detained-by-ice-at-immigration-hearing/>.

<sup>24</sup> Press Release, U.S. Dep't Homeland Sec., *DHS Debunks Alligator Alcatraz Hoaxes* (2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/08/14/dhs-debunks-alligator-alcatraz-hoaxes>.

<sup>25</sup> *Inside 'Alligator Alcatraz': Lawmakers Compare Detention Camp to 'Internment Camps'*, MS Now (July 2025), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd0p\\_Rph0Gw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd0p_Rph0Gw).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

single cage with only three toilets; he also noted that their source of drinking water is connected to those toilets, constructed as a spigot connected right above the toilet seat.<sup>27</sup> He stated the inside of the facility was hot, detainees were sweating, and mosquitoes were flying everywhere.<sup>28</sup> While Frost was there, someone even yelled that they were a U.S. citizen.<sup>29</sup>

Not only are there risks to health but to due process. Due process in the U.S. is the legal procedure protected under the Fourteenth Amendment that must be followed when the federal or state government attempts to take the “life, liberty, or property” from any person, citizen or noncitizen.<sup>30</sup> How due process is applied varies, however, procedural due process generally requires at least a notice, an opportunity to be heard before a court, and an impartial tribunal.<sup>31</sup> ICE has been accused of violating due process for detaining individuals with the limited ability to meet with their lawyer.<sup>32</sup> These obstructions could explain why Congressman Frost heard someone shout that they are a U.S. citizen. The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit regarding this lack of attorney access, citing instances such as attorneys being denied entrance into the facility.<sup>33</sup> The ACLU reported that one of the clients was “wrongly deported” after being unable to meet with their attorney.<sup>34</sup> Even if these lawyers can visit, reports state there are “week-long delays.”<sup>35</sup> Despite these claims, a judge dismissed this case on the basis that most meetings were able to occur, reasoning further that a different court should instead have the

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<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1.

<sup>31</sup> *See Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.*, 339 U.S. 306 (1950).

<sup>32</sup> *Immigration Rights Groups, ACLU Lawsuit Alleges Alligator Alcatraz Preventing Detainees from Having Attorney Access*, CBS News (July 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/alligator-alcatraz-aclu-attorney-access-lawsuit/>.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> Peter Charalambous & Laura Romero, *Judge Dismisses Part of Lawsuit over Detainees' Legal Access at 'Alligator Alcatraz'*, ABC News (Aug. 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/judge-dismisses-part-lawsuit-detainees-legal-access-alligator/story?id=124774536>.

<sup>35</sup> *Attorneys Demand Better Legal Access for "Alligator Alcatraz" Detainees*, CBS News Mia. (Sept. 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/attorneys-demand-better-legal-access-for-alligator-alcatraz-detainees/>.

jurisdiction to try the case.<sup>36</sup> Troublingly, the Department of Justice stated that some detainees could have not even had a removal proceeding.<sup>37</sup>

A previous corrections officer for Garda World Federal Services, a private security company working at Alcatraz, reported her eyewitness account of additional cruel conditions.<sup>38</sup> Just from working there for a week, she was able to see horrid confinements with tents that held close to three hundred detainees each.<sup>39</sup> The restrooms were regularly backed up.<sup>40</sup> Her claims could explain the overflow of toilet water and waste reported on the floors of Alcatraz from the Associated Press.<sup>41</sup> She testified to the lack of hot water and how detainees there usually do not shower every day.<sup>42</sup> Another previous staff member of the facility spoke out about how detainees often did not know the time of day, and they were often deprived of outdoor movement—a basic practice that is normally implemented in prisons.<sup>43</sup> Of all of the detention facilities he has worked at, he claims that Alligator Alcatraz is the worst, and that detainees often cannot sleep because of staff turning up the volume on their radios.<sup>44</sup> Overall, the camp is a hot spot of contamination, which threatens human lives, and worms have even been reported to be found in the food.<sup>45</sup> The United Nations requires that even prisons provide nutritional food, clean sanitation, exercise, and

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<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> Mike Schneider, *DOJ Contradicts DeSantis: Some Detainees at 'Alligator Alcatraz' Likely Never in Removal Proceedings*, NBC 6 S. Fla. (Oct. 2025), <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/doj-contradicts-desantis-some-detainees-at-alligator-alcatraz-likely-never-in-removal-proceedings/3702059/>.

<sup>38</sup> Hatzel Vela, *'It's Inhumane': Former 'Alligator Alcatraz' Worker Describes Conditions*, NBC News (Aug. 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/former-alligator-alcatraz-worker-describes-inhumane-conditions-244449349925>.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> *'Alligator Alcatraz' Staffer Speaks Out About Work and Living Conditions in the Detention Center*, 10 Tampa Bay (Oct. 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPis6lmDk64>.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Gisela Salomon & Kate Payne, *Detained Immigrants at 'Alligator Alcatraz' Say There Are Worms in Food and Wastewater on the Floor*, Associated Press (July 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/alligator-alcatraz-immigration-detainees-florida-cc2fb9e34e760a50e97f13fe59cbf075>.

proper health care.<sup>46</sup> Basic needs like edible food, quality air, and sleep are essential for human survival and have been accused of being consistently restricted in this facility.

#### **IV. Environmental Issues**

A recent lawsuit by Friends of the Everglades managed to secure an order temporarily shutting down Alcatraz. Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, the case took an environmental angle.<sup>47</sup> The plaintiffs—ecological advocacy groups—attested that Alcatraz is causing land degradation and potential for toxic waste.<sup>48</sup> The plaintiffs also sued on the basis that Alcatraz was built on the conditions that it would be used for flight purposes,<sup>49</sup> as the area used to host an airport.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, plaintiffs argued that the construction of Alcatraz violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because environmental review was required prior to building the facility.<sup>51</sup> Federal and state governments rebutted that Alcatraz is a state project, so they do not need to follow NEPA.<sup>52</sup> However, the federal government approved \$608 million of funding for the Alcatraz project, and therefore Friends of Everglades argues this funding makes it a federal project.<sup>53</sup> On August 21, 2025, a Miami district court judge made an order prohibiting further construction at the facility as well as “bringing any additional persons onto the TNT site who were not already being detained at the site at the time the order went into effect.”<sup>54</sup> Additional changes to Alcatraz were mandated to take place after sixty days of this

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<sup>46</sup> U.N. Off. Drugs & Crime, *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, U.N. Doc. V.16-00193, at 6–11 (2015).

<sup>47</sup> *Friends of the Everglades, Inc. v. Kristi Noem*, 796 F. Supp. 3d 1234, at 1 (S.D. Fla. 2025).

<sup>48</sup> Friends of the Everglades, “*Alligator Alcatraz*” *Status Update: 127 Days of America’s Worst Idea* (Nov. 2025), <https://www.everglades.org/alligator-alcatraz-status-update-127-days-of-americas-worst-idea/>.

<sup>49</sup> *Friends of the Everglades*, 796 F. Supp. at 4.

<sup>50</sup> Cecilia Barria & Walter Fojo, *The Virtually Abandoned Florida Airport Being Turned into ‘Alligator Alcatraz’*, BBC Mundo (June 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwyrnrnx7yo>.

<sup>51</sup> *Friends of the Everglades*, 796 F. Supp.

<sup>52</sup> Jamie Ostroff, *Department of Justice Seeks Pause in ‘Alligator Alcatraz,’ Citing Government Shutdown*, WPTV 5 (Oct. 2025), <https://www.wptv.com/wptv-investigates/departments-of-justice-seeks-pause-in-alligator-alcatraz-citing-government-shutdown>.

<sup>53</sup> *Friends of the Everglades*, 796 F. Supp.

<sup>54</sup> Omnibus Order at 80, *Friends of the Everglades, Inc. v. Kristi Noem*, 796 F. Supp. 3d 1234 (S.D. Fla. 2025) (No. 25-22896).

temporary order. However, because of the federal government shutdown that started in October 2025, this order has been paused and Alcatraz has continued to operate. Friends of the Everglades sued again on October 14, 2025,<sup>55</sup> demanding the Florida Division of Emergency Management provide all of its public records relating to the federal funding of Alcatraz.<sup>56</sup> This case currently remains open at the time of writing this article. These environmental concerns demonstrate how Alcatraz affects the general public, not just detainees.

## **V. Conclusion**

Due to its race-based detention process, inhumane conditions, and environmental concerns, the “Alligator Alcatraz” facility is unconstitutional and must be shut down. Its location and lack of proper resources threaten human life and risks violation of federal procedures. Day by day, ICE agents arrest Hispanic and Latinx families from off the street, violently force civilians to the ground, sometimes without regard for citizenship, and ship humans off to a camp where they are not certain if they will see their lawyer or family ever again. Alcatraz requires further investigation of these conditions in order to ensure the proper legal treatment of detainees. If both undocumented and documented citizens are not granted fair procedures in the detention process, due process could become a broader concern for all civilians in the future. Because of these injustices, the detention facility of Alcatraz must be closed. For now, time will tell the fate of Alcatraz; in the next year, its status will be determined by the outcome of pending lawsuits.

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<sup>55</sup> Tom Lotshaw, *Florida Accused Of Hiding Info On Detention Center Grant*, Law360 L. News (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn%3acontentItem%3a6H0Y-9S13-S874-14RB-0000-0-00&context=1519360&identityprofileid=X7P7NJ54809>.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*