

I am the Rev. Doris K. Dalton, the Executive Director of the Westchester Martin Luther King, Jr. Institute for Nonviolence. I am also the Chair of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission. I am honored to stand with you today to demonstrate our collective outrage at the immoral separation of children from families and the indefinite detention of children, adults and families. I stand with you in solidarity for all who are vulnerable and oppressed by this zero tolerance policy.

We also stand here together on land that originally belonged to the Lenape people. I call us to remember how our government legally separated indigenous children from their families and communities. I call us to remember how our government legally separated children and families at slave auction markets. I call us to remember how courthouses just like this one legally separated children from families in Japanese American concentration camps during the Second World War. I call us to remember how our government legally separated children from families using Jim Crow laws. And it keeps happening, especially to our black and brown children.

It's time to ask WHY this keeps happening. What is the premise for the legal separation of children and families? The premise of these family separations is that it is supposed to be for the safety and security of US citizens. To protect the American economy. To protect us from domestic terrorism. In other words, separating children from families is for YOUR benefit, and it's happening in YOUR name. This does not represent us!

People of Justice, We know that forcibly separating children from their loved ones and protectors does not protect us or save us. We know that it will only cause us all further harm. Here is a letter that the MLK Institute wrote to Attorney General Jeff Sessions last week:

Dear Attorney General Jeffrey Sessions,

We are the members of the Board of Directors, the Advisory Board, the Executive Director and supporters of the Westchester Martin Luther King, Jr. Institute for Nonviolence. We are horrified at the devastating impact of your "zero tolerance" immigration and customs enforcement policy that you have enacted at our borders. The consequences of your policy are emotional, mental, physical and spiritual violence needlessly visited upon thousands of

children and adults.

We urge you to abandon the "zero tolerance" policy that has led to the separation of families while they are detained and the indefinite detention of individuals and families while they await immigration proceedings. These policies and practices do not reflect our democratic values, or our commitment to human rights. When we abuse children from other countries, we demonstrate to the global community our deficiencies in compassion and respect for the most vulnerable among us.

We also reject the premise that these actions are done as a method to ultimately protect us, to ensure our safety and security, and to guarantee a robust economy for us to enjoy. We, members of the MLK Institute for Nonviolence community, derive no enjoyment, no protection, no sense of safety or security when we watch our own law enforcement agents forcibly separate children from their parents with no plan for their reunification. The price for our protection, safety, security, and our economic ease cannot be bought with the violence visited upon these children and families.

We demand you immediately enact a plan to quickly reunite all immigrant children with their families, ensure all families remain together throughout the immigration process and end indefinite detention of all persons.

Sincerely,

The Executive Director, Board of Directors and Advisory Board of the MLK Institute for Nonviolence