

7/7/07

TO: ALL THOSE ATTENDING STAFF BRIEFING ON MEDICAL TREATMENT AT IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS.

FROM: JUNE EVERETT/SANDRA M. KENLEY'S SISTER
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RE: STAFF BRIEFING ON MEDICAL TREATMENT AT IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS

Thank you, Mr. Ellison, and all those present here today for inviting me.

When I was asked to be the voice for those immigrants who died in ICE custody, I knew I had no choice because my sister, Sandra M. Kenley, is one of those immigrants who died in jail under ICE supervision. To find out after reading the papers recently, that at least 62 immigrants died while in US custody, was shocking to me, and I know it was also shocking to millions of people around the world. I am compelled today to plead the case that something needs to be done and it is my hope that through my sister's death, we can get back on course and restore the sense of decency and fairness of the American values that we are known for. So many questions are still unanswered.

So many lives have been shattered.

I cannot tell you the stories of all the other deceased immigrants. But I can tell you my sister's story. We grew up in Barbados. My sister was a scholar in our native country. She was an athlete. At the age of 15, she graduated from high school and began teaching Spanish at the Modern High School - English is our native language. My mom is deceased, and my dad, Clifton Roberts of Roberts Manufacturing, is 94 years old. We all grew up with hopes and dreams of coming to America to better our lives. We met many tourists in Barbados who painted a picture of the United States as a country that was fair and just - like the American values. My sister died holding on to these beliefs and dreams.

My sister came to America when she was 20 years old, and lived here for nearly 33 years as a legal immigrant. We never thought that she would die at the hands of the government that promised so much. On her way back from a visit home to Barbados with her granddaughter she was stopped by an ICE officer at the airport. She was asked to show up at Dulles Airport on two occasions to meet with an ICE officer. The first time, they told her to leave because she had brought her granddaughter of whom she had custody. The second time she went to Dulles, she never returned. Her son and I were there with her. She was taken into custody. She was told she was being detained for prior misdemeanor drug charges, but she had already fulfilled the court's requirements for those charges. She even completed her probation early and sentencing by the judge, in the case F2740-02 (B) ATTEMPTED POSSESSION OF COCAINE, was terminated. A letter from her probation officer informing ICE of her clearance was given to the officer at the time of her arrest. Her probation officer Lisa Silor articulated in the letter, "She is not currently under supervision with this Agency and has not been since September 8, 2003." My sister never went back on drugs. She said when she dies she will be drug free and she was.

We warned the ICE officer of my sister's medical condition. She was disabled. She had a bleeding fibroid, and needed surgery. She had high blood pressure, high cholesterol, etc. But, for some reason, ICE determined that she needed to be detained. ICE became her judge and jury again for the same crime she had been cleared of - how could this be America? She was taken away from me, and I didn't know at the time that that would be the last time I kissed my sister goodbye. My sister, Sandra Marina Kenley, should never have been imprisoned; my sister, Sandra Marina Kenley, should never have died.

After she was taken away, Sandra's kids and I for 2-3 weeks could not locate her. All our efforts were fruitless. Eventually, Sandra called from Po-Monkey Regional Jail - cell #21. All I could do was listen to her endless conversations, night and day, complaining about not getting her medicine. And when the prison officers gave her any pills, they were the wrong ones that made her very sick. She was more detailed in her letters to me. We had even given the ICE official my sister's correct medication that day she was arrested at Dulles. Sandra said to me "June, I do not want to cause any waves because it will kill you in these jails. I have heard many stories from inmates that many people coming in and ending up dead or disappearing and no one has seen them again. So, please get me out of here sis." She also said that if you speak out, "they send you far, far away where no one can reach you or find you. She was right. A few weeks later she was transferred to Hampton Regional Jail. She complained of the horrific conditions there also. No medicine for her high blood pressure, no medical treatment for her heavy bleeding, no legal help. My sister,

Sandra, should have never been imprisoned. My sister, Sandra, should never have died.

Despite her warnings, I did everything I could to save my sister's life. Advocates called the jail on her behalf, while I searched for lawyers to help. I even went back to Dulles to try to find the ICE officials to beg them to get my sister the care she needed or to release her, since she was no threat to anyone. Even though she was afraid of retaliation, my sister did everything she could to get help also. She was hemorrhaging non-stop. Blood poured down her legs and spilled on the floor of her cell. My sister was scared, and suffering unnecessarily. But no one would do anything. My sister should have never been locked up, instead she needed medical care.

She was looking forward to her 53rd birthday. This was significant to her, born in 1953, in the 5th month of the year. She could not wait to celebrate with me the next year. We made big plans, but they never happened. Instead, I got a call on December 18th, 2005 saying my sister was dead in jail. Before that, my sister called me everyday and I had not heard from her in several days. She went before the judge on December 14th; the last time I talked to her was December 13, 2005. So I already felt something was wrong when I got the call that day. When I answered, the woman on the other end of the phone, calling from the Hampton Regional Jail, said, "I'm sorry to tell you that your sister passed away." This made no sense. I immediately asked her how my sister died. She said she was not sure, she thinks it was a heart attack, but they were performing an autopsy as we spoke. An autopsy that I never got a copy of per our request. This lady gave me the name "Mr. Simone" who she said could give me more information but he did not have any answers. I did get a copy of her medical report from the hospital where her body was taken. I also got a copy of the ambulance report, but everything is conflicting and does not make sense.

Dr. Michael B. Bennett - ED Physician at Maryview Medical Center in Portsmouth in his report says "Patient was in a jail cell, other jail cell person stated patient fell, hit head, then got back into bed, and was unresponsive - per EMS, time from ems call to er arrival is more than 50 minutes, ems found patient unresponsive, no pulse, no pressure". On Sandra's death certificate the cause of death was Acute Coronary Insufficiency/Hypertensive Cardiovascular disease - no mention of head injury. But in Dr. Bennett's progress notes he writes - Differential diagnosis: arrest after fall? HEAD INJURY MASSIVE vs CARDIOPULMONARY ARREST THEN FALL. I still get no answers: HOW DID SANDRA MARINA KENLEY DIE? I want to know, the world wants to know. Congress, how many more immigrants have to die before the system is fixed. After my sister's death, the Barbados government submitted to Congress a formal request for an inquest into the death of Sandra, but this fell on deaf ears also, they never got a response. Congress, America, something is very wrong here and I need answers; all I've received is my sister's body, a navy blue jumper, and hell to live in

for the rest of my life.

I buried my sister Sandie here in America, on January 4th, 2006, the same day that the judge in jail said she would be released, with or without a lawyer. He told her she had already served her time; these words are in her final letter from jail received December 20th, 2005. So why is she dead? so, she is still here in this country, but dead. What sense does this make? My sister could still be here, alive, had she been given the chance to fulfill her American dream. What good has this done for this country or anyone? Instead, it has brought shame and disgrace to a country that is supposed to stand up for human rights.

My sister was not illegal. She was not a terrorist. She was a human being. One that made mistakes like all of us. She was human enough to turn her life around and to pursue her dreams. She became a nurse, had just bought a new car, became a grandmother with custody, etc. My sister worked in this country for at least 25 years before becoming disabled. Sandra died trying to do the right thing. Sandra died because the American system failed her. A system we believed in. A system that needs fixing, NOW, before more lives are lost unnecessarily. What happened to my sister's human rights and the human rights of all detainees - they have none? How can they be denied medical treatment? They had to live in unsanitary conditions. My sister also was wrongfully imprisoned.

What am I supposed to tell Sandra's granddaughter, Nakita, about her grandmother's death? What am I supposed to tell Nakita about American values? How many more lives have to be shattered before the system is fixed.

Sandra is trying, through me, to help those who cannot help themselves and continue to suffer at the hands of this government. This is now my sister's legacy. So, Mr. Ellison, and members of Congress, I am depending on you to correct the wrongs. Fix it. Make it right. For all those immigrants who gave their lives. For all those immigrants who are still suffering at your hands, in your detention centers. For all those left behind to grieve, to hurt, whose lives have been shattered, Congress, have a heart. My sister's heart was taken so that others may live. So, I call on you today, to investigate the conditions under which my sister died, and to provide ongoing oversight to ensure that no one else suffers like my sister did.

So many questions are still unanswered. So many lives have been shattered.