**FAQs**

*If you can improve this document, please contact us through the ‘contact’ page of this website.*

**I thought they weren’t accepting donations at the detention centers? Where are my donations going?**

Here’s what happens to the folks as they arrive at the border:

They are stopped by the government, who allows only a very few at a time to approach the port of entry to ask for asylum. They then wait for their turn in Mexico under nearby bridges. Angry Tias and Abuelas (in McAllen) and Team Brownsville provide items and love while they wait, discourage them from swimming across the Rio Grande, and let them know what to expect through the process. You can give the Angry Tias money, which will go for things like food, diapers, clothing, blankets, water, etc. You can join them as they cross the border to be under the bridges. Find them at<https://www.facebook.com/angrytiasandabuelas/> while their website is under construction. Contact for Team Brownsville can be found on our ‘organizations’ page.

Next, the refugees enter the US and ask the US Customs and Border Protection for asylum. They are essentially arrested and put into detention facilities (even though asking for asylum isn’t a crime). While they are in detention from anywhere from 72 hours to 6 weeks or more, there is no way to support them with item donations. While they are there they will get processed legally and bonded out. Texas Impact’s Courts and Ports program supports the folks during their hearings, and RAICES also provides legal support and bond money. Any monetary donations go directly to this end. They also need volunteers to help support people during their hearings (you don’t need to speak Spanish or have legal expertise). You can find them at:<https://texasimpact.org/project/courts-ports/> and<https://www.raicestexas.org/>.

When the person has successfully handed their asylum papers and has a court date, they are dropped off by the border patrol at a nearby bus station. At this point they have nothing, because anything they came in with (including shoelaces and belts) has been taken away. Local humanitarian groups meet the buses at the stations and provide support: basic needs, coordination to their next destination, and basic medical care if necessary. The Angry Tias, the [Annunciation House](https://annunciationhouse.org/), and the [Humanitarian Respite Center](https://www.catholiccharitiesrgv.org/HumanitarianRespiteCenter.shtml) are some such organizations in Texas. Find others on our ‘organizations’ page.

The persons then travel to their next destination, legal papers in hand. This may be a sponsor, family, or a resettlement center where they will be transitioned to the community. In Austin, one such center is [Casa Marianella](http://www.casamarianella.org/).

**I hear that many of the refugees are sick. Does volunteering with them put me at risk?**

Many of the people have traveled long distances, suffered under unhealthy circumstances for long periods of time, and have also been exposed to novel bugs once they get here. Once refugees are in contact with humanitarian organizations, all effort is made to address minor and serious medical issues under the care of medical professionals.

There is some risk that you will be exposed to viruses or bacteria when interacting with refugees. If you want to work directly with people, take basic precautions such as frequent handwashing, use of anti-bacterial gel, or wearing a face mask. If you want to not be exposed at all, donate money online, gather and drop off requested items, order requested items online, or work in the back of the centers (cooking, sorting clothing, unpacking & sorting donations, doing office work, or legal help). The needs are varied and great; everyone can find a role they are comfortable with.

**What if I live far away from the border and the detention centers?**

Activate your networks. You’ll find materials to support your efforts on this website, and much can be done without traveling. Also, the answers above can guide you as you organize your communities anywhere.

Witness and advocacy are tremendously important. Keep on your elected representatives and otherwise raise awareness in any way you can: social media, church, hobby groups. On good advice, Tweet at your elected representatives: they can’t turn off the phone & fax machine or fail to open their mail as a means of ignoring you. Write letters to the editor. Write postcards to your officials - these show up quicker in their mailbox. Show up to or organize rallies or other direct action nearby. All of these things prevent the inhumanity from being swept under the rug, and puts pressure on those making the decisions to reconsider their stance.

 Many organizations have Amazon wishlists, or provide lists of urgently needed items on their websites. If you hear of someone who has gone or regularly goes to centers to help, offer to financially support their work, especially if they travel to do so. Gather and send items with them when they go down (see guidelines for used clothing attached). RAICES is also a great place to donate, as they work directly to free refugees from detention centers.

**7-16**