



Bassuk Center

Stable housing, wellness, and opportunity

Help Today

Liliana* left El Salvador with her four children, ages 3 to 15, traveling through Mexico to arrive almost a year later at the US border. Now **pregnant with her fifth child, she was detained and separated** from her family before being allowed entry into the US, in part, because she has relatives on the East Coast.

Liliana and her children were among many whom I met this summer when I volunteered at a **large family shelter in San Diego** that accommodates 60 to 300 refugees and asylum seekers each night.

Poverty, violence, human trafficking, and corruption have compelled families like Liliana's to flee their homelands. Most had been **detained at the border and many families had been separated** before being reunited at the shelter.

While at the shelter run by JFS San Diego, I was struck by many **parallels between newly arriving migrants and US families and children experiencing homelessness**. Migrants' exposures are **reminiscent of US children and families we serve each day at the Bassuk Center**.



Dr. Hart joins shelter staff and Boston volunteers at JFS, San Diego. Photo Courtesy of CJP.

Over the next several weeks, I will **share stories that highlight the connections** between this new wave of families and those already living with homelessness in the US. I will also describe their resilience, hopes, and dreams that emerge about their future.

* Lilliana is not her real name

The first and most obvious parallel was the **fear and uncertainty seen in the faces of the newly arrived families** who have been struggling to survive and to protect their children. How long will they be able to stay in shelter? Are they safe? Will the family suddenly be separated again? How much have their children been hurt? **Will life ever feel routine or "normal?"**

Another similarity was how **genuine and consistent care** by staff and volunteers at the San Diego shelter slowly helped to rebuild **families' ability to trust**. Compared with newly arriving migrant families, many residents living in the shelter for even a few weeks appeared **more relaxed, more engaged**, and were able to **imagine what might be possible** in this new land.

The families' time at the shelter could not erase their past nor predict their future, but providing **necessary care and appropriate services fostered hope and steps** toward a new beginning. This was true for migrant families I met in San Diego; it is equally true for US families experiencing homelessness who receive **safe shelter coupled with comprehensive services**.

Patient, kind attention from caregivers gradually helps parents and children **regain stability and hope**. This transformation happens most consistently when staff and volunteers are trained in **trauma-informed care** and can respond to their devastating experiences (more about this in upcoming emails.) At the Bassuk Center, this is how we work with hundreds of local family shelters across the nation to forge **a path forward for families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness**.

During this **season of reflecting and giving**, please join us to help the most vulnerable families **build strength, resilience, and self-sufficiency**. The families we serve **need your help now** more than ever.

Thank you for your support.

--Jacki

A rectangular button with a blue background and rounded corners. The text "Help Today" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the button.

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