"It was a nightmare. He said no matter what, we are taking your child and he is going to a shelter."

- IM, A SALVADORAN MOTHER FORCIBLY SEPARATED FROM HER SON

These first-person accounts were shared with Caitlin Dickerson for her definitive investigation into the Trump administration's family separation policy in The Atlantic, which won the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting.

"When I came into the U.S., it was a nightmare. I came in the evening with my son and we were detained. In the morning, the officer in charge told me I would be separated from my son. I asked why don't you deport us instead - don't separate us. He said no matter what, we are taking your child and he is going to a shelter - you are considered a criminal by the United States. I begged him not to take my child."

"Then they interviewed me but I don't really know if I was making any sense. I was talking but I felt like I wasn't even awake or in control because I was so upset - I felt like my heart was going to dissolve."

"That afternoon they took my child first and later took me. They took me to a detention center - I was there about a week. They treated us very poorly - they humiliated me and others. There was no reason to have to go through that. They would tell us to take off all our clothes, make us bathe with water that was so hot it would burn. The food was so terrible no one could eat it. They would wake us at 3AM to eat for no reason."

"After that, I was on an ankle monitor for over a year and half before getting it taken off."