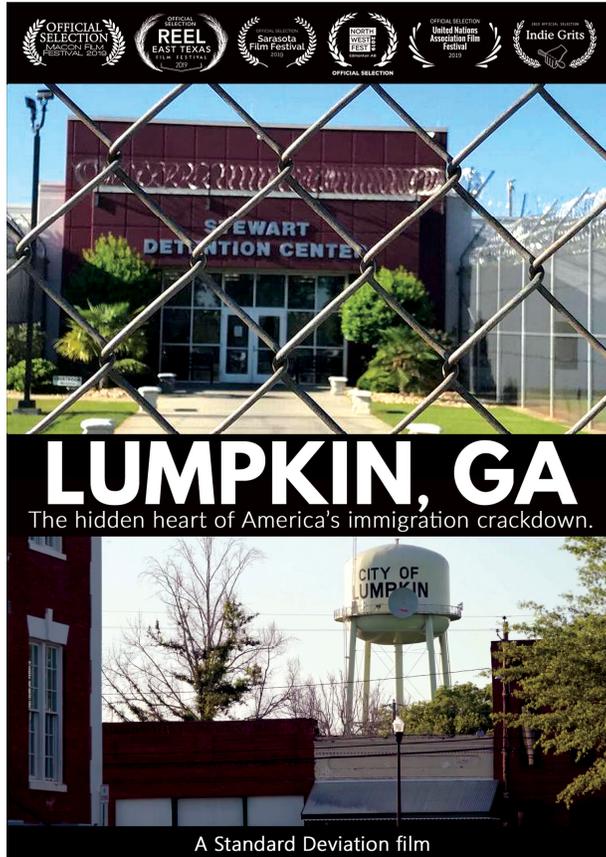




LUMPKIN, GA



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Lumpkin, GA

In a fading Georgia town, a community recalls its dark past and faces a grim present. An undocumented immigrant, caught in legal limbo and facing deportation, contemplates his future. In the midst of it all, a massive, private immigration prison generates millions in profits. Where these stories meet, the hidden epicenter of America's immigration crackdown is revealed – a place called Lumpkin, GA.

About Lumpkin

Lumpkin is located in southwest Georgia. The state of Georgia is in the southeastern United States. It borders Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Georgia is the largest state east of the Mississippi River, and the eighth most populous U.S. state.¹

The city of Lumpkin, located in Stewart County, Georgia, was incorporated in 1829. It is the seat of Stewart County. According to the most recent estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Lumpkin County is 32,955, and is almost 95 percent white.²

Lumpkin was named after Wilson Lumpkin, who served as a governor of Georgia for two years, and was also a U.S. congressman and senator. Lumpkin was an advocate of Indian removal, a forced migration of Native Americans during the nineteenth century, to areas west of the Mississippi River. According to a report by the National Park Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, an 1835 census showed that almost 9,000 Cherokees lived in Georgia.³ However there was ongoing conflict between them and the new colonists, and many of these colonists, including Lumpkin, wanted to remove the Cherokees and other Native Americans. In 1838 and 1839, the Cherokees were forcibly removed to the state of Oklahoma. Many of them died on the journey there.⁴

U.S. Immigration Enforcement

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is a federal cabinet department that works to maintain security in the United States. U.S. Immigration laws are enforced by three different DHS agencies: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Immigration Services (USCIS). CBP is responsible for enforcing immigration laws along the borders, USCIS works with applications related to immigration and naturalization, and ICE is focused on the enforcement of immigration laws within the United States, and on detention and removal of unauthorized immigrants.⁵

¹ <https://georgia.gov/georgia-facts>

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lumpkincountygeorgia>

³ <https://www.nps.gov/trte/learn/historyculture/upload/Cherokee-Removal-from-Georgia-508.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/cherokee-removal>

⁵ https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018/enforcement_actions_2018.pdf

To enter or remain in the United States without authorization is against the law, however many people do so every year, which means that the United States has a large number of unauthorized immigrants. DHS defines unauthorized immigrants as, “All foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents.” It also explains how most unauthorized immigrants come to be that way, stating, “Most unauthorized residents either entered the United States without inspection or were admitted temporarily and stayed past the date they were required to leave.”⁶

Unauthorized Immigrants

According to a 2019 report by the Pew Research Center, almost a quarter of the foreign-born population in the United States is unauthorized immigrants. In total, that equals 23 percent, or about 10.5 million people. The organization reports that the population of unauthorized immigrants in the United States more than tripled between 1990 and 2007, from 3.5 million to 12.2 million. After that, it fell slightly, to 10.5 million in 2017, which is 3.2 percent of the total U.S. population.⁷ The top country of origin for immigrants is Mexico, followed by El Salvador, Guatemala, India, and Honduras.⁸

Many authorized immigrants remain living in the United States for years, however others are apprehended by U.S. immigration services. According to DHS, in 2018 about 570,000 aliens were apprehended in the United States, and about 337,000 were removed from the country.⁹

According to DHS, at the end of 2017, about 58,000 known or suspected aliens were being held in custody. Further, DHS reports that of this total, about 37,000 were confirmed to be aliens (the rest were still under investigation), and of those, 94 percent were found to be unlawfully present in the United States.¹⁰

Stewart Detention Center

While they are awaiting a legal determination, unauthorized immigrants are often held in immigration detention facilities. The United States has utilized immigration detention for a long time. When immigrants came to Ellis Island, some were temporarily detained as a result of health or legal concerns.¹¹ Over the years, however, increasing numbers of people have been subject to detention.

⁶ <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/population-estimates/unauthorized-resident>

⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>

⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/>

⁹ <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018>

¹⁰ https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Alien_Incarceration_Report_OIS_FY17_Q4_2.pdf

¹¹ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/immigration-detention-in-the-united-states-a-primer/>

ICE is responsible for the detention of unauthorized immigrants, and for much of its detention space it contracts out to jails and private prison companies. ICE reports that it has 37 dedicated detention facilities as of December 2019.¹² The American Immigration Council finds that people held by ICE are held in custody for 55 days on average.¹³

Stewart Detention Center is one of the places where unauthorized immigrants are held. This private facility is run by CoreCivic, and is used to house federal detainees for ICE. According to the City of Lumpkin website, Stewart County gets 85 cents per inmate, per day, from the federal government, and this amounts to more than half of its entire annual budget.¹⁴

Controversy Regarding Private Contractors

The use of private contractors such as CoreCivic is controversial. Some people believe that when private companies run detention centers, there can be abuses if those companies are more motivated by profit than the welfare of detainees. Others believe that private companies can actually do a better job. For example, CoreCivic insists, “Ending the use of private contractors like us would lead to more and worse humanitarian crises. The government alone does not have the expertise or capability to quickly and flexibly manage migrant surges like the current border crisis.”¹⁵

There is ongoing disagreement over the conditions in U.S. immigration detention facilities. ICE describes the level of medical care in its authorized detention facilities, stating that detainees are well cared for. It says, “Staffing for detainees includes registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, licensed mental health providers, mid-level providers that include a physician’s assistant and nurse practitioner, a physician, dental care, and access to 24-hour emergency care. Pursuant to our commitment to the welfare of those in the agency’s custody, ICE spends more than \$269 million annually on the spectrum of healthcare services provided to detainees.”¹⁶ However others disagree. For example, the American Immigration Council contends that medical care is not always adequate and that there is evidence of delays in calling 911, inadequate mental health care, and denial of treatment for serious medical conditions.¹⁷

El Refugio

Despite ongoing controversy, thousands of people continue to be detained every year in the United States. El Refugio is an organization that works to support these detained

¹² <https://www.ice.gov/death-detainee-report>

¹³ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigration-detention-united-states-agency>

¹⁴ <http://cityoflumpkin.org/history/>

¹⁵ <http://www.corecivic.com/private-detention>

¹⁶ <https://www.ice.gov/death-detainee-report>

¹⁷ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigration-detention-united-states-agency>

immigrants and their families. It opened its hospitality center in Lumpkin in 2010. The hospitality house provides free meals and lodging for the friends and family of detainees. Of its mission, El Refugio says, “We believe our most powerful role is simply to be present to the people we visit in detention – to recognize their full humanity, to see them face-to-face and to hear them.”¹⁸

Glossary

ICE: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is an agency of the Department of Homeland Security and is focused on the enforcement of immigration laws within the United States, and on the detention and removal of unauthorized immigrants

Indian removal: Indian removal was the forced migration of Native Americans during the nineteenth century, to areas west of the Mississippi River.

legal counsel: In the United States, criminal defendants have the legal right to an attorney, even if they cannot afford one. However, defendants in immigration court do not have this right.

segregated school system: Schools in the United States were racially segregated until the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1954.

undocumented: An undocumented immigrant is a person living in the United States without legal documentation giving him or her the right to do so.



¹⁸ <https://www.elrefugiostewart.org/about-us/>

Additional Resources

Books

- Lucy Fiske (2016). *Human Rights, Refugee Protest and Immigration Detention*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nancy Hiemstra (2019). *Detain and Deport: The Chaotic U.S. Immigration Enforcement Regime*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.
- Daniel Wilsher (2014). *Immigration Detention: Law, History, Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Online Sources

- *Detention Watch Network* (no date). "Immigration Detention 101." <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues/detention-101>
- Mike Guo and Ryan Baugh (October 2019). "Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2018," *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018/enforcement_actions_2018.pdf
- Emily Kassie, the *Marshall Project*, and the *Guardian* (September 24, 2019). "Detained: How the United States Created the Largest Immigrant Detention System in the World." <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/09/24/detained>
- Jynnah Radford (June 17, 2019). "Key Findings About U.S. Immigrants," *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>
- Katie Sullivan and Jeff Mason (April 24, 2019). "Immigration Detention in the United States: A Primer," *Bipartisan Policy Center*. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/immigration-detention-in-the-united-states-a-primer/>
- *U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (January 9, 2020). "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2018." <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018>

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