Former ICE Detainees Illegal Forced Labor Lawsuit Against McHenry County and Sheriff

In “Former immigrant detainees sue McHenry County sheriff, claiming they were illegally forced into labor while housed in jail” (Chicago Tribune, May 11, 2022), the Chicago Tribune examines the lawsuit brought by a group of former federal immigration detainees housed at the McHenry County Jail against McHenry County and Sheriff Bill Prim.

The suit claims that detainees were forced to clean showers, toilets and the gym for free or face punishment that included being locked in their cells or solitary confinement. The detainees, who also claim that the jail officials violated the federal Trafficking Victims Protections Act, are seeking class-action status and are asking for $5 million + in damages for current and past detainees.

Pollock Cohen notes that, “…some detainees were paid a nominal fee to work in the kitchen, but the lawsuit deals with only those who were forced to work without pay. Regardless of the circumstances of each detainee’s case, forced labor is inhumane. There’s a real human cost. The law’s pretty clear. State actors cannot essentially profit off the uncompensated labor of their civil detainees.”

To read the Chicago Tribune article and others on this matter, click on the links to the right.

Ex-Immigrant Detainees File Suit Against McHenry County Jail | Chicago Tribune
McHenry County, Sheriff Sued for Allegedly Forcing Immigrant Detainees to Do Janitorial Work ‘against their will’ or Be Punished | Northwest Herald
Former ICE Detainees Sue McHenry County Jail, Claim They Were Forced to Perform Unpaid Labor | Lake & McHenry County Scanner