



## A GUIDE FOR SHARING YOUR STORY

NaLEC has prepared this guide to support those who may choose to share their story publicly after being wrongfully detained and later released. We offer this because we know that behind every headline is a human being. A family. A story. A life that matters. Too often, stories like yours are told *about* people, but not *by* them.

This guide is here to help you speak in your own voice with clarity, dignity, and confidence.

Choosing to do an interview is a personal decision. You are not obligated. But if you choose to speak, it can be a powerful act that brings truth into the light, protects other families, and reminds people what is truly at stake.

You can do this! You do not need perfect words. You do not need all the answers. You just need to be YOU and simply to tell the truth of what you lived.

### Why Your Voice Matters

There are moments when silence protects. There are also moments when speaking brings light.

Many in our communities carry stories that are unseen, misunderstood, or misrepresented. When you share your story, you help people understand the human reality behind what happened. You remind the public that this is not abstract. This is about families, children, work, faith, and dignity. There are many who cannot speak right now because they are still detained, afraid, or without a platform. So, when you speak, you are not only speaking for yourself. You are helping others be seen. This is not about politics. This is about truth, dignity, and humanity.

### A Biblical Foundation

As people of faith, we believe that God sees, hears, and responds.

*"I have indeed seen the misery of my people... I have heard them crying out." (Exodus 3:7)*

God is attentive to suffering.

*"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves." (Proverbs 31:8)*

There are many who cannot speak right now.

*"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)*

The way we treat the vulnerable matters deeply to God.

When you speak truthfully, you are not only telling your story. You are participating in bringing light, dignity, and justice.

### **What This Interview Is and What It Is Not**

This interview is an opportunity to tell the truth about what happened to you. It is not:

- A courtroom
- An interrogation
- A debate
- A test you must pass

You do not need to be a legal expert and you do not need to defend policy. Your responsibility is simply to tell the truth clearly, calmly, and with dignity.

### **Understanding the Interview and Staying Grounded**

Not every interviewer approaches your story the same way. Some may come from a conservative perspective, others from a progressive perspective, and others may be focused on creating attention or urgency. It is important to understand this and not to become defensive, but to remain steady. You are not there to match their angle. You are not there to represent a political side. You are there to tell the truth.

As people of faith, we remain gospel-centered:

- Not reactive
- Not pulled into extremes
- Not shaped by pressure

Stay grounded in truth, dignity, and clarity.

### **Why Pivots Are Sometimes Necessary**

At times, questions may be asked in a way that oversimplifies your situation, pushes toward controversy, focuses on labels instead of your experience, or tries to create a stronger or more emotional headline. This is sometimes called *sensationalizing* - framing a real story in a way that increases attention, even if it loses accuracy. For these scenarios, use *pivoting*. A pivot is not avoiding the truth. A pivot is protecting the truth. A pivot helps you:

- Stay focused on what actually happened
- Avoid being misrepresented
- Keep your dignity
- Keep your story whole

You can say:

- “What I want people to understand is...”
- “I’m here to share what happened to me...”
- “What matters most is how this affected my family...”
- “I want to stay focused on my experience...”

A pivot brings the conversation back to truth.

### **The Best Way to Stay Grounded**

If you feel unsure at any point, come back to this:

Who you are  
What happened  
How it affected you and your family  
Why it matters

For example:

“I am a father. I work hard and care deeply for my family. I was detained while working, and it was confusing and painful. My family was deeply affected. No one should go through this.”

That is clear and strong, and that is enough!

### **What Kinds of Questions You May Be Asked**

You may be asked about:

Who you are

- Tell us about yourself
- What does your family mean to you

What happened

- What happened the day you were detained?
- What did you understand in that moment?

Your experience

- What was most difficult?
- How did it affect you emotionally?

Your family

- How did this impact your spouse or children?

After your release

- What has life been like since then?

More difficult questions

- What was your immigration status?
- Did you break the law?
- Are you against immigration enforcement?
- Why should people care?

Not all questions will feel fair. That is okay.

### **How to Respond to Difficult Questions**

You do not need to argue or defend yourself. You can say:

- “I’m here to share my experience.”
- “What I want people to understand is what happened to me...”
- “I want to focus on how this affected my family...”
- “I’m not comfortable answering that.”

If needed:

“It’s more complicated than a yes or no. What I can share is what happened to me.”

Stay calm. Stay grounded. Stay in your story.

### **Know Your Rights**

You are not powerless in this moment. You have the right to:

- Decline a question
- Pause
- Ask for clarification
- Correct something that is incorrect
- End the interview if needed

You can say:

- “I’d like to pause.”
- “Let me clarify that.”
- “That’s not accurate, this is what happened...”

### **LIVE, Recorded, and Print Interviews**

It is important to understand the difference. LIVE interviews cannot be edited. So, speak slowly. Take your time. Be clear. Stay grounded.

Recorded interviews may be edited. So, your words may be shortened or used in part. Repeat your main message clearly.

Print interviews are written. So, you can ask to review your quotes for accuracy before publication. Not all outlets will allow this, but it is your right to ask.

## **Different Interview Settings**

### Television / Video:

You may be looking at a camera or a blank screen. Even if it feels like you are speaking into nothing, people will see you clearly. Stay calm. Stay present.

### Zoom:

Look at the camera when speaking, even if it feels unnatural.

### Phone:

Your tone matters. Speak slowly and clearly.

### Newspaper:

Your words carry everything. Be simple and direct.

## **How to Speak on Camera**

- Sit calmly
- Speak slowly
- Pause when needed
- Do not rush
- Keep movements natural
- Stay present

If you feel nervous, remember, only you know what happened, and you are sharing your truth.

## **What to Avoid**

- Do not guess
- Do not exaggerate
- Do not argue
- Do not speculate on legal matters
- Do not feel pressured to answer everything

Stay in your story.

## **Protect Your Family**

You do not have to share everything. You can say: “I want to protect my family’s privacy, but I can say that this affected them deeply.”

### **If You Feel Emotional**

It is okay. Cry if you have to. Be genuine to your emotions. Then, pause, breathe, and continue when ready. Your emotion is not weakness. It is truth.

### **Simple Language That Helps**

- “I’m not a headline. I’m a person.”
- “This affected my family deeply.”
- “I just want fairness.”
- “No one should go through this.”
- “I’m grateful to be home.”

### **How to Prepare**

Before the interview, think through:

- Who you are
- What happened
- How it affected your family
- Why you are choosing to speak

Practice saying it out loud in a few sentences.

### **After the Interview**

Take a breath and thank God for the opportunity to share your story to help others. Do not overanalyze. Be gentle with yourself. Do not assume you did something wrong. You did something very, very courageous – and millions of us are thankful for you. You are not alone in this. Your story matters. Your dignity matters. Your voice matters. And we stand with you.

### **You May be asked for *A Closing Word***

If you are asked for a final thought, you might say:

“I’m grateful to be home. What happened affected my family deeply. I hope my story helps make sure this doesn’t happen to someone else.”

## **A WORD FOR PASTORS AND LEADERS**

### **When You Are Asked to Speak About a Congregant or Community Member**

There may be moments when you are not the one directly affected, but you are asked to speak on behalf of someone in your congregation or community who has been detained, harmed, or impacted. This is a sacred responsibility. You are not simply offering commentary. You are stewarding someone else's story.

#### **Your Role in That Moment**

As a pastor or leader, your role is to:

- Protect the dignity of the individual and their family
- Speak truthfully and carefully
- Avoid speculation or exaggeration
- Provide pastoral and moral clarity
- Ground the moment in faith, not fear or reaction

You are not there to inflame. You are there to shepherd in public. Be prayed up and use wisdom!

#### **Begin with Who They Are—Not What Happened**

Before anything else, help people see the person. You might say:

*“This is not just a situation. This is a person we know. A father. A mother. A worker. A faithful member of our community.”*

Name their humanity first. Do not allow the story to begin with accusation, status, or labels.

#### **Stay Within What You Know**

Only speak to what is true and confirmed. You can say:

- “What we know is...”
- “What I can speak to is...”
- “In our experience as their pastor...”

Avoid:

- Guessing legal details
- Repeating unverified information
- Speaking beyond your knowledge

Credibility matters. Integrity matters.

## **Protect the Family**

Be mindful that your words affect real people in real time. Do not share:

- Private family details
- Immigration specifics you are unsure about
- Information that could put them at risk

You can say:

*“We want to respect the privacy of the family, but we can say this has deeply impacted them.”*

## **Keep the Focus Clear**

You are not there to debate policy in abstract terms. You are there to humanize, clarify, and call for dignity and fairness. Always, bring it back to the person, the family, and the impact.

## **When Questions Become Political**

You may be asked questions that try to pull you into political positioning.

For example:

- “Where do you stand on immigration enforcement?”
- “Is this a failure of policy?”
- “Are you criticizing the government?”

If you are experienced in advocacy on “comprehensive immigration reform” – feel free to speak and make your case. Otherwise, stay grounded.

You can say:

*“We are not here to debate politics. We are here because a member of our community has been deeply impacted, and we believe every person deserves dignity and fair treatment.”*

Or:

*“As a pastor, my concern is for people - families, communities, and the well-being of those entrusted to our care.”*

## **Remain Gospel-Centered**

This is essential. Do not allow the moment to pull you into extremes or reaction. Speak as a pastor:

- With truth

- With compassion
- With clarity
- With conviction

You might say:

*“Our faith calls us to care for people, to uphold dignity, and to stand with those who are vulnerable. That is what is guiding us in this moment.”*

### **Use Clear, Grounded Language**

Some phrases that can help:

- “This is about a real family, not an abstract issue.”
- “We are asking for dignity and due process.”
- “We believe in both justice and compassion.”
- “No family should have to experience this.”
- “Our role is to stand with our community in moments like this.”

### **Do Not Be Pressured to Say More Than You Should**

It is okay to say:

- “I cannot speak to that.”
- “That is not information we are sharing at this time.”
- “I want to stay focused on what we know and what we’ve experienced.”

Restraint is not weakness, it is leadership.

### **Your Presence Matters**

Even beyond your words, your presence communicates something. So, be calm, grounded, pastoral, and steady. Remember, you are modeling how to respond in moments of tension.

### **A Simple Framework to Stay Grounded**

If you feel pulled in different directions, return to this:

Who they are.

What has happened.

How it has affected the family.

Why dignity and fairness matter.

Stay there. Don’t allow yourself to be pushed or pulled elsewhere.

## **A Closing Word for Leaders**

Normally, you will be given the opportunity to offer a final word, so think about this in advance. You might say:

*“As pastors and leaders, we are called to stand with our people in moments like this. This is about a real family, a real community, and the need for dignity, fairness, and compassion. We will continue to walk with them and advocate in a way that reflects both truth and grace.”*

## **Final Encouragement**

To our pastors and leaders: you are shepherding not only in private, but in public. Speak carefully. Speak truthfully. Speak pastorally. Remain Gospel-centered. And remember, you do not need to carry everything; you simply need to be faithful in what God has entrusted to you.