



Welcome Home, Chanthon Bun!



Today, Chanthon Bun was not turned over to ICE after serving his time at San Quentin State Prison. Chanthon Bun, a 41-year old, Cambodian refugee who was sentenced to over 40 years in prison at the age of 18 and who was found suitable for parole by Gov. Newsom was released into the care of the community. He was received by eager community members, faith leaders, and friends ready to aid in his re-entry back into society.

“To live is to hope,” says Chanthon Bun on his first day of freedom. “For me this means to never give up hope and keep on fighting.”

His experience - one of community care not continued punishment - should be a model for everyone’s experience who is being released by CDCR. This is what it means to “treat the immigrant the same as the native born, to love them as ourselves” (Leviticus 19:34). Gov. Newsom can and must stop collaboration and transfers between CDCR and ICE today.

Ny Nourn, Community Advocate at the Asian Law Caucus, shares it best reflecting on her recent pardon from Governor Newsom, “I am grateful to Gov. Newsom for his pardon, and I want to ask him to extend clemency to other currently and formerly incarcerated refugees, immigrants, and survivors facing deportation like I was. California can take a step in the right direction and end the prison to ICE pipeline.”

Currently there are over 1000 active cases of COVID-19 at San Quentin State Prison. Immediately after his release, community members took him to be tested, and he tested positive for COVID-19. If ICE had transferred him to ICE detention he may not have survived because he is immunocompromised, and would have further spread the illness. All transfers from San Quentin and other CDCR prisons and ICE detention must be halted immediately.

Today, Chanthon Bun is here with us. None of us are free, until all of us are free.