

## **Yakelin Statement Concerning Family Separation**

It was really terrible when they took me away from my mother, because I had no idea that we were going to be separated. She kept telling me to be strong and have faith and that we were going to be together again as they took me away. I tried really hard to do what my mom said and stay strong, but I couldn't stop crying and crying. I had never been away from my mom before. I was so scared and didn't know where they were taking me, or if I would ever see my mom again. It was awful.

The shelter where they took us was ok. There were lots of other girls there like me who had been separated from their parents too. Everyone was so sad, and they were constantly talking about their parents. Many times, I would see the other kids crying and I would ask why, and they told me that it was because their parents were being deported without them and they were being left in the United States alone. This scared me so much! I thought about this all the time and worried so much about my mom. I was so scared of getting left behind and my mom being deported all alone when she had suffered so much for us to get here. I would cry about it all the time. I had a really hard time falling asleep at night because I couldn't stop thinking about my mom being deported and me being left here all alone. It just seemed so unfair.

The whole time I was in the shelter I didn't get to talk to my mom once until she got out of detention. This was so hard because I had never gone even a day without talking to my mom. When I finally was reunited with my mom, I was so happy because I hadn't seen her in about 2 months. I hugged her so tightly and now this time I couldn't stop crying because I was so happy instead of being so sad! I was so thankful to God that we were reunited and that He had taken care of us because I had been so worried.

My life is more normal now. I live with my mom and do things like a normal kid. I like playing soccer with my friends here and going to school; my favorite classes are social studies and history and science. I am learning English bit by bit and hope to someday work in a bank. I want to travel everywhere and get to know the rest of the United States.

I know that my mom is fighting with our lawyers for asylum for us to be able to stay in this country. I really hope we get to stay. In my country there are not the opportunities like there are here. There was so much violence in Guatemala and here we have equality. If I could say anything to the President, I would tell him to stop separating kids from their parents because it is just too hard for us kids to lose our parents like that.