

Isolation from ICE Raids Deterring Immigrants from Attending Courts

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Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has amplified efforts in recent years within the United States, including increased activities such as ICE raids. The Trump administration has worked relentlessly to recruit more states and localities to work with ICE on federal immigration enforcement (Wong, Shklyan, Isorena, & Peng, 2019). This relentless effort has had a pervasive impact on the behavior of undocumented immigrants in the United States. Research indicates that increasing interior immigration enforcement is a threat to public safety, in that these efforts can generate distrust and fear in local law enforcement among immigrant communities. Further, immigration enforcement actions, such as apprehensions at courthouses appear to have a parallel impact, including fear and distrust, with similar consequences.

For instance, in August of 2017, a news conference was held by Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez and New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman calling for an end to ICE actions in New York courthouses. At that time, Gonzalez noted that immigration enforcement actions at courthouses discourage immigrants from showing up as witnesses and even defendants. By February 2018, several City of New York officials supported an open letter requesting a ban on ICE from courthouses, which stated that ICE has "created widespread fear of the courts in immigrant and mixed-status communities. Statistics and reports from across New York State confirm that immigrants are declining to appear in court or to initiate legal actions due to fear of ICE" (Council of the City of New York, 2018). Thus, ICE has a significant and negative impact on the lives of undocumented immigrants and their ability to participate within their communities effectively. Moreover, it is apparent that

when local law enforcement officials work with ICE on federal immigration enforcement, the widespread impact on undocumented immigrants is worsened.

Initiatives which urge police officers to enforce immigration law extinguish any existing trust between undocumented immigrants and the police (Valdivia, 2019). As a result, many undocumented immigrants are fearful of local jails and police departments due to the awareness that such direct contact with the police could place them in deportation proceedings. This increased sense of vulnerability to deportation experienced by undocumented immigrants also permeates to spaces of social reproduction within immigrant communities (Coleman, 2012; Garcia, 2014). Often, undocumented immigrants are unable to safely drive or take public transportation without seeing police or immigration officers, and thus, many public roads and public spaces are associated with an amplified fear of deportation. As the geography of deportability continues to expand, so do the areas that are affiliated with an increased risk of deportation, placing an immense strain on undocumented immigrants, and thus compromising their mental health, daily routines, and personal relationships (Valdivia, 2019).

References

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For more information on the impact of ICE raids in courthouses, you can download Ceres' latest report on the chilling effect of ICE raids in courthouses [here](#). For any questions, contact Mitzia Martinez at mmartinez@cerespolicyresearch.com.