



A Santa Rosa Mother's Story of Domestic Violence under ICE.

(ICE - Immigration and Customs Enforcement)

version en español

www.justicewomen.com/icedvsp.pdf

Secrecy, opaque operations, contradictions, and mass violations of civil rights, are the hallmarks of our new law enforcement immigration policies, especially as carried out in partnership with the federal ICE juggernaut cynically known as 'secure communities'. As difficult as it's been to unravel the process as it affects suspects and defendants, the grave harms to immigrant victims of violence against women are hidden even deeper in the shadows, under layers of fear and official abuse.

Last summer, with help from many of you, we put together a report outlining the dire effects of these practices on victims in our local immigrant community. The report can be seen on our website at, www.justicewomen.com/secure_communities.pdf

Here, with her permission and name changes, is one woman's story, and all it reveals of the mounting barriers to victims and of our police's descent into the shadows.

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In late July, 2011, one fear overtook another, and Celia called Santa Rosa Police. Her husband, Jorge, was arrested for domestic violence, but strangely was never booked into jail. A few days later, the DA rejected the case for prosecution, despite bruises visible to police.

Celia breathed the usual sigh of despair at the news. But, we said, it sounded from all she'd told us that the case likely should have been filed. Did she want us to discuss it with the deputy attorney to find out more? "NO!"

'No'? It never used to be, 'No'. Like so many immigrant women of late, Celia feared that bringing attention to her name and case could result in her or his deportations. A few years of these deportations, over 3,000 Sonoma County arrestees turned over to ICE since the program began, have paralyzed the community with fear.

There's another way we can work it, we told Celia. 'You go to the police department and get a copy of the police report, and we'll try to evaluate it from there.' (California law requires that police give domestic violence victims a copy of the report on the victim's request).

Celia did go to the station, but police wouldn't give her the report. They said she didn't have proper identification. That didn't used to happen either.

Jorge returned to the home. The outcome was predictable. Three weeks later Celia called us in a panic. Jorge was threatening suicide, and threatening her too. We told her to call the police immediately. She did!

The officer who responded spoke only minimal Spanish. Celia asked for a telephone interpreter as was provided on her earlier report. The officer refused, and said it wasn't possible. He lied. All officers have access to interpreters by cell all the time.

The officer then asked Celia how long she'd been in the country. Six years, she told him. The officer reprimanded her, saying she should be speaking English by now. He went on lecturing her, that if he were in Mexico he'd have to speak Spanish, so why doesn't she speak English. Celia again asked for a telephone interpreter. The officer lit into her again for her failure to speak English. Defeated, Celia says she began to cry.

She called a neighbor friend to come over and help her. When her neighbor arrived, unbelievably, the officer started in on him. 'She's been in this country six years, don't you think she should be speaking English?' Celia gave up on trying to make a report. The officer left. We interviewed the neighbor who

confirmed all to be true.

There have always been racist cops. But the new immigration policies have encouraged and unleashed these cops' worst behavior and institutionalized ways for them to get away with it.

About a week later, ICE agents came knocking on Celia's door. They took Jorge away and deported him. At the time, neither Celia nor we had proof it was related.

But the story doesn't end there. It never does. Just because a domestic violence abuser is deported, it doesn't stop the abuse. Without justice, punishment, and monitoring, the abusers just carry on from across the border, and worse, so many of them return.

Right away Jorge began calling Celia from Mexico, angrily making the same threats as before. But in amongst his rants, he also had this to say. He railed at Celia for calling 911. The ICE agents, he said, had told him he was deported because his wife called 911 too many times.

And there you have it, the new extra-judicial policing; no report, nothing on the books, no case



goes to the DA, no protection, no due process, no justice, no victim compensation, and no court rulings for Celia and her kids to stand on, in the event her husband returns.

Police can simply call up ICE and disappear people off the street and off the record. It's not even counted in the jail deportation records. And victims are denied all protection of law. Wherever you stand on immigration issues, this should be an outrage to all!

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