

ACLU of Maryland

FREDERICK RESIDENTS CHALLENGE UNCONSTITUTIONAL POLICING OF LATINX PEOPLE BY SHERIFF CHUCK JENKINS

MEDIA CONTACT

Meredith Curtis Goode, 443-310-9946; media@aclu-md.org
(<mailto:media@aclu-md.org>)

JULY 11, 2019

Frederick Residents Challenge Unconstitutional Policing of Latinx People by Sheriff Chuck Jenkins

*Lawsuit Seeks to Hold Sheriff Accountable for Racial Profiling of
Latinx People*

FREDERICK, MD – Defending her constitutional right to due process and to be protected against unlawful search and seizure, Sara Medrano, a Latina Frederick County resident, is challenging racial profiling and illegal detention she endured from two Frederick County sheriff’s deputies who tried to hold her for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) over a “broken” tail light that turned out to be working just fine. Today, Ms. Medrano joined with the [Resources for Immigrant Support and Empowerment \(RISE\) Coalition of Western Maryland](#) (<https://www.risewesternmd.com/>) to bring a lawsuit against Frederick County Sheriff Chuck Jenkins and other Frederick officials seeking to stop unconstitutional policing against Latinx people.

“Unfortunately, Sara’s story is common and happening more than many realize,” said Juliana Downey, a member of RISE, a coalition that is committed to serving, elevating, and empowering the immigrant community in Western Maryland. “She stands as a beacon for others, giving them the courage to share their own stories of racial profiling. Hopefully, through bringing to light her experience and others like it, we can prove these partnerships with ICE are discriminatory and dangerous.”

On the morning of July 7, 2018, Sara Medrano was driving with her daughter and two grandchildren on Route 15 when a Frederick County Sheriff’s deputy followed her and eventually pulled her over. To better understand his questions, Ms. Medrano requested an officer who spoke Spanish. The second officer told her she was pulled over for a broken tail light and asked where she was from. When she said she had lived in Frederick for more than 13 years, the officer asked about her immigration status. Ms. Medrano was detained for about an hour as the deputy unsuccessfully tried to get ICE to come pick her up. She feared the stop would be her last moment with her grandchildren and daughter. Eventually, police let her go with just a warning, but Ms. Medrano feels the Sheriff’s office is not there for her protection, and that she was racially profiled because she is Latinx. Upon returning home Ms. Medrano found that her tail light was working perfectly fine.

Said RISE member John Punchak: "Sara Medrano was harassed by police under an illegal and improper traffic stop. It was not true that she had a broken tail light. And they asked about her immigration status, which police claim they do not do outside of the county jail. Sara Medrano was the victim of improper, illegal, unconstitutional, and racist policing practices sanctioned by Frederick county sheriff Chuck Jenkins."

The racial profiling that occurred with Ms. Medrano is not an isolated event. The Frederick County Sheriff’s Office has harassed other

members of the RISE Coalition, unlawfully targeting and questioning them for suspected immigration violations, including the targeting of Latinx U.S. citizens. The result is that many community members do not feel safe reporting crimes they have experienced in Frederick County to the police and many individuals victimized by Sheriff's deputies do not feel safe making formal complaints against them.

It is clear that Jenkins, and under his direction the sheriff's office, is motivated by racial animus toward Latinx immigrants. Jenkins has entered agreements with ICE to target and isolate the immigrant community, and in particular the Latinx community. Jenkins has made incendiary comments about immigrants through the media and through written and oral testimony that consistently devalues immigrants' lives as justification for his office's discriminatory conduct. He has stated that unaccompanied refugee children "aren't all the innocent children they're portrayed to be" and has called recipients of the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") program "hardcore gangbangers," and claims that we need to "round these people up and place them in Guantanamo until we can deport 'em."

"There are real impacts on the Latinx community when the hateful rhetoric of Sheriff Jenkins translates to discriminatory policing and racial profiling," said Nick Steiner, Equal Justice Works Fellow at the ACLU of Maryland. "Members of the Latinx community are fearful of any contact with law enforcement because of the common understanding that they will question individuals' immigration status and will seek to separate people from their families on that basis alone. Sheriff Jenkins must not engage in unconstitutional behavior in violation of Ms. Medrano's rights and other RISE Coalition members' rights and must be held accountable for what he's done to the immigrant community in Frederick County."

Sara Medrano and the RISE Coalition are represented by Nick Steiner and Deborah Jeon of the ACLU of Maryland, and [John Hayes](#)

<https://www.nixonpeabody.com/en/team/hayes-john-c>) and [Brian Whittaker \(https://www.nixonpeabody.com/en/team/whittaker-brian-j\)](https://www.nixonpeabody.com/en/team/whittaker-brian-j) of [Nixon Peabody LLP \(https://www.nixonpeabody.com/en\)](https://www.nixonpeabody.com/en).

###