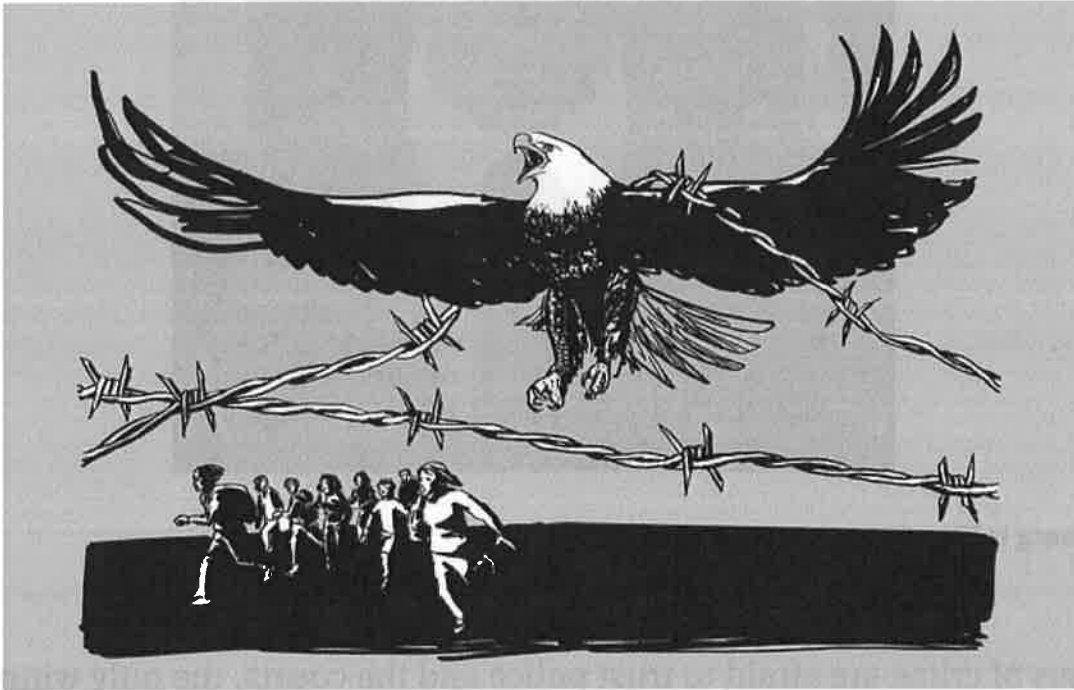


Opinion

Crackdown on immigrants undermines public safety



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GABRIEL CAMPANARIO / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Anti-immigrant rhetoric from the Trump administration is undermining the relationships between immigrants and law enforcement officers.

By Dan Satterberg

Special to The Times

PRESIDENT Donald Trump claims that immigrants threaten public safety, and he promises that a massive wall, immigration agency sweeps and deportations will make us safer. From my position as King County prosecutor, I can tell you these actions have the opposite effect for crime victims.




Dan Satterberg is King County's prosecuting attorney.

When victims of crime are afraid to trust police and the courts, the only winners are violent people. Because our top mission is public safety, this “crackdown” is an immediate and serious concern to those of us who work to protect all King County residents.

There are an estimated 1 million immigrants in Washington, one in every seven people in the state. Police and prosecutors have worked for decades to build trust with these communities, and encourage them to cooperate with the justice system. In King County, brave cooperation from undocumented residents who are witnesses or victims has allowed us to hold many violent offenders accountable. The wisdom of this approach has been widely recognized. Indeed, Congress even passed laws to protect immigrant crime victims to encourage them to come forward and report crimes that put us all at risk.

Undocumented immigrant victims, who are disproportionately women and children, are particularly vulnerable to crime due to language barriers, cultural differences and a lack of familiarity with the justice system. Violent criminals are adept at preying on the most vulnerable and marginalized in our community. This is of special concern in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking, where victims already take enormous risks to stand up to their abusers.

“We are not safer when a victim of abuse thinks she must choose between deportation or suffering more violence at the hands of her abuser. Unpunished violent crime threatens us all.” 

Today that hard-earned trust, built intentionally over many years, is being quickly eroded by Trump administration comments and highly publicized actions of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. Prior administrations had focused their attention on undocumented people in jails or prisons; today the ICE attention is on neighborhoods. In El Paso, Texas, last month, a victim seeking protection from violent abuse was arrested by federal immigration agents in the courthouse where she sought help.

Just this week, Washington Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst wrote a letter to Homeland Security Director John Kelly asking that ICE agents cease operating near our state’s courthouses, citing the real potential for driving victims and witnesses away from the justice system. No longer hypothetical or anecdotal, ICE actions are undermining trust in the neutrality of the court system, where “justice for all” has been our hallmark.

We are not safer when victims of crime fear being deported if they call 911, talk to police, or come to the courthouse to get protection. We are not safer when a victim of abuse thinks she must choose between deportation or suffering more violence at the hands of her abuser. Unpunished violent crime threatens us all.

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My alarm isn't theoretical. Last year our office worked with 67 undocumented immigrants (more than 300 in the last five years) to prosecute crimes ranging from murder and rape to domestic violence. Without that cooperation and trust of undocumented immigrants, we wouldn't have been able to get some dangerous offenders off the streets.

We must continue to assure our most marginalized communities that it is safe to ask police and the courts for help. Here's how we do that in King county:

- Neither the 911 operator, the police, nor the prosecutor will ask about immigration status. We want people to report crime and be safe;
- Victims and witnesses who assist local law enforcement and prosecution are eligible for immigration protection. Federal law still protects immigrants who are crime victims and witnesses.
- Crime victims are eligible for a new service from local civil legal aid organizations in partnership with my office at both Superior Court courthouses (Seattle and Kent). Among the legal services available for crime victims is advice and representation by Northwest Immigrant Rights Project.

Confusion, fear and demagoguery are destabilizing important ties between immigrant communities, police and the court system. This directly undermines public safety. That's why I join other criminal justice leaders in calling for an immediate end to this dangerous crackdown on law-abiding undocumented immigrants.

The trust we have spent decades building with immigrant communities can be lost in a few weeks. As for my office, we remain committed to doing all we can to encourage and protect all crime victims in our community.

Local News

Tukwila officers turn immigrant over to ICE after he called them for help. Was that legal?



Originally published February 9, 2018 at 9:05 pm Updated February 10, 2018 at 12:35 am

A Honduran immigrant calls the police when someone breaks into his car, and gets arrested himself when Tukwila officers see a warrant from immigration authorities. Now, everybody's trying to figure out what happened — and whether it was legal.



By [Nina Shapiro](#)

Seattle Times staff reporter

It was what one immigrant advocate called a “nightmare scenario” — one many law-enforcement officials have long said they seek to avoid.

Early Thursday in Tukwila, a Honduran man who called police for help was turned in by officers to immigration authorities. This, said OneAmerica Executive Director Rich Stolz, sent the message: It's not safe to call to police.

Stolz was one of many people Friday trying to figure out exactly what happened — including officials with the Police Department that turned the man in. And, the Honduran immigrant's lawyer is arguing the arrest was illegal.

Wilson Rodriguez Macarreno, 32, came to the U.S. illegally from Honduras around 2004, said his lawyer, [Luis Cortes](#). Rodriguez Macarreno was escaping rampant gang violence: His brother had been shot dead and a friend cut into pieces, according to Cortes.


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In the U.S., Macarreno worked as a carpenter, became a leader in his church and started a family. His three children — 3-year-old twins and a 1-year-old — are U.S. citizens, Cortes said. He has no criminal record, the lawyer said.

In part because of his children, Rodriguez Macarreno was nervous when, around 5:30 a.m. Thursday, he saw someone trying to break into his car, Cortes said. A few months ago, someone had tried to break into his home.

So Rodriguez Macarreno called the police. Officers found a man who they determined to be trespassing, but they didn't have probable cause to arrest him, according to Officer Victor Masters of the Tukwila Police Department. So they let him go.

The officers, however, held onto Rodriguez Macarreno. They had run him through the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, which contains all sorts of information, including any existing warrants.

It is standard procedure for Tukwila police to run victims, witnesses and suspects through NCIC to confirm their identity, Masters said.

This procedure, in itself, is not unusual. The Seattle Police Department (SPD) and King County Sheriff's Office do the same, according to spokesmen. What they don't do is act on information in the database from immigration authorities.

"If we find something from ICE in there, we don't care," said SPD Detective Patrick Michaud, referring to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

To the fury of officials in President Donald Trump's administration, who have threatened to withhold federal funds, Seattle and King County have policies restricting cooperation with immigration enforcement.

Tukwila police don't usually act on ICE information they see in NCIC either, Masters said, nor do they ask about immigration status. But when the officers on the scene radioed in Rodriguez Macarreno's name to dispatchers, who ran it through NCIC, what popped up looked different.

It was not just a note that ICE "was interested in speaking to the individual," which is typical, according to Masters, but a warrant from the federal agency.

Masters said the officers called ICE, who requested that they take Rodriguez Macarreno to the agency's Tukwila office.

"It's not something we normally do," Masters said. "The situation overall was very, very unique." But since ICE's office was "just down the road," the Tukwila officers complied.

Cortes, however, said his client overheard the officers, using a speakerphone, offering to drop Rodriguez Macarreno off. "You want us to take him to you?" they asked.

"That would be great," came the reply from ICE, according to Rodriguez Macarreno's recounting.

The Tukwila officers handcuffed Rodriguez Macarreno and put him in the car, Cortes said.

"I was kind of appalled," the lawyer said after hearing the story during a visit to his client in the Northwest Detention Center, where he is now being held.

Cortes said local law-enforcement officers do not have authority to arrest people on behalf of ICE — though they have sometimes done so and been rebuked in court rulings.

What then of the ICE warrant?

ICE spokeswoman Lori Haley said she could not, by the end of Friday, provide information about why it was issued or about Rodriguez Macarreno generally.

Cortes said he believed it was for missing an immigration court hearing years ago.

But the lawyer noted that ICE warrants differ from criminal ones in a crucial way: ICE's "administrative" documents are not signed by a judge. So, he said, "there's no oversight by a third party" who assesses probable cause.

Seattle PI - Charge: Child rape suspect threatened to deport victim's mother

The assault went unreported for nearly 2 years, reports say

By Lynsi Burton, SeattlePI

Published 4:20 pm, Monday, February 12, 2018

The molestation of a 14-year-old girl in Bellevue went unreported for a year-and-a-half because the attacker threatened to report the victim's mother to immigration authorities, according to police reports.

Now Siamak Tajer, 48, is charged with third-degree child rape for the July 2016 attack reported against a young neighbor.

The assault was only reported when a therapist, a mandatory reporter, learned of the accusations, according to prosecutors.

The therapist reported the assault to Bellevue police in December. A detective interviewed the girl, now 16, who claimed that she and her younger brothers attended a party at her neighbor's house the day of the attack, according to the incident report.

She told the detective that Tajer tried to kiss her and she rebuffed him, court records indicate. Later, she reportedly drank what she believed to be water, but she immediately felt dizzy and sick.

The girl went home to lie on a couch. Tajer allegedly entered her apartment through an unlocked door and began kissing her, but she had difficulty breathing, speaking and moving. She says he sexually assaulted her until her dog bit him and she was finally able to move away and yell at him, according to Bellevue police.

Tajer left, but reportedly soon called her to say that he would report her mother to immigration authorities if she told police about the attack. The threat frightened her, the girl told the detective.

The teen called her mother, who immediately returned home and smelled a strange medicinal odor on her daughter's breath, the mother later told police. She admitted to Bellevue cops that she didn't report her daughter's assault because she was afraid of being deported, according to the incident report.

The alleged victim's younger brothers told authorities that they remembered Tajer acting suspicious that day after their sister left the party early. He prevented one of them from going home at one point and he made sure everyone was upstairs at his home before he went to the teen's apartment, court documents indicate.

Police arrested Tajer Jan. 31 and he was released on bond five days later, jail records indicate.

