

Destructive immigration policies call for a united front

It's heartbreaking to watch. A young man, taking his 13-year-old daughter to school, is handcuffed and taken away by immigration officers, all while his daughter - still in the car - films it on her phone. Her wails are audible on the recording.

It's a scene of great sorrow and anguish, brought to you by your tax dollars, and one played out by families across the country as draconian immigration policies hit the streets.

EDITORIAL

ICE says it is simply doing business as usual. But it is not. It is a powerful federal agency now

operating under authoritarian leadership from the White House, pushing harder on arbitrary laws, dredging up decades-old records and targeting specific populations based on the color of their skin. It's breaking up families, and lawmakers in Washington D.C., are now talking about taking children from mothers who cross the border, immediate deportations and spending more tax dollars on new detention centers.

There's no question that immigration laws in this country are a mess, but doubling down on this militarized, industrial immigration complex shows the opposite of reform. It is terrorizing families and children. It is breaking a vital social contract.

In Oregon, it's no surprise to see the familiar slate of anti-immigrant bills raise their heads again.

One bill would abolish Oregon's sanctuary state designation, which essentially prohibits state and local law enforcement from expending any resources toward federal immigration efforts. This statute creates a formal wall between the two, as there should be. There is also the familiar effort to make English the official language of Oregon, apropos of nothing, and to require state employers to use a specious federal verification database when hiring workers. Wisely, the state's Democrat

leadership has said it will not allow these bills to move forward. Multnomah County and Portland lawmakers have followed suit, defending people's civil liberties and declaring in favor of sanctuary, not deportation.

But while there is the potential to tear communities apart - and perhaps that's the intention here - in some ways the opposite is actually happening. To be sure, the fear is real and palpable: brown skin is now probable cause. But people are talking. People are looking at not only the rule of law as a defense, but also the rules of solidarity, compassion and common sense. Since 1965, restoring families has been a cornerstone of our immigration laws. And contrary to the hyperbole of the right, immigrants - documented or otherwise - pay taxes, enrich our community and are essential to our economy.

People are sticking their necks out and figuring out how to do the right thing, including the academic and religious communities. People are not standing idly by. Nonetheless, action is not to be undertaken carelessly. ICE is not our local police bureau, and this isn't politics as usual. The current environment requires action, yes, but also caution. Know your rights. Educate yourself with the Immigration Defense Project and the ACLU, which have a wealth of information about people's rights and options.

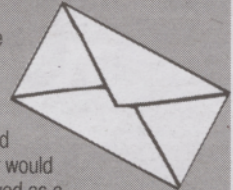
There's a role in this for all of us. Support your city and county representatives. We can draw a line the sand, but it's only as strong as the solidarity behind it.

Support your state representatives for their push back against the trickle-down oppression that vilifies immigrants and refugees.

Check within your community to learn more about what you can do to protect yourselves and others. There is too much at stake to sit by and wait for people to show up.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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Sheeptoad

by Elizabeth Considine

Street Roots welcomes Elizabeth Considine to our pages with her new cartoon, Sheeptoad. Elizabeth was born in Portland and has been drawing since she could hold a pen. She loves theater, growing food, poetry, chickens and walking her three dogs in the park. "I find inspiration in the strangeness of life and the character of human nature. I hope my art will inspire contemplation, curiosity and an odd thought or two."

