

Key, Lori

From: Nicolette W <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 2:25 PM
To: ClerkoftheBoard
Subject: Item 34: Truth Act Forum

To: Ventura County Board of Supervisors and Sherriffs Department

I want to demand that the Sheriff Department and the Board of Supervisors stop all ICE notifications and transfers, and put an end to the painful separations of our communities and families in Ventura County.

The pandemic has made it clearer than ever that the health of each of us depends on the health of all of us. Ventura County is still transferring community members who have earned their release over to ICE detention centers, which are sites of rampant medical neglect and abuse even before the pandemic. This puts all of us at risk as COVID-19 continues to spread.

For months, doctors and advocates have warned that social distancing is impossible in prisons, jails, and detention centers. And now, we are facing a COVID crisis that puts both incarcerated people and the surrounding community at risk.

About 70% of people incarcerated in immigration detention centers are transferred to ICE custody directly upon release from prison or jail. The pipeline from prison/jail to ICE detention and deportation has adverse health impacts for those who go through this experience, their loved ones, and the broader community — and is even more dangerous during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transferring people from one “tinderbox” of infection to another could literally amount to a death sentence. The death toll in ICE custody is the highest it's been in 15 years.

We need to recognize that the spread of COVID-19 in jails, prisons, and detention centers disproportionately hurts Black immigrants, and immigrants and refugees of color.

Even though only 7 percent of non-citizens in the U.S. are Black, they make up 20 percent of those facing deportation on criminal grounds in the U.S. In California, Black immigrants in detention are organizing for justice, holding a #BLM protest in detention.

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors recently declared Racism a Public Health Crisis, which should be followed up with action.

More policing, incarceration, and deportation worsens conditions for families and survivors of violence, and is not an effective way to address or stop harm or violence in our communities.

Money spent on punishment through policing, incarceration, and collaboration with ICE should be diverted to community solutions that are proven to rehabilitate people, including mental health interventions that do not rely on law enforcement, job programs so that people have livable wages, stable housing, and youth programs.

If we uphold our values, we will move Ventura County forward--and keep up with other counties across the state that already protect immigrant residents.

Many counties across the state -- from Los Angeles County, with the state's largest jail system, to Contra Costa County, with a Sheriff who was the immediate past President of the Sheriff's Association -- have already ceased any and all transfers to ICE. In addition, San Francisco and Santa Clara County have some of the strongest sanctuary policies in the state. Ventura County should also move toward a more humane policy that protects County residents, or it will be left behind.

When local law enforcement agencies work with ICE, the result is a two-tiered system of justice where individuals are punished twice simply because they are immigrants.

We already know incarceration harms individuals, families, and communities beyond just the person incarcerated. The Sheriff's cooperation with ICE makes this worse by permanently separating immigrants from their loved ones, who may rely on that person as a parent, partner, or other provider.

Like all people, an immigrant who is released from jail should be able to restart their life with their communities and families, instead of being threatened with deportation. Transferring someone to ICE is a "double jeopardy" where someone who has served their time and is ready to reenter the community is prevented from doing so.

Lastly, I want to submit a plea from myself and my family. I am a citizen, but not everyone in my family is documented. It affects the way that those family members interact and live on a daily basis, and it also extends to my child. She worries about her family's safety and if they will be taken from her. I want to urge you to examine your position of power in this community, and how what you decide and push for affects everyone here, especially the children. The members of my family who are undocumented are courageously still working, because of limited options for unemployment assistance, and they deserve to be protected and valued the same as any other person. They are enduring a global pandemic of Covid19, as well as a public health crisis of rampant racism and white supremacy. This is an opportunity to begin to correct the flaws in one of the systems that upholds white supremacy. I urge you to take it, and to uphold justice and love in these uncertain times.

"Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."

-Martin Luther King Jr

Thank you,
Nicolette Walker-Itza

Ojai, CA