

ICE agents assault and detain US citizen in Alabama

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Last week, Leonardo Garcia Venegas, a 25-year-old construction worker and US citizen born in Florida, was violently assaulted and detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Alabama. Venegas had the audacity to film ICE agents as they arrested his undocumented brother during a workplace raid.

For the “crime” of asking why his brother was being arrested and attempting to record the encounter, Venegas was thrown to the ground by federal agents, his phone discarded and his constitutional rights trampled. He repeatedly asserted his citizenship and presented an Alabama Real ID card—government-issued and backed by heightened documentation requirements—only for ICE agents to dismiss it as fake and proceed with his unlawful detention.

Venegas was not released until hours later, after ICE checked his Social Security number and realized what he had been saying all along: that he was a US citizen. Far from being a mistake, or a case of “overreach,” the event showed a glimpse of the naked face of authoritarian state repression under capitalism. It was only after videos of the assault began circulating online that ICE issued a predictably dishonest statement, claiming Venegas “interfered” with their operation and that his detention “had nothing to do with his citizenship.” The footage, of course, proves otherwise.

While Venegas’s case has rightly provoked outrage, the real significance goes far beyond one brutal arrest. This was not an isolated incident, nor was it driven solely by racial profiling—though that may be a factor.

The brutalization of Venegas coincided with other ICE outrages last week. In Watertown, New York, a longtime resident identified only as Maricela was abducted by ICE and separated from her six-month-old daughter. She was only released following massive

community protest.

In San Diego, ICE agents staked out immigration courtrooms, waiting to seize immigrants—including a 38-year-old Venezuelan man with an active asylum case—just steps from the courtroom door. The man had been granted a stay of removal by the judge, but ICE ignored the court’s decision entirely, operating with the impunity of a lawless secret police force.

This strategy of courthouse ambushes will have the predictable effect of driving people underground, causing them to miss court dates, which in turn becomes the pretext for further repression. It is a calculated tactic designed to erode legal protections and eliminate avenues for defense.

ICE is operating as the American Gestapo—a lawless federal paramilitary force executing workplace raids, separating mothers from infants, and assaulting US citizens who protest—all in the service of capital. The goal is not “border security” or “law enforcement,” but the construction of a police state aimed at smashing resistance by the working class.

The arrest of Leonardo Venegas is particularly significant because it confirms what the *World Socialist Web Site* has long warned: repression aimed at immigrants will be used as a dress rehearsal for wider attacks on the entire working class. The capitalist state cannot tolerate dissent—not even the act of filming an ICE arrest. The next time, it could be a worker live-streaming a protest against unsafe conditions, a teacher denouncing school cuts, or a student opposing imperialist war.

The Department of Homeland Security recently stripped Harvard University of its ability to enroll international students after demanding that it hand over the names and protest activity records of immigrant students—a McCarthyite surveillance request meant to

compile deportation lists of those who oppose genocide in Gaza. Trump has even gone so far as to say that “homegrowns” would be next—referring to US-born citizens who dare to challenge the state.

This assault is not solely the work of the fascistic Trump. The Democrats have been complicit every step of the way. Bill Clinton’s 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) eviscerated due process rights and laid the legal foundation for the current deportation machine. Barack Obama, despite his “hope and change” branding, deported more immigrants than any president in US history. His administration vastly expanded the enforcement infrastructure Trump now exploits.

Among those Democrats with higher political ambitions, California Governor Gavin Newsom—hailed by the liberal media as a “progressive” standard-bearer—has echoed Trump’s reactionary rhetoric, openly praising the removal of undocumented immigrants under the guise of targeting “criminals” while exploiting the “sanctuary state” lie as a smokescreen.

Both parties—Democratic and Republican—serve the same ruling class. The persecution of immigrants is not an aberration but a core function of capitalist rule. By scapegoating immigrants, the ruling class seeks to pit native and foreign-born workers against each other, undermining class solidarity.

Immigrants are used by the ruling class as a reserve army of labor—vulnerable, low-paid and easily exploited—driving down wages and labor conditions for all. The capitalist state, far from being neutral, enforces immigration laws and repression to maintain this exploitable workforce.

Meanwhile, imperialist policies and global capitalist exploitation displace populations, only for these same systems to criminalize their victims when they migrate in search of safety. Finally, as social inequality deepens, the ruling class redirects public anger toward immigrants to deflect scrutiny from the capitalist system itself. In essence, immigrant persecution is a tool of class domination, and the way forward lies in uniting workers of all nations against their common oppressors.

At the same time, the state is expanding its repressive toolkit to target citizens. The escalation of ICE brutality, domestic surveillance and militarized policing

is the ruling class’s response to deepening economic crisis and growing unrest. The repression of immigrants today is the repression of all workers tomorrow.

Only the international unity of the working class can defeat these attacks. Workers—immigrant and native-born—must recognize that their interests are aligned not with their “own” ruling class, but with one another. Rank-and-file committees must be built in every workplace, free from the stranglehold of the pro-capitalist trade unions, to organize a mass, independent struggle against the capitalist state, its police thugs, and the two parties of Wall Street.

The working class has the power not only to stop deportations, but to overthrow the entire rotten system that produces them. It must turn indignation into action, which requires a socialist strategy aimed at forging a future in which no one is illegal, and all are free to live and work where they please.



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