

ICE shooting of TikToker Richard LA exposes the fraud of California’s “sanctuary” policy

Hong Jian, Kimie Saito, Marc Wells
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On the morning of Tuesday, October 21, members of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested TikToker Carlitos Ricardo Parias, better known online as Richard LA, in an attempt to silence his social media coverage exposing ICE raids throughout Los Angeles. In the course of the arrest, ICE agents unleashed a barrage of gunfire, wounding Parias and one of their own.

Rather than detain Parias as he left his home at 8:45 a.m., agents allowed him to enter his car and drive off, before attempting to box him in on a crowded street adjacent to a public high school. In the ensuing chaos, they opened fire, later claiming they “felt threatened.” One bullet struck Parias in the elbow; another ricocheted and hit an ICE agent. The recklessness of the operation, conducted during morning traffic, beside a school, demonstrates the murderous character of ICE and the fascistic methods of the Trump administration.

After being arrested and treated for his wound, Parias was denied access to his attorney for more than 24 hours, and only then allowed to speak by phone under federal supervision. Although released from federal custody, he remains in Los Angeles County Jail.

In the immediate aftermath, the corporate media flooded the area, parroting official claims that “an ICE agent had been shot during a raid.” Television and online outlets deliberately created the impression of an “active shooter” incident, implying that Parias had fired at agents. Only hours later did it emerge that all the gunfire came from ICE itself, fired at a lone, unarmed man whose only “crime” was documenting government repression on social media.

The nearby Santee Education Complex, located on the same street, went into lockdown at 9:03 a.m., shortly after the shots rang out. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) lifted the lockdown at 9:30 a.m. (barely 25 minutes later) while police and federal agents continued to swarm the area. The decision to reopen the campus while an active federal operation continued provoked outrage among

students, parents and teachers.

According to L.A. TACO, a teacher confronted interim principal Lucera Malone, who had told staff that ICE was no longer on campus. When the teacher pointed out that agents were still on the front lawn, she reminded Malone that the school’s policy mandates a lockdown whenever ICE is in the vicinity. The principal reportedly replied she did not work for the teacher, but that “LAUSD pays my mortgage.”

The callousness of the remark and the administration’s neglect of even the most basic safety precautions triggered anger throughout the school community. The next day, students staged a walkout to protest both the presence of ICE and the administration’s disregard for their safety.

Mayra, a parent, told the WSWS, “Shouldn’t we have a full-time principal at all times? One that knows our community and is sensitive to our students? Right now there are so many underlying things that are being put into play that we cannot anticipate everything. But ICE out here firing 11 shots? Yeah, that was really scary. I mean, we are all Latinos, Hispanic or however you identify yourself. We all look the same to them, right? So it’s very scary, very scary, and I know students are aware of those things.”

Alicia, a student who joined the walkout, said the principal “didn’t care about the students, she didn’t care about our safety.” She explained that students initially planned a peaceful protest inside the building but decided that walking out would make a stronger statement in defense of their rights.

Evelyn, another parent, insisted, “It’s the children that pay the principal’s mortgage. She is supposed to serve the children. And what happened, that was not safe. They should not have lifted the lockdown. The streets were closed, signs were posted saying ‘danger, do not cross here.’ Eleven shots were fired. How could you do that when there could be more shots coming?”

The outrage of students and parents is legitimate but the issue cannot be reduced to the failings of one interim

principal. The fundamental question is the daily repression of immigrant families by ICE and other federal agencies—and what strategy is needed to end it. To conduct such a struggle, it is necessary to shake off any illusions in the Democratic Party, which has functioned as Trump's enablers and enforcers.

What occurred at Santee Education Complex exposes the fraud of the “sanctuary state” and “sanctuary city” campaign promoted for years by the Democrats in California and Los Angeles. In practice, these policies have done nothing to defend immigrant rights or oppose federal persecution. Los Angeles, ruled entirely by the Democratic Party from City Hall to the school board, remains one of the most heavily policed metropolitan areas in the country. Local agencies collaborate routinely with federal immigration authorities, whether directly or through the sharing of data, coordination of raids, or logistical support from the LAPD.

There is no constituency within the ruling class for the defense of immigrant rights, democratic rights or free speech. Parias was targeted for two reasons: first, because his TikTok videos exposed the criminality of the US government, documenting ICE's terrorizing of entire working class communities; and second, because he is undocumented and therefore an easy target, a warning to all workers who dare to speak out against the government's authoritarian measures.

The attack on Parias takes place amid an escalating campaign of repression and militarization. Across the country, immigrants are being detained and deported in record numbers, while mass poverty is deepening. Trump has cut off food stamp benefits for more than 42 million Americans, effectively condemning millions of children, elderly, and disabled people to hunger. Meanwhile, billions are funneled into war abroad and militarization at home.

The Democrats, who posture as defenders of “diversity” and “inclusion,” are fully complicit. Under the Biden and Trump administrations alike, ICE has expanded its paramilitary operations. The Los Angeles city government, along with the trade unions and their pseudo-left supporters, has sought to divert social opposition into impotent appeals to the very institutions carrying out repression. Not a single major Democratic politician in California has denounced the shooting of Parias.

The United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) has issued a hypocritical Instagram statement aimed at covering up its own complicity with the Democratic Party and the LAUSD administration. UTLA's statement cynically urges teachers to contact the school's administrator and their UTLA area representative, as if appealing to the very bureaucracies responsible for these policies could defend anyone.

The UTLA bureaucracy is promoting reliance on school

district officials at the same time as it blocks a potential strike by 35,000 educators and keeps them on the job more than four months after the expiration of their last contract. District officials, with the full backing of state and local Democrats, are offering teachers a paltry 2 percent annual raise and are preparing to impose savage austerity to force educators to pay for years of corporate tax giveaways, school privatization schemes, and Trump's gutting of federal funding.

A strike in the second largest school district in America would become a powerful catalyst for a nationwide movement of educators and broader sections of the working class against Trump's attack on public education, immigrants and all democratic and social rights. That is the last thing the union bureaucracy and the Democrats want.

Workers, students and youth must organize democratically controlled rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood, independent of both capitalist parties and the trade union bureaucracies. These committees must organize strike action and mass demonstrations by educators and broader sections of workers and young people to demand the removal of the ICE gestapo and the military from Los Angeles.

Through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, these democratically controlled organizations can link up with workers and young people nationally and internationally to coordinate a united struggle against the capitalist system, which breeds war, inequality and dictatorship.

The shooting of Richard LA underscores that the fight against deportations, censorship, and police violence cannot be waged through appeals to the Democratic Party or any section of the capitalist state. These institutions—police, ICE, courts, and both big business parties—exist to defend the wealth, property and power of the corporate and financial oligarchy.

The persecution of Parias is a warning to all: the war that is being waged today against immigrants will be used tomorrow against every worker who resists exploitation and war. The defense of immigrant rights, free speech and democratic rights is inseparable from the struggle for socialism, the only program that places human need above profit and seeks to unite workers across all borders in the fight to abolish the capitalist system that produces such crimes.



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