

ICE targets students and parents at San Diego schools

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Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents abducted a San Diego City College student near campus last Tuesday morning and, the following day, detained two parents outside an elementary school moments after morning drop-off. The attacks are part of an escalating wave of terror directed at schools, students and immigrant families across San Diego and the nation, as the Trump administration steps up mass deportations in preparation for fascist dictatorship and war.

On the morning of September 8, ICE agents in unmarked vehicles conducted a kidnapping operation at an intersection near San Diego City College, a community college in the downtown area. Video obtained by local news shows armed agents surrounding a vehicle during and taking the driver, Renatho Kemsley Casseus, a student at City College. An as-yet-unidentified passenger, also a student, ran onto the campus and was pursued by agents. The passenger reached the campus, after which ICE agents called off the pursuit. The student was reported to have been helped by a member of the school staff and has not been detained.

The kidnapping on Tuesday was followed by equally chilling events during the morning hours of Wednesday, when ICE detained two parents outside John Marshall Elementary School shortly after the morning drop-off. Immigration agents pulled over the parents' vehicle at an intersection a block from the school. Other vehicles came in and boxed the couple in, after which the woman in the vehicle ran toward a local construction site seeking aid from workers who were present, but was detained.

The two people taken were confirmed to be parents of children aged 2 and 5 who attend the school.

One worker described the scene: "My boss tried to get involved but the officer kind of like, unlocked his gun, or I don't know, then he took out his spray, the pepper spray, and told us to get back," adding: "She was crying about her daughter; she'd say 'my daughter! My daughter!' but we couldn't do anything."

The outcry of students and workers against these barbaric assaults has been swift. On Wednesday, September 9,

students rallied on the streets around City College in downtown San Diego to protest the recent attacks.

Marcus, a student at City College, told WSWs reporters who were on campus hours after the kidnapping: "It's not fair, you have someone coming to school to educate themselves and they get detained. Supposedly the other guy got away, but I don't think it's fair at all ... There is no one in ICE who actually wants people to become citizens, they're more like, 'Oh you weren't born here, you don't belong here.' I don't think it's right."

Marcello, a young worker, said: "I don't think it's ok to separate people from their families. There are a lot of things that are happening that I think are crazy. They are trying to reverse birthright citizenship, that goes against every American value of everyone being equal. To target someone who lives here and has built a life here, it's so inhumane to try and uproot that. If they were going after criminals that would be one thing, but these are people who are trying to just set up a life here. It's messed up."

Marcello pointed to the connection between the repression at home and war abroad: "The civilians pay the cost for the wars that someone wants to make happen. It's either about oil, or guns, or some ulterior motive that's never said openly, so they have to spread propaganda to sell the war."

Members of the Haitian community gathered in protest over Tuesday's abduction of Haitian student Renatho Kemsley Casseus. In July, the Trump administration eliminated Temporary Protected Status for Haitian immigrants, affecting some 350,000 people. One attendee, Willia Caillo, whose husband was abducted August 28, told MSN: "He's the one who drives the car. But I don't have anyone to take me to buy things," adding, "I'm scared, too. I just stay inside. I'm not taking my son to his doctor's appointment."

The official response from local politicians and the trade unions has been confined to statements that disclaim responsibility while doing nothing to stop the attacks. San Diego City College District officials said in a joint statement: "This intrusion by law enforcement is both

disruptive, unwelcome, and in conflict with the SDCCD's core values," while reiterating that local law enforcement did not aid ICE in its abduction, even though video appears to show police protecting ICE agents as they conducted their operation.

San Diego Unified School District issued a joint statement of its own following the kidnapping at John Marshall Elementary, pleading with the Trump administration: "We are asking federal authorities, clearly and urgently: please stop conducting immigration enforcement near our schools and during school arrival and dismissal times."

Nearly a week after the kidnapping of Casseus, AFT Local 1931, which purports to represent faculty and staff at the San Diego Community College District and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District in El Cajon, has yet to issue a single statement.

On September 10 the San Diego Education Association (SDEA) issued a joint statement with the California School Employees Association (CSEA), an affiliate organization of the AFL-CIO, in response to the recent attacks. The SDEA claims to represent 7,000 teachers and staff in San Diego Unified School District.

The pathetic statement amounted to a demand that immigration Gestapo present a judicial warrant before kidnapping students, parents or staff: "We demand strict no-access policies for FEDERAL POL(ICE) on every campus, K-12 and higher education, *without a judicial warrant.*" (emphasis added)

Under conditions where the Trump administration and its immigration police have routinely violated court orders and conducted kidnapping operations inside private residences without a warrant, the demand that a judicial warrant be presented before students or staff are taken serves only to legitimize ICE and the budding police state.

Neither AFT Local 1931 nor the joint statement issued by the SDEA and CSEA called on members to begin preparations for a strike to force immigration Gestapo out of the state and abolish the agency. The refusal of the trade union bureaucracies to defend the democratic rights of students and their members is not a mistake, but an expression of their class role as labor police.

The attacks in San Diego are taking place as the Trump administration ramps up mass deportations across the state and the nation as a whole. In July alone, ICE arrested 1,964 immigrants in San Diego and Imperial counties, part of 50,208 arrests nationwide that month. Another 50,925 people were arrested in August, a trajectory that will result in half a million people being kidnapped every 10 months.

Already in the campaign of repression there have been numerous murders of workers in the streets, such as Alex Pretti and Renée Nicole Good in Minneapolis, Lorenzo

Salgado Araujo in Houston and Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero in Biddeford, Maine. The repression against workers, both documented and undocumented, serves a central aim of the ruling class: to curtail domestic opposition to fascist dictatorship and war abroad against Iran, Russia and eventually China.

The defense of the democratic rights of the working class cannot be left to the courts, the Democratic Party and its appendages in the trade union bureaucracy. It must be taken up independently by the working class itself.

There has already been a surge in strike activity, not only across the country but around the world. Last month, nearly 20,000 Boeing workers in the United States voted to authorize strike action. In Canada more than 1,200 workers at National Steel Car in Hamilton, Ontario, have been on strike since August 12. In neighborhoods and communities across the country, workers and community members have formed watch organizations to monitor and warn of nearby ICE activity.

There is no shortage of opposition to the repression being waged at home. The central issue in the coming struggle is the question of leadership. The decisive factor will be the political independence of the working class itself.

We call on workers to form rank-and-file committees in every school, neighborhood and workplace across the country. It is through these politically independent organizations that workers will be able to coordinate strike action at the local, national and international levels to stop the drive to dictatorship and war and protect their immigrant brothers and sisters. The working class is the only social force that can stop the descent into barbarism, and as such it must take up both the defense of democracy and the cause of socialism.



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