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No Human Being is Illegal.

-- Elie Wiesel

New reporting from the [Intercept](#) has revealed Immigration and Customs Enforcement's clandestine surveillance, targeting, and harassing of immigrant rights demonstrators not only in Nashville but throughout the United States. The time has come to resist ICE's efforts to intimidate the most marginalised members of our communities: undocumented migrants. By reversing the Tennessee Assembly's blanket ban on non-compliance with customs enforcement, we can make our state safer for everyone and use limited resources more wisely.

Sanctuary policies, as they are known, prevent public workers from inquiring about a person's immigration status or detaining them on behalf of customs enforcement officers. Nashville's previous policy of non-compliance was reversed by Mayor Cooper; the Tennessee assembly has passed laws prohibiting municipal governments and police departments from non-cooperation. As part of a grander logic for deterring all migration, the Trump administration predicted that making life inhospitable for people without papers would discourage migration. But we know that economic opportunity motivates migration, and deportation harms non-violent people disproportionately.

Consider the fact that 57% of undocumented people living in the US have been in the country for more than 10 years (according to best estimates); most entered the US legally but overstayed their visa. Since arriving, undocumented people have set down roots in our society; 56,000 Tennessean children have an undocumented parent on whom they depend, and 150,000 families in the country have an undocumented member. 74% of these families do not own their home, and 70% of them have no health insurance.

Rather than a burden on state resources, people without papers make do with much less and contribute more surplus value to the economy than they are compensated: 70% are employed (only 5% are unemployed and 25% are not seeking jobs), in vital industries such as construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. Undocumented labourers generate \$143.4 million in federal tax revenue and yet 29% of their families survive on poverty incomes. Deporting a household breadwinner leaves elderly people and American citizens, born on our soil, in precarious financial straits.

The downward spiral of detention and deportation can begin with something as trivial as a traffic stop over a broken tail-light. In Tennessee, people without papers cannot receive a driver's license, but they still have to get to work. If you are booked by the police for a non-criminal infraction like driving sans license, your data is cross-checked with federal databases. For undocumented migrants, an ICE detainer (the request that local police hold a suspected criminal in custody) might be issued, requiring the jail to detain you for deportation. To reiterate: undocumented migration is not a crime and neither is driving without a license. And yet, Tennesseans will be footing the bill for ICE's detainer -- meanwhile, as far as family members know, their non-violent loved ones have "been disappeared."

Non-cooperation with federal customs enforcement is not just good governance, it's also good politics. District attorneys and sheriffs departments in places like [Tampa Bay](#) and [Sioux City](#) say that undocumented people are more likely to seek police assistance and comply with investigations when they know their legal status won't be used against them. Sanctuary policies prevent unscrupulous employers from using the threat of an immigration raid to bust unions, which are among the only options for undocumented workers to defend their material interests. And as Latin Americans grow as a voting bloc, so to will the number of voters with law-abiding family deported by ICE.

Federal attorneys and ICE argue that honouring detainers is necessary for the justice system to function. What they conveniently leave unspoken is that undocumented immigration is not a crime and that detention without a pressing legal

warrant (such as from a judge) is unconstitutional -- [according to multiple courts](#). The only cases which would justify prolonged detention are when violent criminals -- who cannot legally enter the US under normal visas anyway -- are apprehended and prosecuted, same as legal residents.

Even with the changing of the guard in the White House, the administration continues to [rhetorically disregard the human dignity of people without papers](#). In this vacuum of moral leadership, Tennessee can become a national leader. ICE has no legal authority over police departments that we don't give it: Tennesseans should take this opportunity to get the federal government out of our lives and make this state a sanctuary for America's tired, poor, and huddled masses yearning to breathe free.