

## *Fingerprints' lasting marks*

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### **Body**

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Regarding the March 21 editorial "[\*Not enough fingerprints\*](#)":

The federal Secure Communities program involves sending an alleged criminal's ***fingerprints*** to Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the point of booking - not when the person is convicted, let alone when they're convicted of something serious. So far, a majority of those illegal immigrants deported as a result of this process don't fit the profile of serious criminals that ICE claims to be pursuing. A majority either have no criminal record or committed only minor offenses.

If ICE really wanted to concentrate on serious criminals, it would focus on records of people who've been convicted. Secure Communities' broader scope strongly suggests that it has something else in mind, possibly this:

People who enter the country without documents, if they avoid arrest entirely, have no prints on file in the United States; Secure Communities won't identify them. They also, under present law, have essentially no chance of adjusting their immigration status.

But people who have overstayed visas constitute about 40 percent of those present without formal authorization. They do have prints on file. And they have, in some cases, a remote chance of adjusting their immigration status. They're also the people likeliest to be detected by Secure Communities.

Is ICE going after easy cases? Trying to lower the population of people who might be able to attain legal status in the future? Either explanation seems both possible and regrettable.

Mary Hopkins, Everett, Mass.

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The Post claims that ICE "has neither inclination nor resources to deport suspects with otherwise clean records who have been arrested for low-level infractions." But ICE's own statistics tell a different story, showing the Secure Communities program sweeps up an alarmingly high percentage of people who have no criminal convictions or who were arrested for traffic and other low-level offenses. That worries immigrant communities, who view Secure Communities as an incentive to arrest people just so their ***fingerprints*** can be checked or as an obstacle to approaching the police when they are victims or witnesses to a crime.

## Fingerprints' lasting marks

Post articles have revealed ICE's pattern of providing misleading and contradictory information about the program. Maybe the editorial board should read the articles, too.

Joan Friedland, Washington

The writer is the managing attorney at the National Immigration Law Center.

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