

Dear Council Members,

I am a Montgomery County resident, and like many people I know, I have been horrified by the lawlessness and abuse perpetrated at the hands of ICE under the current administration.

These agents are not interested in keeping our communities safe - quite the opposite. ICE used to prioritize the detainment and deportation of undocumented immigrants who could pose a threat to their community, but no longer. I have first hand knowledge of families that have been affected here in Montgomery County. ICE agents are mainly using racial profiling to detain hard working individuals with no criminal record that have fled their home countries to make a better life for themselves and their children. They are nannies, teachers, small business owners, construction workers - they are even teenagers.

In Montgomery County ICE has targeted bus stops where children wait to go to school. They have pulled workers off ladders as they repair homes. They have taken people as they show up to their routine immigration appointments. They are tearing families apart. Some of us are trying to provide support for the children left behind as their parents are detained for months on end. It is heartbreaking but also damaging to the entire community. Many people are also being wrongfully detained, just recently folks here in Montgomery County who are citizens or have asylum were taken. And even if people who have been detained are ultimately released, the descriptions of their experience in detention are nothing short of torture. It seems the cruelty is the point.

This should not be a political issue. It is a human issue. It is about right and wrong. But it is also about what is best for our communities. Please use every tool at your disposal to hold in check the abuses of a rogue agency. No law enforcement should have to obscure their identity. I even spoke to a young woman recently who lives in Montgomery County but attends Bowie State. She told me a story of ICE agents showing up to campus only to find out later that they were ICE impersonators. Even the FBI admitted this is happening all over the country. In particular, young women are being assaulted and even raped by people dressed as ICE agents. And how is anyone to know the difference? ICE is acting violently, refusing to show ID, dragging people and holding them down, even if they are pregnant or disabled or elderly. If you are being kidnapped, law enforcement advises you to fight back, to resist being moved to a second location by any means necessary. However ICE agents have shot and even killed people who have merely tried to run away.

For a long time Montgomery County has earned the reputation as a safe and welcoming place for immigrants. And as a result we have many immigrant communities from all over the world. Yet these same communities are currently under assault and are not able to defend themselves. That is our responsibility. And to be clear, with masked agents who have been told they have 'absolute immunity', no-one is truly safe.

Please support both the County Values Act and Unmask ICE.

Thank you,

Anna Winthrop