

Press Release

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NEW HAVEN RESIDENTS SUE IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE) OVER ILLEGAL HOME ENTRIES AND ARRESTS IN 2007 RAIDS

Tuesday, October 27, 2009 – On October 28, 2009, ten New Haven residents will file a civil rights suit against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and officials over illegal home entries and unlawful arrests in the 2007 New Haven raids. The lawsuit alleges that ICE agents broke into homes without search warrants or consent in the early morning of June 6, 2007 and arrested residents based solely on their race and/or ethnicity. ICE targeted New Haven in order to retaliate against the City’s public safety policies that aimed to integrate all residents, including immigrant and Latinos, into civic life, according to the complaint. In addition to suing the agents who participated in the raid, the plaintiffs are also suing senior ICE officials for failing to prevent foreseeable constitutional violations. The lawsuit seeks to remedy constitutional violations suffered by New Haven residents at the hands of a broken immigration enforcement system.

“ICE agents broke into my home without permission while I was still sleeping, pulled the covers from my bed, and arrested me for no reason,” said Jose Solano-Yangua, a plaintiff in the case. “I was terrified and humiliated. We are bringing this suit, because we refuse to let our families and community live in fear.”

The complaint alleges multiple constitutional violations that took place during the June 6, 2007 raids. ICE agents illegally raided plaintiffs’ homes in the early morning, in some instances using physical force or entering with guns drawn. ICE agents handcuffed plaintiffs, some in front of their families and young children, and shipped them to Hartford and then to Rhode Island, where they were detained for days or weeks. These agents entered residences without search warrants or consent and arrested plaintiffs based on race and/or ethnicity. The complaint also states that senior officials who supervised and planned the operation and administered the national program of which these raids were a part share responsibility for these constitutional violations.

“The raids were not a product of routine immigration enforcement,” said Sandra Trevino, Executive Director of JUNTA for Progressive Action, a New Haven-based community organization. “According to documents obtained in a Freedom of Information Act suit we brought, ICE was mobilizing in opposition to the City’s public safety policies, including the Elm City Resident Card Program, at the very time the agency planned and executed these raids.”

The 2007 raids took place thirty-six hours after the City of New Haven approved the Elm City Resident Card Program that would provide identification to all city residents, regardless of immigration status.

“Our community will not be intimidated or silenced,” said Father James Manship of St. Rose of Lima Church, whose parishioners were vocal supporters of New Haven’s Elm City Resident Card Program. “We will stand with the plaintiffs in this lawsuit in order to seek justice.”

“Senior ICE officials should have stopped their subordinates from retaliating against New Haven through these home raids,” said Lindsay Nash, one of the Yale law students representing the plaintiffs. “Instead, these senior officials pressured regional ICE teams to meet new arrest quotas with full knowledge that the constitutional violations committed by ICE agents across the country would be visited upon our clients. We hope that this lawsuit offers a remedy to our clients and helps to change our immigration enforcement system.”

Community representatives from JUNTA for Progressive Action and St. Rose of Lima Church are available to speak to the press. For further inquiries, please contact Valarie Kaur at valarie.kaur@yale.edu or (650) 269-2792, and Ana Munoz at ana.munoz@yale.edu and (203) 645-6913.

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