

Free the Danbury 11!

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On Tuesday, September 19, the city government of Danbury collaborated with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in an attack on civil liberties and workers' rights. A federal agent, disguising himself as a contractor, lured 11 immigrant day laborers into a van with the promise of work and drove them directly to the Danbury police station, where federal agents awaited to whisk them away to jail in Hartford, then on to detention in Boston. With no justification, 7 of them have since been moved to a prison in Texas, making it even more difficult for families to contact them or petition for their release.

Acting like secret police, ICE had initially withheld the right of these workers to contact their families, and had refused even to confirm the names of those who were taken until public pressure became too much to bear.

Unfortunately this is not an isolated attack. ICE is conducting raids around the country, detaining over 21,000 workers by August of this year (compared with 4,000 detentions in all of 2003). ICE is claiming 1,000 immigrants arrested per week. These attacks are being perpetrated in the wake of enormous mobilizations earlier this year, when undocumented workers began standing up for their rights, and are a deliberate attempt to weaken the immigrant rights movement. Recent raids include:

-120 workers arrested in Stillmore, GA, over Labor Day weekend

-55 workers arrested in Tallahassee, FL, on September 16

-55 workers arrested in West Michigan on September 16

-107 workers arrested in three towns in California on September 17

-875 workers arrested in five southern states in August

Etc, etc, etc.

Every successful raid is an assault on the living standards for all working people, regardless of legal status, because it weakens the resolve of immigrants to stand up for themselves and makes it easier for employers to pay everyone less.

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