

ORGANIZING TO KEEP ICE OUT OF YOUR WORKPLACE



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This article was written by a member of Black Rose / Rosa Negra (BRRN) with experience in both workplace organizing and neighborhood based organizing against immigration raids.

Drawing on this background, the author describes a series of steps you can start taking today to defend yourself and your coworkers from ICE.



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By Keith Robertson

Introduction

When ICE comes to your workplace, it can be over before you know it. Because they know that the community is opposed to them, ICE has adapted their tactics to be sneaky and fast. That's why we need to be organized and ready to stand up to them the second they show up. The solidarity of immediate bystanders can mean the difference between deportation and freedom, and, as we've seen, can spark waves of resistance. So when ICE comes to your workplace, be organized to stop them.

Blocking Trump's deportation raids is one of the most critical tactics in this moment. Trump's approach to his first six months in office has been to "flood the zone" with so many outrageous attacks that his opposition doesn't know where to focus and respond. At this point, almost all of us have been affected by one or more of the assaults Trump has made to advance his vision of autocratic, white-male, billionaire rule. And of course we are all witness to the crushing genocide in Gaza and widening Israeli war across the Middle East that Trump is facilitating.

Despite this, opposition was disappointingly frail until neighbors and coworkers began physically standing up to la migra and disrupting their deportation operations. This is because these raids are both

Further Reading

How To Organize a Neighborhood Popular Assembly by members of Black Rose/Rosa Negra 2025.

How to Organize Your Building by Rose Lenehan and Tracy Jean Rosenthal 2020.

How the Koreatown Popular Assembly Built Neighborhood Power to Confront ICE by members of Black Rose/Rosa Negra. 2025.

To Kick ICE Out Requires Action, To Keep Them Out Requires Organization Statement by Bay Area Local of Black Rose/Rosa Negra. 2025

It Will Take Collective Direct Action to Stop the Abducitons by Jon A., Alexandria H., and Cameron P. 2025.

Survival of the Organized: Critical Reflections on Organizing and Mutual Aid by Alexandria H., Juan VL., and Charles W. 2025.

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begin thinking of what's over the horizon – about structure, campaigns, and bigger goals. If you're in a nonunion workplace, maybe this is the beginning of your union organizing committee. Mobilize the informal leaders in your workplace into raids defense, and then invite them to a workplace organizing training put on by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Labor Notes, or Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee (EWOC).

If you're already in a union, maybe this is the beginning of an independent rank-and-file caucus ready to take direct action against other workplace issues related to Trump's America – like a transphobic supervisor who refuses to use your coworker's correct pronouns. Or maybe this is a way to build out the organizing you're already doing in your workplace, and you can use this to build momentum to winning contract protections for undocumented workers.

Whatever your situation, we want to remind every freedom-loving, border-hating worker out there that when we stand together, we can defeat ICE, and we can show the whole working class that we have the power to win.



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massively hated, and are a concrete manifestation of Trump's policy that we can directly impact. When neighbors confront immigration raids, it is a direct confrontation with Trump's core policy of mass deportation. Even though it only involved a few hundred people at first, the confrontation with ICE and CBP in Los Angeles arguably had a bigger impact than the hundreds of thousands who marched in the No Kings protests a week later.

Seeing that it is possible to stand up to Trump and defend our neighbors and coworkers has a massive mobilizing effect on everyone who has been overwhelmed by the past six months and doesn't know where to start.

Step 1: Start Simple, Talk to Your Coworkers

The most basic thing to prepare to challenge immigration raids at or near your workplace is to talk to your coworkers. Without this, you can't do anything! Try starting with simple things, like having lunch with coworkers who you haven't talked to much before; learning about each other's families and sharing snacks.

Once you know each other, you will need to create a way for your coworkers to communicate quickly with each other and mobilize a response. At its simplest, this could be a groupchat among your coworkers who share a concern about immigration raids.

Recently, when a Zionist organization showed up outside an Oakland, CA hospital to harass a worker and union member, hospital workers were able to utilize the communication networks they had built through workplace Palestine organizing to quickly respond and shut them down. This is the kind of value that creating horizontal communication structures in your workplace has. If you are in a union, it is also valuable to use its structures to organize your workplace response – like creating a health and safety committee that responds to the safety issue of federal agents coming to kidnap workers.

Step 2: Know Your Rights

Second, familiarize yourself with your rights, with ICE tactics

(which are changing all the time), and with local resources. If possible, attend trainings with local rapid-response networks and become trained first responders. It's important to connect with groups like rapid response networks that have been doing this work for years and that are particularly skilled at dispelling the false rumors that cause so much panic in our communities. But it's equally important to be aware of their limitations. One is the limitation that no matter how rapid the rapid response network, ICE raids will almost always be over by the time they make it to the scene.

The deeper limitation is that most – but not all – rapid response networks and mainstream immigrant-rights organizations are nonprofits, with many receiving their funding from local governments, and their objective is strictly to observe raids and provide legal resources, rather than to risk their funding by intervening and taking direct action to disrupt raids. That's why we should do our best to maintain our independence, and be clear about our own goals and strategy, while collaborating where it makes sense.

Step 3: Make a Plan

Now you can make plans! It doesn't usually make sense to overplan, because it's impossible to predict all the possible scenarios. Really, the most important thing is talking to your coworkers and connecting each other together in an organizing structure, more so than the most perfect plan ever.

But it is very useful to put your rapid response training to use and develop some protocols around the following:

- How you will verify that an immigration raid is indeed happening at your workplace. The SALUTE/ALERTA method can be useful here. Remember that there are different agencies doing raids, with Homeland Security Investigation [HSI] often coming to workplaces, and they often will be in plainclothes and will straight up lie about who they are and what they're doing.
- How you will protect the most at-risk workers.

- How you will secure entrances and exits.
- How you will notify community allies.
- How you will connect with legal support.
- How you will deal with management.
- How you will respond to ICE presence that is in the neighborhood but not at your workplace specifically.

Roleplaying responses to an immigration raid as a group can be a good way to build confidence and cohesion. Doing things like sitting down in front of an ICE van are very scary steps to take, but can become easier when you've practiced ahead of time and know that you have coworkers beside you who will be with you arm-in-arm. Remember the muscle memory you developed during monthly fire drills in fifth grade? That's what you want to replicate.

Thinking Bigger

We always need to keep in mind the difference between mobilization and organization. Challenging ICE with your coworkers who are pissed off at federal agents kidnapping kids is mobilizing: getting people who already agree on an issue to take action together. Working with those coworkers to go out and get everyone else to join you in marching on your boss to demand that they stop using e-Verify requires organizing: transforming individual isolation, apathy, and hopelessness into the power to win change.

What we've seen in past years is cycle after cycle of mass mobilization, where individuals come into the streets to fight for change, and then they go back home still as disconnected individuals, without the relationships and knowledge to create lasting change in their lives. As revolutionaries, we need to be attuned to when the moment is right for mobilization, to be there leading our coworkers into the fight, and then to be creating organizing structures that can hold people together and give them the tools to lead their own fights over the long term.

With that in mind, as you talk to coworkers and build your communication structures and workplace defense plans, you can also