

Written Testimony for 3/31 Public Judiciary Hearing on the S. Burlington ICE Raid

My name is Kelly Mangan. I'm 43 years old. I'm a children's book author and illustrator living in Burlington. I also work part-time at a bakery in South Burlington. I'm a mom of two kids (9 and 12), and the wife of an immigrant, who is now a naturalized US citizen.

I was at the ICE raid on March 11th in South Burlington for approximately 10 and a half hours. I've struggled to write this testimony. I've struggled to condense 10-plus hours of terror, rage, and heartbreak into something useful and poignant for the Judiciary Committee.

On March 11th, I was on my way out of town to visit a friend when I got a text from Migrant Justice that ICE was attempting to abduct someone in South Burlington. I cancelled my plans & let my partner know where I was going so he could pick up the kids. He begged me to be careful.

I showed up to 337 Dorset Street around 9am, and immediately saw five, armed ICE agents with military grade weaponry, tactical vests, and plain clothes underneath. Almost all of them were hiding their faces. They reminded me of the ski-mask-wearing paramilitary groups that I saw in Northern Ireland in the 1990s, during The Troubles.

There were maybe 50 community members at the protest to start, though that number continued to grow throughout the day. People recorded the ICE agents' movements on our phones, and took turns blocking the front and back entrances of the home with our bodies. We also made ourselves (nonviolent) general nuisances. This included asking the agents irritating and outrageous questions, chanting, singing, yelling, blowing whistles, roasting and mocking the agents, and telling them to leave our community.

South Burlington Police were on the scene almost from the beginning. I heard multiple ICE agents openly admit to them that they didn't have a warrant. So they had absolutely no reason to be at this home in the first place. The S Burlington Police Chief, William Breault, told me and a few other people that he and his officers were there to protect the community. I asked, "If it comes down to it, where does your loyalty lie: with protecting the people in your community, or with the feds?"

He replied, "My loyalty is to the law."

I pressed, "So you're on the people's side now, but if ICE is able to get a warrant, then you'll be on their side?" And he simply reiterated that he was there to protect people, though he refused to specify which people he was there to protect.

VT Border Patrol eventually showed up at ICE's behest.



The VT Border Patrol agent who appeared to be in charge [*the man pictured left*] chatted with the ICE agents at the scene, and fielded questions from protestors about his role there. Several people told him that ICE didn't have a warrant, and he said that doesn't matter. People argued with him that it does, in fact, matter quite a lot. A man asked him how he felt about people dying in detention-- doesn't he think what ICE is doing to this family is wrong? The CBP agent replied that "it doesn't really matter if it's right or wrong, it's the law and it's my job." He then turned to a woman who was filming him, who was shaking with cold, and said threateningly, "Why are you shaking? You don't seem like you're from here."

I mention this interaction because it is part of a larger theme: Every member of law enforcement who arrived on scene, regardless of their agency, carried with them the attitude that we-- the community members-- were the problem, and their comrades were the ICE agents who'd come to attack our community. It's a matter of loyalty to people they see as being "like them."

As more ICE agents descended on the house, more and more community members showed up to defend it. People brought food, hand warmers, blankets, ponchos, umbrellas, water, and other supplies to the protest, (since many of us had been there for several hours in the cold and rain). The next-door neighbors opened their home to anybody who needed to get warm or use the bathroom during the standoff. Somebody had pizza delivered. The pizza delivery driver even came back to join the protest after his shift was over! I told him that was a really cool

thing to do, and he said that after he saw what was happening, he felt like he really needed to do something.

Roughly a dozen moms I know from my kids' schools showed up throughout the day to help. One of them had never protested before, and she was so overwhelmed by the weighty reality of the situation that she burst into tears. The point I'm driving at is this: Most of the people who were there on March 11th weren't activists. And none of us were "paid protestors," or "outside agitators," or whatever the Right likes to say we are. We were just neighbors, teachers, parents, and community members who left work on a Wednesday to defend another family against our government.

In the late afternoon, a large force of Vermont State Troopers arrived and closed off Dorset Street, effectively hemming most of us in who'd parked nearby. Several dozen more ICE agents joined the VSP officers, mingling and chatting with them, making it hard to know who was who-- but also sending a pretty clear message whose team the states were on.

Word filtered through the crowd that an ICE agent was en route from St Johnsbury with a warrant, and a confrontation was imminent. Protesters linked arms around the perimeter of the home. I was stationed on the north side of the house, near a window, arm-in-arm with a man and a woman I didn't know. We were told by protest organizers that a disperse order had been issued by Vermont State Troopers, and they were threatening to arrest anyone who didn't disperse. We did not disperse.

Suddenly, a massive force of VT State Troopers and ICE agents rushed the front of the home. I lost sight of them then from where I was, but we could hear the sounds of people screaming as they were assaulted by the troopers. We heard the sounds of the front door being splintered to pieces. And then the sounds of screaming coming from inside the house. A few minutes later, we jumped when we heard a loud bang (which we now know was a gunshot from an ICE agent's weapon discharging). The woman standing with me said, "Jesus Christ, what's happening in there??" We quickly decided to drop arms, since ICE had already breached the house, and try to find somewhere more useful to be.

The scene was utter chaos-- an explosion of rage set off by ICE and VT State Troopers' collaborative use of violence. At least 200 people poured into the street to prevent ICE's vehicles from leaving. That's when I saw Vermont State Troopers escalating once again by grappling protesters by their heads and necks, hitting them, throwing them on the ground— right beside their new ICE buddies, who were doing the exact same thing. Every claim by VT law enforcement that ICE were the only ones brutalizing people is a complete lie.

VT State Troopers got out their gas masks and put them on. They all did it at the same time, indicating to me that this was a coordinated decision. VSP began

pepper spraying every protester they could reach, even people lying on the ground. I saw a man on the side of the road with orange pepper spray dripping down his face, so I used my bottle of water to rinse his eyes as best I could. I ran to get another bottle and found a sobbing teenage girl, who said a state trooper had pulled her glasses off her face and sprayed her directly in the eyes and mouth. I rinsed her eyes and thumped her back while she tried to cough up the pepper spray. I kept going back for water and finding more people who needed it after being hit with chemical agents.

In the midst of all this chaos— of half blinded protestors stumbling through the road—one of the ICE vehicles floored it through a crowd of people, clipping two of them. Neither person was seriously injured to my knowledge, but a young SBPD officer was just standing there, watching it all happen and not lifting a finger to help anyone. Having seen firsthand what SBPD and VSP's idea of "protecting the community" entails, I think we are all better off without it. I finally left the protest around 7:30. Wet, cold, hoarse, numb— with gloves and jacket covered in pepper spray— and feeling thoroughly defeated. ICE had succeeded in unlawfully arresting three people (all of whom, I will remind this committee, have every legal right to be here and *none* of whom were named in ICE's warrant). A mother was ripped away from her child. Protestors were brutalized. And Vermont law enforcement helped achieve all of this, in direct violation of state law.

I suffered a panic attack the day after the ICE raid, which I hadn't been expecting. I was shoved around a little by some ICE agents as they pressed into the crowd, but I wasn't hurt. I was quite lucky in that respect. A lot of people weren't so lucky. But it got me thinking about specific harm, and generalized harm.

We know the specific people who were harmed by this ICE raid: Johana, Camila, Christian, and their families. We also know some of the protestors who were harmed.

What we have *not* addressed is the generalized harm that is done to an entire community when we're terrorized and besieged by a secret police force. Or when that secret police force deputizes state and local police to carry out their campaign of repression and violence against the populace.

There needs to be a serious reckoning for the role that Vermont law enforcement played in the March 11th raid. And for the role law enforcement *continues* to play in propping up authoritarianism.

Thank you.

Kelly Mangan