

I would like to submit the following testimony for the March 19th hearing regarding the ICE Operation in South Burlington.

When I left for work on Wednesday, March 11, a typical day, I had no idea that later I would be face to face with masked, unnamed, and armed ICE agents, standing in between them and my neighbors who did nothing to deserve being ripped violently from their home in front of their children. I have never been more scared in my life than in the moments I stood with my community, exercising my first amendment rights, knowing that my body was no match for the weapons and tactical gear of the State Police and ICE should it be used against me. I was given no orders to disperse at any point by police or ICE.

It was clear to me that the majority of the police both state and local, were not there to protect me. At best, many stood by and watched the events unfold, and at worst, state police aggressively cleared the path and broke down the door allowing ICE agents to enter the home of people not named on the warrant. It was clear by the fact that police faced off against protesters in helmets and gas masks and riot gear and guns, meant to use against protesters, with their backs to ICE, a sign of trust, that they were there to protect ICE, not their community. I also saw some SBPD officers unnecessarily throwing protesters to the ground as they attempted to help their friends breath, violently handcuffing others, and turning a blind eye when masked men, presumed to be ICE agents, detained and marched off with citizens. Where were the police when flash grenades and chemical weapons were deployed at the end of the night to disperse protesters?

I have always made decisions based on what I will feel when I must someday answer to future generations. What will future generations say when history runs its course and reveals the evils and atrocities of our time? Will I hang my head in shame when they question why I stood by and let unspeakable terrors happen, or can I hold my head high knowing that I tried to be on the right side of history and stood for human rights between those full of hate and the targeted and oppressed?

Thank you,
Meaghan Hickey