

**Testimony of Alejandra Mota for the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Public Safety  
March 12, 2014**

My name is Alejandra Mota. I'm Mexican and I've lived in Philadelphia with my husband and my two children, who were born here, for 11 years. In 2010, my family and I were affected by the collaboration between immigration and the police through of an ICE hold.

It was a regular day and I was sitting in front of my house with my family. A man came running by us, who was chased by another man with a gun in his hand. Seeing this, I became scared and ran inside the house with my children and closed the door. My husband didn't get into the house in time. When I looked through the window, I saw my husband bloodied from head to toe next to the man with a gun, as well as 5 police officers. My husband was on the floor with a police officers' foot on his back. His head was split open because an officer had hit him with a gun. They began to leave, and when I looked out the door, I saw that the man with a gun had blood on his hands. He shouted at me, asking where the man who was running had gone. I told him that I didn't know what he was talking about and he pushed me and entered our home. I asked him not to scream because my kids, who were just 3 and 5 years old at that time, were terrified but he kept yelling at me in English.

I tried several times to make him stop scaring my kids, but he pushed me again and went into the kitchen. My kids were there and he continued screaming and scaring them. He pointed the gun at me. The police did not let the ambulance take my husband to the hospital, but instead they put him in a police car and took him away. I tried to go with them because I was concerned about my husband and they told me that I would be arrested if I went to the hospital. Because of this, I didn't know anything about his whereabouts until days later when my husband was able to communicate with the church. He was put in the jail at CFCF and wasn't allowed to make any calls.

Immediately upon being taken into police custody, ICE issued a hold on him. The police complied with that hold and turned my husband over to immigration agents. He was charged in criminal court of more than 15 counts, including attacking a policeman with a gun. If he was found guilty, my husband would face 100 years in prison and of course would be deported after serving his sentence.

The ICE hold caused great harm to my family financially. We spent the savings that we had and needed to borrow money to fight the deportation and criminal cases. Our loss of employment and depression also caused a financial strain. This situation left me alone to maintain our home and we didn't have enough money to do so. The ICE hold caused our family to spend between 35 and 40 thousand dollars because we were victims of fraud by corrupt lawyers and had to pay fines and paperwork.

Police and local prisons in Philadelphia are giving tools to federal immigration to destroy families. To me, it's ridiculous to be punished twice. The first punishment is from the criminal justice system and afterwards it's through deportation. By collaborating with the ICE holds, the city is not only punishing the person who may or may not have committed a crime. In my case, I was punished, as were my kids and the community in general. Everyone knows what the police did to my husband and feels afraid, insecure, and unprotected. Thanks to support from my community, my church and New Sanctuary Movement, we were able to win our case and prove that my husband was the victim of police violence. The police had been looking for another person, and because of a police error, my family had to go through this trauma.

Even after my husband was found not guilty, he was still in deportation because of the ICE hold. Fortunately, he had a good lawyer and was able to win his case and get a U-Visa, which is a visa for people who are victims of crimes. In this case, he was a victim of police abuse.

I'm asking that the immigration system and the criminal system are separated in this city. The idea that the deportation is the way to fight crime is ridiculous from my point of view. I ask that the city block ICE holds for all regardless of legal status or criminal case. Everyone deserves a second chance. We understand the work of the police and we are prepared to cooperate, but we cannot agree that the police should act as immigration agents and help serve double punishments by deporting our people.