



September 20, 2011

Ms. Margo Schlanger
Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
United States Department of Homeland Security
151 M Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Ms. Schlanger,

The Rights Working Group (RWG) contacted you in August to invite you to a racial profiling hearing in Shelbyville, Tennessee on September 12, 2011. This invitation was on behalf of a RWG member, the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC). TIRRC, along with local partners, organized the hearing to highlight the concerns of Latino residents of Shelbyville who are regularly stopped by various law enforcement entities: the Shelbyville Police Department, Bedford County Sheriff's Department, and Tennessee State Troopers, who are all either formally or informally working closely with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Although you were unable to attend the hearing, Nadia Firozvi attended to represent your office. Ms. Firozvi listened to testimony at the hearing and after the formal event spoke with individuals about their personal experiences. During the hearing, community members shared disturbing stories of pretextual traffic stops and described the near-police state to which Latinos in Shelbyville are subject. We are attaching a new report from TIRRC, "The Forgotten Constitution," that further documents these experiences.

On September 17th, five days after this forum, ICE conducted a raid upon Shelbyville targeting Latino community members, including a number who spoke out at the September 12th hearing. The raids appear to be retaliatory in nature – an effort to intimidate community members who speak out against police and ICE abuses. Moreover, these actions have spread fear throughout the Latino community, which feels targeted and increasingly under siege by law enforcement – whether it be ICE, state or local police. The result has been a severe chilling of speech in the community and increased fear of government agents. The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties was in attendance at this forum for the purpose of listening to community concerns about civil rights abuses by state and local police and ICE. Days later, this same community was targeted by an immigration enforcement action leading to the chilling of free speech and further civil rights abuses.

We are requesting that your office begin an immediate investigation of this incident. We ask that your investigation examine ICE's actions and the impact of the raids on the civil rights of Shelbyville residents. Your immediate and effective response is paramount to reassuring communities that they can continue to provide information to government agencies such as OCRCL in order to report civil rights violations by ICE agents. Without swift and deliberate

action by you, the raid will have a broader chilling effect and send the message that your department is unwilling or unable to protect the free speech rights of those who have legitimate complaints about civil rights abuses by ICE.

We thank you and members of your office for meeting with us tomorrow, September 21st, and we look forward to discussing this matter further then.

Sincerely yours,



Margaret Huang
Executive Director
Rights Working Group



Stephen Fotopulos
Executive Director
TIRRC

Cc: Ivan Fong
Gary Mead
John Morton
Timothy Moynihan
Yasmeen Pitts
John Sandweg