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Fight state-sanctioned racial profiling

Handful of TN, Davidson officials will ignore lessons of failed law

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On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down three provisions of Arizona's immigration law SB 1070, while upholding its most controversial provision: Section 2(B), which allows police officers to demand proof of immigration status of anyone they "reasonably suspect" may be undocumented.

The real lessons of SB 1070 were not found in Supreme Court chambers, but in the disastrous effects it has had on Arizona. Ruling that federal law did not pre-empt Arizona's disastrous "show me your papers" policies, the Supreme Court has given a green light to racial profiling in the name of immigration enforcement. Our country should not ask whether states can pass these laws, but whether they should.

Arizona implemented SB 1070 in 2010; Alabama and four other states have since passed similar laws. As a result, state-sanctioned racial profiling has separated thousands of families, eroded the trust between vulnerable communities and law enforcement, and damaged state economies that were struggling to recover.

Unfortunately, Tennesseans do not have to travel out of state to understand the disastrous effects of Arizona-style laws. For example, the 287(g) program in Davidson County, which allows local law enforcement officers to act as federal immigration officers, has led to the same problems that communities in Arizona continue to face. In

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Stephanie Teatro

Written by Stephanie Teatro

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Earlier this month, protesters rallied in Nashville to call for an end to the federal 287(g) program. / Shelley Mays / File / The Tennessean

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fact, Sheriff Daron Hall recently joined controversial Maricopa County, Ariz., Sheriff Joe Arpaio on a list of the nation's 10 most anti-immigrant politicians.

Under 287(g), nearly 10,000 Nashvillians have been deported, creating a deep distrust of law enforcement officials in the city's immigrant community. Many victims of domestic and sexual abuse no longer report crimes. A 2009 report by the Southern Poverty Law Center found that nearly 75 percent of Latinos surveyed in Nashville said they would be reluctant to call law enforcement if they were victims of a crime. When local law enforcement collaborates with federal immigration agencies, the whole community becomes less safe.

The court has set a terrible precedent in upholding a law that violates the basic rights of communities in Arizona, requires local police and local resources to enforce federal law, and depends on racial profiling. By allowing these provisions to stand, the Supreme Court has failed to honor and promote the values that make this country great. Luckily, this will not be the last word on whether SB 1070 and its copycats across

the country will continue, since the court held that provision is still subject to legal challenges.

We don't have to follow Arizona down the same dangerous path. Tennessee can create policies that promote public safety, uphold due process, respect the rights of all workers, and make the full participation and contributions of immigrants in our communities easier. We need reasoned, thoughtful solutions that strengthen our economies and our communities, not legislation that separates families and wastes resources on the unjust detention and deportation of mothers, fathers, children and community members. From Arizona to Tennessee, we can hold our elected officials accountable toward workable immigration reform that upholds our values and moves us forward together.

During the past legislative session, Tennesseans rightfully turned away Arizona copycat laws and other harmful anti-immigration legislation proposed by a handful of legislators who have built their careers on cruel immigration policies. Undoubtedly, these



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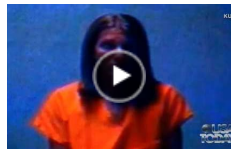
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legislators will see the Supreme Court's decision as a green light to further promote racial profiling and family separation while ignoring the greater lessons of the failed SB 1070 experiment. We as voters and engaged citizens must tell these out-of-touch politicians that Tennessee deserves better.

Stephanie Teatro is policy and civic engagement coordinator for the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition.

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