



Secure Communities??

As part of our Beyond Know Your Rights initiative, the **Rural Organizing Project** (ROP) is working with allies and member groups throughout the state to address the impacts and problems of increased collaboration between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local law enforcement. A troubling new development in this issue is the recent introduction into Oregon of the Secure Communities program.

What is Secure Communities? Secure Communities is a program where local law enforcement officials check the fingerprints of an individual they are booking into a jail against Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration databases, rather than just against FBI criminal databases. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is automatically notified if the fingerprints match fingerprints in the DHS system, *even if the person has not been convicted of any criminal act*. Clackamas County is the first county in Oregon to implement this program.

What is problematic about the “Secure Communities” program? The "Secure Communities" program erodes public trust, hurts community policing, leaves the door open for racial profiling and police abuse, and runs counter to our state's history and policies of welcoming immigrants.

- The Sheriff says it targets “criminals” but the program operates pre-conviction and “applies to immigrants regardless of guilt or innocence, how or why they were arrested, and whether or not their arrests were based on racial or ethnic profiling or were just a pretext for checking immigration status.”¹
- Community policing requires trust. When police collaborate with ICE, trust is replaced by fear. When people are fearful of reporting crimes and collaborating with police, **everyone's** public safety is compromised.
- There is usually no oversight or auditing of the program within DHS or the local law enforcement agency.
- Secure Communities targets individuals at arrest, not conviction - thereby upending a fundamental feature of our criminal justice system: innocent until proven guilty.
- The data shows that Secure Communities does not target threats to our community.
- Advocates worry that pre-textual arrests will increase, creating racial profiling problems. Whether charges are lowered, dropped, or deemed unlawful, individuals are still deportable under the program.
- US citizens can be mistakenly identified under the system, leaving the county vulnerable to unlawful imprisonment claims. An alarming 5% of US citizens have been “tagged” in the “Secure Communities” program nationally.

What is the Rural Organizing Project? ROP exists to strengthen the skills, resources, and vision of progressive, grassroots groups in rural and small town Oregon, with the goal of keeping such groups a vibrant source for a just democracy. To get involved in local efforts to address Secure Communities in Clackamas County or for more information about ROP contact field organizer **Sarah Loose** at sarah@rop.org, 503-543-8417 or visit the ROP website: www.rop.org.

¹ From “More Questions than Answers about the Secure Communities Program” by National Immigration Law Center, March 2009, available at www.nilc.org.