

Eyewitness account:

Good morning,

My name is Brandon Siguenza, and I am a US citizen from Minneapolis. Yesterday, while doing legal observation, ICE stopped their cars to harass my friend and me. They sprayed pepper spray into the vent of our vehicle. We held our hands in the air and told them we were not obstructing, that the car was in park and they were free to drive forward and away. There was no active immigration raid. They returned to their cars, and drove forward a bit, then decided to stop again. They surrounded us, smashed the windows of our car, opened the doors (they were unlocked), ripped my friend and I out of the car and arrested us on charges of obstruction.

I was put in an unmarked SUV, separated from my friend. As I was put in the back seat an ICE agent tore the whistle off my neck and said "I'll be taking this, I might need it later." My phone was knocked out of my hand while being arrested. As we drove away I asked the driver and the passenger if they wouldn't mind buckling my seatbelt, as they were driving erratically. I was ignored. I asked them if I could have the handcuffs loosened, as I was losing circulation, and was told no. At one point the passenger realized his own driver's license was in the backseat next to mine, and tried to surreptitiously grab it without me seeing it.

We were taken to the Whipple federal building, where I saw dozens of brown people being processed in an unheated garage. I was frisked, told of my charges, and saw buses and vans being prepped. I later learned that these were being filled with detainees and driven to the airport for deportation. As we were led in, I noticed that the building was very busy. I got the impression that one of the 2 agents bringing me around was being trained. At multiple points throughout my stay, government agents were unable to open doors, not sure where they were meant to be going, and overall confused and overwhelmed. They couldn't figure out how to use the building phones, or complained about a lack of cell service preventing them from contacting their lawyer or family.

from checking the internet or making calls.

The people in the cells were extremely scared. We heard people screaming "let me out!", crying, wailing and terrified screams. There were cells with as many as 8 people. I have no way of knowing how long they have been there, if they were allowed any contact with the outside world, or if they were being brought food or water. Most people were staring at the ground with almost no energy. I was not allowed to talk to anyone imprisoned. I distinctly remember seeing a desperate woman. She was staring at the ground with her head in her hands crying, hopeless, while her friend or family member sat on a bathroom seat observed by 3 men.

My friend and I were put in an area for "USCs," which we eventually learned meant US citizens, separated by gender. We were imprisoned for 8 hours, during which my friend was never allowed a phone call. I was allowed to call my wife and tell her where I was. During my interview with Special Agent William and Special Agent Garcia, they asked me to empty my pockets. When I pulled out gloves, Agent William said those were meant to be taken when I was processed, and complained about having to fill out the form again. He frisked me once more, where he found glass in my pocket from when our car window was shattered. He filled out the form listing my personal items again, but put the wrong date. I was read my rights, I pleaded the fifth and was led back to my cell.

Food, water, and bathroom breaks were extremely difficult to acquire. I would ask over the intercom provided in the cell for a bathroom break, be told someone was on their way, then ask again 20 minutes later, be told someone was on their way, wait another 20 minutes, etc. Eventually they either turned off the intercom or it stopped working, because no one would respond. I could get water and bathroom breaks by pounding on the glass when someone happened to walk by and beg them directly. Hours would go by without anyone checking on us. I am vegan and the only food they offered were turkey sandwiches, fruit snacks with gelatin, and granola bars with honey. I eventually ate a granola bar out of hunger.

I was in the cell alone for between 1 and 2 hours, then another man was put into my cell, whose shirt was ripped open from his arrest, and an injured toe, who was carried aggressively into an unmarked car during his arrest. After about 4-5 hours, another man was brought in who had a cut on his head from his arrest. He told me he was tackled by 4 or 5 agents during his arrest. At no point was he offered medical assistance.

Later I was told that a lawyer was here to see me, and I was able to speak with him in a visitation room. The special agent told me that the door could not be closed all the way, so it was cracked during my interaction with my lawyer. I got the impression that they were not used to having lawyers present, and were trying to follow procedure as best they could. I asked an agent if the other detainees were allowed lawyers and was not answered.

At one point, 3 men from the department of Homeland Security Investigations brought me into a cell. They insinuated that they could help me out. After inquiring several times what exactly they meant they finally told me that they could offer undocumented family members of mine legal protection if I have any (I don't), or money, in exchange for giving them the names of protest organizers, or undocumented persons. I was shocked, and told them no.

Finally, after hours of detention, I was told to follow an agent. At no point was I told whether or not I was being charged, or where I was going, but I was led out of the building. I asked if I could use a phone to call my wife to pick me up, and was told I could not. After pleading for several minutes eventually Special Agent William let me use his phone to call my wife. As I was escorted off the property by government agents, I was told to turn right. I was escorted to the protest area, where 5 minutes later, tear gas was deployed and I was struck by a paint ball gun. I was not protesting, I was simply being released without charges after an 8 hour detention. I was on the other side of the street, as instructed by the agents that released me and the agents shouting orders over a bullhorn. A passerby who was tear gassed was panicking and having an asthma attack, so I helped her find a medic to get her an inhaler. I

attack, so I helped her find a medic to get her an inhaler. I used a stranger's phone to co-ordinate pickup, and was picked up by my wife.

During my detention I knew that I was being released. I knew that as a citizen of the United States I have legal protection. The hundred or so other people being detained had no such protection. At this time I don't need your help, it is the families that are being separated, abused, terrorized, harassed and killed that need your help. If this is happening to me, an American citizen born in the United States, then what is happening to the people in here that have no one calling lawyers on their behalf? That have no constitutional rights to due process? What is happening to the people that they will never be released to see their families, go to their jobs, or walk through their city ever again?

Please take care of yourselves, your family, and your community. I am safe and healthy, if you feel compelled to help, please offer your help to the Immigrant Defense Network at <https://immigrantdefensenetwork.org/>. If you know someone detained by ICE, call or text CAIR-MN at 612-206-3360 for 24/7 legal intake.

Photo: ICE going door to door. They are reportedly doing the same thing on the doors - asking people for names.

