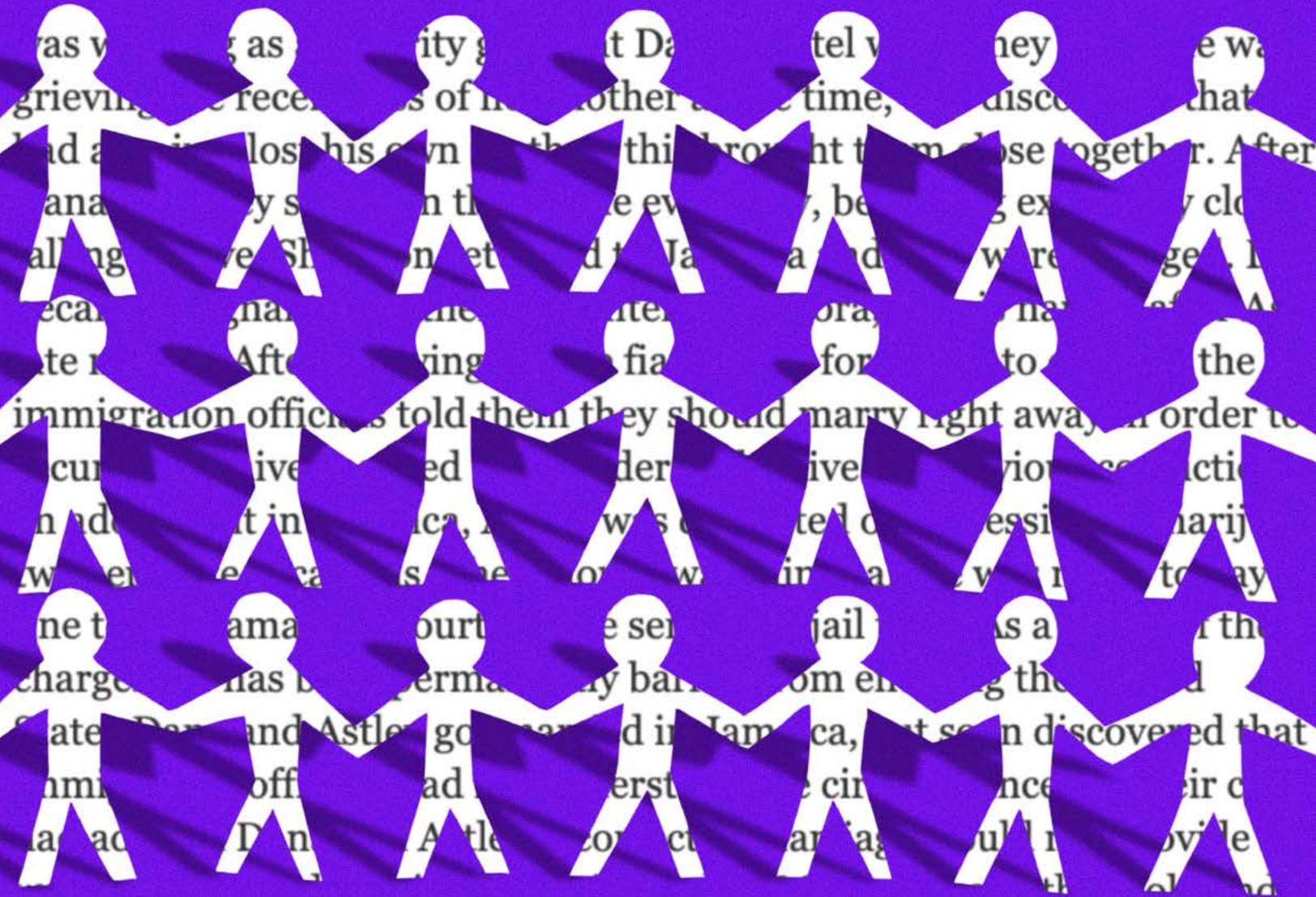


DEFINE
AMERICAN

A Writer's Guide To Understanding I.C.E. Raids



Dear writers,

ICE has descended upon Los Angeles in unprecedented force. We are, in real time, seeing families torn apart. Neighbors, friends, people on their way to work, students trying to get an education, and essential workers are being forcibly removed. While the news has been focusing on the clashes between protestors and law enforcement, they aren't fully capturing the real story unfolding in our streets: **the power of a city that refuses to let fear win**. Angelenos are creating human shields of solidarity, entire communities declaring in one clear message: *Los Angeles stands with our undocumented neighbors*.

As writers and creatives, you have the unique power to answer to this moment in a way that can transcend news headlines, cutting through the noise while presenting full, human stories.

As you craft these stories, here are some things to consider:

Immigrants Are Not Criminals

Current enforcement operations reveal a critical truth that challenges prevailing narratives: the majority of people being detained in recent ICE raids have no criminal background. These operations are targeting individuals who were previously deemed low-priority for removal—many enrolled in Alternative to Detention programs that allowed them to remain in their communities while their cases were processed. According to reporting from the BBC, hundreds of those arrested were participating in monitoring programs specifically designed for individuals not considered an immediate public safety threat. This reality contradicts the rhetoric that frames enforcement as a public safety initiative. Instead, these actions are separating families, disrupting communities, and targeting people whose primary violation is immigration status, a civil, not criminal, matter.

Source: Perfect storm as Trump's mass deportation drive collides with city of immigrants

Example on Television: Mo, Netflix, "Field of Dreams"

Immigrants Have Rights

Every person in the United States, regardless of immigration status, has fundamental constitutional rights and protections that cannot be taken away, including the right to remain silent, the right to refuse searches without a warrant, and the right to legal representation. The Immigrant Legal Resource Center’s “red cards” offer immediate access to critical information during high-stress situations when people may forget their rights or feel pressured to comply with requests that exceed an officer’s legal authority.

Source: Red Cards / Tarjetas Rojas | Immigrant Legal Resource Center | ILRC
Example on Television: SuperStore, NBC, “Employee Appreciation Day”

What Workplaces Can Do to Protect Their Employees

ICE has broad investigative powers and can conduct workplace raids with warrants, but employers and their workers have important protections under the law. ICE must present a judicial warrant signed by a federal judge to enter nonpublic areas of a workplace, immigration officer-signed forms like DHS Form I-200 or I-205 are not sufficient for entry into private areas.

Source: Explainer: What Employers Should Know about ICE | IndustryWeek
Example on Television: SuperStore, NBC, “Employee Appreciation Day”

Understanding Immigrant Rights in Medical Settings

Healthcare facilities represent one of the most critical spaces where immigrant communities should feel protected while seeking care, yet enforcement actions have increasingly created fear around accessing medical services. Under federal HIPAA laws, healthcare providers are prohibited from disclosing protected health information, including immigration status, with only limited exceptions, while California’s Constitution and state laws provide additional privacy protections for medical information. Despite these legal safeguards, the reality is that many undocumented individuals now avoid seeking necessary medical care out of fear of deportation, creating public health risks that affect entire communities.

Source: Know Your Rights: Immigrant Safety in Hospitals and Clinics | ACLU of Northern CA

Example on Television: Grey’s Anatomy, ABC, “Beautiful Dreamer”

Understanding the Rights of Students on Campus

Federal immigration officers can enter public areas of campus without a warrant, but they cannot access nonpublic spaces, including residence halls, classrooms, and offices, without a judicial warrant signed by a judge or explicit consent from authorized campus officials. Students have the constitutional right to refuse entry to their dorm rooms or private residences if officers present only administrative warrants (which are not signed by judges), and they maintain their Fifth Amendment right to remain silent and not answer questions without a lawyer present. Student education records are protected under FERPA, meaning campus employees cannot disclose personally identifiable information without the student's written consent, except in response to lawfully issued judicial subpoenas.

Source: FAQ ICE Enforcement on Campuses

Example on Television: *The Fosters*, Freeform, “ICE Raids The School”

ICE In Places of Worship

While ICE agents can legally enter the public spaces of churches, mosques, synagogues, and other places of worship without a warrant, they cannot access private areas without a judicial warrant signed by a federal judge. Places of worship are not required to enforce immigration laws, and religious leaders have no obligation to answer questions about congregants' immigration status or provide information to ICE agents. While some faith communities declare themselves “sanctuary” congregations, this designation carries no legal protection under federal law and may actually draw government attention. The concept of religious sanctuary, though historically significant, is not recognized by modern immigration enforcement. Faith communities can, however, take practical steps to protect their congregants by clearly marking private areas, establishing protocols for interacting with law enforcement, training designated staff members to handle ICE encounters, and providing “Know Your Rights” education to their communities.

Source: Immigration Enforcement— Guidance for Places of Worship
| ACLU of North Carolina

Example on Television: *Opportunity for a new storyline on TV*

Tech's Role in ICE Raids

Modern immigration enforcement is powered by sophisticated technology that transforms deportation into a data-driven operation capable of mass surveillance. ICE has awarded Palantir Technologies a \$30 million contract to develop “ImmigrationOS,” a comprehensive surveillance platform designed to streamline the “end-to-end immigration lifecycle from identification to removal” and provide “near real-time visibility into instances of self-deportation.” This platform represents the culmination of ICE’s founding strategy to use technology and data as critical tools for tracking people for deportation, creating a revolving door relationship between Silicon Valley and federal agencies that circumvents local protections for vulnerable communities. For writers exploring these stories, the intersection of technology and immigration enforcement reveals how corporate boardroom decisions translate into family separations in communities, while challenging audiences to consider the ethical implications of surveillance capitalism applied to immigration enforcement.

Source: ICE pays Palantir \$30M to build new tool to track and deport immigrants - Axios Denver Who’s Behind ICE: The Tech and Data Companies Fueling Deportations – Surveillance Resistance Lab

Example on Television: Opportunity for a new storyline on TV



The Power of Community

The protests spreading across Los Angeles reveal one thing: communities are choosing solidarity over silence. While organizations like CHIRLA organize demonstrations to support immigrant families, and despite isolated clashes following the administration's deployment of the National Guard and Marines, the overwhelming majority of community responses have been peaceful acts of resistance and mutual aid. These grassroots movements transform neighborhoods into sanctuaries where longtime residents stand with newcomers, faith communities open doors as safe havens, and everyday people become protectors of their neighbors' dignity. For writers, these community narratives offer powerful counter-stories to enforcement rhetoric. These stories reveal communities defined not by who belongs, but by our collective commitment to ensuring everyone can live with dignity and without fear.

Example on Television: Gentefied, Netflix, "The Mural."

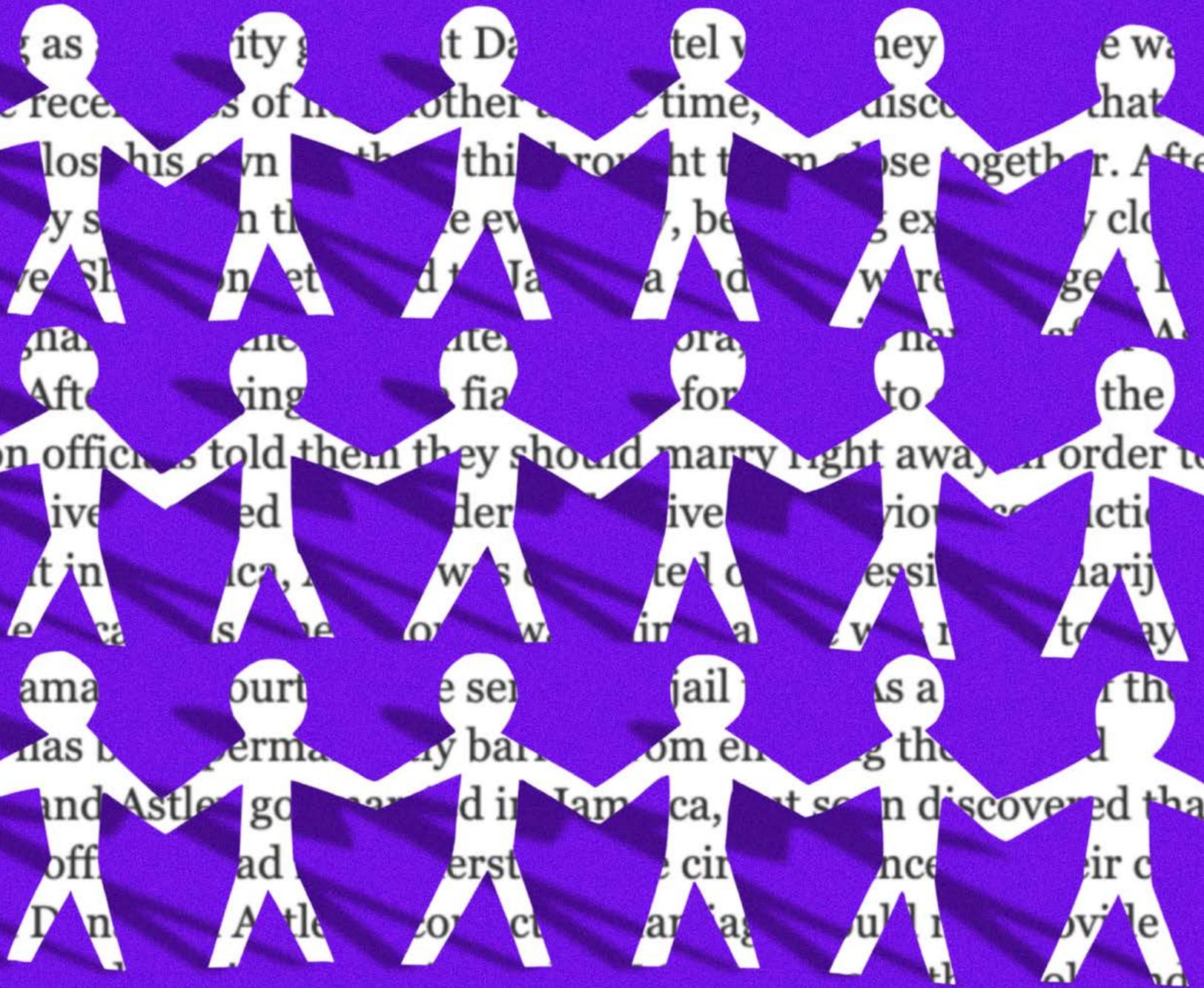
Spectacle and ICE Tactics

The deployment of ICE operations often functions as a form of political spectacle, transforming enforcement actions into highly visible performances designed to communicate power and control rather than merely execute policy. These operations frequently involve coordinated media presence, dramatic timing, and symbolic locations that amplify their psychological impact. The spectacle serves multiple purposes: it projects an image of decisive government action to certain constituencies, creates a climate of fear within immigrant communities that extends beyond those directly targeted, and generates media coverage that reinforces particular narratives about immigration and law enforcement. This theatrical dimension of ICE tactics reflects how immigration enforcement has become increasingly performative, where the visual and symbolic aspects of raids, arrests, and deportations are carefully orchestrated to maximize their communicative effect. The spectacle thus becomes a tool of governance itself, using visibility and drama to shape public perception and behavior in ways that traditional, less visible enforcement mechanisms cannot achieve.

Source: The Trump Administration Is Turning ICE Raids and Protests Into Reality TV

Example on Television: Opportunity for a new storyline on TV

For more information or specific questions, reach out to us at dulce@defineamerican.com



DEFINE
AMERICAN

defineamerican.com