

ICE Risk Mitigation

Surveillance, Raids, Deportation, and Resistance Tactics for Trans Liberation across Borders



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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is one of the most violent threats to trans people, especially black and brown migrants, asylum seekers, undocumented trans women, and gender-nonconforming individuals. From raids to detention to family separation, ICE operates like a paramilitary force with nearly unchecked power. This guide maps the specific risks ICE poses to trans lives and how to mitigate them through community, legal tactics, digital hygiene, and resistance.

This guide is written for trans migrants, trans-led organizers, and allies who refuse to let borders define who belongs.

WHO'S MOST AT RISK?

- **Trans women of color**
- **Undocumented trans people living in mixed-status households**
- **Trans folks with prior contact with the criminal legal system**
- **Trans youth in shelters or foster systems**
- **LGBTQ+ asylum seekers with active cases**
- **Trans sex workers, especially near high-surveillance corridors**

PRIMARY THREATS FROM ICE TO TRANS PEOPLE

1. **Surveillance and Database Tracking**
 - ICE uses biometric data (fingerprints, facial recognition, DNA) from DMV records, jails, and medical systems
 - DHS Fusion Centers collaborate with local law enforcement to cross-reference gender marker updates, aliases, or name changes
2. **Detention Conditions**
 - Trans women are often placed in men's facilities
 - Solitary confinement used as "protection," causing extreme mental harm
 - No access to HRT or gender-affirming care in most centers
 - High rates of sexual assault, denial of medical treatment, and transphobic abuse
3. **Raids and Targeted Arrests**
 - Doorstep raids disguised as package deliveries
 - Arrests at hospitals, workplaces, or shelters
 - Reliance on community snitches and digital tracking
4. **Deportation Without Appeal**
 - Expedited removal processes often ignore asylum claims, especially when gender persecution is under-documented
 - Detransitioning during deportation due to lack of meds, documents, or safety in home country



MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR TRANS PEOPLE UNDER THREAT

1. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS (AND TRAIN OTHERS)

- You are not required to open the door for ICE unless they show a signed judicial warrant (Form I-200 or I-205 does *not* count)
- You have the right to remain silent and not sign anything
- You do not have to disclose gender history or medical status
- Prepare a “Know Your Rights” zine in multiple languages
- Host community defense trainings with trans-led legal groups

2. BUILD A SAFE DOCUMENT TRAIL

- Keep copies of ID, prescriptions, asylum paperwork, affidavits, and medical letters in encrypted cloud storage
- Make a “grab-and-go” bag with these materials, plus HRT, water, phone numbers
- If possible, update gender markers and name changes in a sanctuary state

3. DIGITAL SECURITY

- Use Signal, ProtonMail, and 2FA for all organizing and personal comms
- Never store legal status or identity info in unsecured cloud notes or chats
- Use Tor or VPNs when accessing sensitive info, especially from shelters
- Disable location tracking on all devices; use Faraday bags during raids

4. MUTUAL AID DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Create ICE response teams that include:
 - Legal observer
 - Medic
 - Transport
 - Spiritual support
 - Language interpreter
- Develop housing networks for rapid relocation
- Build anonymous reporting channels to alert the community to raids or checkpoints

5. COMMUNITY RAPID RESPONSE TO RAIDS

- Text trees, group chats, airhorns, or flashlight codes
- Neighborhood patrols that observe and film from a distance
- Safe house routes with neutral drop points
- Do NOT confront ICE directly unless legally protected and strategically trained

6. DETENTION SUPPORT + ADVOCACY

- Document every incident and prepare media kits for each arrested person
- Connect with legal clinics like Transgender Law Center’s Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project (BLMP)
- Crowdsource bail funds and commissary support
- Publish op-eds, run press campaigns, and elevate voices from inside



CITIES WITH ACTIVE TRANS-LED ANTI-ICE WORK

- **New York, NY** – Make the Road, BLMP, Sylvia Rivera Law Project
 - [Make the Road NY](#)
 - [Black LGBTQ+ Migrant Project \(BLMP\)](#)
 - [Sylvia Rivera Law Project](#)
- **Los Angeles, CA**
 - [Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement \(TQLM\)](#)
 - [Gender Justice LA](#)
- **Phoenix, AZ**
 - [Trans Queer Pueblo](#)
- **Chicago, IL**
 - [Organized Communities Against Deportations \(OCAD\)](#)
- **Oakland/SF, CA**
 - [TGI Justice Project](#)
 - [Black LGBTQ+ Migrant Project \(BLMP\)](#) *(they're national, but often active here too)*

LONG-TERM STRATEGY: FROM SURVIVAL TO SANCTUARY

- Push local governments to pass sanctuary laws that include gender identity protections
- Pressure medical systems to provide uninterrupted HRT access in shelters and detention centers
- Train up trans-led legal brigades and border defense teams
- Archive abuse to build international human rights cases



🚨 ICE Is Not Just an Immigration Agency 🚨

ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was not created to keep people safe. It was created to preserve white supremacy, to militarize borders, and to turn human movement into a crime. But what often gets erased in mainstream conversations is this: **ICE is not just an immigration agency. It is a gender-based, racialized enforcement tool designed to disappear the unwanted.**

Every raid, every detention, every deportation is not just an attack on immigration status. It's an attack on *identity, kinship, and existence*. And it is deeply gendered.

Trans women of color are disproportionately targeted, brutalized, and killed by ICE. Nonbinary migrants are erased by a binary system that refuses to even acknowledge their existence. Pregnant asylum seekers are shackled. HIV-positive detainees are denied care. Queer love is mocked. Gender non-conforming bodies are punished. **ICE operates with the explicit intent to discipline bodies that deviate from colonial norms of gender, race, class, and ability.**

ICE is not about law. It is about power. ICE is not about protection. It is about control. ICE is not about safety. It is about erasure.

⚡ A System Designed to Break Us ⚡

- ICE detains trans migrants in solitary confinement, often under the guise of "protective custody," causing long-term psychological damage.
- ICE collaborates with local police to sweep up Black and brown communities through racial profiling and gang databases with no due process.
- ICE separates queer couples, deports trans caregivers, and targets those who seek hormones or medical support as "non-compliant."
- ICE denies interpreters, misgenders detainees, and places them in facilities where abuse is guaranteed.

And then the headlines call it a "failure of the system" when a trans person dies in detention. But we know better. **It's not a bug. It's the blueprint.**

🏠 Our Response: Defiance, Not Compliance 🏠

We will not be erased by borders, cages, or bureaucrats. Our bodies are not paperwork. Our lives are not conditional. Our genders are not up for approval.

- We fight with underground railroad networks for asylum seekers.
- We build safehouses and encrypted comms channels.
- We refuse to comply with data collection that feeds predictive policing.
- We train each other in know-your-rights protocols, raid response, and medical advocacy.
- We tell our stories even when they try to silence us, because memory is a weapon.



Abolition Means All Of Us

Abolishing ICE is not just about dismantling an agency. It's about tearing down every structure that criminalizes movement, gender, and survival. It's about the abolition of borders as systems of violence. It's about imagining a world where no one is illegal, no one is caged, and no one is discarded because their existence disrupts the empire.

ICE is a gender violence engine. ICE is an anti-Black and anti-Indigenous tool of conquest. ICE is a machine built to disappear us.

We say no.

No more cages. No more raids. No more silent deaths. We fight for every migrant. Every queer. Every trans person in flight. Because none of us are free until all of us are free.

We are ungovernable. And we do not ask for permission to survive.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

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