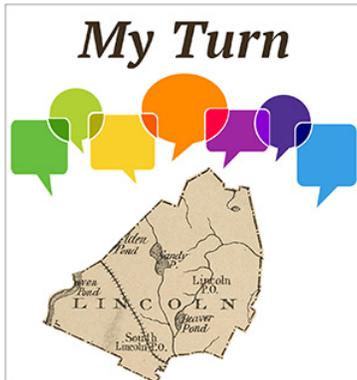


My Turn: Lincoln in the ICE age

By Kathy Madison



Lincoln has long felt like a kind of refuge — blessed by acres of conserved land, home to miles of wild trails and ponds. Our backyards visited by wildlife from opossums and wild turkeys to coyotes and bears. Homes nestled along quiet roads, with gardens and working farms... a quiet, friendly place where one can feel safe.

But we are not safe.

For me, it began last March. A Maryland father, Kilmer Abrego Garcia, was arrested and deported without trial to a notorious prison in El Salvador. The judge's orders to return him, along with others, were ignored by this administration. Then in April, a Tufts student was grabbed suddenly by masked men on a Somerville street and flown to Louisiana. In May, ICE agents shattered car windows in Acton and Waltham to grab residents, and one morning in Lincoln, a woman didn't show up for work. Weeks later we learned that ICE had taken her, her family desperate to find her.

In May, I cofounded [Lincoln Witness](#) with Kim Jalet. We formed in response to a clearly out-of-control immigration enforcement machine. Twenty Lincolnites showed up for our first meeting; today there are forty of us. You may have seen us at the July Fourth parade with our Lady Liberties costumes, or at the Farmer's Market, handing out Know Your Rights cards and raising emergency funds for immigrant families. Our goal is to serve as witnesses to injustice, to prepare ourselves and others in these dark days, to share information, resources and reach out to our neighboring communities.

In early September, we asked the Town of Lincoln to spread the word, to offer guidance to residents regarding town-wide policies, to inform and educate, because in this town some people still say, "I have nothing to worry about from ICE since I'm not illegal." The fact is that since January, more than 170 U.S. citizens have been detained, abused and held for days because ICE considers due process optional.

Recently, an American citizen and veteran experienced the fury of ICE and, when contradicted by his captors, refused to keep silent. He wrote about it [here](#).

Remember when we were told that only the "worst of the worst" would be targeted for deportation? In fact, today there are more than 62,000 people in immigration custody – more than half of whom have no criminal record. The crackdown accelerates. During September more than 1,400 Massachusetts residents have been detained by ICE. Families are ripped apart. Law-abiding, tax-paying workers, children, those suffering serious medical conditions — all have been

grabbed by an enforcement agency acting with impunity, with faces masked, with no oversight, and permitted now by the Supreme Court to conduct racial profiling.

Nearly one hundred years ago, another regime in another country first mercilessly stigmatized Jews and then rounded up them up. I've often wondered how many of their former neighbors missed them as they disappeared, first slowly, then all at once. Did anyone stay up nights wondering where they'd gone? If they were OK?

Today, in 2025, undocumented immigrants are called "illegals," a pejorative that strips their humanity, practically equates them with the "worst of the worst," and decrees that they be detained and deported — even to countries foreign to their original homelands. No consideration is given to those immigrants and refugees who are simply showing up for a regular, scheduled visit to an immigration office on their path to citizenship. For ICE, there's a quota to fill. And their budget is monstrously huge, bumped up by \$75 billion in July.

Here's the thing. Immigrants are the first targets. But increasingly, any individual or organization that dares to criticize the administration has become a potential enemy. I think about what that fact means for me and countless others who are showing up to confront injustice. Increasingly, we must assess what level of risk we are willing to assume. What words we are willing to publish. What we can say in public.

It may come down to a simple equation: "the land of the free" = "the home of the brave."

Editor's note: Madison, who lives on Concord Road, invites readers to join a vigil, march, and rally starting at Waltham District Court (38 Linden St.) on Saturday, Nov. 8 at 11:00am. [Click here](#) to see related events in the area.

"My Turn" is a forum for readers to offer their letters to the editor or views on any subject of interest to other Lincolnites. Submissions must be signed with the writer's name and street address and sent via email to lincolnsquirrelnews@gmail.com. Items will be edited for punctuation, spelling, style, etc., and will be published at the discretion of the editor. Submissions containing personal attacks, errors of fact, or other inappropriate material will not be published.