

You've seen kidnappings, executions, and suspicious deaths in custody. Maybe you've even protested, done Know Your Rights trainings, or joined rapid response efforts. There's no doubt about it: ICE is on the mind.

Why was ICE created, and why, even after mass outrage, will the system that created it never fully abolish it?

*Why does capitalism need ICE?*

Primary Source:  
The Upstream podcast episode "*Immigration, ICE, and Working Class Rebellion with Cecilia Guerrero*"

Additional Sources:  
*Calloni, Stella. "Los Archivos del Horror del Operativo Cóndor". [www.derechos.org](http://www.derechos.org). Segundo Paso, Operation Condor: How U.S. Support Fueled the Oppression That Swept 1970s South America, [en.segundopaso.org/operation-condor-how-u-s-support-fueled-the-oppression-that-swept-1970s-south-america/](http://en.segundopaso.org/operation-condor-how-u-s-support-fueled-the-oppression-that-swept-1970s-south-america/)  
Where did banana republics get their name? 2017-08-17, *The Economist**



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Foothill Fire is an organization of anarchists and communists fighting for a stateless, classless society.

# ICE: WHERE DID IT COME FROM AND WHERE SHOULD IT GO?

A guided discussion on ICE – and why the system that created it will never abolish it.



Foothill Fire is a revolutionary organization dedicated to fighting for a stateless, classless society. Organizing today's investigative discussion on ICE and immigration under capitalism is part of that work. Please feel free to reach out to us with questions and consider attending our other upcoming events.

You can use this handout to share these topics with your friends and as a reference as we listen to audio clips of Cecilia Guerrero on the Upstream podcast episode "*Immigration, ICE, and Working Class Rebellion with Cecilia Guerrero*":

### **1. Immigration Enforcement**

00:13:37 - 00:16:15

"...One worker at one of our organizing meetings was saying 'well, you know, the difference between the democrats and the republicans is that the democrats are fake. They tell you what you want to hear then they deport you, then they deport more people than anyone. Trump is different. He's a businessman, he likes to make a big fuss and be selective about how he goes about it to cause the most panic. His tactics are psychological, so people leave on their own or stop coming.' I think that is spot on, you know, I think that assessment was spot on. But one thing that I want to touch on is that, you know, while it's true that Biden deported more people than Trump, and that Obama earned his nickname 'the deporter in chief', there's one key aspect that I find that is different from previous administrations that does constitute an escalation, and that's the fact that workplace raids have increased exponentially. Trump is targeting these so-called 'sanctuary cities', and in that process he's showing that the term doesn't mean much, and like 'what is a sanctuary city' – exactly. So Trump is targeting the home depots, the construction sites, the elementary school graduations. And that's a campaign of terror – very explicit – against the working class. Right? And I'm not saying deportation has not always been an attack against the working class, like, deportations are always an attack on the working class. But this time the mask is just fully off. They are blatant about it right now..." (Continued on following page.)

(Continued from previous page): "...More blatantly than ever, targeting working class people, working class spaces, and working class leaders. Labor organizers, activists, anti-imperialists, right? All of those people are at the top of Trump's deportation list, right? And you know what I do see this is a type of escalation, and I also see this as a type of weakness. It's a major contradiction, because that is also a force that is currently galvanizing the working class and opening peoples eyes and building deeper, more class conscious and more international type of solidarity than ever before. Because how can undocumented workers not see themselves in Palestine when they're seeing Palestinians being thrown in the same ICE detention centers as their loved ones for standing up against the genocide of their own people?"

Questions for clip 1:

Why is Trump's terror campaign both the same and different than that of Biden and Obama?

Why might the working class be the specific target of Trump's terror campaign?

What is a reason to ramp up this terrorism now and why is it a contradiction?

Why might it be important for immigration resistance to see their movement in the Palestinian movement?

## 2. Capitalism leads to immigration 00:22:33 - 00:26:25

“First, we should be clear that the displacement of workers and peasants from oppressed countries to capitalist, imperialist countries is inevitable. Immigration is inevitable under a capitalist, imperialist system. You know? And so competition among workers is a *feature* of capitalism. So as long as capitalism exists, someone out there is going to be coming for you job. Right? Like, blame capitalism, not your fellow workers.

So now that that’s out of the way, we can dive into it a little more. So, capitalism always needs to expand. It needs to find more markets, more things to commodify, more resources to extract, more labor to exploit. Monopoly capitalists from imperialist countries are displacing people from their land. So like in Guatemala for example, Mayan communities are being displaced at alarming rates due to mega-projects by corporations from imperialist countries. That... these mega-projects are evil things like mining operations, hydroelectric plants, cash-crop monocultures like palm for palm oil... and so oppressed countries are not able to develop their economies like other countries. Their economies are subjugated to finance capital and external debt. Right? Which gets exacerbated by predatory trade agreements, for example. In these conditions, capitalism is unable to fully develop domestically, and feudal relations persist in the countryside. So we call these conditions ‘semi-colonial and semi-feudal’. Because they still have... its not that this is a new type of colonialism or feudalism, it’s just that these questions are still unanswered or unresolved. Those problems are still there, even though the countries are independent in name. And so to protect their investments and power, right, imperialist governments representing these monopoly capitalists intervene with the domestic affairs of other countries they oppress, inflicting brutal violence on the people and destabilizing their societies. So they people leave their countries because of the violence inflicted upon them by imperialists (with the help of their governments) and move to imperialist countries to find work and safety. ...”  
(Continued on following page).

(Continued from previous page): “And so then they’re considered, like, ‘immigrants’ or ‘foreign workers’ and become part of a pool of super exploited labor. And so, immigrants from oppressed countries, so working class immigrants from oppressed countries, they compose a majority of what we call quote-unquote ‘unskilled labor’. Right? And so that has always been the case. Lenin has a piece called Capitalism and Worker’s Immigration where he points out that the term ‘unskilled worker’ is basically another way to say ‘foreign worker’ – right, so he is like, ‘the more oppressed the country, the larger is the number of unskilled agricultural laborers it supplies.’ Right? And the advanced nations, they are taking all the best paid occupations for themselves, and leave the people from the semi-feudal countries the worse paid occupations. So, you know, that has always been the case, and at this point, immigrant foreign workers - right - are paid less than other workers. Capitalists benefit from paying these workers less, but also by making other workers compete with these workers, and by instigating tensions in the workplace that are rooted in national origin – or, national chauvinism, also known as race.”

Questions for clip 2:

Can you name an example of an imperialist nation meddling with an oppressed nation for their resources?

What methods do you see imperialist nations using to subjugate oppressed nations? Economic/militaristic/colonial...

Is a capitalist system possible without having oppressed nations to extract from?

### 3. English Worker vs. Irish Worker 00:36:40 - 00:38:03

Cecilia Guerrero quotes a letter from Marx: “He says ‘Every industrial and commercial center in England right now now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps: English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standards of life. In relation to the Irish worker, he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation, and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrat and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitudes towards him is much the same as that of the poor whites to the Black workers in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest, in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rulers in Ireland. This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, religious institutions, comic papers, in short: by all the means at the disposal of the ruling class. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist maintains its power.’”

Questions for clip 3:

Why does capitalism necessitate an army of underemployed to keep workers in check?

What does it mean when she says that the English worker becomes a tool for the aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland and over himself?

What does she mean that this is the secret by which capitalists maintain power?

What is the contradiction between foreign workers and citizen workers?

What might be a description of a class traitor in this context?

### 4: Moving from "Know your rights" Frameworks and into Building a Plan 1:03:24 - 1:05:45

“The immigrant rights movement has been very much focused around very... peaceful tactics, you know, these ‘know your rights’ framework. Like, if you only know your rights, you’ll be safe. And that is a type of passive defense. Just waiting for something bad to happen to you so you can, like, maybe minimize the damage that is done to you. But, you know, one of the things that these kinds of frameworks do not do is that they do not explain the root of that oppression, right? And at the end of the day, a lot of the people that are being targeted by Trump, a lot of the people that are being sent to labor camps in El Salvador, to CECOT, they had rights on paper. But that doesn’t matter. Immigrants have always gotten their rights violated, in the workplace, in their communities – that never stopped a boss from not paying a worker, that never stopped an ICE agent from breaking their own protocols to cause terror among the people. And so, the framework of rights, which has its background in the United Nations and whatnot, it is not helpful for the people to really understand who the enemy is, who their friends are, and how do we unite with our friends and fight our enemies, how do we build that plan for us for ICE to be weaker by the day – not just for us to be able to respond once ICE is attacking us and to respond in the most passive way. And so this is refreshing, too, because the same immigrant rights movement has been portraying our people as this defenseless victims that we just need to protect, and we need to protect them by voting for the democratic party, or just by giving money to these rapid response networks composed of more people that serve the democratic party, but rather seeing the people say ‘you know what, we’re actually brave as hell. We’re actually the strongest motherfuckers in this game, like, we’re actually going to make any recent uprising – like, the most radical uprising that y’all have put together – we can make that look like a peaceful rally’. That’s what this is showing.”

Questions for clip 4:

What is your understanding of why she's saying the know your rights framework doesn't get us where we need to go? Why does it fall short of being an effective tool for change?

If a Know Your Rights framework is not addressing root causes (maybe this kind of training or focus can be seen as harm reduction, something that we don't need to stop doing but to understand that on its own it is not enough to make change) but ultimately if we want to build beyond it, what can we do?

How do we engage without co-opting? How can we make a plan together?

## 5. Stepping Away from the Oppressors Rules: Opting Out of the Game and Fighting On Your Own Terms

Additional framing from host Robert

1:09:50 – 1:11:02

“When I think about the liberal rights movement, or various rights movements, versus what you’re encouraging and underscoring, which is more communist movements, like, it’s the difference between trying to learn how to play the game of liberalism -- like, the game of bourgeois democracy -- really well, so you can put up a good defense over those who control the game. Versus the alternative, which is simply opting out of the game, breaking the rules of the game, and fighting on your own terms. So then you’re going from defense to offense, and you’re stepping away from the oppressors rules and, I mean, **you’re always going to lose when you’re fighting on the terms of your enemy**, especially when your enemy is more than happy to throw the rules out the second it begins to benefit them to do such. Like, laws are tools of the capitalist class, and they will only adhere to laws when it benefits them, as we’re seeing very, very clearly right now. Like, laws are pretty meaningless when those in power simply choose to ignore them.”

Questions for clip 5:

What does he mean when he suggests that you shouldn't limit your resistance to fit the rules of your oppressor?

If the oppressor can simply ignore a protest, is that protest going to be effective?

What kinds of actions can oppressors not ignore?

## Key Terms: What we mean when we say...

**Antagonism** in Marxism refers to the irreconcilable, fundamental conflict between opposing social classes—often this is seen as the bourgeoisie (capitalists) and the proletariat (workers)—driven by their contradictory interests. It is the core of class struggle, manifesting as exploitation, where the capitalist class thrives on the surplus value produced by the working class.

**Banana Republic** is a term used to describe nations that are run as a business to export natural resources for the benefit of the ruling class. The term's origin is literal: In the early 20th century, the United Fruit Company, with the leverage of the U.S. government, created political, economic, and social circumstances to coup the democratic governments of Central American countries such as Honduras and Guatemala, installing dictators and anti-labor violence to serve their fruit exports.

**Capitalism** is the economic, political, and social way that our society is organized. It is class-based and driven by profit and the need for constant expansion. Monopoly capitalism formed when smaller businesses were swallowed by larger ones, and these became increasingly managed and controlled by financial capital (think mega banks).

**Communism** is a hypothetical economic, political, and social way of organizing society characterized by the absence of the state ("state" meaning government, not state as in California) and social class. In this system we would all be responsible and empowered to make the important decisions about how our lives are organized.

**Colonialism** is the practice of maintaining political, social, economic, and cultural domination over a territory and its people for the interests of the colonizing nation, usually to extract labor and resources. When the colonized nation is forced to accept settlers from the colonizing nation, it becomes *settler colonialism*, which is how the United States began. **Semi-colonial** means that while a formal colonial system is not in place, the social and economic conditions of the colonial system largely remain. For example, while there are no longer English people literally running the government of India, England still subjugates and extracts labor and wealth from India.

**Contradiction** refers to opposing forces or ideas that are an inherent part of a single, developing system. Unlike a logical contradiction (where something cannot be both A and B), a Marxist contradiction involves opposing tendencies that coexist and whose struggle is the fundamental cause of all motion, change, and development in society and nature.

**Feudalism** is “the way they used to do it”: peasants work the land and produce crops, and a series of nobility above them extracts that wealth upwards towards the king or emperor. Peasants lives were tied to the land they worked (serfdom). From within feudalism, capitalism began and grew to replace feudalism in most of the world. **Semi-feudal** means that feudalism and capitalism are existing beside each other. There are peasants working the land, but they're living in the shadow of factories that extract labor and resources to capitalist countries.

The concept of the "**Global South**" as an economically and politically disadvantaged collective is widely considered a product of historical processes, including colonialism and the unequal global economic structures imposed by the nations that now constitute the "**Global North**". The term refers less to a strict geographic location and more to a shared history of exploitation and ongoing systemic inequalities.

**Imperialist Countries** are nations that extend power over others through military force, economic dominance. Related to, but not identical with, the process of colonialism, which involves the direct occupation and rule of a foreign nation.

**Neoliberalism** is a set of global economic policies to keep the global south subjugated to the global north, and keep the global south in a state of *semi-colonialism*. It is characterized by the domination of financial tools like the World Bank, IMF, and control of the dollar.

**Operation Condor** was a campaign of anti-communist state violence and terror across South America supplied, trained, and funded by the United States. The United States funded and supplied anti-communist death squads and dictators who targeted communists, dissidents, labor organizers, and other perceived threats. It is estimated that Operation Condor left 50,000 people dead, 30,000 people disappeared, and 400,000 people imprisoned. While Operation Condor existed formally from 1975-1983, its policies existed long before and continued long after.

The **Proletariat** is an element of the working class that gained prominence with the rise of capitalism. You know you're a proletarian when you have to sell your labor to survive, you don't own the café/warehouse/business where you do this, and you lack any significant material possessions or wealth.

The **Bourgeoisie** is the primary ruling class under capitalism. It's probably not your boss, or even your bosses' boss, but it's the big dogs at the top who own the banks, the investment firms, the warehouses, and the factories. The relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is considered to be the defining *contradiction* of capitalism.