



INSIDE

Her mom died 36 years ago. She's still searching for answers

Fear lingers

A year after ICE arrests in Bloomington, fear over immigration enforcement remains

By Jack Forrest
jforres@iu.edu | @byjackforrest

Inside Monroe County's justice center, Monica was afraid.

As guardian of one of her granddaughters, the 55-year-old was there this January to turn in legal forms.

But something like what went down months earlier in the same place, she worried, could happen again.

In April last year, federal agents detained a Mexican man at the Charlotte Zietlow Justice Center on a warrant. He had been scheduled to plead guilty under an agreement stemming from charges of driving under the influence and possession of cocaine. He was at the court that morning to attend a hearing, though it was rescheduled for the next month.

Monica, a house cleaner, has lived in Bloomington for over 25 years, but she is from Mexico. She doesn't have legal documentation to live in the United States. The Indiana Daily Student is referring to her by a pseudonym to protect her identity.

Monica understands the risk of not having it. But the forceful way immigration enforcement agents have operated makes her sad, she said. "Because we not animals," Monica said, "we are people."

Many like Monica in Bloomington's Latino and immigrant communities have aimed to remain under the radar. Some have stayed home, skipped work or thought twice about who might be driving an unmarked vehicle. Others worry for their neighbors.

A year after a string of immigration arrests in Bloomington and nearly a year and a half into the Trump administration's widened deportation campaign, their fear over immigration enforcement lingers.

...

One day after the justice center arrest last year, three men from Guatemala and Nicaragua were booked into a Kentucky jail. They had been detained in Bloomington by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. One of them had no prior criminal record.

The scope of ICE activity in the city was unclear at the time. The fear was acute.

Exodus Refugee Immigration temporarily closed its offices. The Monroe County Community School Corporation affirmed to parents ICE had not been at its schools. Local advocates used Signal to attempt to verify sightings of agents. One restaurant manager said she was "expecting" ICE there.

Norma Landgraff recalled getting a flurry of phone calls and texts, many asking the same question: where are they?

Landgraff, 56, is the coor-



ILLUSTRATION BY ARDEN ROEDA

dinator of Iglesia Hispania, Sherwood Oaks Christian Church's Spanish-language congregation.

She is originally from Colombia but has U.S. citizenship, she said; her husband is American. That's why she was comfortable speaking publicly for this story. But she recognizes that many others wouldn't be. Of the roughly 150 who attend Iglesia Hispania, she estimates 90% are first-generation immigrants.

During the period of fear over ICE arrests last year, attendance at Iglesia Hispania was cut in half, she said. People canceled doctor's appointments. They stayed at home, some for almost three weeks. Eventually, others gave in, Landgraff said. If they were arrested, so be it; they couldn't wait anymore.

Now, the community is one of fear, Landgraff said. People are afraid to go to the park or send their kids to school.

"It will not put fear in my life because my God is bigger than any leadership of the country."

Norma Landgraff, coordinator of Iglesia Hispania, Sherwood Oaks Christian Church's Spanish-language congregation

During an interview inside Sherwood Oaks, Landgraff held up her phone. On the screen were two verses: Leviticus 19:33-34.

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them," she then read aloud. "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord, your God."

God's command is clear, she said. It's not conditional. It directs believers to love immigrants as themselves.

"And love is help," Landgraff said.

That help has different forms. Landgraff said when requested, the church pays for a first appointment with a lawyer — just the start of the costs associated with the immigration legal process. Iglesia Hispania, in partnership with other groups, also offers English classes, distributes food, assists with bills and otherwise acquaints people with American culture.

This past February, when ICE rumors flared up again, Iglesia Hispania received an influx in requests for help paying bills, Landgraff said; people were again scared to go to work.

For Bloomington's Community Care Coalition, advocacy takes the shape of organization. Melissa Shelton, an organizer with the coalition, said it includes area organizations or faith groups that work with and assist immigrants through fundraising, advocacy and education.

"It's up to us to build a strong movement to make sure our immigrant and refugee neighbors know that not only do we care about them, but we are standing in solidarity with them," Shelton said.

Collectively, the coalition's organizations — including groups like the Bloomington Friends Meeting and First United Church — have hundreds of members, Shelton estimated.

"It's up to us to build a strong movement to make sure our immigrant and refugee neighbors know that not only do we care about them, but we are standing in solidarity with them."

Melissa Shelton, an organizer with Bloomington's Community Care Coalition

Much of the work comes down to keeping each other

safe, she said. One organization has had volunteers accompany immigrants to doctor's appointments or immigration proceedings.

Hundreds of migrants have been detained at immigration courts nationwide since the start of the Trump administration's crackdown. The continued practice has been the subject of lawsuits and intense backlash from advocates.

Monroe County itself has run into legal standoffs over immigration enforcement laws.

Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita sued Sheriff Ruben Marté in 2024, alleging the office's policy not to hold people based solely on non-criminal or administrative ICE detainer requests violated state law.

Rokita then issued a civil investigative demand to Exodus Refugee in 2025, claiming the nonprofit may have been involved in labor trafficking. In a press release, Rokita implied he'd seek from Exodus "information about possible interference with federal immigration enforcement activities, in which entities in Monroe County may have engaged earlier this year."

Exodus and the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana hit back with a federal lawsuit claiming the investigation was retaliation for Exodus' "association with immigrants and refugees."

Most recently, Marté filed a federal suit requesting relief from a state law set to take effect July 1 requiring law enforcement to comply with ICE detainers. The April 8 suit argues the legislation is unconstitutional because it would make the sheriff's office detain people off immigration detainer requests, even without a warrant or probable cause.

At Iglesia Hispania, immigrants have turned to faith. Landgraff said at Bible studies and other meetings, they'll talk about how God

brought them to the United States for a reason — and if they have to leave the country, it'll be part of His plan, too.

It's because of this, and not her citizenship status, that she isn't afraid. She wants others not to be afraid, either.

"It will not put fear in my life because my God is bigger than any leadership of the country," Landgraff said.

...

Monica, the 55-year-old house cleaner, came to the United States to seek a better life for her children.

Along the way, she's been through a lot. She had health issues as a child and still suffers from chronic illness. Monica's mother and stepfather were abusive, she said, as were past partners of hers. She spent almost all her childhood living with her grandmother.

In 2022, her daughter was struck by a truck and killed in Mexico. She was crossing the road. The driver was suspected to be drunk, Monica said. Because she couldn't go to Mexico, she couldn't be at the memorial. She watched on FaceTime.

It still doesn't feel real to Monica. It feels like her daughter is still in Mexico. That they will talk again someday. She didn't get to say goodbye to her children.

Monica is the guardian of one of her daughter's daughters, like Monica's own grandmother cared for her.

They're surrounded by family here: Monica's sisters, brother and other relatives. Monica's son lives in Bloomington, too. When she started living here, she felt safe. Not anymore.

Last spring, when ICE was in town, she only took her granddaughter to school. Monica and her granddaughter stayed at her sister's house, afraid of being alone.

Monica's son, 30, has

lived nearly his whole life in Bloomington. The IDS is not naming him to avoid further identifying Monica.

Monica's son said he is a recipient of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, an initiative of the Obama administration to allow certain people who arrived in the United States as a child to delay deportation on a renewable two-year basis.

Recent nationwide delays in the re-application process have increased uncertainty; if his application were not processed in time, Monica's son said, he couldn't drive or work. It took about six months for his most recent application to be approved, he said, when it usually takes three.

Still, the fear of not having DACA protections looms. President Donald Trump's administration attempted to end DACA during his first term, though the Supreme Court ultimately overruled the decision. In a February letter to Sen. Dick Durbin, then-Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem wrote at least 261 DACA recipients were detained between January and mid-November 2025. DHS has claimed the program "does not confer any form of legal status in this country."

The thought of this possibility is amplified when fear ripples through the community.

Monica's son was walking his dog with a neighbor earlier this year. Not long before, someone had sent him a poster warning of ICE in town.

As he walked through the neighborhood, an unmarked white vehicle approached. It was the same make and model the police use, he thought. The driver slowed down, looked over and stared at him.

There was no way for Monica's son to know if the vehicle was ICE. It could be anyone, he said.

When Monica speaks about her granddaughter's love for soccer, she lights up. She can play with both feet, Monica said. She's the one scoring goals. They tried out basketball, gymnastics, ballet and hip-hop dancing, but soccer was what stuck. Aside from work, her practices are one of the few occasions Monica will leave home.

Monica has thought about what'd happen to her granddaughter, who she says was born in the United States, should Monica be detained or deported.

She discusses that possibility openly with her granddaughter. In one scenario, Monica's nephew would look after her, but he's young. She's also considered bringing her granddaughter with her.

"She say, 'I want to go with you,'" Monica said.

Monica doesn't want to be deported. She doesn't want to leave her granddaughter alone.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS: The IDS will end the year without a deficit

IU should reaffirm its commitments to free speech and student media

By Mia Hilkowitz
and Andrew Miller
mhilkowi@iu.edu | am13@iu.edu

As the school year comes to a close, we are writing to update on the state of the Indiana Daily Student and give an outlook on student media's future at Indiana University.

The IDS will finish this school year without a financial deficit, a rarity in recent history. Our expenses be-

gan consistently outpacing revenue in fiscal year 2015. After that point, we pulled from cash reserves until fiscal year 2021. Those reserves ran out, and our deficit accumulated.

But this year, that's no longer the case. This fiscal year, the IDS will end in the black. We will do so with our print editions restored, no expected deficit through summer and, in our view, the most comprehensive

plan for IU student media's future etched into place.

Now, we are calling on Media School and university administrators to take the necessary next steps to reaffirm their commitment to editorial independence, free speech and student opportunity: enacting the Task Force on Editorial Independence and Sustainability's recommendations.

Right now is the moment for administrators to decide

what kind of institution IU will become.

It's the culmination of a school year of unnecessary struggle.

Last October, we were launched into the national spotlight for our fight against IU's attempt at censoring our print paper. That came to a head before our planned Oct. 16 paper, set to include our Homecoming edition and regular reporting. After Media School ad-

ministrators directed us to print no news, we, and our then-student media director Jim Rodenbush, pushed back. IU fired Rodenbush and fully cut our paper, in clear retaliation.

The outrage was swift and widespread. Outlets across the world shared the story. National advocacy and legal groups, faculty and community members condemned it. Alumni pulled heaps of donations away

from the university.

This public support clearly overwhelmed IU, leading it to reverse its ban on print and set up the task force.

We've since had positive conversations with the IU Bloomington chancellor, interim provost and many others. We were both on, and contributed to, the task force established in the aftermath.