



A journey of ceremony and prayer honoring Dakota women who witnessed 1862 executions



Dakota Omani ended their travel at Land of Memories Park in Mankato with a ceremony honoring the Dakota men hanged and witnesses of the hangings on Dec. 26, 1862. (Photo by Leah Lemm / MPR News.)

BY CHANDRA COLVIN/MPR NEWS

Dozens of riders on horseback and travelers on foot arrived Friday morning at Reconciliation Park in Mankato.

Last year, two rides marked the revival of the famous reconciliation ride, honoring the 38 Dakota men hanged in Mankato on Dec. 26, 1862. Two additional men were hanged at Fort Snelling in 1865. The rides begin in both South Dakota and Nebraska, and end in Mankato.

However, another journey honoring the Dakota women of 1862 finished its fourth year in Mankato this year.

“We have always heard of our women that wept at the gallows,” said Gaby Strong, who organized the Dakota Omani, meaning “Dakota Travel” in English. Strong says Dakota Omani was purposefully named to welcome Indigenous communities to participate in the journey, whether they ride horseback, travel on foot or drive their vehicles.

Dakota Omani begins in Morton near Birch Coulee Battlefield in southwest Minnesota and ends at Land of Memories Park in Mankato. It spans over a total of four days, where “every step is a prayer” for the women who witnessed the hanging in 1862 and were later marched to Fort Snelling.

I joined Dakota Omani travelers earlier in the week, before their four-day journey to Mankato began. Out of respect for ceremony, I did not photograph or record the gatherings.

Setting intentions for the journey

I joined Dakota Omani on Monday, before the journey began. An evening meal was held in Morton at the Native-led nonprofit, Dakota Wicohan. The organization has a range of language, leadership and cultural lifeways programs, including a youth horse program called Sunktanka Wicayuhapi, or We Care for the Horses.

Tables and chairs filled two rooms within the building. In an open atrium between the rooms, more tables were lined with food, drinks and disposable plates and silverware.

Local members of the Lower Sioux Indian Community, located just a few miles from Morton, helped prepare the meal. The dinner consisted of beef, bread, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn and fruit salad — the kind with marshmallows and whipped cream.

I arrived before the 5 p.m. gathering and watched as travelers began to arrive one by one. While the journey commemorates and honors events surrounded by grief and solemnity, travelers greeted each other with enthusiasm and excitement. For some, it was a reunion.

I learned that several participants had participated in Dakota Omani since it started. Participants also learned more about the intentions of the journey on Monday evening.

— CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE —

Eyewitness says ICE gave conflicting orders before shooting woman

BY MPR NEWS STAFF



Federal agents surround a crashed vehicle on Portland Avenue in Minneapolis after an ICE officer shot and killed an observer on January 7. (Photo by Ben Hovland / MPR News.)

An eyewitness told MPR News that ICE agents gave mixed orders to a driver in south Minneapolis on January 7, with one agent ordering her to drive away from the scene where an ICE vehicle was stuck in a snowbank while another yelled for her to get out of her car as he reached for the door handle.

The scene ended with an agent shooting into the car, killing the woman.

Caitlin Callenson said she was walking down Portland Avenue with her partner when she saw who she assumed were Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

“They tried to zoom their car out of the snowbank but were just stuck,” she said.

She said other ICE vehicles showed up, leading neighbors to believe it might be an ICE enforcement action. People showed up, and some began blowing whistles.

“People in our neighborhood have been terrorized by ICE for six weeks. We want our neighbors safe, and so when we see a group of ICE vehicles, people in the community are showing up and saying, ‘This is not OK,’” she said.

Callenson said one person — the woman who was shot a short time later — drove her vehicle

perpendicular to the lanes of traffic on Portland Avenue, south of the ICE vehicles. By that point, Callenson said, the vehicle stuck in snow had been freed.

“Some of them were leaving, and they just went around her, but ICE gave her orders to leave, while at the same time, another ICE person said, ‘Get out of the car,’ and he reached for her door handle. And then there was an ICE agent in front of her vehicle. So it was difficult for her to leave, as she’d been ordered to do,” Callenson said.

“She turned her steering wheel toward the right. The person was grabbing her door handle, the ICE officer who was in front of her vehicle shot once from the front and twice from the side, hitting her maybe three feet away at the max. Because she was shot, and she was already trying to leave, her foot was on the accelerator, and she crashed into a telephone pole.”

After the shooting, Callenson said a neighbor identifying himself as a doctor asked if he could render aid to the woman who shot but was told by ICE agents to stand back. She said emergency responders’ vehicles couldn’t get past ICE vehicles, so firefighters and other first responders had to walk to the injured woman.

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 —

When Venezuela helped Americans

BY WINONA LADUKE

We owe Venezuela a debt. I remember when Venezuela paid our energy bills right after Hurricane Katrina and US refinery capacity was down. Oil prices skyrocketed, it was a hard winter, and the oil companies were making huge profits while many Americans experienced real hardships. Congress asked if they would give the American people a break on pricing. That didn't happen.

However, Venezuela's CITGO Petroleum donated about \$400 million in fuel support for American families. No American corporations did the same. This fuel donation over a couple of critical years was provided in 25 states and to 240 native American communities.

Most of the tribal nations in Minnesota and the Dakotas received support, as did many low-income people in the region. We were grateful. That was a donation in a time of need. Let's remember that Venezuela helped our people as the Trump administration today commits high seas piracy and escalates a war campaign for Venezuela's oil.

Hugo Chavez was Venezuela's president – and a Wayuu Indian person. Just to say, that sometimes-Indigenous people are presidents of countries. On White Earth, not only did CITGO pay for fuel assistance, but they paid for solar thermal panels for houses on the reservation, which The White Earth Land Recovery Project installed.

How did this gift happen? Well, Hugo Chavez was the president of Venezuela. And mind you, he was a Wayuu Indian person. Just to say, that sometimes-Indigenous people are presidents of countries.

Joe Kennedy II (Nephew of President Kennedy), through his nonprofit Citizens Energy Corporation, saw what was happening in Massachusetts where elderly people were without heat. Kennedy approached major US oil companies and oil-producing nations to ask them to assist the poor in bearing the burden of rising energy costs. "They all said no," said Kennedy, "except for CITGO, President Chavez and the people of Venezuela." Kennedy added, "I have asked every single oil company, and not one of them has given me a gallon to help the poor"

Citizens Energy Corporation then partnered with CITGO to assist tens of thousands of households with free heating oil. Together they delivered approximately 8.5 million gallons of heating oil to more than 33,000 households and around 60 homeless shelters in Massachusetts. Local oil dealers delivered 100 gallons of fuel at no cost to eligible families throughout the state.

"We are so grateful for this generous



The trump administration bombed Venezuela on January 3 and took President Mudaro and his wife into custody. (AP photo.)

donation from the people of Venezuela and CITGO Petroleum Corporation," Kennedy said.

On White Earth, not only did CITGO pay for fuel assistance, basically a direct transfer payment to Ferrel Gas and other providers, but they did something different. They paid for some solar thermal panels for houses on the reservation. The White Earth

Land Recovery Project was starting to install these solar thermal panels which reduced heating bills by up to 30% in houses- so it reduced the propane sales of companies. While that seems crazy, to cut into future profits, this is heat security, not just make money for oil companies. CITGO understood, and supported solar for White Earth, and the first wind turbine we put up.

Now, that would have been a happy ending for all of us, but energy addicts don't have gratitude. Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world, followed by Saudi Arabia and then Canada. Venezuela wanted a fair price for its oil, and American greed would not tolerate that.

These solar thermal panels reduced home heating bills by up to 30% , but it also reduced oil company propane sales. While that seems crazy to cut into future oil company profits, this move by CITGO made heat security feasible for our people. Now that would have been a happy ending, but energy addicts don't have gratitude.

Venezuela, with the largest oil reserves in the world, followed by Saudi Arabia and then Canada, wanted a fair price for its oil. But American greed would not tolerate that. Those politics are exactly how we got Alberta's Athabasca tar sands oil rush, driven by guys like the Koth Brothers and linked to the Flint Hills Refinery in Rosemount, Minnesota,

and ultimately to a lot of arrests, and impaired ecosystems.

David and Charles Koch were some of the richest guys in America until the Tech geniuses arrived, Bezos, Gates, Zuckerman and Musk. In 2013, Koch Industries was the second largest privately held company in the US. The brothers owned a fertilizer company in Venezuela and had been making some substantial profits. Venezuela, like a lot of other countries exploited by big American corporations, decided to nationalize. Then, as OPEC started in 1973, the Chileans nationalized Anaconda and Kennecott copper.

In 2010, Venezuelan President Chavez expropriated FertiNitro, a company in which Koch Minerals Sarl indirectly owned 25 % of the equity. That made the brothers mad, so they went to International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, which awarded the Koch brothers a large settlement.

Then came the oil. Chavez told a reporter, "We are no longer an oil colony." Chavez wanted \$35 more a barrel for the heavy tar sands oil it was sending to the US, and the Koch's didn't like that much. They and other oil barons nudged the first Trump and later the Obama administration to impose sanctions on Venezuela. Then the Koch Brothers moved north to the Canadian Tar sands.

By 2014, the brothers had leased 2 million-plus acres of tar sands from the Canadian government. But the oil needed to be refined, even though there was no infrastructure and no pipelines. The majority of US oil infrastructure was on the coast of Texas where the mega tankers docked. Hence Koch's push for tar sands pipelines like the KXL pipeline -- one of five proposed pipelines. Massive opposition to Keystone and the

Dakota Access Pipeline (for Bakken oil) ensued. Three of the tar sands pipelines were defeated. But then came Line 3.

And that's why Minnesota was and is important. Enbridge today has six lines across the top of the state and imports more tar sands oil than anyone, 75% of it. The Flint Hills Pine Bend Refinery processes the most tar sands oil of any refinery in the US. And it produces gas for our cars, and 77% of that oil is from the tar sands, the dirtiest, most polluting oil in the world. It's delivered by Enbridge to Clearbrook, the big switchboard for Enbridge, then directly to Flint Hills.

These days, I liked it more when we were nice and Venezuela gave us oil. And for the \$35 more per barrel that Hugo Chavez demanded, it seems like a cheap price -- in comparison to all the destruction we are witnessing in the north due to ongoing oil infrastructure issues and economics.

Today, we watch the Trump administration move towards war against Venezuela and further erode the rule of law. Internationally, Trump's actions set bad precedents. But, of course, Kings think that they can make their own laws. Personally, here in the Deep North, I'm going to try and stay far away from petroleum-based fertilizers that damage water and soil.

We'll use natural fertilizers like fish emulsion, biochar and lots of manure. And I will continue to support work that creates a post-petroleum economy, because that's a more peaceful economy. Plus, I hate being an addict, and I don't like addict politics. I like gratitude and cooperation.

Thank you, Venezuela, my prayers are with your people and land.

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Thousands of ICE agents descend on the Twin Cities

BY THE CIRCLE

The Trump administration has intensified immigration enforcement in Minnesota with the arrival of thousands of federal ICE agents, marking the largest such operation the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) says it has ever undertaken in the Twin Cities.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem joined a large contingent of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers on January 5, during a pre-dawn enforcement action on the East Side of St. Paul, where agents arrested an Ecuadorian national. Noem claims he is suspected of homicide in his home country, according to a video Noem posted on her X account. The scene included an armored vehicle and a heavy federal presence around Payne Avenue, a busy commercial corridor in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood.

Noem's visit came amid a reported surge of roughly 2,000 additional ICE and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents being deployed to Minnesota as part of what senior officials described as "Operation Metro Surge," a 30-day federal immigration enforce-

ment and fraud investigation initiative focused on the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

Acting ICE Director Todd Lyons described the current activity as the agency’s “largest immigration operation ever” in an interview with a television network, underscoring the scale of the enforcement effort in a state with long-standing sanctuary policies in its largest cities.

DHS announced that more than 150 people in Minnesota were arrested by immigration agents, though officials did not specify the nationalities or legal statuses of those taken into custody.

The intensified enforcement follows a broader federal focus on alleged welfare fraud and immigration violations in Minnesota, including scrutiny of day-care centers, nutrition programs and other social services. Critics say the crackdown disproportionately affects Somali American communities, which make up one of the largest Somali populations in the United States.

The expanded federal presence has generated alarm among immigrant advocates, Native Americans, and community groups. Advocates have voiced concerns that widespread enforcement, especially with little public notice, is fostering fear among immigrant fami-

lies and could ensnare lawful residents. Native Americans are also being wrongfully detained simply due to skin color.

“They’re up there taking the fight to these sanctuary jurisdictions,” Lyons said, referring to Minneapolis and St. Paul by name, according to the video clips posted online.

Minnesota officials have also criticized the operation. Governor Tim Walz has called for reviews of recent arrests after reports emerged that at least two U.S. citizens were detained during ICE actions, urging Noem to ensure due process and proper warrant procedures.

Local protests have accompanied the federal sweep. Last month, demonstrators gathered during federal worksite raids in St. Paul, questioning how agents “sleep at night” amid allegations of aggressive tactics.

The DHS asserts its enforcement efforts are lawful and targeted at individuals who have violated federal immigration law or committed serious crimes. In a written statement, Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin noted the agency had already made over 1,000 arrests in Minnesota since late December, though she declined to specify operational details.

But the surge of federal agents is unfolding in a politically charged environment. Minnesota's sanctuary cities have long resisted cooperation with ICE, and critics argue that increased federal enforcement undermines local policy and community trust.

Several immigrant rights organizations and civil liberties groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, have initiated legal challenges against ICE, alleging constitutional violations during protests and enforcement actions.

Residents on the East Side of St. Paul and throughout the Twin Cities report heightened anxiety, especially in immigrant neighborhoods with large East African and Latino communities. Many are carrying identification and travel documents routinely to avoid complications during any encounter with law enforcement.

Community advocates have called for clearer communication and due process protections as federal agents conduct operations that critics say resemble military-style raids. The issue has become a flashpoint in broader national debates over immigration policy and enforcement tactics.

The poster is divided into several color-coded sections: a purple top left, a white middle left, a dark blue bottom left, and a large yellow right side. The title 'Dyani White Hawk' is in yellow on the purple background, and 'Love Language' is in purple on the white background. The right side features a stylized illustration of a Lakota tipi interior with a white beaded dome and colorful hanging ornaments. Text on the yellow background provides details about the exhibition, including the artist's name in Lakota (Sičánŋu Lakota), the guiding words of the exhibition, and information about free admission for Tribal Nations members. The Walker Art Center logo and name are in white on the dark blue background.

Back to the Future

BY WINONA LADUKE

It was like that movie Back to the Future. I traveled to a meeting with White Earth Tribal representatives and 8th Fire Solar to meet with some energy industry professionals in Minneapolis at OATI (Open Access Technology International). OATI supplies software to manage the grid which moves electrical power around the country and around the world. We discussed renewable energy, the future, and how local communities' utilities and rural cooperatives are moving towards the sun and the wind for the future of power.

After the meeting, I traveled back to the reservation in a Ford Lightning electric truck. I was in the back seat and two of my sons were in the front seat. That's the future.

What is the future of energy? What do you want it to be? Pine Point village on White Earth decided it wanted to have a little more control over the costs and future of energy. This fall, Pine Point Elementary School, with 10 Power, 8th Fire Solar and Ziegler Energy, installed 480 kw of solar power for the school -- that's a school that is 100% electric and serves one of the poorest communities in Minnesota. Their electric bill is whopping! Scheduled to come online by January of 2026, the project could provide 100% of the school's energy, and with battery backup power, that school will keep the power going till the grid comes back up after it goes down. What's wrong with that?

For now, most of the power used by the school and the White Earth community has been coming from some dirty coal plants in North Dakota, which have been spewing nasty stuff towards Minnesota, and a few big dam projects in Manitoba, which are destroying that northern river. That's where fish and migratory birds live. I'd like to move along.

On what my ancestors called the Scorched Path, these types of outdated power production will cause the bills to get bigger and the problems worse. For 100 years or so, economists and all have been saying Big is Best. But more power outages, long inefficient transmission lines and generation -- which waste about 61% of the energy between point of origin and use -- are not a very reliable future. That's why we need local power.

The White Earth tribal officials from the Tribal Utilities Commission and tribal planners went to see OATI, sort of the gurus of electric grid management. Simply stated, utility power producers and transmission entities need to move power around, turn off and on switches, "manage loads" and such. Computers and smart people operate the "smart grid."

With customers like Great River Energy, Ottertail Power, Xcel and others "OATI provides solutions for the operational challenges of energy providers in an industry that is constantly changing. Changes in technology, market demand, and regulations require utility companies to constantly adapt..." it says on their website. That's the future. That's being adaptable, or their words -- having interoperability.

The White Earth tribal staff and community members from 8th Fire Solar and Akiing listened to these guys talk about the grids of the future. That future grid for them though is mostly renewable energy and distributed energy -- and not all from centralized



From left: Gwekaanimad Gasco, Nick Bellrock, John Martin, and William Sayers at the 8th Fire Solar facility in Osage with their Ford Lightning.

power plants. That's local generation, wind in a farm field and community units called micro grids.

The writing is on the wall, and we all just need to read it. This fall, the Federal Energy Regulatory Council reported some 68% of the energy coming online in our region is solar, with wind and batteries pushing that higher. And the majority of what's getting retired is coal. This region is called MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operators), and MISO is changing.

Despite attempts by the Trump administration to change the course of history, keeping a 50-year-old

plant that wastes lots of energy on life support doesn't make any sense. It sure doesn't make any sense for our communities. Why should we pay for monopolized fossil fuel industries, when we can each bask in the sun? And, by the way, solar is a third less expensive to put in than new coal, or some crazy mini-nuclear plants on the Missouri River to feed a data center.

Over there in OATI land, they had all sorts of charts and graphics, and what seemed clear is that the future is in these changes, and that most of the energy industry is embracing them. But what's even better is the idea of using less energy. That's what 8th Fire Solar is working on -- reducing home heating bills by implementing simple solar thermal panels, installed on a south-facing wall. Heating bills using solar thermal can be reduced by up to 30% and considering that almost 40% of energy bills this time of year are heating, well that's some significant savings.

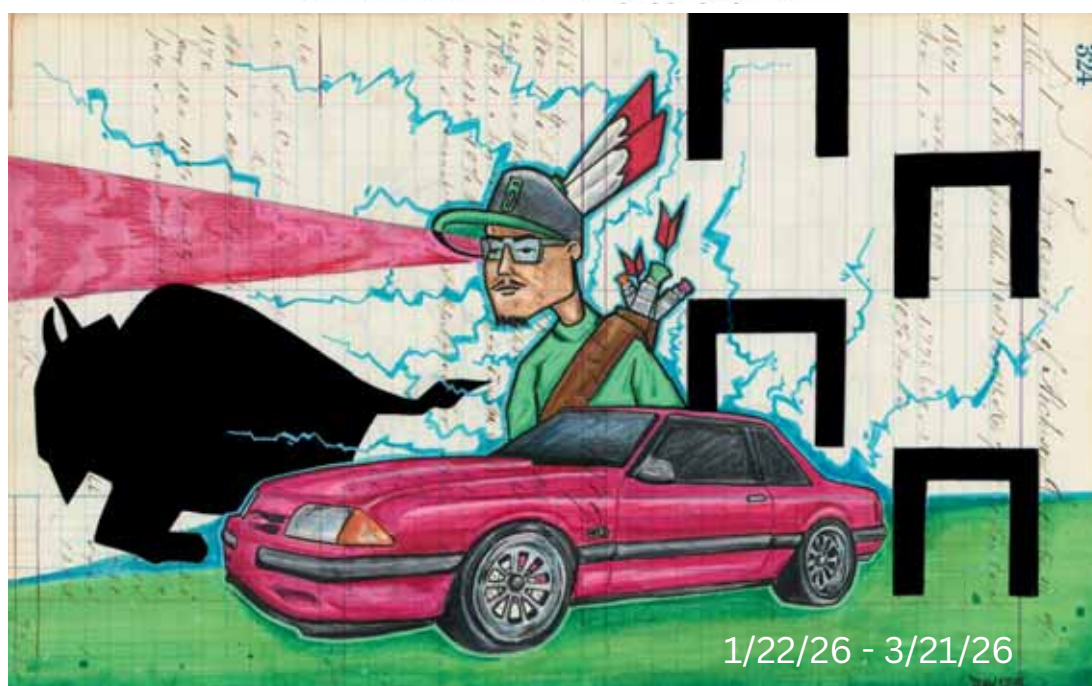
As the longest night of the year comes upon us, the sun will return, and I want to be ready. Let's all work together to make a good future. These rural cooperatives who serve us all can be part of making that future, and I think that these smart grid ideas and community-scaled projects are the power of the future.

Pine Point and OATI are talking about the future of energy, right along with 8th Fire Solar. And as I sat there in the back of that electric Ford Lightning, headed back to the reservation, I realized that I want to be part of that future.

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Frank Buffalo Hyde’s installation is Unapologetically Indigenous

BY DAN NINHAM

Frank Buffalo Hyde (b. 1974, Santa Fe, NM) is an Onondaga/ Niimiipuu (Nez Perce) artist whose paintings examine and elevate an image of contemporary Indigenous life through a vibrant pop-sensibility and uncompromising satirical eye, according to the Hirshhorn Museum installation website. His work has been shown at museums including the Wheelright Museum of the American Indian, Santa Fe, NM; the C.M Russell Museum, Great Falls, MT; and he is in the permanent collection at the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, OK.

(His work) is in the public collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington DC; Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY; Iroquois Museum, Cobleskill, NY; Longyear Museum at Colgate University, Hamilton, NY; the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM; the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Hyde lives and works in Northfield, MN.

Frank Buffalo Hyde's Unapologetically Indigenous installation is at the Soo Visual Arts Center, 2909 Bryant Avenue South #101, Minneapolis, MN. The exhibition runs from December 7, 2025 to January 18, 2026.

Below is the interview.

DN: How did you get started in your art career?

FBH: I had my first showing in a group exhibition in Armory Square in Syracuse, NY. Charcoal drawings while I was in high school.



Hyde working on his mural at The Northfield YMCA in Northfield, MN. Completed in April 2025 (Photo by Néepe Hyde.)

DN: Describe your art style and how has it evolved over time?

FBH: Post-modern neo expressionist Native American. Like many artists my work has been a process of trial and error. I spent the first eight years trying on all the hats. Working on different styles until my visual vocabulary became evident.

DN: What is your art vision statement?

FBH: My work is for indigenous people primarily. I am pro- indigenous first, that doesn't mean that I am anti anything else. It means that there's a certain short-hand for native peoples combined with current events and popular culture.

DN: Share how your indigenous core values are embodied in your art.

FBH: My indigenous perspective is a result of growing up in my community in the Onondaga Nation. Where we are sovereign we hold our own borders and government. I have also combined that with a fascination with the outside world of history, movies and current events. I often react and address the miscommunication between those things in complex allegorical compositions that function on multiple levels.

DN: What role does storytelling play in your art?

FBH: I guess narratives are key to my work. I choose images that are already loaded with collective consciousness content. Similar to storytelling in a way but, non-linear.

DN: Describe a recent project that you are most proud of and why it stands out to you.

FBH: I recently participated in a group show at The High Desert museum in Bend, Oregon titled "Sensing Sasquatch" (and) it was curated to be from the perspective of indigenous people and how medicine can't always be quantified by western science but is revered among many different tribes as reality. It won the 2025 Autry Living History prize.

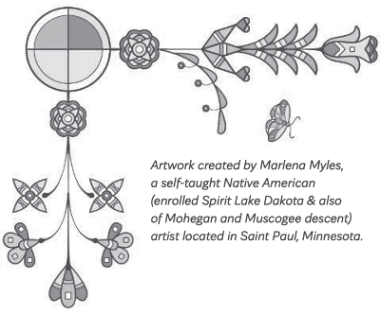
DN: Do you mentor others? What advice would you give to aspiring artists who follow your lead?

FBH: I absolutely believe in mentoring when possible I hire youth artists to be interns in my studio. It offers real world experience in a professional art studio. I try to be open and available to anyone who has questions about the art world.

DN: Share details on your current and future art exhibitions and residencies.

STUDY PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY

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Artwork created by Marlena Myles, a self-taught Native American (enrolled Spirit Lake Dakota & also of Mohegan and Muscogee descent) artist located in Saint Paul, Minnesota.



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- (b) Are a family member or caregiver of someone who meets the criteria (a) above.

We will ask you to actively engage with others in a Listening Session structured similarly to a Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) where a community comes together to collectively characterize their shared understanding of a condition – in this case TBI – while being mindful of cultural values, traditions, and spiritual practices. You will be compensated for time spent participating in this study.

For more information, contact a member of the study team at: 507-255-0718 or WAYS@mayo.edu

Funding Source: National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research 90DPTB0031-03-00



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Above: *We Carry the Wisdom of the Stars*, 24x18 acrylic on canvas, 2025.
Below: Installation shot of *Unapologetically Indigenous*. (Photos by Frank Buffalo Hyde.)



FBH: I currently have a solo exhibition at SOVAC in Minneapolis titled “Unapologetically Indigenous” that runs through January 18, 2026 along with a few public art projects in Minnesota and Oklahoma that have yet to be completed. I was commissioned by the Northfield YMCA to create a mural for their newly updated cardio and weight training area. I incorporated many of the activities available at the facility and also my daughter was the model for the volleyball player as well as painting assistant and photographer.

DN: In closing, what do you want your readers to know about you that may not have been in the media already?

FBH: I guess most people don’t know that I’m also an art writer and recently gave a keynote speech to the Minnesota Art Educator’s Conference. I also have a music project called Buffalo Jim.

Learn more about Frank Buffalo Hyde at: frankbuffalohyde.com

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Callenson said she saw the ICE agent who fired the gunshots walk away to the north and get in an ICE vehicle.

Callenson and others took videos of the shooting that are now circulating widely online.

"You can see, like, what happened in that video was not self-defense," she said.

Gov. Tim Walz said that he issued a "warning order to prepare the Minnesota National Guard," a move he called a heads-up for possible mobilization after an ICE agent shot and killed a woman in south Minneapolis.

ICE says the woman was shot in her car after attempting to run over agents. Mayor Jacob Frey and Gov. Tim Walz are disputing ICE's version of events.

Walz told reporters that he and others had been warning that the heightened ICE operations in the Twin Cities were a danger to public safety. "Today, that recklessness cost someone their life," he said, adding that it was "predictable and avoidable."

He also pleaded for people to protest peacefully and not force a confrontation. "They want a show," he said of the Trump administration. "We can't give it to them."

He added: "To Americans, I ask you this, please stand with Minneapolis."

Gov. Tim Walz is expected to speak to reporters. On social media, though, he



A bullet hole is visible in the windshield of a crashed vehicle on Portland Avenue in Minneapolis after an ICE officer shot and killed an US citizen on January 7. (Photos by Ben Hovland / MPR News.)

challenged ICE's version of events and the agency's claim of self-defense in the shooting and killing of a woman in south Minneapolis.

In a social media post, the governor wrote, "I've seen the video. Don't believe this propaganda machine. The state will ensure there is a full, fair, and expeditious investigation to ensure accountability and justice."

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension confirmed it is also investigating the shooting.

Briefing reporters Wednesday, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey disputed

ICE's assertion that an agent acted in self-defense in shooting and killing a woman who an ICE spokesperson said attempted to run over agents with her car.

Frey said he'd seen video of the confrontation and said ICE was "already trying to spin this as an act of self-defense. That is bullshit. This was an agent recklessly using power ... that resulted in someone dying, getting killed."

"The narrative that this was done in self-defense is a garbage narrative."

He did not name the woman but said she was 37 years old.

"We've dreaded this moment since the

early stages of this ICE presence in Minneapolis," he added.

Brian O'Hara, the city police chief, said there was "nothing to indicate that this woman was the target of any law enforcement investigation," adding that she was "in her car and it appears then blocking the street because of the presence of federal law enforcement."

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, in a statement, said "the presence of federal immigration enforcement agents is causing chaos in our city and making our community less safe. We are demanding that ICE leave the city and state immediately."

The State Emergency Operation Center has been activated. For reference, this is the multi-agency team that crops up during major incidents. You'll remember it from the post-George Floyd murder.

Federal authorities say the ICE agent, "fearing for his life" killed the woman during a confrontation.

The ICE statement says, in part: "Today, ICE officers in Minneapolis were conducting targeted operations when rioters began blocking ICE officers and one of these violent rioters weaponized her vehicle, attempting to run over our law enforcement officers in an attempt to kill them—an act of domestic terrorism."

"An ICE officer, fearing for his life, the lives of his fellow law enforcement

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The Bell Museum waives general museum admission for Dakota and all Indigenous peoples. For more information visit bellmuseum.umn.edu/mnisota-makhoche



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and the safety of the public, fired defensive shots.

“He used his training and saved his own life and that of his fellow officers.

“The alleged perpetrator was hit and is deceased. Thankfully, the ICE officers who were hurt are expected to make full recoveries.”

The shooting happened a day after the Department of Homeland Security announced that “the largest DHS operation ever is happening right now in Minnesota.”

The agency said it was deploying 2,000 law enforcement officers to the Twin Cities — an escalation of an immigration crackdown that started more than a month earlier.

MPR News contacted both DHS and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to confirm the number of agents being deployed to Minnesota. DHS responded with a statement from Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin, saying, “While for the safety of our officers we do not get into law enforcement footprint, DHS has surged law enforcement and has already made more than 1,000 arrests of murderers, rapists, pedophiles and gang members.”

Amid the reported surge of federal agents, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was in the Twin Cities on January 6.

Gov. Tim Walz had sharply criticized the federal enforcement effort, raising concerns about both the scale of the operation and the lack of coordination with



Left: Community members confront law enforcement on Portland Avenue in Minneapolis after an ICE officer shot and killed a citizen. Right: A federal police officer watches protestors after an ICE agent shot and killed an observer in Minneapolis on Wednesday



state officials.

Minneapolis council member Robin Wonsley posted on social media she is on the ground with other council members. The City of Minneapolis X account shared that Mayor Jacob Frey is “demanding ICE to leave the city and state immediately.”

A witness to the shooting in south Minneapolis told MPR News that she saw a federal agent shoot a woman several times.

Emily Heller lives near 33rd and Portland and said she woke up to a commotion outside her home. She said she saw a car blocking traffic on Portland

Avenue that appeared to be part of a protest against federal law enforcement operations.

Heller said she heard ICE agents telling the driver, a woman, to “get out of here.”

“She was trying to turn around, and the ICE agent was in front of her car, and he pulled out a gun and put it right in — like, his midriff was on her bumper — and he reached across the hood of the car and shot her in the face like three, four times,” Heller said.

Heller said it appeared the woman then accelerated and traveled about 100 feet before striking a utility pole and some other vehicles. She could be seen

slumped over inside her car.

Gov. Tim Walz said his public safety team will share information as they learn more.

“In the meantime, I ask folks to remain calm,” Walz said in the post.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey also confirmed the shooting involved an ICE agent.

“The presence of federal immigration enforcement agents is causing chaos in our city,” Frey said in the post. “We’re demanding ICE to leave the city immediately. We stand rock solid with our immigrant and refugee communities.”



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North Woods HS Chosa's future looks bright and tomorrow

Brynn Chosa is an enrolled member of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa. She is a senior at North Woods High School and is a varsity volleyball and basketball athlete.

"I played for Minnesota North Volleyball Club for six years and I've had numerous coaches over the years," said Brynn Chosa.

Chosa's cultural background influenced her approach to sport in a positive way.

"My background influenced my approach in sports by my family members," said Chosa. "My older brother and cousins all played basketball growing up and were always in the gym. I've been in the gym constantly since before I could walk. I grew up playing basketball."

"I spent lots of time with Cade, Darnell, Bryce, and Darius who are my brother and cousins playing basketball. They worked very hard and it showed me that if I work hard enough it will pay off. They used to get a ton of awards and accolades and it inspired me to be like them."

"I even wanted to be better than them which I think has fueled my work ethic at the start of my career. I also started playing basketball with the Nett Lake Eagles that was ran by Brandon Benner," added Chosa.

"My uncle Robbie Goggleye helped coach us and he also helped me find my passion for basketball," said Chosa. "He was hard on us but it just made us stronger ball players."

High caliber student athletes deal with challenges that don't become obstacles in their athletic careers. Using indigenous core value/s may help deal with it in a positive way.

"A time when I had to overcome a significant obstacle was during my sophomore year of volleyball," said Chosa. "I wanted to quit and I lost all my love for the sport. I hated everything about volleyball that year."

"I was taught to not quit something in the middle of doing it and to push through. So that's what I did, I finished out the season and persevered through the challenges," added Chosa.

She continued to talk about dealing with making a major decision.

"I was also always taught to be respectful to everyone around me, no matter how they treated me or anyone else," said Chosa. "I made sure to always respect the coaches and players, even if I had a tough time."

"Going through that situation, my mental health wasn't the best," said Chosa. "After that season I took a step back from volleyball during the spring time. And during my junior year I had relearned to love volleyball again. My mom Amanda, some of my teammates, and my coach Kaileen were some of the key people who helped me overcome this challenge."

Chosa has many notable highlights and achievements in athletics.

She varsity lettered in basketball eighth to 12th grade and volleyball from 10th to 12th grade. Being a two time basketball and volleyball captain brings responsibility. She's also won team honors as a volleyball defensive player of the year and All Arrowhead Conference and nominee for player of the year in basketball.

She's had a state honor being recognized as 2024-2025 breakdown athletes for basketball and volleyball. She was on Team Minnesota at the 2023 North American Indigenous Games in basketball and her club volleyball team placed third at Nationals in Orlando, FL.



North Woods HS Brynn Chosa played volleyball and is now in basketball season.

Her favorite achievement was going to the MN state volleyball tournament her senior year.

Being an Indigenous athlete means being someone special in the community.

"Being an Indigenous athlete to me is being more than an athlete," said Chosa. "It's about being a role model and someone the younger kids can look up to. I want native kids to look at my sports achievements and believe they can also do it. I also want native kids to realize that they can be passionate about their sport and their culture."

Others are watching Chosa when she doesn't realize it. She has advice that she would give whenever that happens.

"My advice is to always work hard on the court and in the classroom," said Chosa. "Make sure your school work comes first and then athletics. Hard work pays off in the long run."

"And another thing is to enjoy every step of the way, whether it's bad or good moments because you can always learn from them," added Chosa.

North Woods HS two sport athlete Brynn Chosa's future looks bright today and tomorrow.



Manufacturing crimes, again

“A federal grand jury today returned a six-count indictment against four members of a far-left, anti-capitalist, and anti-government group that allegedly plotted to set off bombs in Southern California on New Year’s Eve, charging them with additional, terrorism-related felonies,” boasted a Dec. 23 press release from the United States Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California.

Among those charged by the feds is Audrey Illeene Carroll, 30, a.k.a. “Asiginaak.” I don’t know any of these people, but “Asiginaak” sounds like an Inuit name. And the alleged terrorists are members of an outfit called the “Turtle Island Liberation Front.”

Also, the *Los Angeles Times*, in an article purporting to investigate the Turtle Island Liberation Front, noted: “A fifth person was arrested by federal officials in the terror plot investigation — in Louisiana.”

Mainstream press outlets — broadcast and cable TV, newspapers and news syndicates — generally reported the U.S. Attorney’s statement with little embellishment. I immediately thought that it sounded fishy as hell.

Over many years, I’ve reported on the FBI’s sordid history of infiltration and surveillance of dissident groups, including the Black Panthers, American Indian Movement (AIM), socialist parties, etc. And during the Nixon administration, Tricky Dick tasked the CIA with snooping on anti-Vietnam War student groups and other activists that he suspected of having ties to foreign enemies, despite U.S. laws prohibiting the CIA from engaging in domestic spying. (For more on this period, I recommend the new Netflix documentary, “Cover-Up,” which focuses on the career of investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who broke the story of the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War.)

More recently, I’ve written about the FBI’s practice of planting informants with groups of wannabe revolutionists and manufacturing “terrorist” plots. In my day job as editor and publisher of the Minneapolis-based *American Jewish World* newspaper, I won a 2010 Rockower Award for excellence in editorial writing, for an article titled “Manufacturing crimes.”

That piece discussed the case of the “Newburgh Four,” a group of ex-convicts accused by the feds of conspiring to bomb synagogues in the Bronx, New York, and to bring down a commercial airliner with a surface-to-air missile. At one point in the prosecution, a federal judge ordered the defendants released due to the government’s role in fabricating the terrorist plot.

I wrote in May 2009, regarding the Newburgh Four case: “The tabloid press in New York has been replete with stories

over the past week about how one of the bomb plotters spent his days before getting busted smoking marijuana and playing video games. In court, he told the judge, ‘I smoke it regularly,’ then reassuringly added, ‘I understand everything you are saying.’ The *New York Daily News* reported that one of the Newburgh men had been declared to be a paranoid schizophrenic.”

Here’s how it works: The FBI finds some likely suspects, plants an informant with them and leads them down the path to an ostensible terrorist crime. Of course, the plotters are under surveillance 24/7 and the plot is broken up in the nick of time. The Newburgh Four were ultimately convicted and sent back to prison. It’s very difficult to mount an entrapment defense.

As I wrote in the *Jewish World*: “The federal authorities contend that these arrests save lives, but Bruce Schneier, who writes on security and security technology, told AP: ‘Most of these guys don’t get tried. These are not criminal masterminds, they’re idiots. There’s huge fanfares at the arrest, and then it dies off.’”

I don’t know what will transpire with the prosecution of the Turtle Island Liberation Front members. On Dec. 16, The Intercept reported on the case: “An FBI investigation into an alleged terror plot in Southern California bears the familiar hallmarks of the bureau’s long-running use of informants and undercover agents to advance plots that might not otherwise have materialized, court documents show.”

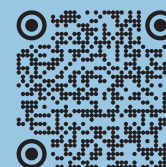
The report added that an FBI informant is key to the U.S. government’s prosecution of the Turtle Island radicals: “The limited details available suggest an investigation that leaned heavily on a paid informant and at least one undercover FBI agent, according to an affidavit filed in federal court. The informant and the undercover agent were involved in nearly every stage of the case, including discussions of operational security and transporting members of the group to the site in the Mojave Desert where federal agents ultimately made the arrests.”

Further, “The informant, who has worked other cases on the FBI’s payroll since 2021, had been in contact with the group known as the Turtle Island Liberation Front since at least late November, just two months after President Donald Trump designated ‘antifa’ a domestic terrorism organization.”

Trump has blabbered about going after the “enemy within”; and federal forces, ICE and other masked thugs, are currently terrorizing residents of the Twin Cities and other locales. There is a rising tide of fascism — when it comes to these alleged terrorism plots, don’t believe the hype.

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Native Market and Cultural Celebration & Food Lab

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENN HALL

Driving west on Lake Street toward the Midtown Global Market in Minneapolis, traffic slowed as marchers strolled along in the cold holding signs protesting the current ICE occupation. Those of us crawling the other direction beeped our horns and waved at the dedicated citizens from all walks of life, thanking them for showing up for their neighbors and exercising their freedom of speech. I was heading over to check out the Native Market and Cultural Celebration that NATIFs, Midtown Global Market, and the Indigenous Food Lab collaborated on Saturday, December 20.

Inside the market, smooth sounds of piano came from musical guest Wenso Ashby and vocalist J. Michelle. Next to the stage, Chef Sean Sherman signed copies of his cookbook. Shoppers milled about checking out the handmade goods, art, and jewelry. Delicious food smells wafted throughout the main hall as people visited and checked gifts off their holiday shopping lists.

I picked up a pain soothing salve, a handmade purse, and even brought home a beautiful bag of heirloom black beans from an Arizona farm. There was a community clothing giveaway, hosted by Tommie Taylor.

Enterprising kids helped out at their relatives booths, handing out business cards and pointing out their favorite pieces of jewelry. What struck me is the contemporary themes woven throughout the booths - aliens and pop icons on hand-beaded earrings, cheeky t-shirts centered around frybread and modern slang.

Every vendor I spoke with seemed to be doing brisk business, the atmosphere was cheerful and determined. The Native Market and Cultural Celebration was a beautiful reminder of the entrepreneurial spirit of Native people and it brought people together in an open, welcoming environment for the holiday season.



40th Anniversary of the White Earth Land Settlement Act

REVIEW BY WINONA LADUKE

In 1986, Congress passed the White Earth Land Settlement Act. Returning 10,000 acres of land to the White Earth Anishinaabe and \$17 million in settlement funds to the White Earth Tribe. What was this for? How did this happen? Was it just?

The Giiwediniing Museum will be exploring the history of land loss on the White Earth reservation, and those who fought to protect our land- from the 1800s to the 1980s. We've collected a lot of historical information and interviewed people involved with the 2415 investigation into land loss on the White Earth reservation. We want to talk to those who remember and participated in meetings, demonstrations and the formation of Anishinaabe Akeeng, a community organization, along with groups like White Earth Heirs and Allottees Association to seek justice.

The museum will be hosting a set of community meetings to record oral histories of land loss on the White Earth reservation and the contemporary struggles of those in the 1980s and beyond who sought return of land. Those meetings will begin in January, and the museum will work with community people to prepare exhibits and materials from historic and present oral histories. We will hold meetings in White Earth village, and in Minneapolis.

How did this happen?

"... the lands so held by any Indian shall be exempt from taxation and sale for debt and shall not be alienated except with approval of the Secretary of Interior and in no case to any person not a member of the Chippewa..." Article 7 of the 1867 Treaty. That treaty was signed by President Andrew Johnson, and was the basis for many of the Anishinaabe Chiefs to move their people to the reservation, including Mezhukegiizhig, who moved to the Rice Lake area, Bad Boy (Pine Point and Tamarac Refuge area), Wadena, whose family is today largely in Naytauwash, and of course Wabunoquod, or White Cloud who became one of the principle leaders of the Anishinaabe of White Earth.

The Problem

From an initial reservation area of 829,444 acres, in 1983 there were only 54,125 acres in tribal hands, and 1,953 under allotment on the White Earth Reservation. The Nelson Act, Clapp Act and Steenerson Act stripped land and trees from the Anishinaabe, followed by land takings like the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and the White Earth State Forest. It was devastating for our people, and illegal. That is how the urban Anishinaabe came to be- by the 1920s. three quarters of all tribal members had moved off reservation- refugees in our own land. The museum will explore this historic record, and the impacts on our people.

Then we will talk about resistance: A 1974 Minnesota Supreme Court decision and the actions of George Aubid the heir of ZayZah, opened a door for the beginning of land recovery by the White Earth band, underscoring what would become a national investigation.

The federal 2415 investigation began on White Earth in 1979 and was intended to review the allotments and the land transactions which had resulted in the illegal transfer of lands. The investigation found that there were several ways in which land had been transferred illegally- tax forfeiture (ZayZah case), forced fee patents, minor sales, full blood sales and more. The



initial investigation by the 2415 found at least 99,350 acres of land were tied up in 947 disputes. The 2415 investigation was closed before completion, but many of the researchers concluded that if the 2415 study had been completed, two or three times as much real estate could have been claimed. Interviews with John Morrin, an initial researcher for 2415 Claims, and others helped reveal the injustices.

White Earth tribal members organized to inform others about the land rights and the 2415 investigation. Tribal members formed groups like Anishinaabe Akeeng, and the White Earth Coalition of Heirs and Allottees. They held meetings, met with the tribal council, and testified at state and federal hearings.

Initial legislation proposed in 1983 would have "cleared land title", in return for \$3 million. This was opposed by the community and later the tribal council. There was a bitter battle, ending in the 1986 White Earth Land Settlement Act which was passed in Congress under a suspension of the rules, and very few legislators in the room, another theft of land.

The White Earth Land Settlement Act told a story of what had happened to our people, but much of the story was omitted, and there were clear denials of due process and just compensation. This law was opposed by many allottees and their descendants, who filed two federal cases- Manypenny V. US and Little Wolf V. US seeking return of land and due process. These cases, filed in Washington DC, were dismissed.

In 1989, some members of Anishinaabe Akeeng formed the White Earth Land Recovery Project and were able over the course of twenty years, to secure 1300 acres of land on which they farm, harvest maple syrup, hold ceremonies, and created a radio station- Nijii Radio or KKWE in one of the facilities, the former Callaway Elementary School. That's the legacy and there is more

The quest for justice on White Earth continues. We hope to have a display commemorating the 40th Anniversary of WELSA, and what it means in these times, up for the summer. Please email winona@giiwediniing.org if you've got stories to tell and want to help organize informational meetings !



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E. Ambrose Webster (American, 1869-1935), *Brook in Winter* (detail), c. 1914, oil on canvas. Gift of Jeanne Baker Driscoll in memory of John and Marie Baker and Marge Kallemeijn, 2016.92

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Unfettered and unaccountable: How Trump is building a violent shadowy federal police force

BY J. DAVID MCSWANE &
HANNAH ALLAM/PROPUBICA

When Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers stormed through Santa Ana, California, in June 2025, panicked calls flooded into the city's emergency response system.

Recordings of those calls, obtained by ProPublica, captured some of the terror residents felt as they watched masked men ambush people and force them into unmarked cars. In some cases, the men wore plain clothes and refused to identify themselves. There was no way to confirm whether they were immigration agents or imposters. In six of the calls to Santa Ana police, residents described what they were seeing as kidnappings.

"He's bleeding," one caller said about a person he saw yanked from a car wash lot and beaten. "They dumped him into a white van. It doesn't say ICE."

One woman's voice shook as she asked, "What kind of police go around without license plates?"

And then this from another: "Should we just run from them?"

During a tense public meeting days later, Mayor Valerie Amezcua and the City Council asked their police chief whether there was anything they could do to rein in the federal agents — even if only to ban the use of masks. The answer was a resounding no. Plus, filing complaints with the Department of Homeland Security was likely to go nowhere because the office that once

handled them had been dismantled. There was little chance of holding individual agents accountable for alleged abuses because, among other hurdles, there was no way to reliably learn their identities.

Since then, Amezcua, 58, said she has reluctantly accepted the reality: There are virtually no limits on what federal agents can do to achieve Donald Trump's goal of mass deportations. Santa Ana has proven to be a template for much larger raids and even more violent arrests in Chicago and elsewhere. "It's almost like he tries it out in this county and says, 'It worked there, so now let me send them there,'" Amezcua said.

Current and former national security officials share the mayor's concerns. They describe the legions of masked immigration officers operating in near-total anonymity on the orders of the president as the crossing of a line that had long set the United States apart from the world's most repressive regimes. ICE, in their view, has become an unfettered and unaccountable national police force. The transformation, the officials say, unfolded rapidly and in plain sight. Trump's DHS appointees swiftly dismantled civil rights guardrails, encouraged agents to wear masks, threatened groups and state governments that stood in their way, and then made so many arrests that the influx overwhelmed lawyers trying to defend immigrants taken out of state or out of the country.

And although they are reluctant to predict the future, the current and former officials worry that this force assembled

from federal agents across the country could eventually be turned against any groups the administration labels a threat.

One former senior DHS official who was involved in oversight said that what is happening on American streets today "gives me goosebumps."

Speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, the official rattled off scenes that once would've triggered investigations: "Accosting people outside of their immigration court hearings where they're showing up and trying to do the right thing and then hauling them off to an immigration jail in the middle of the country where they can't access loved ones or speak to counsel. Bands of masked men apprehending people in broad daylight in the streets and hauling them off. Disappearing people to a third country, to a prison where there's a documented record of serious torture and human rights abuse."

The former official paused. "We're at an inflection point in history right now and it's frightening."

Although ICE is conducting itself out in the open, even inviting conservative social media influencers to accompany its agents on high-profile raids, the agency operates in darkness. The identities of DHS officers, their salaries and their operations have long been withheld for security reasons and generally exempted from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. However, there were offices within DHS created to hold agents and their supervisors accountable for their actions on the job. The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, created by Congress and led largely by lawyers, investigated allegations of rape and unlawful searches from both the public and within DHS ranks, for instance. Egregious conduct was referred to the Justice Department.

The CRCL office had limited powers; former staffers say their job was to protect DHS by ensuring personnel followed the law and addressed civil rights concerns. Still, it was effective in stalling rushed deportations or ensuring detainees had access to phones and lawyers. And even when its investigations didn't fix problems, CRCL provided an accounting of allegations and a measure of transparency for Congress and the public.

The office processed thousands of complaints — 3,000 in fiscal year 2023 alone — ranging from allegations of lack of access to medical treatment to reports of sexual assault at detention centers. Former staffers said around 600 complaints were open when work was suspended.

The administration has gutted most of the office. What's left of it was led, at least for a while, by a 29-year-old White House appointee who helped craft Project 2025, the right-wing blueprint that broadly calls for the curtailment of civil rights enforcement.

Meanwhile, ICE is enjoying a windfall in resources. On top of its annual operating budget of \$10 billion a year, the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill included an added \$7.5 billion a year for the next four years for recruiting and retention alone. As part of its hiring blitz, the agency has dropped age, training and education standards and has offered recruits signing bonuses as high as \$50,000.

"Supercharging this law enforcement agency and at the same time you have oversight being eliminated?" said the former DHS official. "This is very scary."

Michelle Brané, a longtime human rights attorney who directed DHS' ombudsman office during the Biden administration, said Trump's adherence to "the authoritarian playbook is not even subtle."

"ICE, their secret police, is their tool," Brané said. "Once they have that power, which they have now, there's nothing stopping them from using it against citizens."

Tricia McLaughlin, the DHS assistant secretary for public affairs, refuted descriptions of ICE as a secret police force. She called such comparisons the kind of "smears and demonization" that led to the attack on an ICE facility in Texas, in which a gunman targeted an ICE transport van and shot three detained migrants, two of them fatally, before killing himself.

In a written response to *ProPublica*, McLaughlin dismissed the current and former national security officials and scholars interviewed by *ProPublica* as "far-left champagne socialists" who haven't seen ICE enforcement up close.

"If they had," she wrote, "they would know when our heroic law enforcement officers conduct operations, they clearly identify themselves as law enforcement while wearing masks to protect themselves from being targeted by highly sophisticated gangs" and other criminals.

McLaughlin said the recruiting blitz is not compromising standards. She wrote that the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center is ready for 11,000 new hires by the beginning of next year and that training has been streamlined and boosted by technology. "Our workforce never stops learning," McLaughlin wrote.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson also praised ICE conduct and accused Democrats of making "dangerous, untrue smears."

"ICE officers act heroically to enforce the law, arrest criminal illegal aliens and protect American communities with the utmost professionalism," Jackson said. "Anyone pointing the finger at law enforcement officers instead of the criminals are simply doing the bidding of criminal illegal aliens and fueling false narratives that lead to violence."

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, the Trump pick who fired nearly the entire civil rights oversight staff, said the move was in response to CRCL func-



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tioning “as internal adversaries that slow down operations,” according to a DHS spokesperson.

Trump also eliminated the department’s Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, which was charged with flagging inhumane conditions at ICE detention facilities where many of the apprehended immigrants are held. The office was resurrected after a lawsuit and court order, though it’s sparsely staffed.

The hobbling of the office comes as the White House embarks on an aggressive expansion of detention sites with an eye toward repurposing old jails or building new ones with names that telegraph harsh conditions: “Alligator Alcatraz” in the Florida Everglades, built by the state and operated in partnership with DHS, or the “Cornhusker Clink” in Nebraska.

“It is a shocking situation to be in that I don’t think anybody anticipated a year ago,” said Erica Frantz, a political scientist at Michigan State University who studies authoritarianism. “We might’ve thought that we were going to see a slide, but I don’t think anybody anticipated how quickly it would transpire, and now people at all levels are scrambling to figure out how to push back.”

‘Authoritarian playbook’

Frantz and other scholars who study anti-democratic political systems in other countries said there are numerous examples in which ICE’s activities appear cut from an authoritarian playbook. Among them was the detention of Tufts University doctoral student Rûmeysa Öztürk, who was apprehended after co-writing an op-ed for the campus paper that criticized the school’s response to the war in Gaza. ICE held her incommunicado for 24 hours and then shuffled her through three states before jailing her in Louisiana.

“The thing that got me into the topic of ‘maybe ICE is a secret police force’?” said Lee Morgenbesser, an Australian political science professor who studies authoritarianism. “It was that daylight snatching of the Tufts student.”

Morgenbesser was also struck by the high-profile instances of ICE detaining elected officials who attempted to stand in their way. Among them, New York City Comptroller Brad Lander was detained for demanding a judicial warrant from ICE, and U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla was forcibly removed from a DHS press conference.

And David Sklansky, a Stanford Law School professor who researches policing and democracy, said it appears that ICE’s agents are allowed to operate with complete anonymity. “It’s not just that people can’t see faces of the officers,” Sklansky said. “The officers aren’t wearing shoulder insignia or name tags.”

U.S. District Judge William G. Young, a Ronald Reagan appointee, recently pointed out that use of masked law enforcement officers had long been considered anathema to American ideals. In a blistering ruling against the administration’s arrests of pro-Palestinian protesters, he wrote, “To us, masks are associated

with cowardly desperados and the despised Ku Klux Klan. In all our history we have never tolerated an armed masked secret police.” The Trump administration has said it will appeal that ruling.

Where the fallout is felt

The fallout is being felt in places like Hays County, Texas, not far from Austin, where ICE apprehended 47 people, including nine children, during a birthday celebration in the early morning of April 1, 2025.

The agency’s only disclosure about the raid in Dripping Springs describes the operation as part of a yearlong investigation targeting “members and associates believed to be part of the Venezuelan transnational gang, Tren de Aragua.”

Six months later, the county’s top elected official told *ProPublica* the federal government has ignored his attempts to get answers.

“We’re not told why they took them, and we’re not told where they took them,” said County Judge Ruben Becerra, a Democrat. “By definition, that’s a kidnapping.”

In the raid, a Texas trooper secured a search warrant that allowed law enforcement officers to breach the home, an Airbnb rental on a vast stretch of land in the Hill Country. Becerra told *ProPublica* he believes the suspicion of drugs at the party was a pretense to pull people out of the house so ICE officers who lacked a warrant could take them into custody. The Texas Department of Public Safety did not respond to a request for comment.

The Trump administration has yet to produce evidence supporting claims of gang involvement, said Karen Muñoz, a civil rights attorney helping families track down their relatives who were jailed or deported. While some court documents are sealed, nothing in the public record verifies the gang affiliation DHS cited as the cause for the birthday party raid.

“There’s no evidence released at all that any person kidnapped at that party was a member of any organized criminal group,” Muñoz said.

McLaughlin, the DHS spokesperson, did not respond to questions about Hays County and other raids where families and attorneys allege a lack of transparency and due process.

In plain sight

Months after ICE’s widely publicized raids, fear continues to envelop Santa Ana, a majority-Hispanic city with a large immigrant population. Amezcua, the mayor, said the raids have complicated local policing and rendered parents afraid to pick up their children from school. The city manager, a California-born citizen and Latino, carries with him three government IDs, including a passport.

Raids of car washes and apartment buildings continue, but the community has started to “push back,” Amezcua said. “Like many other communities, the

neighbors come out. People stop in the middle of traffic.”

With so few institutional checks on ICE’s powers, citizens are increasingly relying on themselves. On at least one occasion in nearby Downey, a citizen’s intervention had some effect.

On June 12 2024, Melyssa Rivas had just started her workday when a colleague burst into her office with urgent news: “ICE is here.”

The commotion was around the corner in Rivas’ hometown, a Los Angeles suburb locals call “Mexican Beverly Hills” for its stately houses and affluent Hispanic families. Rivas, 31, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, belongs to Facebook groups where residents share updates about cultural festivals, church programs and, these days, the presence of Trump’s deportation foot soldiers.

Rivas had seen posts about ICE officers sweeping through LA and figured Downey’s turn had come. She and her co-worker rushed toward the sound of screaming at a nearby intersection. Rivas hit “record” on her phone as a semicircle of trucks and vans came into view. She filmed at least half a dozen masked men in camouflage vests encircling a Hispanic man on his knees.

Her unease deepened as she registered details that “didn’t seem right,” Rivas recalled in an interview. She said the parked vans had out-of-state plates or no tags. The armed men wore only generic “police” patches, and most were in street clothes. No visible insignia identified them as state or federal — or even legal authorities at all.

“When is it that we just decided to do things a different way? There’s due process, there’s a legal way, and it just doesn’t seem to matter anymore,” Rivas said. “Where are human rights?”

Video footage shows Rivas and others berating the officers for complicity in what they called a “kidnapping.” Local news channels later reported that the vehicles had chased the man after a raid at a nearby car wash.

“I know half of you guys know this is fucked up,” Rivas was recorded telling the officers.

Moments later, the scene took a turn. As suddenly as they’d arrived, the officers returned to their vehicles and left, with no apology and no explanation to the distraught man they left on the sidewalk.

Through a mask, one of them said, “Have a good day.”

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Many participants I spoke with said they had already participated in the ride from South Dakota to Mankato, which is separate from the Dakota Omani. The Dakota Omani started not only as a way to remember the Dakota men who were hanged on Dec. 26, 1862, but also to commemorate the Dakota women who witnessed the hanging.

Strong said there was a commitment to hold Dakota Omani for four years as they sought those women’s names. This year would be the first in which their names would be read aloud alongside the Dakota men’s names at Land of Memories Park.

Strong shared with the group that there were 17 women total.

An elder stood to acknowledge everyone. He prayed for their meal and for the upcoming trip while encouraging participants to reflect on their participation.

Everyone listened attentively, including young children who were there with their parents. I noticed people of all ages came to participate in the journey, some appearing to be as young as two or three.

“Every step is a prayer,” was consistently repeated throughout the evening.

Ceremony and prayer

Dakota Omani travelers gathered for a morning ceremony near the Birch Coulee Battlefield on Tuesday. The historic site, surrounded by farmland and forest, is located a few miles from Morton’s main street.



Birch Coulee Battlefield is a historic site located in southwest Minnesota near Morton. The Battle of Birch Coulee took place in September of 1862 during the US-Dakota War. Dakota Photo by Chandra Colvin / MPR News)

According to the Minnesota Historical Society, the Battle of Birch Coulee is one of the “hardest-fought battles” during the U.S.-Dakota War. It’s where Dakota Omani has always marked its starting point.

A chilly morning met us with a fierce wind that felt like a sting on my cheeks. I arrived to watch as three youth saddled their horses, bundled up, and prepared for their first day of travel. The group made their way to the Fort Ridgley area on the first day.

Near the Battle of Birch Coulee historic site, a group gathered around a small fire for the ceremony. Many were bundled up from head to toe, wearing hats, mittens and some even wore snowpants. I had a chance to speak with a few whom I met the previous night. The mood of the ceremony

was one of humility and thoughtfulness.

A prayer and song were shared. I was handed tobacco, a sacred medicine for ceremonial and healing purposes. We were told to hold it in our left hand and to place it into the fire before starting the journey, or to hold onto it and offer it to the earth along the way.

Once the morning ceremony began, it was short and to the point. Again, recording and photography were not allowed. Travelers were asked to be mindful and intentional of their participation in Dakota Omani.

The journey began with people following behind Strong, who carried a medicine bundle with Indigenous plant medicines. From what I observed, those walking on foot went first, followed by those on horse-

back. Participants who were joining in their cars followed last with their hazard lights turned on.

Before parting ways with Dakota Omani, I followed in my own car and took the time to reflect on all I witnessed and experienced. I can understand why there was to be no recording or photography, even travelers were told not to share anything on social media. Dakota Omani is meant to be a journey of prayer and ceremony.

On Friday morning, those who participated in Dakota Omani stopped at Reconciliation Park in Mankato for a ceremony before making their way to Land of Memories Park for the reading of the 17 Dakota women’s names:

- Winuna Renville
- Wasu Na Win
- Maza yohomni Win
- Cecile Tami-ye
- Taga Maga
- Pe Ya atke win
- An e kiya win
- Eci ti win
- Wakan hde ze win
- Wakanka
- Iye tonka win
- Ta Maza Wastete
- Wandu Tokca Win
- Wankan mini win
- An apu pte win
- Tawiyaku
- Maza mde ca win

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