

LA's Community Self-Defense fights ICE fascism

written by John Parker
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The Community Self-Defense Coalition held a march on Feb. 17, vowing to fight against ICE repression.

Los Angeles — There is an urgent need to build principled unity to confront the rising threat of fascism, a threat that spreads relentlessly like a virus, intensifying attacks on Black, Brown, and working-class communities at record levels.

While figures like Donald Trump and Elon Musk may be the loudest voices

advancing this agenda, the Democratic Party under Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were complicit — funding and supporting Israeli genocide and deportations at home as tools of political control.

Barack Obama, despite his progressive reputation, oversaw more than 3 million formal deportations during his presidency — the highest number under any administration. That brutal legacy of “formal removals,” in which individuals are forcibly expelled from the U.S. under court order, set the stage. Biden and Harris continued down this path, even as they publicly claimed to support immigrant rights and racial justice.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has likewise failed to live up to her rhetoric. Despite claims of prioritizing safety, she has remained silent on the LAPD’s long-standing cooperation with ICE, which continues to terrorize immigrant and migrant communities. The label “sanctuary city” becomes a cruel oxymoron when families are ripped apart in churches, schools, or their homes, while city leaders look the other way.

This hypocrisy has not gone unnoticed. The growing anger and disillusionment across the country is fueling the rise of grassroots resistance — nowhere more powerfully than in Los Angeles County, where the Community for Self-Defense Coalition (CSDC) is taking bold steps to protect vulnerable communities.

Community Self-Defense in action

Formed in February, the CSDC is already a force to be reckoned with. Over 60 organizations have joined this coalition, with the Steering Committee comprising Unión Del Barrio (which initiated the project), People’s Struggle - San Fernando Valley, the Association of Raza Educators, Santee MEChA, Centro CSO, Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, and the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice.

The coalition's central mission is to inform the public of their rights during ICE raids, conduct community patrols, and disrupt deportation operations through rapid response. Their outreach includes flyers, door-to-door engagement, and workplace visits, empowering residents to demand that agents produce signed warrants before entering homes or places of business.

These actions have made a difference. On Feb. 23, in the city of Alhambra in Los Angeles County, 12 ICE vehicles were forced to leave empty-handed after community defense patrols showed up. In another instance, as Ron Gochez of Unión Del Barrio described it to the LA Times, multiple LAPD vehicles were seen alongside federal agents during a raid in South Central. Using a megaphone, Gochez warned residents not to engage, not to open doors, and not to sign anything.

Such patrols are a form of organized resistance, not just against ICE but against the systemic violence carried out by both Democratic and Republican administrations. The U.S. is home to over 50 million immigrants, most of whom are workers contributing significantly to the economy. And yet, they are repaid with fear, detention, dehumanization and deportation — sometimes in countries they've never lived in.

A recent [“60 Minutes”](#) report on the torture of deported immigrants highlighted just how far this system has rotted. While Trump intensified the cruelty, the roots go much deeper. California politicians like Gavin Newsom and Karen Bass have prioritized police budgets over housing, health care, and community safety. LAPD funding now tops \$1 billion, even as the death toll from police violence continues to climb — disproportionately affecting Black and Brown residents.

Naming the violence: this is genocide

What we are witnessing must be named for what it is: genocide. According to the United Nations Convention on Genocide, the term includes not only mass killings,

but also actions intended to cause serious harm, impose life-threatening conditions, and destroy families and cultures. By these standards, the U.S. government's actions — at home and abroad — meet the definition.

This is not a new argument. On Dec. 17, 1951, legendary figures Paul Robeson and William Patterson submitted a historic petition to the United Nations: "We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People." Nearly a century later, the conditions they described persist and in many ways have worsened.

Police killings of Black and Brown youth continue to break records annually. Immigrant children are separated from their families, deported, or left to languish in detention centers. In Gaza, over 100 children are now killed or injured by U.S.-supplied weapons every day in a genocidal war enabled by U.S. foreign policy. The silence of mainstream politicians and media is deafening — and damning.

The legacy of self-defense

In the face of such violence, the right to self-defense becomes not just moral but essential. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, inspired by Malcolm X and rooted in the struggles of oppressed peoples worldwide, offers a historic model.

On the [Black Panther Party](#):

"The practices of the late Malcolm X were deeply rooted in the theoretical foundations of the Black Panther Party. Malcolm had represented both a militant revolutionary, with the dignity and self-respect to stand up and fight to win equality for all oppressed minorities; while also being an outstanding role model, someone who sought to bring about positive social services; something the Black Panthers would take to new heights. The Panthers followed Malcolm's belief of international working class unity across the spectrum of color and gender ... From the tenets of Maoism they set the role of their Party as the vanguard of the revolution and worked

to establish a united front, while from Marxism they addressed the capitalist economic system, embraced the theory of [dialectical materialism](#), and represented the need for all workers to forcefully take over the means of production.”

Their 10-point program of Panthers remains deeply relevant today — especially these demands:

Point 5: We Want Education for Our People That Exposes the True Nature of This Decadent American Society.

Education must teach true history, not sanitized narratives. Ethnic studies are under attack for a reason — they awaken resistance.

Point 6: We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service.

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military by whatever means necessary.

The Trump Administration and the Democratic Party would like us to fall in line with U.S. wars and proxy wars. Imperialist wars rob us of basic social services and push austerity and the killing of our international community, even those that share our ethnicity. Self-defense means protecting our international multi-national community.

Point 7: We Want An Immediate End to Police Brutality and the Murder of Black People.

We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community

from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

Last Monday, the Supreme Court greenlit the Trump administration's plan to resume mass deportations of Venezuelan migrants, using 1798-era war powers. In dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor warned that the decision allows for people to be "taken off the streets, forced onto planes and confined to foreign prisons with no opportunity for redress."

This is the legal foundation of fascism — and it is here.

We may not yet be ready to meet this threat with armed resistance. But we can begin by building movements strong enough to dismantle the institutions that enable it. We must continue organizing for police to be disarmed and replaced.

Right now the Community Self-Defense Coalition is the primary opponent of fascism here in Los Angeles. On May 1, it will take to the streets again, with even more strength, in defiance of state terror and in defense of the people.

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