The Growing Human Rights Crisis on the Northern Border

Pastor Emilio Benitez, Maria Garcia, Professor Angelina Godoya, Juan Jose Maldonado, William Prince, Bill Talbott

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Bill Talbott

Hi I’m Bill Talbott. I’m professor of philosophy here the University of Washington. My great pleasure to welcome you hear this afternoon to this very important event that represents a unique collaboration between the communities in the northern part of the state of Washington, between the organization one America and between the UW’s Center for human rights. And today actually we are marking the release a report of the growing human rights crisis on the northern border. I think almost everyone in this room is aware of the human rights crisis on the southern border but it came as something of a surprise to me to find out we have one of the northern border to announce we’re going to talk about today.

I’m going to introduce our panelists and then each of the panelists will give a short talk and we’re going to allow time for questions and answers so if you have questions we will have someone actually circulating with a microphone and you’ll be able to ask your questions over microphone. We also have professor at Jaime Mayorfeld from political science here is translating from English to Spanish and we have actually earphones if you need the service and he’s right in the back of the verve now translating what I’m saying. At the end of the question and answer session we’re going to move to room 115 which is right down the wall for a reception and you’re all invited to that reception.

Our first panelist is Ada Williams Prince policy and advocacy director for One America. She holds a B.A. from the school for international training in Brattleboro Vermont and an MA in development studies from Bradford University England. She has worked with refugees since 1994 beginning in Nepal with Bhutanese refugees. Prior to One America she was a senior advocacy officer for the Women’s Refugee Commission leading advocacy efforts with the U.N. and the NGO community pushing for global systemic change to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugees and displaced persons. She has worked with many organizations including the National Rehabilitation Counsel for Torture Survivors, Save the Children UK, Refugees International, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and USID. Has served on the board of the Refugee Women’s Alliance in Seattle and is chair of the board of directors of Wansworth Women’s Aid UK, a domestic violence shelter.

Our second speaker is Juan Jose Maldonado a One America based group leader and volunteer in the border town of Lynden, Washington. He has been volunteering in One America for three years and is also active as health promoter for Semar, a reporter for KSVR local Spanish radio and is vice president of the San Carlos soccer league the where he coaches soccer. He is originally from the state of Jalisco, Mexico and has been a resident of the U.S. for over 21 years.

Our third speaker is not quite in order is a little further down is Pastor Emilio Benitez he is pastor at El Camino De Emaus Burlington, Washington. As part of the northern border project he was trained in human rights documentation at American university’s law school in Washington, DC. Originally
he is from the pueblo Jojela in the state of Morelos, Mexico. He learned about social justice and human rights of an early age from his father who was very involved in social movements, human rights work and the campesino movement in Mexico. His father taught him the values of human dignity and respect and that when one sees an injustice you must take a stand.

Our fourth speaker is Maria Garcia a community member from Mount Vernon Washington. She also lived in Yakima for 10 years where she worked in agriculture and picking apples and asparagus. Now she works as a cook in a local Mexican Deli and strongly identifies herself as part of the farmworker community. That she is the proud mother of two girls raising them to seguir adelante, to be strong young women and make something of themselves. She is originally from a state of the Guerrero in Mexico.

Our fifth speaker is at our own Angelina Snodgrass Godoy is a professor hear the University of Washington and is a null and in Jackson share in human rights and is the director of the universe to Washington center for human rights. Professor Godoy is a sociologist. She received her PH D from UC Berkeley. A research focuses on human rights essential in Latin America. Prior to graduate school she worked at Amnesty International. At UW she teaches courses in human rights in both the law societies and justice program and in the Jackson school of international studies.

And we also have sitting on the David Ayala Zamora who is the organizing director of One America and you’ll be providing translations. Please welcome our panel.

Okay now I’ll turn it over to the panel and we’ll start with Ada Williams-Prince.

**Ada William Prince**

Thank you very much Bill it was very strange to hear my bio read out like that. Excuse my voice I have a germ factory otherwise known as a two year old so if I go up and down I apologize. Thank you so much for being here today. One America’s mission is to advance democracy and justice through building power in immigrant communities and our diverse membership of immigrants live in communities across the states and with them we’ve been able to identify problems that require education, documentation and ultimately policy change.

One America’s humble beginnings started to address the backlash in a post 911 world against immigrant communities of color particularly Muslims, air of Americans, east Africans and south Asians. Not much has changed. In 2010 we partnered with care to do in racial profile hearing in Burlington, Washington where community members told stories of racial profiling in that area. As bill said I think this is something that we’re used to hearing about on the southern border. But I am here to talk about what is happening on the northern border.

One America has been organizing with community and members in Whatcom and Skagit counties before the beginning of this project and they were involved in the project from identifying the need to been gaining the tools to document their own realities and now being able to take this report an advocate for policy changes.

How this all started was in 2008 and 2009 we were invited to participate in a series of meetings convened by Washington U.S. senator Maria Cantwell. With local law enforcement officials along the northern border who themselves were concerned about the increased presence of Federal agents along the border and the undermining of community trust. We started to hear more and more about the concerns that people had about border controls behavior particularly towards immigrants and people of color living and working in towns 100 miles from the Canadian border. And one America began this project over a year ago with generous support from the U.S. human rights fund. We
began conducting on the ground interviews, observation and research in these border communities which resulted in this report at the growing human rights crisis on the northern border.

What we have seen and heard from residents on the northern border is that they are afraid to go to the courthouse and pay a fine. They are two mistrustful of authorities to call 911. They are too fearful to leave their homes to go to church or go to the grocery store. Their experience and powerful stories are rooted in specific and avoidable patterns of practice implemented by the U.S. customs and border patrol, CBP working in close coordination with immigration and customs enforcement and local law enforcement agencies. The report covers 109 interviews that details 135 incidents reported by Latinos, Muslims and Arabs across Skagit, Whatcom and Snohomish counties. One America reaches the community by doing a research where immigrants live and work. Trained leaders knocked on doors in trailer Parks and apartment complexes, visited migrant camps, worksites, grocery stores. They contacted trusted institutions such as local churches, domestic violence service providers, community health clinics, Spanish language radio stations and ask them to refer community members to the One America human rights hotline.

So this report is really the product of a unique three-way partnership between One America, the University of Washington Center for Human Rights and the residents and leaders of these border communities. It culminates the first stage of a long process of organizing, educating and empowering northern border communities to defend their human rights. It is a partnership that I can only see continuing. I really like to thank the University of Washington Center for Human Rights, Angelina, Catherine, Carolyn, and Ursula all of whom are here and Alex for this collaboration. And I also want to make sure to thank Michelle Storms who is a One America Board member but also the person who helped us secure this location today. And I want to thank everyone who contributed their story to this report. We hope these sorts do justice to their experience.

So I just want to lay out for you the report. If you haven’t had a chance to read it yet, I’m just going to give you the spoiler alert about the report. Basically, the report focuses on three main concerns and patterns of abuse. The first is Border Patrol’s use of racial profiling. In interviews community members described a large number of incidents where CBP stopped individuals for no discernible reason other than their appearance, accent, or their perceived inability to speak English. The second is this dangerous fusion: this collaboration between Border Patrol and local law enforcement and other agencies. Many of the incidents reported did not arise from Border Patrol’s assigned responsibility but actually from their interaction with other federal and local agencies such as providing interpretation services and responding to 9-1-1 calls. The third is that CBP creates this climate of fear and unsafe communities. Feelings of fear and anxiety were reported in nearly 70% of the incidents that we documented. Fear of immigration enforcement of the police, even of emergency services plus other agencies whose operations are vital to the health and safety to all people in these communities. So just to recap, three main concerns and patterns of abuse that were emerging as part of the documentation that we uncovered: racial profiling, this dangerous fusion, and this climate of fear, which you’ll hear about.

The report also offers policy recommendations. We want things to change while still protecting our borders, improving the ability for border patrol to carry out its mission and protecting the safety and rights of all who live in these communities. In response to this redeveloped these recommendations and I’m only going to be able to tell you own a few because you read the report of all and see all of them. One is that we need to reform the Department of Justice’s guidance, their 2003 guidance around the use of race by local and Federal enforcement authorities. Reforms would include a pro edition of racial profiling based on national origin, language, among other reforms. The other is that Congress should not increase funding at the northern border until a full investigation has been completed examining the use of those resources along the northern border. And then here in Washington State, state and local police should stop enforcing Federal immigration laws including
by engaging in interior enforcement operations with border patrol agents and by requesting translation assistance from border patrol. State and local law enforcement the lay needed to end practices and programs that actually undermining the lion between Federal immigration enforcement and local law enforcement. Although focused on Washington State the problems and abuse is cataloged in the interviews and the research at those what is happening along the U.S. Canadian border. One America helped to create the Northern Border Coalition last year to help organize immigrant and refugee communities to push for change.

This week our Executive Director Permla Jayapal and our senior policy manager Toby Gavin are sharing this report with members of Congress as part of our larger advocacy strategy around this and changing these policies. And today the first ever racial profiling hearing happened today in the senate with the hopes of passing the End Racial Profiling Act.

If you want to do something about what’s happening in the northern border area we have and action alert today on our web site with a letter to Janet Napolitano and to the Atty. General of the United States. We also have an iPad version of the report which is really exciting. Any questions you have will be available at the reception. And again I just got a call of you for being here and all of you for being here. Thank you.

Bill Talbott

Next we’ll hear from Juan Jose Maldonado.

Juan Jose Maldonado

Good afternoon. My name is Juan Jose Maldonado and I am or regionally from Mexico. I came in 1991 to the north part of the state. A lot of the things that are happening right now for me are not new. Since that time I came to the north part of this state the police already were stopping us and detaining us. There was no ICE at the time to identify who were the border patrol at the time. I noticed that when I was working in the field the field was close to the highway and border patrol used to go by the route was in the middle of the field so the field was on both sides. So people came to work not looking at any other side just to look in front of them. This is a time when harvesting was happening. But when that time passed by in September or October, so when harvesting was over the border patrol and INS to start it kind of persecuting acts. I do not understand why that change of attitude. I was detained in Blaine, Lynden, Sumas and Bellingham. I visited for immigration offices each of them to my fingerprints and photograph. I asked one of the officers why don’t you look for in the computer if I was already arrested three times. He told me that’s my work. After that I found out that each of those offices received an amount of money for every person that they ID or log in. I made some profit for each of those offices with my fingerprints and my photo. Some rays profiling crime is happening over there and they are immune.

I was a test when I came to a store to buy some food and the immigration officer was at the door and he looked at me. I don’t know if I’d look Caucasian but he ignored me. And when I came into the store I noticed that he detained other folks who were behind me. When I looked at them I noticed that they looked indigenous. I say indigenous because there are several people from Guatemala, El Salvador and while Honda and Mexico. And the Ins officers detained them because they up here different. And I noticed that racial profiling was applied to in those instances. Then I looked to get involved in resolving those issues. I found an invitation to join One America. At the beginning I came to those meetings because I was curious but when I noticed that it was a serious thing and they had clear intentions I felt I wanted to be part of One America. It is not because I am not paying him to talk good about One America, it is something that I don’t. I got myself involved into several things: participating in events, Marches, and rallies, public demonstrations. I have
noticed in all of these events there is the same animal to help the community. People from the north of the state the live in panic and despair. I went house by house trying to talk to people. They just looked through the window. They said I don’t want to talk because my boss will fire me. For me it is something difficult to understand we’re in this year 2012 call the country that is the leader in human rights to continue in this situation.

I don’t have anything personal against Caucasians or blacks. I am interested in living together. If some tried to label us as criminals, we are going to continue fight against that and continue on our way. Thank you.

Bill Talbott

Our next speaker is Pastor Emilio Benitez.

Pastor Emilio Benitez

Good afternoon my name is Emilio Benitez. I work for the Lutheran church and the Lutheran church in America is called ilk a. I think that some of you might recognize it. When we talk about human rights it is really complicated. Not only the color of the people or if a little less illegal. I can tell you several stories that I have lived with the undocumented community. One of them a humble family who lived in trailers. Without any criminal record, hard workers. The only crime that they have committed is to look to survive. Because they did not have that opportunity in their own country. For the economical policies that have been applied that some of them are the free trade agreements. This family, INS officers just came to their house. They asked for Antonio Banderas it is a fictitious name. But there are many Antonio Banderas. And they incriminated this person with a lot of crime. This as part of this story is that two girls were friends with my daughter’s one was nine and the other was eight. They saw the arrest and the abuse that their fathers suffered. These two girls were born here they are U.S. citizens. Unfortunately there is a narcotic traffic war going on in Mexico. Arms that were bought where these two U.S. citizen girls have to go back because their parents were deported.

That is why I think that the human rights is a complex thing because it is not just about the color or are the racial profiling. In terms of human rights we can see the budget cuts that are suffering our schools to. Thousands of people losing their houses. Where are their human rights? The budgets are being cut too but several people need a Dr. That I think is not only for undocumented folks but for other people too. I think that we need two when we go back to warehouses and our neighborhoods we need to be with a more open mind to help out two improve the life of people. And to finish this song of the Beatles says we all live in a yellow submarine all of us need to live respecting each other.

Bill Talbott

The next speaker is Maria Garcia.

Maria Garcia

Good afternoon my name is Maria. In reality I am not going to talk about human rights I have never been in universities. This is the first time that I am in one. Maybe my feelings are going to take over because it is really important for me to some people are going to hear us to day. Today I’m going to talk to you as a mother and as a farm worker at the same time I am going to talk to you as a cook. I want to tell you that I have never had a fear before but these times are the first time that I started being scared. At this time when I should be having more confidence and feel support and not being
scared because I have two daughters who can give me that strength. It is now when I am more afraid about what may happen with them. My fear is that I need to go to work and I don’t know if I’m going to come back to see them again. I think that I need to go to look for food and to look to work to get some money to support them and that is not going to happen it’s not because I don’t have energy or I don’t have strength. I have worked hard for 10 years in the apple industry and picking asparagus picking up cherries. And I work in the Agra industry from sun to sun. Sometimes I think that these people have made these laws they are should have gone to the fields and seen how life is there instead of just been sitting and working what else they can do against undocumented people. It is worse that with the products that we do in the field there doing this bad loss. Then I ask myself where is my human rights to fight for my daughters? Where is my human rights as a woman to get by? And so where is the possibility that I can have to take my two daughters ahead because they’re so intelligent and to be productive for our society? Because we produce kids who are coming into the world to produce and to be good for society. As a mother I feel smothered humiliated. So I would like that somebody who would answer my question what is going to happen with all those kids. Because there are a lot of kids without parents. Because those kids who have been abandoned because their kids have been deported that’s my adding to what she said those folks are not interested that those kids do not have shoes or clothes. I’m going to finish saying that we call this valley the green valley the beautiful valley but with these laws we are permitting that this valley is becoming the terror valley, the valley where there is no marker in life but gray life.

Thank you.

Bill Talbott

Final speaker is Professor Angelina Godoya.

Angelina Godoya: thank you Bill and thank you Maria and all of my fellow panelists for your testimony today. And thanks to all of you also for being here today to share with us these concerns. As I’m sure you can relate there are many reasons to be concerned about the stories that were hearing in this discussion and about the accounts that are so carefully documented in the report which I encourage you all to read. You can be concerned about the way that taxpayer dollars are being sent on overzealous immigration enforcement. You can be concerned perhaps about the evident need for comprehensive immigration reform in this country or you could be moved about humanitarian concern for the suffering of families that are being torn apart by these policies. But in the minutes that I have a few I want to emphasize the specific human rights, concerns that the practices of the border patrol that this should report has so carefully documented over the course of the year focus on. These are specific areas of concern where border patrol patterns of practice run afoul of international human rights conventions and practices as well as fundamental rights enshrined in U.S. law. And there’s fundamentally three areas of concern. The first of these is freedom from discrimination. Now as if you have heard today and as the report documents the Latino community in the cities and towns near the northern border in Washington State is subjected to a far greater scrutiny from immigration enforcement than people of other ethnicities for no other reason than the color of their skin or the language that they speak. And this happens through a number of practices. Ada mentioned them in her opening remarks. It happens when the border patrol goes up to people in public places approaching them simply because of the color of their skin or because they speak with an accent and ask them for papers. So the specific use of racial profiling to target people for immigration enforcement, that’s one way. Other ways it happens is when the border patrol collaborates with specific local or Federal agencies. Collaboration to provide things such as interpretation services. So the police pull you over because you have a broken taillight. There’s many stories like this in the report. They play over, they decide that you need an interpreter and they call and the border patrol to interpret. But then that interpretation turns into another opportunity for emigration enforcement. Once the border patrol is on the scene they ask for your
papers. That wouldn’t have happened to you if you did not appear to be Latino or if the police are border control did not decide that you needed that interpretation service. Or another example you call a merge and CE Services. You call 911. And who answers that call? Well it’s the border patrol. Sometimes they arrive alongside first responders, sometimes even before first responders arrive. And again while their function there in those interactions is ostensibly to interpret for those first responders or for law enforcement or to provide backup where those agencies request it, once on the scene they request papers and see it as another opportunity for immigration enforcement. Again the sum total for these practices is greater scrutiny for immigration enforcement applied to people are or appear to be Latino or Spanish speakers in these communities. The problem here is not the enforcement of immigration law which of course is the border patrol’s job. The problem is its selective application to a specific targeted group for no other reason than their imputed ethnic identity. That runs afoul of fundamental prohibitionist on discrimination and guarantees of the quality before the law which exists in both international human rights norms and conventions as well as in the U.S. constitution. So that’s one.

Number two. Access to justice or due process rights. A number of the accounts that are documented in the report speak of the border patrol regularly maintaining a practice either inside the courthouse or write immediately and the environment of the courthouse in communities along the northern border. And particularly doing so reportedly on days when Spanish language interpretation is provided. This creates a disincentive for people to access the courts which is their fundamental right. It is an additional barrier for access to justice for people especially people from mixed immigration status families and that fundamentally violates their right to equality before the law.

And then third other association all rights of which there are many and some are detailed in the report are also imperiled by this general climate of fear that you’ve heard so many speakers this afternoon comment upon. This overzealous enforcement of immigration law in these communities has led to a widespread climate of fear in which people are fear to defend their most basic rights even to leave their own homes. And I want to speak very clearly about this question of fear because I think it’s one on which sometimes there’s misperceptions. At a border patrol community round table that I and other researchers and folks involved in this project’s attended we heard some comments by Chief Bates who is the Chief of the Blaine sector, this area of the border patrol. And he said something to the effect of, and this isn’t a direct quote, something to the effect of look it’s my job to enforce this country’s immigration law that’s what I do. If the way that were doing that means that some people who are undocumented experience fear of getting caught well then that’s too bad but I’m not going to stop doing my job. And again that’s not a direct quote but it was something along those generalize that he said. And indeed I think that sentiment is widespread. I’ve heard it from my students. I’ve heard it from people in the general community and I want to address it had on because I think it’s wrong for at least two reasons. His often first of all the assumption that when we’re talking about fear of fear is just of people getting caught, just of undocumented people getting caught is wrong because it’s not only the undocumented who are afraid. Many families are comprised of people with mixed immigration status and people are afraid to call law enforcement, they’re afraid to call 911, they’re afraid to access the courts not only because of their own immigration status but because of that of a loved one. This means that citizens and permanent lawful residents in their country are also inescapably affected by the same practices. They are also afraid to call for help or access basic social services. So that’s one reason why this assumption is wrong. But the more important reason it’s wrong is number two and that’s because even if it didn’t affect citizens are lawful permanent residence, human rights apply to all humans regardless of their immigration status. And this is true not only under international human rights law and practice but indeed under the U.S. constitution itself. The 14th amendment to the U.S. constitution guarantees equal protection of the laws to all people regardless of their immigration status. These are the core
and most fundamental human rights that are protected under our system and they are the rights that are being violated on a regular basis here in Washington State by the practices that this report documents. So the issue when we’re talking about fear is not just the fear that some undocumented immigrants may have of getting caught without papers, we’re talking about entire communities who are afraid to access basic social services. We’re talking about entire communities who report their afraid to go to church, exercise their fundamental right to worship. Entire communities who say they’re not willing to go to court even where that is necessary to defend themselves and their rights against other forms of mistreatment. Entire communities who told us to the course of this research that they’re afraid to call the police even when there are the victim of a crime. That’s the climate of fear that we’re talking about knees communities that affect citizens and noncitizens a light it affects all of us as residents of Washington State. And it’s why we at the Center for Human Rights have been so honored to collaborate with One America on this very important research. We are also so honored to collaborate with the courageous residents of these communities along the northern border who are giving voice to these fundamental concerns bringing this situation out of the shadows and today telling us we can do to see concrete solutions. Thank you. 45:02???

Bill Talbott

Now we’ll have some time for questions and I believe that will have someone circulating with a microphone out there. I also believe although I’m not sure that we have a couple of immigration attorneys here who could answer actually legal questions: Shankar Norian of the ACLU of Washington and Jorje Baron of the northwest immigrant rights project either one here? Thank you very much. So now we have an expert here if we need them. If people will raise their hands then you can take the mic to them.

Audience one

Thank you all for those wonderful presentations. My question is are there civilians in the northern border getting involved and maybe given a free pass by ICE and also participating in some of this kind of behavior of intimidation toward people of apparently Hispanic background?

Juan Jose Maldonado

So I have the experience that I know that immigration were contacting folks and asking them to help them to find undocumented people and only that but to give their family members to them. There was a video to that showed that some people from Argentina were complaining that immigration use them for the same matter and immigration offered them to have legal permanent residence status as they changed too. And on the other hand there was somebody in Ferndale who had to leave the town because some neighbors found out that he was doing this type of connection with immigration and some people tried to kill him. And I am amazed my own people who do this type of work.

Pastor Emilio Benitez

I have an experienced two. Immigration came to my house asking me to work with them to bring people who don’t have documents. It happened five years ago. It was a time when I was still in the seminary and our member was the holy week and it was on Monday Thursday. I remember that I told them they were doing the same thing as Judas did with Jesus Christ, betrayed him. That is and it happened to me. 50: 08

Audience two
My question is what can we do to improve the situation at the northern border?

Angelina Godoya

I think there are a number of recommendations policy recommendations that can happen on different levels. One is to pass the end of racial profiling act. The other is to reform the behavior of the border patrol in the sense that looking at their practices and policies. There is a prosecutorial discretion memo for immigration and customs enforcement that the kind of thing that you can do for CPB as well in terms of reforming their policies. The other is really looking at the collaboration between border patrol and what’s happening up their with local law enforcement end responding to 911 calls. I think that first and foremost a policy needs to be changed. But there are a number of policy recommendations in the report that detail a number of things that we think can happen. Also you can sign a letter to Janet Napolitano and Attorney General of United States through an action alert on our web site.

Bill Talbott

Anybody else want to address that place?

Juan Jose Maldonado

Another thing I think needs to happen or that you can do the rest of the more attention to the border. The border has three important points Blaine, Linden and Sumas. Some few years ago there was a lot of movement in these three cities. Now when you go to visit Sumas it is a ghost town. Those towns produce a lot of agricultural and cattle. When immigration to call those workers away the farmland and the dairy industry is disappearing. Went in and blame our different story because they have different industries are it was so beautiful to go to Sumas and see all the farmland that was being cultivated but now it’s not the same.

Audience three

Can you give us more detail on that 911 problem is is still in effect and is it still the border patrol that’s doing the 911 and is it a phone company problem? What phone company is up there and what’s been done about changing it?

Maria Garcia

The way that the services work is that the local law enforcement doesn’t have enough money for interpretation. So they call border patrol to interpret in cases such as if there is a traffic accident they will call border patrol and have them com. So it’s a collaboration where they would consider it cost savings. But the other problem with that isn’t there is a central command kind of center where border patrol can hear all of the calls that come out so they essentially sometimes serve as a dispatcher for any call that comes in. The other thing is it’s interesting that it said they say it’s a cost savings because the amount of money that we spend on increasing border patrol’s presence in the northern border area through appropriations we’ve increased in from 200 and something in 1992 of border patrol agents in the area to 2000 and something. I know that effectively that is done nothing to change the situation it is just made people feel less safe. So when the border patrol and local law enforcement are working together in that way to local law enforcement it seems like wild this is a no brainer they speak Spanish and I need Spanish translation. I don’t have the money to pay for independence Spanish translation so why don’t I just use border patrol? And to answer that and we talked about this it’s really a question of why don’t you have the money. It’s not about money at this point. It’s about how you make sure a community feels safe and can use the services that we all
pay for that all residents should be able to use. But they have said that they have done this and Whatcom county since 1924. It’s not something that they have specifically written down. They have said that it has been going on since this time there’s no reason to change it.

**Audience three**

Have you talked to the executive of Whatcom County?

**Maria Garcia**

We have talked to many people in Whatcom County and even DHS has said they have had to change their website because they won’t touch this issue at this point. They want talk about it that border patrol does interpretation service. They don’t want people to really know that that’s happening. And it’s also true that in other areas in New York for example we’ve noticed a few cases of that is happening on the other part of the northern border.

**Juan Jose Benitez**

The chief of police of Bellingham in a meeting that we had three years ago said it was very difficult to train the police to learn Spanish. Because I have experience people to be detained several times I have found out that all of those police departments have Spanish speakers but they don’t want to speak Spanish. In Blaine the boss of the border was Puerto Rican. The person you detain to be in Bellingham was Mendez. The land and seem like it was Sanchez. They have a name year but they don’t understand Spanish.

**Bill Talbott**

We can continue the conversation at the reception.

**Audience four**

Maybe I should retract my question in honor of the reception are something. I’m just curious how does this program called safe communities overlap with what your discovering at the border? I know they’re different but I’m curious how do they overlap?

**Maria Garcia**

Secure Communities is one of the ICE access programs. So it’s another program that deals with collaboration between local law enforcement and Federal agencies. The secure communities program which is now mandatory and Washington State is a system by where they share fingerprints across different databases the Federal database, the immigration database, the FBI database for example. So it’s all related to this idea of what you do in terms of National Security how data is being shared and how that’s being used to broker more immigration enforcement and harsher immigration enforcement. At Secured Communities we did another report on this in Eastern Washington on what the statistics are. The Secure Communities program was designed to catch terrorists, dangerous criminals at a certain level. We have statistics from each county that show that it’s not doing that. So its stated purpose is actually not and it leads to more and more arrests and deportations that are unnecessary. And it also pushes immigration into, it criminalizes immigration, it’s a civil offense not a criminal offense so the mummies are sharing these fingerprints and in the instance that it takes. It used to take 48 HRS for some of these things to be processed where people would then be released from jails who could then go on to figure out their situation. So it in traps people very quickly who probably shouldn’t be in there. But I can’t anymore about this at the reception.
Bill Talbott

Is there anybody else on the panel who wants to say anything?

Juan Jose Benitez

I just want to tell you that this stuff was already prepared because before if the Secured Communities they already called us criminals. I am a criminal because I provide the right to undocumented coworkers. I am a criminal because I stand up on a corner asking for work. I am a criminal because I’ve received an undocumented immigrant into my house. Secured Communities attack to the way that immigration is labeling us as criminals.

Bill Talbott

Okay thank you. Let me now invite you all to the reception in room 115. At the reception we can continue the conversation. You can also pick up a copy of the report. There will be a nice slide show. There also will be a rewarding of fellowships from the Center for Human Rights. Now in closing I want to give thank yous. There are actually far too many for me to try and think now. We will think more of them at the reception but I want to thank first but I want to thank you all for coming out because problems like this get addressed when there’s more awareness in the community. And this is the beginning and you’re the beginning of the process. The second thing is I want to thank our panelists for their appearance today. The third thing I want to do is I want to thank our partner organizations that have all contributed to making this happening. And then the last person I want to thank right now is the person who has worked tirelessly to make this event happen. She is our assistant director at the Center for Human Rights, Scarlett Aldebot-Green. Let’s thank them all.