

Lessons from the assault on L.A.'s MacArthur Park

On Monday, July 7, MacArthur Park in the middle of Los Angeles was invaded by a military force of dozens. The invading soldiers wore full battle dress complete with weapons and gas masks. They also wore masks covering their faces to hide their identities. They rode in armored vehicles equipped with machine guns. The force included cavalry – men on horses carrying batons to beat down any opposition. They deployed at one end of the park, forming a battle line that then swept through, pushing people out of the park. Anyone who looked twice at the soldiers had weapons pointed at them and threatening gestures made.

Who were these masked men? They refused to explain themselves until the mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass, arrived at the park and demanded an answer. The reply, of course, was ICE – Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the federal police force that has been terrorizing Los Angeles for the past month. The ICE agents were backed up by 80 National Guard troops under orders from the commander in chief, Donald Trump. Bass convinced leaders of the assault group to leave, but as they did so they threatened to return and to strike anywhere they pleased without consulting city authorities.

Asked about the purpose of the operation, why this peaceful city park had been invaded, a spokesperson for DHS (Dept. of Homeland Security) refused to discuss it beyond saying, “That operation is ongoing. So that should be a message in itself.” In other words, shut up and accept this as normal. This message was amplified by Gregory Bovino, chief of Customs and Border Protection in Southern California, who insisted that ICE would carry on without approval by Mayor Bass, Governor Newsom, or anyone else. He said, “Better get used to us now, cause this is going to be normal very soon. We will go anywhere, anytime we want in Los Angeles.” (1)

So this is the new normal. Instead of parks being playgrounds for kids, they become battle grounds, areas to be swept clean by Donald Trump’s forces of

law and order. But for what purpose? Supposedly for immigration enforcement. But the sweep at MacArthur Park did not yield any immigrants, criminal or otherwise. But that didn’t stop Mr. Bovino from promising, “we will go anywhere, anytime.” This points to some important lessons of the assault on MacArthur Park:

ICE raids are meant to intimidate everyone, not just to arrest immigrants

Some Democratic congressmen are proposing a “no masks” law for ICE, that ICE agents should have to identify themselves with name tags, badge numbers and open faces. Not a bad idea. But it probably doesn’t stand much of a chance being passed by Congress. And it raises the question, why is ICE following this method? Clearly, the answer is: to intimidate – not just any potential arrestee, but anyone in the area and anyone watching on TV. (2) ICE has been reformed by Trump and his henchmen to be a gang of anonymous thugs who snatch people off the street and disappear them without legal control and without explanation. They don’t just arrest people for some alleged crimes; their raids are meant to instill fear in the entire community.

ICE raids are attacks on everyone, not just on immigrants

The lack of due process for immigrants doesn’t just affect them; it affects everyone. Converting the local park into a battleground doesn’t just affect immigrants; it affects all the kids and moms who normally play and take walks there. And taking away immigrants’ rights to a fair hearing before being deported means that anyone can have their rights to a fair trial taken away. If the Trumpists can get away with doing away with habeas corpus for immigrants, they can just as well take away that right from any citizen.

ICE is a para-military force backed by the military

The brazen display of military force in MacArthur Park brings home the fact that ICE raids are not just

occasional police raids on a few criminals. ICE is a paramilitary force, reformed by Trump to carry out the invasion of America's cities, suburbs and farm country. It's backed up by National Guard troops nationalized by Trump. And Trump also is utilizing Marine Corps troops in Los Angeles and guarding Trump's new detention facility in Florida, "Alligator Alcatraz." With the passage of Trump's One Big Ugly budget bill, ICE will grow by leaps and bounds, almost doubling the number of its agents and having a budget greater than the FBI. And this is a small part of the hundreds of billions Congress has appropriated for "immigration control." Fat construction contracts are being handed out to private prison operators for opening up new detention centers all across the country. Trump has gotten the money from Congress to build his cherished Wall on the border. With approval from the Supreme Court, Trump is ready to impose military-style raids everywhere.

Anyone in the way will be threatened – or worse!

Some people in MacArthur Park yelled at the ICE agents, telling them to leave. The reply they got was guns pointed at them. Again, this shows that ICE raids are aimed at the entire community, not just at supposedly "criminal" immigrants. Trump administration officials have repeatedly declared that anyone who interferes in any way with ICE agents will be trampled by the law. (3) Besides the scores of protesters arrested in Los Angeles, this includes also the New Jersey congresswoman arrested for supposedly "assaulting" ICE agents who were arresting the mayor of Newark. Also included is Wisconsin local judge Hannah Dugan, who opposed ICE agents using her courtroom as an entrapment zone for ICE arrests. (4)

Another recent horror perpetrated by ICE was the July 10 raid on the Glass House farm in Camarillo, Ventura County, California. In this case, ICE's fascist tactics resulted in the death of one farm worker, Jaime Alanis Garcia, age 57. When ICE agents formed their assault line on the farm, workers panicked and ran, and some of them scrambled onto the roofs of greenhouses to escape. According to the account of one man who was arrested at the scene, ICE agents fired tear gas canisters at them, breaking the glass and

causing them to fall. Mr. Garcia fell from a height of 30 feet and suffered a broken neck and skull. He was taken off life support at a local hospital two days later. Local people who came out to protest the raid were also attacked, and some are still in hospital with serious injuries. As usual, ICE is lying about every detail of the raid and charging the protesters with assaulting federal agents. (5)

Lessons from these experiences show the importance of opposing Trump's program of mass deportations. If Trump and his expanded ICE are able to establish a new normalcy of military occupation, mass raids in the middle of cities, disappearances and suspension of due process, this will be difficult or impossible to reverse.

NOTES

1. Jill Cowan and Mimi Dwyer, "Federal agents march through L.A. park, spurring local outrage". New York Times, July 7, 2025.

Federal Agents March Through L.A. Park, Spurring Local Outrage - The New York Times

2. The assault force on MacArthur Park had their own film crew along, presumably to publicize what a great victory they achieved in the field.

3. And some have been trampled by horses!

4. Victoria Bisset, "Case against judge accused of hiding immigrant can proceed, magistrate says". Washington Post, July 8, 2025.

Wisconsin Judge Hannah Dugan's case should proceed, federal judge says - The Washington Post

5. Dakota Smith, Christopher Goffard and Jeanette Marantos, "Details emerge about pot-farm immigration raid as worker dies". Los Angeles Times, published July 12, 2025, updated July 13, 2025, 4:20 PM PT.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-12/ice-agents-raid-farm-mans-death> <>

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