



Statement by Brooklyn Defender Services

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My name is Shawn Blumberg and I am an immigration attorney at Brooklyn Defender Services. I advise non-citizen clients who face criminal charges about the immigration implications of their criminal cases. The vast majority of people who come through Brooklyn criminal courts are there for low-level cases.

As of today, the new Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security has made it clear that undocumented immigrants who are merely arrested are a priority for deportation. Since 1992, as many as 8 million people have been arrested in New York City, despite two decades of falling crime, the vast majority for low-level quality of life behaviors or crimes of poverty.

Broken Windows policing, as operationalized by the NYPD starting in the early 1990s, is a radical, mass-arrest policy that has almost exclusively targeted people of color, new immigrants and other socially and economically marginalized groups. In addition to all of the other collateral consequences related to criminal justice involvement, now our clients who may be arrested for drinking a beer in front of their home in an over policed neighborhood will be a priority for deportation.

New York City demonstrates its commitment to immigrant New Yorkers every day by funding critical programs like the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project that provides poor people in deportation proceedings in the City with a free lawyer. Our NYIFUP lawyers preserve families and communities, but as enforcement of laws at the federal level becomes more aggressive, the City must do more to help people avoid the criminal justice system altogether.

It is critical to look at every single City agency, especially the NYPD, to ensure that we are doing as much as possible to reduce the negative consequences of changing immigration enforcement priorities. Every single arrest, no matter how minor, provides fingerprints to the federal government that may be used to deport people.

The time for half-measures and incremental reforms is past. We call on the Mayor and the City Council to advance bold action today.