

## **GR Rapid Response to ICE statement on which groups we will work with**

Since GR Rapid Response to ICE was founded in 2017, we have always worked directly with Movimiento Cosecha, the immigrant-led group in Grand Rapids that is part of Movimiento Cosecha national.

More than any other criteria GR Rapid Response to ICE wants to make sure that we are centering the lived experience of communities that are most affected by the repression of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We embrace and try to practice the Zapatista principle - We lead by following.

As GR Rapid Response to ICE we believe it is vitally important that we follow affected communities, which is how we build trust, make connections and practice authentic solidarity.

We have trained over a thousand people in the past year and this is the number one thing we communicate to people in our trainings - that we follow the lead of affected communities and center their lived experience. We also have trained people outside of Kent County and continue to get requests to do so from white-led groups who want to start some sort of Rapid Response group. We always ask them 1) what kind of relationship do you have with communities that are most likely to be targeted by ICE, and 2) is forming a Rapid Response to ICE what they want you to do?

There are organizations and people we have trained that have refused to follow the lead of affected communities, thus we no longer have a relationship with them. Refusing to follow the lead of affected communities puts those communities at greater risk of ICE repression and it demonstrates that they perpetuate harm and what we call white saviorism.

We also don't work with groups or individuals who work with or rely on any law enforcement agencies. GR Rapid Response to ICE believes in abolishing all forums of state carceral violence, which includes cops. We also adopt this principle because cops not only collaborate with ICE, but affected communities do not trust cops.

A recent example of how white-led groups are ignoring or minimizing the importance of following the lead of affected communities and Movimiento Cosecha came to our attention when we found out that people were meeting at the Kent County Democratic Party headquarters. The purpose of this meeting was to create a separate group of "Peaceful Observers" who would position themselves near schools and other public places with the intent of documenting ICE activity.

The group that met at the Kent County Democratic Party headquarters included members of that political party, including Grand Rapids Mayor David LaGrand. Movimiento Cosecha and GR Rapid Response to ICE were not invited to that meeting, even though GR Rapid Response to ICE and Movimiento Cosecha have already been doing patrols in areas near schools and in neighborhoods, because affected

communities have asked us to engage in patrolling, since affected community members have seen an increase in ICE activity in those areas.

People who do the patrolling through GR Rapid Response to ICE have been trained on best practices in doing this work, which involves reducing the ability of ICE to arrest and detain immigrants. Our patrols would simultaneously have people calling our hotline (616-238-0081) - to mobilize more people if ICE is sighted – documenting ICE activity, and potentially intervening to prevent ICE from taking people.

The “Peaceful Observers” group also scheduled a training in the last week of February, yet people were emailing GR Rapid Response to ICE to register. We told them that we were not hosting this training, but even before the training was scheduled the “Peaceful Observers” effort was causing confusion. When people did show up to their training the person who was leading the training didn’t show up, thus canceling the training.

We would ask why would anyone want to create a separate entity that is only designed to observe, doesn’t have a Rapid Response component, and isn’t following what affected communities are asking of them? This is more than just ineffective but actively dangerous. If the public could be confused between that “Peaceful Observers” training and ours, people could easily end up calling this entity instead of our trained responders when there is ICE activity. Our patrolling or any other aspect of our work is part of the Rapid Response system, thus making all of what we do integral to the work of minimizing ICE violence directed at affected communities. This includes:

Operating a hotline

Rapid Response to ICE activity with trained people

Patrols

Accompaniment

Monitoring ICE activity

Working with Movimiento Cosecha on local policy issues

Mutual Aid support - legal, material, financial, transportation and sanctuary

There are also several Indivisible groups that we do not work with, since they are supporting the police or are merely trying to reform ICE. These Indivisible groups also do not follow the lead of affected communities.

Lastly, we want to say that GR Rapid Response to ICE is not a humanitarian gesture. It is a political intervention rooted in a material understanding of power. In the context of ICE raids, deportations, and carceral violence, to show up is not to perform rescue, but to participate in collective resistance. This is why we say we are not protesting ICE, rather we are resisting ICE.