

Sanctuary Communities - A New Book About To Be Released By The Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center

by Bill Woods for StreetVibes

A timely book is about to be released by the Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center. Co-authored by Brennan Grayson, the Executive Director of the Center, and John D. Tynes, "Sanctuary Communities" examines the role of providing "sanctuary" in this current climate of deporting any person who cannot prove their legal status for living in this country. The book also explores what motivates so many people from Central America to seek refuge in the United States. The authors strive to provide essential information so that readers can understand a complex and often emotionally charged subject.



Cincinnati receives a lot of attention in the section of the book focusing on "sanctuary issues." Although City Council voted in February 2017 to become a Sanctuary City, **Brennan Grayson** declares that the City lacks the legal capacity to be such a community. Council's formal Resolution states the City will deny the use of its law enforcement personnel or services to enforce federal immigration laws. However, since it lacks its own jail, this critical portion of the Resolution is unworkable.

Hamilton County operates the Justice Center that houses the jail where persons arrested by the City Police are held. Although the County has no formal written policy regarding federal enforcement of immigration laws, Grayson found the activities of jail employees add up to an informal working relationship with ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement). In essence according to this section of the book, the policy of Sheriff Jim Neil, who administers the jail, is to cooperate with ICE.

What are these activities occurring at the Hamilton County Justice Center? The common practice is for the Center to contact ICE when it is holding someone who appears to be an undocumented immigrant. It honors ICE requests to detain an immigrant even when that person is found to have broken no local law. It also informally cooperates when ICE officials are working to collect damning evidence about someone being held at the County facility.



The results of this cooperation are significant. Over the last decade, the Hamilton County Justice Center has facilitated over 1,500 deportations. Since Cincinnati declared itself a Sanctuary City in 2017, 359 of those deportations have occurred.

These facts are why the authors conclude that cities like Cincinnati that do not control the policies of their jail systems cannot call themselves sanctuary cities. "While there is no standard definition for what constitutes sanctuary or a sanctuary community," they write, "the term is used to refer to cities that protect undocumented immigrants from deportation by limiting cooperation with the federal law enforcement agencies that deport them." San Francisco is cited in the book

as a model for other communities to follow.

The need for effective sanctuaries is stressed in the book because of the current thrust of the federal government to deport especially undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The authors spend some time debunking the negative myths about lawless Hispanics crossing the borders to rape and pillage. In fact, studies indicate that undocumented immigrants are more likely to be taken advantage of by employers and landlords due to their fears of deportation. One of the primary goals of the Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center is to protect immigrant workers from wage theft. "Clearly," note the authors, "immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, face significant challenges living in this country."

The Workers Center will release this book on December 5th, and people will have a chance to hear and meet the authors that day at the Community issues Forum at Christ Church Cathedral, 318 East Fourth Street. This event begins at noon on Thursday December 5th, and is free and open to the public. For more information, call 381-4994.