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Clean Air and SURJ Buffalo Lead Vigil Outside Tonawanda Customs and Border Patrol Detainment Facility

Members of the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York and Showing Up for Racial Justice Buffalo lead vigil to protest mass deportation, violence by ICE and CBP, and to urge action by local and state officials

Town of Tonawanda, NY: The Clean Air Coalition of WNY and SURJ Buffalo held a vigil today near the Customs & Border Patrol detention facility at 600 Colvin Woods Pkwy in Tonawanda to call attention to the lawless violence of federal immigration agents here in Western New York as well as in other places like Minneapolis.

In 2025 alone, 32 detainees held by ICE died, the largest number of deaths in a single year since 2004¹. This is partly a result of the reckless expansion of the immigration detention system, which cages people in inhumane conditions indefinitely without adequate due process. Here in Western New York, immigration agents have rapidly transformed spaces into jails, including the facility on Colvin Woods Parkway.

"I was shocked to learn that federal immigration agents are detaining people right here in Tonawanda without any oversight or accountability. This is a welcoming community and we love all of our neighbors, including immigrants. Tonawanda officials must take action to end ICE/CBP detention

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2026/jan/04/ice-2025-deaths-timeline>



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in our town” said Melissa Hubbard (she/her), Tonawanda resident and Clean Air member.

Clean Air and SURJ Buffalo members emphasized that there are many things Tonawanda elected officials can do to resist the Trump regime’s violent mass deportation agenda. They can use zoning enforcement to fine CBP for detaining people in an inappropriate facility in the town, they can pass a resolution supporting the New York for All Act, and they can create formal policy prohibiting town police from collaborating with federal immigration agencies.

As Clean Air’s Board Chair and former Tonawanda Town Engineer James Jones said, “To learn that ICE has a migrant detention facility here in the Town of Tonawanda in a commercial zoned area where lawful detainees are on record as being held, just a few yards away from one of the town’s largest and most popular parks is appalling. This facility is improperly zoned and was built without public knowledge. The town always had a strong relationship with federal law enforcement however since last year, it is readily apparent that trusted relationship is broken and the duty to protect, respect and serve the community is being intentionally neglected. State and local government needs to stand up for their citizenry and protect human rights and dignity.”

“While ICE violence has been increasingly visible, much of it remains hidden in plain sight, in the offices, bureaucratic structures, and tacit support by local officials, support for a brutal deportation machine that terrorizes our community. Shadow detention locations such as this one in Tonawanda lack basic rights and legal access and disappear family members” stated Jennifer Connor, Executive Director for Justice for Migrant Families..

Connor continued, stating, “The good people of our community need to know what is being done in their name, in their backyard and with our tax dollars, and speak out against this assault on everyday families as well as the entire concept of fairness and due process.”



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Justice for Migrant Families urges people to send postcards to Andrew Olivetti at Department of Homeland Security at 250 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo NY 14202 in opposition to the book ban for people detained at the Batavia facility, and to visit their website for additional ways to support their work - <https://www.justiceformigrantfamilies.org/>

Clean Air further urges everyone to visit <https://www.nyic.org/> to send a letter to lawmakers in Albany in support of the New York For All Act using New York Immigration Coalition's digital letter campaign, and to talk with your local lawmakers to urge them to take action using the tools of local government.

Clean Air is also concerned about how the current policies of mass deportation are rapidly eroding trust between local, state and federal government and residents, which undermines the ability to work together to address community harms, like holding industrial polluters violating permits to account.

Clean Air additionally notes that the harms of mass deportation disproportionately is affecting demographics that are also disproportionately affected by environmental injustices, and that the federal government is not only causing direct harms with mass deportation, but also rolling back environmental regulations, such as weakening PM2.5 air quality laws, which will disproportionately harm these communities and bring broad harm to all.

For additional comments, please contact Maya Wood at
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The Clean Air Coalition builds power by developing grassroots leaders who organize their communities to run and win environmental justice and public health campaigns in Western New York.

SURJ Buffalo is a chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice, a national network organizing white people against white supremacy. This chapter is a coalition of folks organizing across class lines in Buffalo, Erie County, and Western New York to undermine racist institutions through collective action.