

**Testimony of Julio Cesar Mora before the House Subcommittee on Immigration,
Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law and the House
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties**
*Joint Hearing on the Public Safety and Civil Rights Implications of State and Local
Enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws*

April 2, 2009

My name is Julio Cesar Mora. I am 19 years old and I am from Avondale, Arizona. I have three brothers and one sister, and we were all born in the United States. My mother passed away when I was still little, so I have mostly been raised by my dad. My dad is 66, and he still works so that he can support all of us. He came to this country from Mexico in the 1960s and worked for many years as a farm worker. Then he started working for a company called Handyman Maintenance, or H.M.I. contracting, doing landscaping for government buildings.

A couple months ago, in February, I was driving with my dad to work when we were stopped by the police. We left Avondale a little after five in the morning, when it was still dark. H.M.I. is at Lower Buckeye and 19th Avenue in Phoenix. When we were almost at 19th Avenue, we passed two black police SUVs parked under a bulletin board. Then, about 15 seconds after we turned onto 19th Avenue, one of the SUVs caught up and stopped right in front of us. The other one followed behind. We were still more than a hundred yards from HMI. I remember that my dad had to slam on the breaks to avoid hitting the one that was in front of us because it was so aggressive. I didn't understand why they trapped us like that; my dad hadn't done anything wrong. One of the officers came up to the window and asked us where we were going. We told him my dad was just going to work; my dad didn't want any trouble and he thought they would leave us alone if they knew he was on his way to work. But instead, they told us to turn off the car and step out of the vehicle. I asked them why but they didn't say. They patted us down and tied our hands together with zip ties, like we were criminals. They put mine on really tight and it left marks on my arms. I later learned that the officers were deputies from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

They brought us to H.M.I., where there were a lot of people lined up and a lot of other officers guarding them, telling them to turn off their phones. There was about one officer for every three workers. I also saw some officers in black uniforms with the word SWAT written on them. They were carrying guns like they have in the army and some were wearing masks over their faces. They were searching near the soda machines, and at first I didn't understand what they were searching for, but then I realized they were looking for people. I'd never seen anything like that. These people weren't dangerous, but they were treating us like we were.

As soon as we got there, my dad asked if he could use the bathroom. He told the officer that he had to go since we left the house. They said he was going to have to wait. We went to stand on the line like they told us to, but we kept asking different officers if my dad could use the bathroom. By about the fifth time, my dad's stomach was hurting. I was worried because he has diabetes and has a hard time holding it. I even told the officers he was sick, and a guy behind me got angry and asked why they wouldn't let him go. The officers thought it was me and moved me to the back of the line away from my dad.

My dad eventually got to go, but it wasn't until he asked several more times and told an officer he was going to go right there in front of everyone, and even then, he had to go outside behind a car. It really hurt me that they embarrassed him like that. Later, I also had to go, and they let me use the bathroom, but three officers guarded me and they refused to untie my hands. I tried to go with my hands tied, but couldn't; when I asked one of them for help, he said, "What's the matter, you can't find it?" I felt like they were making fun of me just because they could.

I went back to the line and continued to wait. I still didn't know why they had arrested us and what we were waiting for. At that point, I really started to worry that they might take me to jail. I thought thank God my girlfriend Victoria, who was five months pregnant, didn't come with us that day like she usually does. But she would still wake up and see this on the news and get scared. I got up the courage to ask one of officers if I could please leave because I didn't work at H.M.I. He told me no. When I got to the front of the line, and the same officer asked me if I was a U.S. citizen. I said I was born here, and gave my name and social security number. They checked me out on their computer, and finally they let me go, almost three hours after it all began. They let my dad go too because he has had his green card since 1976.

To this day, I don't know why the officers stopped us out of all the cars on the road. Maybe it was because of the *Campesina* radio station sticker on our bumper or maybe it's because my dad was wearing his Mexican *tejana* and they thought we were illegal. But they never bothered to ask us. I don't think it's fair the way we were treated.

I have heard that the Sheriff has an agreement with ICE, and that's why he was able to ask everyone about their immigration status. I had heard that he was arresting people in Guadalupe and Mesa, but I never thought it would happen to me. Now I know it can happen to anyone, citizens too. My dad says he's always tried to protect me from these kinds of things, but that day I saw a man begging an officer not to deport him, offering him some candy as a bribe. It opened my eyes to what is happening in Arizona. Most of the people in my neighborhood, they are just trying to get by and make a better life for their kids. The police are supposed to keep us safe, but they are arresting us instead of the real criminals. I still think of that day sometimes when I have to go to the bathroom. And I still think of the guy with the candy. They took away our pride -- my dad's, this man's, and mine.

I would like say thank you to the Subcommittees for letting me speak today.