

Hello, I'm Art Stevens, a priest at Trinity Episcopal Church. I'm here to tell you some *personal* experiences of *white privilege* in our injustice system, beginning locally with the juvenile court, then moving on to ICE. I am speaking primarily to my fellow beneficiaries of white privilege. I urge you and your faith communities and friends to get more *visibly involved* in making change.

I used to accompany families of Latino youth in juvenile court, just sit with them as a white person. Often there were about 20 families, most of whose adults spoke little English and were very scared. I often was the only white person there except for the judge and one pro bono attorney. My presence seemed to offer the parents and youth at least some comfort.

Now, why were there so many Latino and so few white defendants? Perhaps because sheriffs don't stop white kids going home from school to ask what they are doing, and (however innocent the answer) make a record of the stop that might be used against them later and call their attention to the Sheriff and ICE? Or because officers don't patrol white neighborhoods looking for misbehavior? You tell me. I always felt embarrassed that there weren't more white mentors sitting with these families. But I know that the need for white companionship in court proceedings has not been talked about. I am here to make it visible. I'm also here to advocate for changes in behavior of the sheriff's officers.

Now for our involvement with ICE. Judy and I have personal experience helping a family get a bail bond for a young Latino friend of impeccable reputation. He had just completed his court-ordered community service following his first ever misdemeanor offense, a DUI with no injuries. When he reported to the sheriff to certify his completion, he was turned over to ICE, put on a bus to Adelanto Detention Center 3 ½ hours away, and given just 1 phone call. We were shocked!

Judy and I immediately got involved to help the family. Very few detainees are granted bond; most linger there, are sent to other detention centers, or are deported. We were fortunate to find a very good immigration attorney based at Adelanto, which saved paying her transportation. Her services cost \$1500 in advance, which we were able to help with. She arranged for a bond hearing in 3 weeks. His family and we visited several times. You need to know that Adelanto definitely is not friendly to visitors, and visiting hours are quite inconvenient.

It's important for you to know what it took to gain bond. First, the lawyer advised preparing a file in triplicate about our friend's history, with testimonials from family, teachers, employers and friends. Judy and I contributed to it and arranged it with our testimonial first, assuming that he might benefit from being strongly endorsed by white clergy.

The night before the bond hearing, Trinity Church held a vigil for our friend. His mother and sister were there, and spoke. We invited the undocumented student organization at UCSB, and several took part. Quite a few white Trinity parishioners did too. We were all in tears. It was a very powerful experience for everyone. We went to the hearing feeling empowered by community support.

On hearing day, the judge, our friend's lawyer, and the prosecutor were the only white people in the courtroom except for Judy and me, who were pretty visible in the back row, white people wearing clergy clothes. The judge skimmed through the paperwork, including our letter. He looked at us, said "Are you the Reverends Stevens?" We said "Yes." He asked "What church?" Surprised, we said "Episcopal." He thought, then said "I'll go for 10," meaning a bond of \$10,000. Whew! We were SO relieved! At the same time, we couldn't help but be appalled at the white supremacy and classism involved. Had we not be there—white people and clergy from an "establishment" church, our friend was very unlikely to have gotten bond. So we were grateful, yet appalled to consider the poor chances of Latinos who didn't have white establishment support.

How was the family to raise \$10,000? This was a Thursday and they wanted their boy's release ASAP, which would be next Monday. Judy and I didn't have that much ready money. A miracle happened! We went to the Palmdale Wells Fargo. The executive who helped us was a Muslim named Ibrahim! He said "I get it! I know what it's like to be discriminated against. I'll find you the money." Normally it would take days to get the money. The next morning, as we were praying, the phone rang and Ibrahim said "I have the money for you. Come and get it."

The family took the bank check to the LA Homeland Security office early Monday, had to wait 7 hours after delivering it, and at rush hour were told to drive the 2 hours to Adelanto to pick up our young friend. They had to wait another 2 hours to release him, even though Adelanto had been notified. At 11 p.m. he was released.

Our young friend needed to hire a lawyer to defend his ongoing case in the LA Immigration Court. Our Latino friends at CHIRLA (The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles) found the lawyer. Our friend discovered that he couldn't work legally without fear of losing his bond and being deported. His lawyer applied for a work permit, which wouldn't be granted for over a year. During that time friends, Latino and white, and family, pitched in to help while he resumed his studies at SBCC.

Here's my message to my fellow beneficiaries of white supremacy.

Because of institutional racism, it can make a BIG difference if white people get involved—doing things like being a supportive presence in juvenile court and in ICE bond hearings, driving families to visit detainees, contributing financially, providing meals and other forms of support to Latino families dealing with the terrors of ICE detention and family separation.

It really does take a village—people of different races and economic levels—to promote healing and justice when racism and white supremacy are so prevalent. We need more white mentors and advocates for families—especially now with all the realistic fear of family separation and deportation. We white people must show our Latino sisters and brothers that we really do care. We must do so in practical ways.

Judy and I feel so blessed by this whole experience. It was trauma, trauma, trauma, and love, love, love, shared by so many people. So come on, my fellow beneficiaries of white privilege, please, let's all get on our feet and act. Let's show that we do care!!!