



Ortega Melendres, et al. v. Arpaio, et al. Plaintiff Profiles

Manuel Ortega Melendres

Manuel Ortega Melendres is a legal visitor to the United States who possessed a valid visa. On September 26, 2007, he was a passenger in a vehicle that was stopped by officers from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in Cave Creek, Arizona. MCSO was conducting an operation targeted at day laborers. Although the officer who stopped him claimed that the reason he pulled the vehicle over was because the driver was speeding, the driver, who was a Caucasian male, was not given a citation or taken into custody. The officer instead asked Mr. Ortega and the other Latino passengers to produce identification. Though Mr. Ortega provided identification, he was nonetheless arrested. Mr. Ortega spent four hours in a cell in the county jail. Eventually he was taken to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) official, who confirmed that he had proper documentation to be in the United States. After an hours-long ordeal, Mr. Ortega was released.

Manuel Nieto & Velia Meraz

In March 2008, Manuel Nieto and Velia Meraz, who are brother and sister, were stopped during a sweep in North Phoenix after they had witnessed the MCSO detaining two Latino men at a gas station. After pulling into the gas station, the MCSO deputy ordered Ms. Meraz and Mr. Nieto to leave. They left the gas station, but were subsequently pulled over by MCSO deputies in front of their family business at gunpoint. While Mr. Nieto called 911, MCSO deputies pulled him out of his car and threw him against it. Family members who were present at the time informed the officers that both Mr. Nieto and Ms. Meraz are U.S. citizens. MCSO ran Mr. Nieto's identification and then released both of them without a citation or any apology.

David and Jessika Rodriguez

David and Jessika Rodriguez, along with their two young children, were off-roading near Lake Bartlett in December 2007. As they were leaving the preserve, they were stopped and ticketed by MCSO for driving on a closed road. But several other drivers who were not Latino and driving on the same stretch of the road were allowed to leave with only a warning. During the stop, the MCSO deputy demanded to see Mr. Rodriguez's Social Security card even though he had produced his Arizona driver's license, registration and proof of insurance. Mr. Rodriguez eventually relented and provided the deputy with his Social Security number so that he and his family could leave in peace. As the Rodriguezes drove to the exit of the preserve, they were able to stop and speak with other drivers and confirm that not one of them had been given a citation. The Rodriguezes were treated unfairly because they are Latino. The Rodriguezes are U.S. citizens.