Government Surveillance

Of Immigrants and Muslims

Since the 2016 Presidential election, the Trump administration has intensified the monitoring and criminalization of immigrants of color in the United States — with direct violence, detention and deportation hastened by the increasing availability of big data and new surveillance technologies.

At virtually every stage of the process of migrating or traveling to, from, and within the United States, people of color with and without U.S. citizenship status are subject to the legal and extralegal collection and analysis of extensive quantities of personal information. This information is being aggregated and stored by government agencies for long retention periods and shared among a variety of public and private actors, both inside and outside the United States, with little to no transparency, oversight, or accountability.

Six Facts:



Customs and Border Protection is contracting with private companies to deploy drones, underground sensors, facial recognition and license plate readers along the border.

The Muslim Ban is being used to vet all immigrants.

The "muslim ban" which was upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2018, is being used to ban immigrants from Muslim-majority countries. The criteria in the ban is also being used to vet potential visa applicants from other countries.

Federal spending on immigration enforcement is rising—and being spent on technology.

In addition to funding for more ICE agents, the Department of Homeland Security is spending millions on surveillance technology like cell-site simulators known as Stingrays.

DHS tracks the social media activity of visa applicants and foreign visitors to the U.S.

Since 2015, the Department of Homeland Security has been asking foreign visitors and visa applicants for their social media identifiers. Under the Trump administration, visa applicants are now asked to turn over all social media handles used in the last 5 years.

ICE wanted to automate social media monitoring of all immigrants, but backed down.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement sought to build an algorithm for social media vetting of all visa applicants and immigrants. After pressure from advocates, including the Center for Media Justice, ICE abandoned its automation plans, but is instead hiring more people to conduct this type of vetting.

Silicon Valley is profiting from high tech immigration enforcement.

Various tech companies have contracts with the government to support immigration enforcement, detention and deportation. Microsoft has a \$19.5 million contract with ICE. Vigilant Solutions contracts with ICE to grant access to its license plate reader database. Amazon's "Rekognition" tool gives law enforcement the power to use facial recognition in drone cameras, body worn cameras, and other surveillance video.





