

ICE in Great Neck: Now is the Time for Moral Courage

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Parashat Sh'mot 5786 / January 9, 2026

Help the Family of a Great Neck Resident Detained by ICE

This has been a scary week.

We have all seen the videos of the tragic killing of Renee Nicole Good by an ICE agent in Minneapolis. We've seen the rush to smear this young mother as a "domestic terrorist" before the incident has been investigated.

We've seen ICE-related violence in Portland, Oregon, too.

And then, late last night, our local news reported that a Great Neck resident, Tomas Orellena, has been taken by ICE as part of the agency's crackdown in Nassau County.

Tomas is one of our neighbors. I don't know him, but his 11-year-old son is my son Zach's friend. They used to play basketball together during recess at JFK, and they're both now in 6th grade at North Middle School.

News 12 says Tomas has been here legally for more than 25 years under "Temporary Protected Status, which allows individuals from designated countries to live and work legally in the United States." His wife Claudia is a U.S. citizen, and they are the parents of eight children.

I'd like to read some of what his family posted on social media:

[W]e are here speaking on behalf of our father, Tomas Orellena, who has been detained by ICE. You might know him as a friend, a coworker, a family member, a man who just always looked out for others, a man who plowed snow when it was too much for our neighbors or mowed the lawn to make money on the side, or even a deli worker that served you coffee and a breakfast sandwich at Great Neck Plaza 25 plus years ago. He had a great sense of humor and always had cheer in his eyes...

Our father did everything for our family and was the head of the household. ... Provided food to be put on the table and at some point in our lives he sacrificed 10 plus hours to just work across the 5 boroughs of New York City just so we could live a normal life. Without him, our family is broken, and we need your help."

Zach told Karen the kids were all talking about this in school today—but no one was snickering or making light of it. They were all talking about how wrong this is.

Zach said he's scared for Tony's family, and he's scared about all the racism in the country. That hits hard when it comes from your kid. I'm proud of him.

From what I've read, there are no public details about this case yet. And I certainly don't want to prejudge something I don't know about.

It is, of course, the government's duty to enforce our immigration laws. But methods matter.

As people of conscience, we know that the cruel and sadistic ways in which ICE is conducting its work are a moral abomination.

This week's parashah tells the story of the midwives, Shifrah and Pu'ah, who defied Pharaoh's order to kill the newborn Hebrew boys. It tells of Pharaoh's daughter, who rescued baby Moses from the Nile and raised him in knowing defiance of her father's edict.

These women are heralded year after year as paragons of civil disobedience in response to tyranny, but tonight, their stories speak directly to the moment, and to this Great Neck community: Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor. You must resist.

Let them call you whatever names they want. Let them threaten you.

This is a moment for moral courage.

[You can help Tomas' family by donating to their Go Fund Me page.](#)