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## Hot Lines and Hot Tempers

By Margot Hornblower/Los Angeles

The telephone never stops ringing in the shabby downtown office of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles. "At what hospital did this happen?" David Paz Soldan, a 26-year-old lawyer, is patiently asking the Spanish-speaking caller. A moment later he is fielding another complaint: "You say police confiscated your car because you did not have a green card?"

The federal courts may have temporarily put a halt to enforcement of Proposition 187, but many Californians -- who passed the Nov. 8 initiative 59% to 41% -- appear to be ignoring the legal injunction and taking enforcement into their own hands. In the past two weeks special Prop 187 hot lines in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno and Sacramento have received thousands of calls from distraught victims reporting impromptu acts of discrimination that recalled the vigilante spirit of the old Wild West. Many of the callers were citizens or legal residents, wrongly suspected of being illegal. "No one has the word undocumented tattooed on their forehead," said Juanita Ontiveros of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. "So people are being harassed because of looks, language and mannerisms."

A Mexican-American mother called to say her sick two-year-old had been left waiting five hours, then was turned away with only cursory examinations on two successive nights at the Kaiser Foundation Hospital in Hayward, California, 30 miles from San Francisco. Limp, dehydrated and near death, the child was finally admitted on the third day -- and immediately attached to an IV. Then, as she sat by her child's bed, the mother, a legal resident, was asked for her immigration papers. A Kaiser spokeswoman said the policy is to ask for insurance papers but not for immigration documents.

Two middle-aged Latinas called the Sacramento hot line to complain that when they were picked up by police for jaywalking in Manteca, they were asked for residency papers. They were not carrying documentation, they said, although they were legal residents, and one of the policemen said to them, "We can send you back to Tijuana." When the women reacted angrily, they were hauled off to the county jail 15 miles away, released at 11 p.m. and told to walk home. A Manteca police spokesman said the two women were picked up for shoplifting and had

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volunteered that they were undocumented aliens.


Ambrosio Quintero, a retired factory worker married to an American, told Paz / Soldan that when he approached a Latino employee of a large Pasadena auto shop Thursday, he was told that employees were forbidden to speak Spanish with customers since 187 passed. Assistant manager Sam Gonzalez of Fedco Tire Center said the store recently declared that employees were not to speak to one another in a foreign language but that the rule does not apply to customers.

Among the other hot-line complaints under investigation:

-- A Palm Springs pharmacy demanded immigration documents before filling a prescription for a customer's daughter, a U.S. citizen.

-- A customer at a Santa Paula restaurant demanded to see the cook's green card, declaring that it was every citizen's duty to report illegals.

-- A Woodland Hills nurse was pelted with rocks and anti-Hispanic epithets at a high school she has walked by for 10 years without incident. "She was crying so hard, I couldn't get her off the phone for 20 minutes," said Paz Soldan. "She kept saying, 'This is my dream -- the land of liberty.' "

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