

# The Dallas Morning News

## Hispanic advocate Carlos Quintanilla's legal woes are lengthy

Migrant protest leader plays down litany of alleged traffic offenses

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By SERGIO CHAPA / Al Día

Hispanic activist Carlos Quintanilla's legal troubles extend beyond the misdemeanor arrest warrants that led to his arrest in Irving last week before a rally against the city's immigration policies.

Accion America leader Carlos Quintanilla addressed the media and supporters Thursday night after being released from the Irving jail, where he'd been held on traffic charges. He was arrested before he could lead a protest against Irving's policy of placing immigration holds on undocumented arrestees.

Irving police arrested Mr. Quintanilla for allegedly driving without a license, a criminal trespass warrant from Dallas and seven other warrants hours before he was scheduled to lead a rally against the city's 24/7 Criminal Alien Program. The program has been used to deport more than 1,600 undocumented immigrants from Irving since last year.



Mr. Quintanilla was released from jail after supporters paid more than \$3,000 in cash, but a review of Dallas city and county records show that the activist owes an additional \$3,488.90 in outstanding fines, fees and court costs for 12 other alleged offenses dating to August 2003.

Mr. Quintanilla said he and his attorneys will clear his name, but municipal court records show that the cases remained classified as warrants Tuesday morning. Mr. Quintanilla's attorney, Olivario Estrada, did not return calls seeking comment.

The 12 alleged violations range from fire code transgressions from his prior business, Mercado Azteca, to traffic offenses such as driving without a license, no seat belt, no insurance, expired inspection stickers and expired registration stickers.

Texas Department of Public Safety records show that Mr. Quintanilla's driver's license has been suspended off and on since July 2005 for failure to pay DPS fees related to various traffic tickets. It has been suspended since July 2006 for nonpayment of DPS fees for traffic offenses.

City of Dallas records show that eight cases, including the three alleged fire code violations and five traffic violations, went to a collection agency and are classified as warrants. A ninth case went to a collection agency, but a warrant hasn't been placed on it yet.

But Johnanna Greiner, chief of prosecution for Dallas' city attorney's office, said those warrants were never entered into a law enforcement database that would have triggered additional criminal charges during his Irving arrest. She said Mr. Quintanilla received deferred adjudication in the majority of the cases but never paid the

finances and fees set by the judge. Mr. Quintanilla, she said, must also pay DPS fees in two cases for which he received time served.

Ms. Greiner said Mr. Quintanilla must resolve all his tickets and pay state fees for many of them before he can apply to get his driver's license back.

Court records show that Mr. Quintanilla already has court dates set for three of the tickets from the Irving arrest.

Mr. Quintanilla said he is disputing those tickets and will investigate the others.

Mr. Quintanilla said he thought he'd been given time served for all his traffic tickets during a July 2006 incarceration in a child support dispute.

Mr. Quintanilla was criticized by other Hispanic leaders last week, but he said Monday that he does not believe his arrest or the outstanding tickets undermine his credibility.

"How do you measure credibility?" he asked. "By parking tickets or by what I've done with 'cheese' heroin and other issues?"

Jose Angel Gutierrez, a former Chicano activist and government professor with the University of Texas at Arlington, said police have historically come after Hispanic activists with any criminal charges they can find.

Dr. Gutierrez said he does not believe the arrest and tickets will hurt the immigration reform movement, but they might damage Mr. Quintanilla's public image for a short time.

"It's something you need to take especially seriously," Mr. Gutierrez said. "You need to have a clean white shirt and pants these days. ... It just shows you how petty things are getting."

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