

## **U.S. citizens caught in immigration net**

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### **Body**

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**Immigration** and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deported 357,000 illegal aliens in 2008, up 23.5% from 2007. Most were from Latin America, so it's inevitable that some **citizens** of Latino descent would be detained by mistake. Even so, their stories are troubling:

\*Alicia Rodriguez, a third-generation American, was pulled over in Mansfield, Texas, for driving with unpaid tickets. Held by police who thought she was an illegal immigrant, she spent a night in jail before being transferred to another facility, where she had a panic attack. She was released after her sister produced her birth certificate.

\*Rennison Castillo was arrested after a domestic dispute and later scheduled for deportation, though he is a **U.S. citizen** and an Army veteran. Officials at the **immigration** jail in Tacoma, Wash., said they could not find records of his citizenship or military service. After Castillo called the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, an attorney obtained his military records, and he was freed.

Rodriguez and Castillo were among the 55 cases documented by the Associated Press of **citizens** detained or deported since 2001. While the numbers might seem small, the AP report noted that **immigration** lawyers suspect hundreds of such cases.

This brings us back to the ever elusive "comprehensive **immigration** reform." Schizophrenic enforcement has created a breeding ground of mistakes such as those cited above. The federal 287(g) program, for instance, deputizes state and local police to help ICE **catch** criminal aliens. Earlier this year, a Government Accountability Office report found that ICE failed to properly train these officers, to define their authority, or to monitor the program effectively. Is it any surprise that local officers tied to this program arrested several **U.S. citizens**? To her credit, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has ordered a review of 287(g).

How many other suspect programs are out there? How many **citizens** must be jailed to muster up the outrage necessary for real reform? Couldn't ICE make better use of its limited resources once the **U.S.** deals with the 12 million illegal immigrants already here?

President Obama has vowed to address **immigration** reform as soon as next month. The questions are waiting for him. Let's hope he has the answers.

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