

What are ICE raids accomplishing?

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Body

Residents of Postville, Iowa, recently described to a congressional delegation the scars that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (**ICE**) **raid** on Agriprocessors' meat plant had left on their community. In the wake of the May incident, they say, the town is economically and socially unstable.

ICE raids are, in essence, government-sanctioned racial profiling. Typically, **ICE** descends upon a workplace with armed agents to determine who is legal and who is not.

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., has asked the right question about the **raids**: "When dealing with Anglo identity theft suspects, is federal law enforcement going to start cordoning off white neighborhoods or workplaces, handcuffing and detaining everyone, and only then sorting out the accused?"

The U.S. has every right to deport illegal aliens, of course. But the government has been charging them with identity theft and sentencing them to serve jail time first. While those workers are here illegally, their violation is a far cry from robbing someone of their money or property by stealing their identity. The incarceration is costly and unnecessarily punitive.

Erik Camayd-Freixas, a veteran federal interpreter at the Postville **raid**, described a sad procession of men and women, shackled at the wrist, waist and ankles, being denied due process. The U.S. attorney's office says the workers' rights were not compromised.

Sure, the **raids** ensnare a negligible number of undocumented workers, but what do they really **accomplish**? The Des Moines Register reported that Postville has lost one-third of its population, and that Agriprocessors has begun importing homeless people from Texas to work, leading to a rise in crime, public drunkenness and a run on food banks.

True, the **raid** exposed a range of possible workplace violations, including child labor and safety issues. But investigators were already looking into these abuses, independent of **ICE**. Illegal immigrants will clam up in this new climate of fear. The best way to halt these abuses is with comprehensive reform.

Barack Obama and John McCain have criticized the **raids** and remain committed to immigration reform. In the meantime, Congress should hold hearings on **ICE** itself. In the USA, all people deserve to be treated humanely -- and with justice.

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