



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

## **POSTCARDS FROM POSTVILLE, IOWA: Town Leaders, Residents, and Other Americans Tell the Story of the Largest Immigration Raid in U.S. History**

### **Elected Officials**

#### **Postville Mayor Bob Penrod**

"We didn't need this. This literally blew our town away."

"Basu: After Show of Raid, What Next?" *Des Moines Register*, 5/18/08

#### **Postville Community Schools Superintendent David Strudthoff**

"They don't go after employers. They don't put CEOs in jail. (The sudden incarceration of more than 10 percent of the town's population) is like a natural disaster – only this one is manmade. In the end, it is the greater population that will suffer and the workforce that will be held accountable."

"Immigration Raid Jars a Small Town," *Washington Post*, 5/18/08

#### **U.S. Representative Bruce Braley (D-IA)**

"Until we enforce our immigration laws equally against both employers and employees who break the law, we will continue to have a problem with illegal immigration."

"Immigration Raid Jars a Small Town," *Washington Post*, 5/18/08

#### **U.S. Representative Donald Payne (D-NJ)**

"The ones that are encouraging people to break the law walk away."

"Advocates Ask Why Owners Aren't Facing Any Charges," *Des Moines Register*, 5/21/08

#### **Postville Community Schools Superintendent David Strudthoff**

"It's just like having a tornado that wiped out an entire part of town."

"Basu: After Show of Raid, What Next?" *Des Moines Register*, 5/18/08

#### **Postville Community Schools Superintendent David Strudthoff**

"When they say the immigration system is broken, that's not really accurate. It's shattered."

"Raid Mars Future For 3 Graduating Today From Postville," *Des Moines Register*, 5/25/08

#### **U.S. Rep. Bruce Braley (D-IA)**

"Until we enforce our immigration laws equally against both employers and employees who break the law, we will continue to have a problem with immigration."

"Immigration Raid Spurs Calls for Action Against Owners," *Chicago Tribune*, 6/2/08

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**James Carstensen, spokesman for Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA)**

“It’s a tragedy of an immigration system that is absolutely broken and the tragedy of an enforcement system that is probably not working as effectively as promised by the Bush administration.”

“Immigration Raid Spurs Calls for Action Against Owners,” *Chicago Tribune*, 6/2/08

**U.S. Rep. Timothy Bishop (D-NY)**

“Is it not reasonable to assume that if over a third of the work force employed at this plant violated labor law in one form or another that management has to have some complicity in those violations?”

“Immigration Raid Spurs Calls for Action Against Owners,” *Chicago Tribune*, 6/2/08

**Community Members**

**Trevor Seibert, Postville landlord**

“You didn’t come into town and roust out a bunch of illegal immigrants. You came into town and roused out our neighbors, our friends. I don’t feel safer today than before.”

“Vignettes: Nun Fears For Detainees’ Children,” *Des Moines Register*, 5/15/08

**Lisa Powell, community resident**

“This is a potentially fatal blow to this specific community... You just destroyed the housing market in this community, a lot of the businesses are going to permanently close; the people aren’t there to buy the goods.”

Video Interview, Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform,  
<http://www.sojo.net>

**David Roederer, Executive Director, Iowa Chamber Alliance**

“What I don’t think is fair to employers of this state and employers of other states is they are being saddled with the enforcement of something the federal government said they cannot do. The employers cannot solve this problem either.”

“Panelists criticize immigration raids as business advocate says enforcement,”  
*IowaPolitics.com*, 6/06/08

**Julie Heightland, School Librarian (Postville, IA)**

“Money-wise, we’re sitting OK for the fall because that money has already been committed. It’s the following year, because if we don’t have the numbers this fall, we aren’t going to have any money.”

“Immigration Raid Leaves Mark on Iowa Town,” *NPR: All Things Considered*, 6/9/08

**Blanca Shroeder, Choir Director, St. Bridget’s Catholic Church (Postville, IA)**

“It’s very sad when you hear the children asking, ‘Mom, is my dad coming one day? It’s possible, do you think, we will see my father again?’ So, these things really break your heart.”

“Immigration Raid Leaves Mark on Iowa Town,” *NPR: All Things Considered*, 6/9/08

## **Religious Leaders**

### **Sister Kathy Thill, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (Waterloo, IA)**

"I am also a United States citizen who grew up believing that this is a democratic country in which the dignity of all people is respected and their rights protected. This is not the country I experienced this past week. Hundreds of families were torn apart by this raid. The humanitarian impact of this raid is obvious to anyone in Postville. The economic impact will soon be evident. Fear is rampant."

"Immigrants Feel Distress, Shock, Nun Says," *Des Moines Register*, 5/21, 08

### **Sister Mary McCauley, St. Bridget's Catholic Church (Postville, IA)**

"I noted the statement made by ICE when they reported at 2:00 that this raid had taken place. One of the lines was that they were doing this because they were 'upholding the integrity of the immigration law.' And my concern is, as they held up the law they totally neglected the integrity of the person and the integrity of the family, as families were broken apart... I think the real call for all of us is to work towards immigration reform."

Video Interview, Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform,

<http://www.sojo.net>

### **Rabbi Aaron Goldsmith, former Postville City Councilman**

"At a time when America is trying to hold on to industries, you know what I see out of this? Kosher chickens coming from China. These are hardworking families working there. This isn't a place that required helicopters and guns."

"Immigration Raid Roils Iowa Melting Pot," *Chicago Tribune*, 5/18/08

### **Pastor Steve Brackett, St. Paul Lutheran Church (Postville, IA)**

"I hope the message that comes out of this is that our United States Congress and our President and all of our elected officials need to come together to come up with some form of immigration policy that is just, that is right, and that will prevent something like this from ever happening again."

Video Interview, Fair Immigration Reform Movement,

<http://fairimmigration.wordpress.com/>

### **Pastor Steve Brackett, St. Paul Lutheran Church (Postville, IA)**

"They say this is the largest single raid that's happened in U.S. history, and imagine that raid happening in a town that is less than 3,000 people. We are in the process of losing one-third to one-half of our population almost overnight."

Video Interview, Fair Immigration Reform Movement,

<http://fairimmigration.wordpress.com/>

**The Rev. Steven L. Ullestad, bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Northeastern Iowa Synod, Waverly, and Ralston H. Deffenbaugh Jr., president, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Baltimore**

“The impact on Postville underscores the need for comprehensive reform of immigration policy. The immigration law needs to protect children and unite families, safeguard human rights and worker rights, enable marginalized undocumented people to come out of the shadows and to live without fear, and provide a path to permanence for those who have put down roots.”

May 20, 2008 Statement submitted to the U.S. Congress and entered into the *Congressional Record*

**The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop**

“The impact of the immigration raid on Postville’s community is similar to what would have happened if the town had been hit by a natural disaster. As a result of the raid, families have been separated, children are traumatized and a once thriving community is devastated. Our immigration law is badly broken and in desperate need of reform.”

May 20, 2008 Statement submitted to the U.S. Congress and entered into the *Congressional Record*

**Father Paul Ouderkirk, St. Bridget’s Catholic Church (Postville, IA)**

“It’s in the hearts of the people. They’re frightened. They had roots here; they liked it here because Postville is about the same size as the areas where they came from. The wound, also, has hurt this parish because it’s so deep we don’t know what the long-term effects will be.”

“Immigration Raid Leaves Mark on Iowa Town,” *NPR: All Things Considered*, 6/9/08

**Rabbi Morris J. Allen, Beth Jacob Congregation (Mendota Heights, MN)**

“We shouldn’t accept a standard of kashrut that is more concerned about the lung of a cow than the hand of a worker...[this situation] gives us an opportunity to link social responsibility with religious ritual.”

“Raid Unsettles Kosher Beliefs,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 7/1/08

## **Immigration Experts**

**Angela Kelley, Director of the Immigration Policy Center**

“The truth is that our government could go after employers for wage and hour violations and a host of other labor violations, but the bull’s-eye remains on the immigrant workers.”

“Experts See Charges for Plant’s Managers,” *Des Moines Register*, 5/15/08

**Mark Lauritsen, International Vice President, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)**

“This employer has a long history of violating every law that’s out there – labor laws, environmental laws, now immigration laws. This administration seems to place a larger value on big, splashy shows in this immigration raid than in vigorously enforcing other labor laws.”

“Immigration Raid Jars a Small Town,” *Washington Post*, 5/18/08

**Lori Chesser, Immigration Lawyer (Des Moines, IA)**

“Between the language barrier, the complexity of the immigration situation and the fast track it’s on, I’m just really concerned about the due process for these people.”

“Lawyers Average 17 Cases Apiece,” *Des Moines Register*, 5/16/08)

**Jeanne Butterfield, Executive Director, AILA**

“It is inconceivable that among the 300 workers arrested, none has meritorious claims to be in this country under our country’s immigration laws.”

“ACLU Demands Government Restore Basic Legal Protections To Meatpacking Workers Arrested In Iowa Raid,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, 5/23/08

**Frank Sharry, Executive Director, America’s Voice**

“Even if you wanted to pursue an imbalanced enforcement-first strategy, the only thoughtful way to do it would be to go after employers, make examples of them and try to scare other employers into compliance. They’re not doing that.”

“Immigration Raid Spurs Calls for Action Against Owners,” *Chicago Tribune*, 6/2/08

**Frank Sharry, Executive Director, America’s Voice**

“Something is seriously wrong when a company with the egregious track record of Agriprocessors gets a free pass while their employees and employees’ families pay a steep price.... The best way to deal with illegal immigration is combine a strong crackdown on unscrupulous employers with immigration and labor law enforcement, combined with a way for easy-to-exploit immigrant workers to get legal so they can become fully enfranchised and stand up for themselves against bad actor employers.”

“Agriprocessors Raid Shines Spotlight On Broken Immigration System, Experts Say,” Press Release, 5/19/08

**Juliet Stumpf, Immigration Law Professor, Lewis & Clark Law School, Portland, OR**

“To my knowledge, the magnitude of these indictments is completely unprecedented. It’s the reliance on criminal process here as part of an immigration enforcement action that take this out of the ordinary, a startling intensification of the criminalization of immigration law.”

“270 Illegal Immigrants Sent to Prison in Federal Push,” *The New York Times*, 5/24/08

**Christopher Clausen, Lawyer Representing 21 Guatemalans**

“The government is not bashful about the fact that they are trying to send a message that if you get caught working illegally here you will pay a criminal penalty.”

“270 Illegal Immigrants Sent to Prison in Federal Push,” *The New York Times*, 5/24/08

**Jim Benzoni, Immigration Lawyer, Des Moines, IA**

"This was not about law enforcement. This was not even about immigration policy. This was about publicity. It was a made-for-TV melodrama. The federal government is carrying out politically-motivated terrorism against innocent people. That's crime, that is not law enforcement."

"300 immigrants on lam as arrests hang in limbo," *The Des Moines Register*, 6/11/2008

**Alicia Claypool, Iowa Immigration Education Coalition**

"I don't think that this is the best that we can do. I don't think this is what Iowans really think of themselves. Just thinking about the images on the news of black helicopters flying over Postville reminds me of these militaristic movies you see previews for. That does not represent the best of America or the best of Iowa. I think it's a total violation of the ideals of America and that we respect due process."

"Panelists criticize immigration raids as business advocate says enforcement," *IowaPolitics.com*, 6/06/08

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