Documenting the Postville Story

Thomas L. Kessler
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The Postville Story

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February 24, 2018

• Retired from the UNI Rod Library
• Social Sciences Bibliographer
• You are getting my perspective as a bibliographer
• A bibliographer is a person who describes and lists books and other publications, with particular attention to such characteristics as authorship, publication date, edition, typography, etc.
• Looking at the documentation that exists related to The Postville Story
• Including The Postville Project
• But beyond that the larger range and scope of material that exists related to The Postville Story
The Postville Story

On May 12, 2008, agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) conducted an immigration raid at the Agriprocessors, Inc. plant in the small northeast Iowa community of Postville. While the 2008 raid focused national and international attention on Postville, the raid is part of a much larger story: the rapid demographic change and transition of a small rural community since the 1980s due to an influx of people of many nationalities and cultures.

Postville Story (Settlement-1840, organized-1873, 1880-832)

- My association with this story began with the Postville Immigration Raid as a concerned community member.

- Horrific scenes at the Cattle Congress on the evening of the raid and witnessing the "first responders" as they attempted to address the human toll of the raid.

- First interest was a personal/human interest.

- But it was also pretty immediately obvious that the Postville Immigration Raid and its aftermath was part of a much larger story.

- And that's when my professional interests also kicked in related to documenting this story.
  - Historical Record
  - Resource for learning
One part of the larger Postville Story is illustrated in population graphs for a three decade period:

- **1980**
  - Total Population - 1,475
  - Race - White - 1,468 - 99.5%
  - Ethnicity - Hispanic or Latino - 1 - 0%
  - Non Hispanic - 1,474 - 100%

- **1990**
  - Total Population - 1,472
  - Race - White - 1,468 - 100%
  - Ethnicity - Hispanic or Latino - 1 - 0%
  - Non Hispanic - 1,471 - 100%

- **2000**
  - Total Population - 2,273
  - White - 1,809 - 80%
  - Hispanic or Latino - 469 - 20.6%
  - Non Hispanic - 1,804 - 79.3%
• 2010
  o Total Population - 2,227
  o White - 1,715 - 77%
  o Hispanic or Latino - 713 - 32%
  o Non Hispanic - 1,514 - 71%

• 2016 [www.city-data.com/races/races-Postville-iowa.html]
  o White - 1,203 (?) - 56.7%  Approx 60%
  o Hispanic - 878 (?) - (38.5% - 41.5%)  Approx 40%
Scope of the Postville Story

• Anthropology
• Business/Economics
• Criminal Justice
• Cultural Studies
• Education
• Gender Studies
• History
• Humanities
• Immigration Policy
• Journalism
• Labor Law
• Migration Studies
• Psychology
• Religion/Theology
• Social Services
• Sociology

Scope of the Postville Story

• Spread out through the publications and information platforms in a wide range of subject areas.

• In both the popular and general literature as well as the academic literature.

• These are some of the examples that come to mind - others could be added to the list.

• A story with many interdisciplinary implications and ramifications.
The Postville Project: Documenting a Community in Transition

- Collaborative Effort
  - UNI Rod Library
  - Luther College Archives
- Funding from the State Historical Society of Iowa
- Postville Project Digital Collections

- UNI - Digital archive of materials related to the Postville Immigration Raid
  - Initiated within weeks of the raid in June 2008

- Luther College Archives - Project related to archival of materials associated with filmmaker Luis Argueta’s work - initially *AbUSed: The Postville Raid*
  - Initiated Fall of 2008
  - Rachel Vagts - Luther College Archivist at the time

- Combined efforts during the Spring of 2009
  - With thanks to Dr. Cooley

- Successful in obtaining grant funding from the State Historical Society of Iowa
  - Historical Resource Development Program
  - Grant funding allowed us to hire professional and student staff
The Postville Project
3 Initial Assumptions

1. The Postville immigration raid was, and will remain, a significant event related to the issue of U.S. national immigration policy.

2. The story of the rapid demographic and cultural transition of Postville is an important part of the social history of the state of Iowa.

3. Knowledge of how events and issues unfolded, and the responses to them, offer important insights for other communities facing similar demographic and cultural changes and challenges.

1. The Postville immigration raid was, and will remain, a significant event related to the issue of U.S. national immigration policy.

2. The story of the rapid demographic and cultural transition of Postville is an important part of the social history of the state of Iowa.

   • And the United States

3. Knowledge of how events and issues unfolded, and the responses to them, offer important insights for other communities facing similar demographic and cultural changes and challenges.

   • Still waiting to see if this assumption is borne out.
The Postville Project works to collect, preserve, and present stories and materials related to the community of Postville, Iowa, before, during, and after the 2008 immigration raid at the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant. Luther College and the University of Northern Iowa organized the Postville Project in an effort to preserve and exhibit oral histories, media, and stories surrounding the 2008 immigration raid and the memories of the community both before and after that event.

The Postville Project allows users to contribute materials to the project, browse the collections maintained by the project, conduct research with a list of related resources and videos, and view the 2008 footage from Luis Argüeta’s All Net: The Postville Raid documentary.

- Current face of the project
- Has been an ongoing effort and challenge in terms of evolving technologies
- Look at the project
- Postville Project Collections
  - Rod Library ScholarWorks


- *Shattered Dreams: The story of a historic ICE raid in the words of the detainees* by Virginia Gibbs and Luz Maria Hernandez (Moorpark, CA: Floricanto Press 2014)

- *Postville: La criminalización de las migrantes* by Erik Camayd-Freixas (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2009)
Films & Videos


In the Shadow of the Raid. Directed by Greg Brosman and Jennifer Szymaszek (MCO Film Works, 2009)

The U Turn. Directed by Luis Argueta (New York: Maya Media, 2017)


Documentaries

  - Description: The perversion of the U.S. Constitution, the rule of law, and due process, and the human face of immigration are revealed through the gripping personal stories of the individuals, the families and the town that survived the most brutal, most expensive and largest immigration raid in the history of the United States.

- The U Turn. Directed by Luis Argueta (New York: Maya Media, 2017)
  - Description: The U-Turn is a documentary by award winning director, Luis Argueta, about the transformational journey of the immigrant workers who broke the silence about the abuses
they endured at Agriprocessors, the meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa, and the community that would not abandon them. The film showcases the U visa, an immigration relief in much need of dissemination among, and understanding by, immigrants, immigration rights-advocates and law-enforcement.

- **Abrazos.** Directed by Luis Argueta (Maya Media, 2014)
  - Description: "Tells the story of the transformational journey of a group of U.S. citizen children who travel 3,000 miles, from Minnesota to Guatemala, to meet their grandparents for the first time. After being separated for nearly two decades, these families are able to share stories, strengthen traditions and begin to reconstruct their cultural identity."

- **In the Shadow of the Raid.** Directed by Greg Brosman and Jennifer Szymaszek (MCO Film Works, 2009)
  - Description: The arrest of nearly 400 undocumented workers in Postville, Iowa, pushed the town to the brink of collapse and severed an economic lifeline to one of the poorest areas in the Western Hemisphere.

Local Films

Other Publications & Materials

- Artwork
- Blog entries
- Book Chapters
- Congressional hearings
- Conference proceedings
- Court proceedings
- Journal articles
- Newspaper articles
- News coverage
- Magazine articles
- Photographs
- Personal papers
- Presentations
- Theses/Dissertations
- Theater productions
- Youtube videos

Examples of Other Publications & Materials

- Artwork

- Blogs

- Conference Proceedings
  - 1 Year Anniversary Conference

- Journal Articles
  - American Journal of Sociology
  - Anthropological Quarterly
  - Columbia Journalism Review
  - Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems
  - Families in Society
  - Fordham Urban Law Journal
  - Iowa Law Review
- Personal Papers
  - Erik Camayd-Freixas
  - Stephen Bloom
- Photographs
  - Araceli Castañeda Five Year Anniversary Photo Collection
- Presentations - Sr. Mary McCauley
- Theses
  - *Recent Jewish immigrants' communication in Postville, Iowa: a case study* by Anna I. Levina (University of Northern Iowa. Master's thesis; 2003)
  - “God will deliver us”: human rights abuses from Guatemala to Iowa and Back, 1980-2014 by RaeAnn Swanson (University of Northern Iowa. Master's thesis; 2015)
• Dissertations

• *Community, nationalism, and soccer in America’s heartland: Globalization and Postville, IA* by Douglas White (Arizona State University, 2010)

• *Making Meatville: Belonging and Migration in a Midwest Meatpacking Town* by Cristina Ortiz (University of Iowa, 2013)

• *How Iowa newspapers mirror and shape the attitudes and opinions of Iowans about immigration* by Patti Brown (Iowa State University, 2009)

• *The Question of the Animal and Religion Dietary Practices, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Jewish Traditions* by Aaron Saul Gross (University of California Santa Barbara, 2010)

• *Después del arresto: Una aproximación interdisciplinaria a la criminalización de las madres inmigrantes* by Luz María Ramirez Ede Hernández (University of Minnesota, 2015)

• *The NAFTA spectacle: Envisioning borders, migrants and the U.S.- Mexico neoliberal relation in visual culture* by Jamie Wilson (University of Arizona, 2013)
Cedar Falls Authors

- Jennifer Cooley & Karen Mitchell
  - Carne Viva in Postville: Stories of Madres and Monarchs
  - Carne Viva: engaging simulations on immigration in Iowa

- Mark Grey & Michele Devlin
  - Postville U.S.A.: Surviving Diversity in Small Town America

- Cindy Juby & Laura E. Kaplan
  - Postville the Effects of an Immigration Raid

- RaeAnn Swanson
  - “God will deliver us”: human rights abuses from Guatemala to Iowa and Back, 1980-2014

- Cooley & Mitchell - both creative & scholarly work
  - Carne Viva: engaging simulations on immigration in Iowa

- Postville: The effects of an immigration raid

- “God will deliver us”: human rights abuses from Guatemala to Iowa and Back, 1980-2014 (UNI, 2015)
  - UNI ScholarWorks
  - 196 Downloads

- RaeAnn’s oral history project - Community Voices: Postville Oral History Project
The Postville Story
How does it unfold from here?

- Friday, May 11, 2018 - 10-Year Anniversary
  Commemoration of the Postville Immigration Raid

- Fate of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)
- Comprehensive Immigration Reform
- Response to the changing demographics

How does the Postville Story unfold from here?

- Friday, May 11, 2018 - 10-Year Anniversary
  Commemoration of the Postville Immigration Raid

- Postville’s story is ongoing

- Coming full circle for me as a concerned citizen
  - DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)
  - Comprehensive Immigration Reform
  - Response to changing demographics
  - Majority Minority:
    - 2044 (Census Bureau)
    - 2055 (Pew Research Center)