

2009

Information about the May 12, 2008, Immigration Raid in Postville, Iowa

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE MAY 12, 2008, IMMIGRATION RAID IN POSTVILLE, IOWA

What happened on May 12, 2008?

- **Of the over 950 employees at Agriprocessors 75% were undocumented persons.**
- **ICE agents were prepared with over 600 arrest warrants, but second and third shift workers were not in the plant at the time of the raid, hence only 389 were arrested.**
- **The majority of those arrested were men from Guatemala.**
- **Around 90 were from Mexico, 4 from the Ukraine and 3 from Israel.**
- **56 were released with ankle bracelets, for humanitarian or health reasons, mostly women to care for their children.**
- **12 minors were released.**

What happened after the Raid?

For the six days following the raid St. Bridget's became a "safe haven", with families living at St. Bridget's receiving the comfort of each other, meals, and assistance from local and regional organizations and churches. Lawyers, clergy, medical personnel, translators, drivers, social workers, and friends offered their special expertise and presence. Since the first week many organizations continue to provide on-going expertise and assistance. Donations have come in from across the country following publicity related to the raid. Advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform is at the top of the agenda for future efforts.

See: <http://www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us/PostvilleRelief>

Who is being helped by donations in Postville now?

- 28 women wearing GPS bracelets, and their families, who are awaiting court dates in November 09
- 41 witnesses, adults who are able to work but are finding it difficult to find work.
- 12 minors

How have donations received been used thus far?

- General living expenses: e.g., rent, utilities, phone
- Food and personal items not available through the Postville Food Pantry
- Documentation and Vital Records: e.g., apostilles (certifies the authenticity of a signature), birth certificates, passports
- Medical and dental expenses (partial)
- Legal assistance
- Transportation: airline tickets to Guatemala; mileage reimbursement for drivers (taking people to appointments in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Chicago, Omaha, etc); Buses taking groups of people to O'Hare, Omaha etc.
- Salaries for increased staff to respond to the needs of the people
- Office technology updates required to respond to this humanitarian disaster
- Clerical supplies, phone, internet
- Postage

What are the St. Bridget Staff and volunteers doing now?

- providing a listening ear
- the serving of a meal
- paying bills for those who cannot work
- advocacy work – sharing the Postville story with other communities and organizations
- tracking and expressing gratitude for the many donations of food and money
- securing documents so the citizenship process can begin

- arranging for transportation for those returning to their home countries, court dates, fingerprinting and legal processes in Des Moines and Omaha
- stacking shelves at the Postville Food Pantry
- contacting immigration lawyers
- securing counseling for those traumatized by the raid
- participating in city dialogues about how to help others who came to take the jobs of the Hispanics and are now also unemployed
- urging of our Congressional representatives to advocate for worker justice, family unity, an end to raids and comprehensive immigration reform.

The cost of the raid

It is estimated that the total cost of the Postville Immigration Raid was between \$7 million and \$9 million. It is believed that the cost per day for each detainee was \$95.00. This would mean that the incarceration costs alone amounted to approximately \$5 million. We are uncertain of court costs, translator fees, lawyer fees, transportation, and other processing expenses. To date St. Bridget's Hispanic Ministry has spent over \$1.2 million. In addition, the Postville Response Coalition has spent a good portion of the assistance given to them. The greatest cost is the immeasurable human devastation experienced by Guatemalan and Mexican families, both in Postville and in their home countries. Besides the financial disaster, families are left with traumatic human suffering of separation, fear and devastation experienced because of the raid.

What can you do?

Donate Money

Your tax-deductible gift can be sent to:

St. Bridget Hispanic Ministry Fund

c/o Paul Rael

PO Box 369

Postville, Iowa 52162

or donate on-line: <http://www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us/PostvilleRelief>

Social Advocacy

Advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and an end to raids.

Education

- Participate in educational forums that focus on immigration related issues.
- View documentaries that help you to know and understand the plight of our immigrants and refugees such as:
 - Voice of a Mountain*
 - Dying To Live*
 - The Mountain Trembles*
 - One Border one Body*
 - Strangers No Longer*
 - Under the Same Moon*
- Investigate the following websites:
 - <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>
 - <http://www.immigrationforum.org>
- Be aware of the **five principles** guiding the US Catholic Bishops concerning immigration:
 - Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homelands;
 - Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families;
 - Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders;
 - Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection;
 - The human dignity and human right of undocumented migrants should be protected. (Taken from *Strangers No Longer...Together on a Journey of Hope*. View at www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml)

Pray

- Pray about and for the issue of immigration.
- Reflect on Hebrew or Christian Scriptures that pertaining to immigration.