

Postville today: An update

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POSTVILLE TODAY: AN UPDATE

With just over 2,000 residents, the town of Postville continues to heal from the May 2008 ICE raid. Long time residents and new arrivals continue to call Postville home, including families and individuals from Guatemala, Mexico, the Philippines, Somalia, Israel, Russia, and numerous eastern European countries. School enrollment has stabilized and even grown recently, with recent arrivals from other states as well as abroad.

Postville's economy was impacted by the raid and its aftereffects as well as the national economic downturn. Business recovery is slow. However, there are encouraging signs, including the re-opening last year of a Mexican grocery store that had closed after

the raid. The Kosher grocery business was purchased by a local rabbi, and relocated to the Postville main street in late 2010. Agri Star Meat and Poultry LLC, which has owned and operated the plant since they bought it from bankruptcy in August 2009, has continued to produce kosher meats. The owner, Hershey Friedman, is based in Montreal, Canada. Agri Star currently employs about 700 workers, well below the numbers before the raid. They have retained many of the same supervisors who worked under the previous management. The beef-kill is not at full capacity and skilled workers are needed.

Finding adequate, affordable housing continues to be a challenge for many families in Postville, particularly given the high deposits required for many rentals and the associated utilities. Many houses are owned by local banks due to foreclosure in the months following the raid, and only available for purchase. However, a grant-funded homeownership assistance program through the City has enabled multiple families to purchase or rehabilitate homes. Local churches continue to provide assistance to those needing spiritual and emotional support. However, after 2½ years of providing a centralized location for the response to the raid, the Hispanic Ministry office at St. Bridget Parish has significantly reduced the services provided. The Trinity Cluster, of which St. Bridget's is a part, is now served by a bilingual pastor, and the Hispanic Ministry office at St. Bridget's is served by two former staff who donate their time one half day a week.

The impact of unpaid debts and back taxes continues to be felt by the City of Postville and several local businesses. On average, the Postville Food Pantry serves twice as many families each week as it did prior to the raid. The process of healing and recovery is ongoing.

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

The increased anti-immigrant rhetoric—both at the state and national level—continues to emphasize “being tough” on immigration, but offers no real or comprehensive solutions. Immigration reform legislation introduced during the 111th Congress, including the Real Enforcement with Practical Answers for Immigration Reform (REPAIR) Act and the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (the DREAM Act), failed to garner sufficient bipartisan support to be adopted. Campaign trail rhetoric and the early bills introduced by members of the 112th Congress and the Iowa Legislature point to further impasse and the potential broadening of policies of fear and exclusion nationally and within Iowa.

Our voices are desperately needed to bring about real change to our broken immigration system, in a way that respects our values and moves us forward together.

There are voices that continue to call for a return to large-scale work-site enforcement raids like the one that devastated Postville or complain that “nothing is being done” to enforce immigration law. However, deportations by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) continue at a record pace, and an unprecedented 392,862 people were deported in 2010, many as the result of “soft” raids on workplaces as well as increased border enforcement. These numbers mean that while military style workplace enforcement raids are not being conducted, “Postville” happens three times a day in our country.

You CAN make a difference!

- Help get the word out about *abUSed: The Postville Raid* by purchasing a DVD and showing it to your friends, family, church group, or organization. You can also make a tax-deductible contribution to support distributing the film and creating additional educational and outreach resources:
 - ◇ ON-LINE through the film’s fiscal sponsor, the New York Immigration Coalition at http://www.nycharities.org/donate/c_donate.asp?CharityCode=1722 (Please designate your donation for: abUSed: The Postville Raid Fund)
 - ◇ BY MAIL: All checks can be made out to: “The New York Immigration Coalition.” Please put in the memo: For abUSed: The Postville Raid Fund. And send to: The New York Immigration Coalition, 137-139 West 25th Street, 12 Floor, New York, New York 10001-7277
 - ◇ USING THE SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE AND PLEDGE CARD distributed at the film’s showing.
- **Use your voice!** We need to bring about a cultural change in our conversation about immigration, beginning with our elected officials. From state to national representatives, elected officials need to hear that this matters to you. (see contact sheets available in the resource table).
- **Volunteer locally** to help welcome newcomers and change minds and hearts. Here are some great local organizations where you can begin:
 - ◇ Local and area food pantries and the Decorah Area Free Clinic at First Lutheran Church.
 - ◇ **The New Iowan Center** is always looking for volunteers to help facilitate Citizenship classes (for those preparing to take the US Citizenship Exam), Basic Computer Classes in Spanish, Spanish Literacy Classes, etc. Volunteers are also needed for general office tasks and contacting partners, which would not require bilingual abilities. Contact Dawn Hernandez, 204 S. Ogden St., P.O. Box 1217, Postville, IA 52162, 563-864-7021, or nicpostville@gmail.com.
 - ◇ The **Postville Schools** continue to grow and reach out to newcomers to our area. Help is needed to provide basic school supplies, especially notebooks, folders, colored pencils, and pencil boxes. Send a financial or in-kind donation to the Postville Community School District, Attention: Maryn Olson,

Student and Family Services Coordinator, 314 W. Post Street, P.O. Box 717, Postville, IA 52162, molson@postville.k12.ia.us, or 563-864-7651 ext. 425.

- ◇ The **Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center** welcomes volunteers and donations in advocating for humane immigration reform and assisting new Iowans as they come into our community. Contact Mike Blevins, Executive Director, 119 Winnebago Street, Decorah, IA 52101, 563-382-5337, or michael.blev@nejpc.org.

- **Get informed** our democracy works best when we are engaged and informed. Here are some organizations that have been supportive both in providing service and advocacy on behalf of immigrants:
 - ◇ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops www.justiceforimmigrants.org
 - ◇ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service www.lirs.org
 - ◇ General Board of Church & Society of the United Methodist Church www.umc-gbcs.org
 - ◇ Iowa Immigration Education Coalition (IIEC) www.iowaimmigrationeducation.org
 - ◇ Reform Immigration for America reformimmigrationforamerica.org



SPONSORS

Our deep appreciation to the many individuals and organizations who have made these presentations of ***abUSED: The Postville Raid*** possible. Our special thanks to the following sponsors and in-kind supporters:

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Luther College Lectures and Fine Arts
New Iowan Center
Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center
Oneota Community Food Coop
Postville Community School District

Please tear off this portion of the sheet and place in the donation basket or return at the resource table.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

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Contact me about volunteering for ...

- The New Iowan Center
- The Postville Community School District
- The Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center
- Area Food Pantry
- Free Clinic
- Sign me up for updates from abUSEDThePostvilleRaid.com