

After the Raid is Over: Marshalltown, Iowa and the Consequences of Worksite Enforcement Raids



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For many years, large-scale worksite raids constituted a major element of federal immigration enforcement. While the large-scale and well-publicized worksite raids have tapered, immigration enforcement has continued to increase, and the number of deportations and detentions is at an all-time high.

The ever-expanding arsenal of ICE enforcement policies, together with harsh state and local laws and policies, have harmful side effects that go far beyond the unauthorized population. Policies meant to target unauthorized immigrants also impact their family members, employers, and neighbors. A large number of the people affected are U.S.-citizen children. Latinos, Asians, and others who “sound” or “appear” to be foreign may be the victims of mistakes (such as the U.S. citizens who have been mistakenly deported), or may experience civil rights violations, discrimination, or profiling. In states and localities with anti-immigrant laws and policies, negative attitudes towards immigrants and nasty rhetoric might be enough to cause lawfully present people to leave.

When large numbers of people leave an area, either because they have been deported or because they simply couldn’t endure the hostility, there is a negative impact on the community. Immigrants and their families are workers, taxpayers, business owners, and consumers. When they disappear, so do tax revenues, businesses, and jobs. Furthermore, the goodwill between ethnic communities that took years to build can be quickly destroyed.

This paper examines the effects of the raid on the community’s financial, social, and human capital. It is important to recognize that the same effects are being felt in communities across the country, wherever large numbers of immigrants are being targeted and deported. The economic, social, and human impact of immigration enforcement rarely receives as much attention as the sheer numbers of people arrested and deported, but it is the broader implications of enforcement-only policies that have the strongest negative effects on the community.

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