The debate over immigration remains complex, emotional, and unresolved. However, regardless of one's political beliefs on the issue, as a compassionate, concerned, and largely Christian nation, we have a moral obligation to condemn the Postville raids that violated the human rights of 390 individuals this week. In addition, as citizens of the United States we have a civil responsibility to protect our Constitutional rights, which have been jeopardized by this unjust process.

The very definition of the word “raid” seems inconsistent with a humanitarian approach to solving the immigration dilemma. According to Merriam-Webster, its primary meaning is a “hostile or predatory incursion.” Alternate definitions include descriptions such as a “sudden invasion” or a “surprise attack.” Clearly, the U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE), a part of the Department of Homeland Security, is treating the problem as a hostile military operation. A quick trip to the ICE homepage will reveal that it was created “...to more effectively enforce our immigration and customs laws and to protect the United States against terrorist attacks.”

The employees at Agriprocessors, Inc. were not an organized militia or a terrorist niche. They are mothers, fathers, and hard-working economic refugees trying to make a simple living to support their families.

What's more, these raids are not only inhumane and unnecessarily aggressive, but they are also poorly planned and organized. While it is our understanding that single parents are occasionally released from ICE custody to care for their children, there are many parents who are transported to ICE detention facilities far from their homes, and their family members have no ability to communicate with them. What will happen to the children of the detainees, many of whom are United States citizens, and are currently being barred from consistent contact with their parents? How will this affect these children, our children, and how they come to view the United States? Will this not continue our developing reputation as an ethnocentric nation that uses fear and force rather than diplomacy to solve its problems?

In addition and independent of the inhumanity of these raids is the precedent they have established to violate our Constitutional rights. The Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states that it is “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures...” ICE authorities have argued that they can use warrants to bypass the Fourth Amendment when they have evidence that “criminal violations” will be found at the location. However, how can they detect the “violators” without questioning everyone? And what “evidence” do they have to obtain the warrant in the first place? Is an employer with a large proportion of employees with Hispanic surnames sufficient? Is it an employer's history of various other violations that raises suspicion? And regardless, why aren't the suspects being questioned individually if there is so much evidence against them?

Looking back to history, the justification for these raids seems alarmingly similar to those used to support the Japanese internment camps of World War II. In addition, it has long been a historic pattern that when the economy undergoes a down turn, immigrant groups
are made the easy scapegoats. How satisfying for the Administration to be able to “protect our borders” by rounding up immigrants who are working in low-paying jobs. How much easier is it to have such raids instead of dealing with immigration reform that is humane, fair, and unbiased. Clearly, our government has not learned from its previous errors in misdirecting resources to fight the “War on Terror.” It is now our responsibility to defend human rights and the integrity of our Constitution by sending a clear message to the Administration that we see through the misguidance and mistreatment by strongly voicing our opposition to the ICE raids.

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