

## **EFFECTS OF POSTVILLE ON CHILDREN AND WOMEN** (Taken from Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services)

It is estimated that there are 10.3 million undocumented people in the United States.

They are honest, hard-working people who take care of our parents and children, clean our offices and harvest our food. They come and remain here to carry out vital services for our communities, doing jobs for which there are not enough U.S. workers.

It is extremely difficult for families to travel together to the United States. For example, the current backlog of family preference visas makes U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents wait up to 20 years to reunite with their families.

Postville, Iowa had been a model community in many ways. It illustrated the positive role that immigration can have in revitalizing a local economy and the capacity of very diverse groups to live together in community. At one time the town's population had declined to 800. Then Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn, New York moved to Iowa and opened a kosher meat processing plant. With the subsequent migration of hundreds of immigrant workers from Guatemala, Mexico, Israel and Ukraine, the town was revitalized and the population tripled to nearly 2,000.

After the immigration raid on May 12, however, the town shows the humanitarian and economic cost of our broken immigration system. Having been the largest raid in U.S. history, there were 313 men arrested and 76 women who were bused to the Cattle Congress in nearby Waterloo for initial processing.

It has been a devastating effect on the community. Following the raid, an estimated 65% of the Latino high school students and 90% of Latino students overall were absent from class. Some elementary classes shrunk from 25 children to six. One Postville teacher estimates there are at least 150 students without one or both parents. Children wonder whether they will ever see their parents again, and children of U.S. citizens have psychological impacts and fears of their own parents being taken away like their friends' parents have been.

Additionally, the whole town has felt an impact. Nearly half of the workers in the town's main industry were detained, which is over 10% of the town's total population.