
Two Years and Four Thousand Arrests Later: Del Monte and the ICE Raids, An Update.

by Stephen Manning, Sarah Loose, Alice Perry

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A few hours after dawn, several white unmarked vans departed from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters in downtown Portland. Workers, most of whom lived in North Portland, had left their homes earlier to arrive at the Fresh Del Monte food processing factory, donning their safety clothes and gear to begin another workday cutting and packaging fruit. By 10:30am, agents had spilled from the unmarked vans and surrounded the factory. It was June 12, 2007. The most ferocious immigration raid in Oregon and, at that time, in the United States was underway. By late afternoon, 168 individuals had been arrested.

Since then, ICE has arrested some 4,345 individuals in large scale raids. As the Portland community dealt with the raid and in communities across the country reacted, we learned many things about ICE, about immigration, about ourselves and, most importantly, about our communities.

First, we learned that the whole theory behind ICE's large scale raid tactics was illegal. ICE's mantra was that immigrants are criminals. A few months ago, in a case called *Flores-Figueroa v. United States*, the Supreme Court rejected that theory in a unanimous decision.

Second, we learned that raids like Del Monte have negative impacts beyond just the individuals detained. In Portland, teachers struggled to explain to children why their classmates had suddenly disappeared, even as many children including citizen children expressed fears that they too would be taken away. Massive amounts of energy and money went into dealing with raid's aftermath. Two years later, the emotional and financial costs to the Portland area are still undetermined. Children are still separated from their parents. Faith communities struggle to provide support to detained immigrants who are still awaiting resolution of the immigration court cases. It became clear that when the due process rights of our legal system are ignored in the context of a raid, we all suffer.

For example, in Postville, Iowa, the scene of another massive raid a year ago, the entire town is at the point of going bankrupt. There is an eerie abandoned quality to the town from the schools to the shuttered businesses. The town shrank by half. "It's like you're in

an oven and there's no place to go and there's no timer to get you out," said former Postville-Mayor Robert Penrod, who, overwhelmed, resigned earlier this year.

Third, we learned that enforcement only – deportation – will solve nothing and is a waste of time and money. In Postville, the initial price tag for the raid was more than \$5.2 million in government costs. In Portland, we are still assessing the financial costs of the Del Monte raid. The economic impact locally has been substantial. Nationally, the number of people detained annually is triple what it was just ten years ago, with an annual cost of \$1.7 billion, yet the problems with our immigration system have not been resolved. Ultimately, deporting people does nothing to address the root cause of migration and it underscores the need for a reasonable, rationale solution.

Fourth, we learned that there is no “line” for immigrants to stand in. Saying there is a line implies everyone has a chance to get in line; this is not true for most immigrants and was not true for most if not all of the Del Monte raid victims.

Oregonians are pragmatic people. We overwhelmingly reject the notion that we should (or even that we can) deport 12 million people. Americans know that immigrants contribute to our society and we want a long-term solution.

We learned that Oregonians are also sensible about reforming the immigration system – Oregonians on all sides of the political spectrum. People prefer “a comprehensive approach that secures the border, cracks down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and requires all illegal immigrants to register and meet certain requirements to become legal” over raids. They join Americans across the country 86% of who support comprehensive reform, with 58% strongly supporting it.

Most importantly, we learned that our community is strongest when we act together and work across divides to build relationships. Del Monte workers impacted in the raid and currently stuck in legal and financial limbo, have organized themselves and are partnering with local faith communities and organizations to educate about the need for just and humane immigration reform. Oregonians across the state have come forward to say that what happened at Del Monte was a tragedy and a waste and to assert that immigrants in Oregon are part of the fabric of our community.

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