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Tactics in Swift raids denounced at hearing

BY JASON CLAYWORTH • REGISTER STAFF WRITER • APRIL 30, 2008

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Allegations that federal officials illegally arrested nearly 1,300 Swift workers in raids at Marshalltown and across the country were highlighted Tuesday at a union-sponsored hearing that included remarks by former Gov. Tom Vilsack.

A federal immigration agency spokesman said the allegations were false.

The hearing before the National Commission on ICE Misconduct and Violations of Fourth Amendment Rights drew about 100 people to Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Des Moines.

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Swift workers and minority advocates told of the emotional turmoil felt during the raids.

"Our nation has no real comprehensive immigration policy, so instead we use scare tactics to mark the failure of our system," Vilsack said.

Vilsack and others alleged that immigration officials used humiliation, opposite-sex searches and long periods of secrecy in the Dec. 12, 2006, raids at Swift & Co. in Marshalltown, where 90 people were arrested on immigration charges.

Vilsack, a Democrat, alleged that federal officials violated Fourth Amendment rights, which guard against unreasonable searches and seizures.

"We're here today because it is clear that our constitutional rights have been violated during raids conducted by our government," Vilsack said.

The event was the first in Iowa and the third in the nation to be staged by the National Commission on ICE Misconduct, a group organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

The group, of which Vilsack is a member, is examining the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The commission, which is not affiliated with any branch of government, will produce a public report on its findings.

Swift workers and minority advocates described the ways in which federal officials treated the workers. One man who worked in a Colorado plant said he was denied food, water and permission to use a restroom. Some, according to secondhand accounts, were separated from their families for more than a week and, at times, were denied access to attorneys.

ICE spokesman Tim Counts said the allegations were untrue.

"All the allegations are absolutely false, including that one," Counts said of the statement from one man who said ICE officials denied him access to a restroom for about four hours. "Our work site operations are conducted fully within the law and policy, using methods that have been upheld repeatedly by courts. They're the same methods we've been using for decades."



JOHN GAPS III/REGISTER PHOTOS

Rocio Villagomez, a student and parent, wipes away tears while speaking Tuesday at a Des Moines hearing organized by the National Commission on ICE Misconduct and Violations of Fourth Amendment Rights.

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ICE officials did not attend Tuesday's event.

Melissa Broekemeier, a 19-year employee of the Swift plant who was born in the United States, said she was detained for about six hours. Several Latino teenagers who wouldn't give their last names talked about being left to care for younger siblings after their parents were taken away.

"It would appear that ICE makes its own rules and enforces them in its own way," said the Rev. Barbara Dinnen, a United Methodist minister who worked closely with many of the families affected by the raids.

Reporter Jason Clayworth can be reached at (515) 699-7058 or jclayworth@dmreg.com

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HiIBilyKY wrote:

IMME56 - Please read it again. The whole paragraph pertains to US citizens born or naturalized. You're splitting hairs. Of course a illegal immigrant is a person but we do not owe them due process. This is the problem, no one who defends the illegals wants to read what was written into law.

4/30/2008 3:17:27 PM

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oatmeal wrote:

Is this the same Vilsack that wanted to do away with "Eminent Domain"...you know take your home from you and put up a goat farm. When are we going to stop taking this crap from these commy creeps like Vilsack and the ACLU?...They need an attitude adjustment. BIG TIME!!!

4/30/2008 3:15:13 PM

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IMME56 wrote:

HiIBilyKY

Yes, that first sentence is a description of what a US Citizen is.

However, the next sentence does not state or imply that Person equates to citizen, just the opposite, it distinguishes between the two, using both descriptions in its statement. Therefore a person is not necessarily a citizen, and obviously, an illegal person is still a person.

nor shall any State deprive ANY PERSON of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to ANY PERSON within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws

4/30/2008 3:12:45 PM

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HiIBilyKY wrote:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

Read and then read again the first sentence until you understand what it says. Note this is for United State citizens. No where does it say illegal immigrants.

4/30/2008 3:02:58 PM

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IMME56 wrote:

Most people in the US would be considered illegal aliens if they considered that Native Americans didn't invite them into this country.

The situation posed by the article is not debating whether someone has a legal right to be in the US, but if the ICE overstepped their authority as it relates to the constitution. Any person has rights, whether they are documented, natural born citizens or here illegally. To suggest otherwise would be to dehumanize people.

Did ICE overstep their authority or did their process interfere with the legal rights of other?



By AshleyK:
4/30/2008 2:43 PM CDT



Biofuels, livestock industry, and oil companies all need reform
By DavidGoodner:
4/30/2008 2:22 PM CDT



I'd vote for Wright over Obama, but Obama is the best we've got
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By Barnstormer:
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By JoanneBoeckman:
4/30/2008 11:39 AM CDT

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Courts and lawyers will figure that one out, not internet posters.

4/30/2008 2:50:05 PM

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newwen07 wrote:

They are lawbreakers, plain and simple. Some get caught and some don't...that still doesn't make it right. The fact that they work jobs that most Americans can't afford to work doesn't just "ok" the whole issue. We have turned a blind eye to this issue for too long. All I can say is that if I were to "immigrate" to Mexico, they would lock my butt up so fast and I would not be given due process. In their eyes, I broke their laws, plain and simple. Why is it that some in the U.S. have to open up their mouths and defend these people? They have no right to be here unless they did it legally. I have friends who have legally immigrated and they are disgusted with this whole thing...

4/30/2008 2:37:54 PM

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cyznup wrote:

I wish there was a spot on the tax forms that I could check to say that I dont want any of my tax dollars to go to anything that would help ILLEGAL immigrants. I would feel much better making Viltax and iowafree pick up the rest of it for me since they want the law breakers here. iowafree, how about you go down to the border and just hand over your SS card to the first one you see hope the fence. You can pay thousands trying to restore your credit.

4/30/2008 2:31:53 PM

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sammy1 wrote:

The leaders of Marshalltown put their heads in the sand. City leaders don't want law enforcement to do anything about illegals...because it may hurt the "image"...well it's too late...Marshalltown's image sucks...and its mainly because of this problem. The laws should be enforced..if they were..the citizens would feel much better about the community...at least they'd know something was being done.

Swifts need to be held accountable for who they are hiring. When they hire a criminal they should be called on it.

4/30/2008 2:28:24 PM

[Recommend \(3\)](#)

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sammy1 wrote:

I am so sick of all these bleeding hearts and their comments and commissions. Why don't people against illegals entering our country put on meetings like this...we could shed a few tears too.

I do not feel sorry for these people or their family members...children included. As adults we are responsible for our actions and if those actions effect our children, then we are responsible for that too.

Illegals need to realize that the majority of americans don't feel sorry for them and are not on their side.

You are breaking the laws of this country its as simple as that. You are a criminal.

As for Marshalltown...this has ruin the fabric of that community. The leaders should be ashamed.

4/30/2008 2:24:41 PM

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bikerdoc wrote:

GOMX My ancestors came from Prussia in the mid 1700s but even then there were immigration laws. They werent much but there were laws but that is exactly the point. Yes my ancestors done what they had to do worked hard learned the language etc... but no matter how you slice it they were LEGAL! Just as your son in law and grandfather were and are LEGAL. It doesnt make any difference whether the immigration laws are easy or hard you have to do what you have to do to be LEGAL. If they are ILLEGAL they have no rights and shoudl be sent back to where ever they came from.

4/30/2008 2:22:30 PM

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