

# The Human Face of the Immigration Fight, Part I

Contributed by Len Sherman

Friday, 30 May 2008

Last Updated Friday, 20 June 2008

Every war has its human face, its human cost, and the battle over immigration is no different. To deny that, and simply wrap this issue in political terms, or in spare, simplistic notions of right and wrong, black and white, is to consciously not confront its hard reality.

Every war has its human face, its human cost, and the battle over immigration is no different. To deny that, and simply wrap this issue in political terms, or in spare, simplistic notions of right and wrong, black and white, is to consciously not confront its hard reality.

From The San Francisco Chronicle: Federal immigration officers arrested more than 900 people in California on immigration violations this month, almost half of them in Northern California, officials said Friday.

Fugitive operations teams with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement made 441 arrests in the northern part of the state. Of those, 178 were targeted individuals who had either ignored final orders of deportation or who returned to the United States illegally after being deported. The other 263 were people encountered in the course of making the arrests who did not have legal authorization to be in the country, ICE officials said.

This country will be significantly better off without some of those people.

Roughly 1 in 5 of the people arrested had felony or misdemeanor criminal convictions, according to the agency. They included a 31-year-old Sacramento man with a record of transporting and selling heroin and a 41-year-old man from Watsonville with convictions for spousal rape and burglary. Both men had been previously deported and had returned to the United States.

Other arrests led to other results:

Among those arrested in the Bay Area were 17 people in San Rafael taken into custody at their homes early Thursday, of whom four were targeted by immigration officials, said ICE spokeswoman Virginia Kice.

The San Rafael arrests sent fear through Mexican and Central American communities, which include many undocumented immigrants. Three San Rafael schools reported scores of student absences Thursday, including San Pedro Elementary School, which canceled its open house Thursday night because families were afraid to attend, district officials said. San Pedro's principal, Kathryn Gibney, had testified before Congress two days earlier at a hearing on the emotional impact of immigration raids on children.

The situation apparently did not sit comfortably with even those charged with enforcing the law.

Kice emphasized that ICE did not make any arrests at schools. "Our goal in making all these arrests is to involve as few third parties as possible," she said. "That's one reason we endeavor to make these arrests at residences."

If a crime is a crime is a crime, and the same applies to those committing those crimes, ICE would not hesitate to enter a school, a hospital, or a nunnery. Clearly, the bar here is set a bit differently, a difference the government acknowledges by its actions and its words.