



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on September 21, 2009

Immigration Raids Benefit Legal Workers

According to a Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) report, raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers are not only catching illegal immigrants, they are clearing the way for legal workers to take over the positions vacated by illegals.

A case in point was reported by *USA Today* on September 15. ICE cracked down on six meatpacking plants operated by Swift & Co. in December 2006, rounding up almost 1,300 illegal immigrants. [This represented approximately 10 percent of the workers at the six plants.](#)



How did Swift & Co. respond to such a sudden reduction in its labor force? With new-found ethics resulting from being caught with its hand in the illegal-immigrant cookie jar, the company turned to legal American workers and was back to full staff in a matter of months.

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“Whenever there’s an immigration raid, you find white, black and legal immigrant labor lining up to do those jobs that Americans will supposedly not do,” said Carol Swain, a professor at Vanderbilt University. While the Swift & Co. case may be an extreme example, Swain has noted a growing trend for a positive side effect from immigration raids: “They were very beneficial to American workers.”

The CIS found that, depending on where in the country the job openings have occurred, the composition of the legal workers has varied. In the West, the openings at a Swift & Co. plant were filled mostly by white Americans and U.S.-born Hispanics.

In North Carolina, in a House of Raeford Farms plant that had a staff that was over 80-percent Hispanic, after ICE took action, the workforce became 70-percent African-American, the *Charlotte Observer* reported.

The Great Plains have seen a surge of legal immigrants stepping in to take vacated positions. Jill Cashen, spokeswoman for the United Food and Commercial Workers union representing 1.3 million laborers in the food-processing industry, stated that immigrants from Sudan, Somalia, and Southeast Asia are filling these openings.

Steven Camarota of CIS pointed out that, overall, native-born Americans are filling a majority of the jobs that have become available, putting to rest the myth that America needs illegal immigrants to do the work legal citizens refuse to do. In farming, fishing, and forestry jobs, native-born workers outnumber immigrants two-to-one, and in construction jobs, the ratio is 3-to-1, Camarota said.

The current state of the economy is undoubtedly a factor in people being willing to take jobs that wouldn’t be their first choice. T. Willard Fair, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Miami, believes that the recession is responsible for Americans being willing to do some hard labor: “We’ll take anything now. We’re willing to be exploited for a while.”



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Fair may have a point, but this attitude is not fair to Americans. It seems a little too close to the pro-immigration mantra that most Americans are usually too lazy to do hard work. One need only point to the tens of thousands of Americans who are even now doing some of the dirtiest and hardest work imaginable: serving in the U.S. military forces that are stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Does anyone really believe that these patriotic men and women would not rather be back here in America working in a factory and coming home to their families at the end of a long, hard day instead of remaining in touch by long-distance communications? These brave individuals are being exploited like cheap labor to wage an undeclared war that has lasted longer than World War II, and there is still no end in sight.

America's armed forces should be brought home as soon as possible. Once they are back home and rejoin the work force, there will be even less call for illegal immigrants.

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