

Case Studies for the Know Your Rights Workshop

Case Study #1

At 4:30 a.m., Maria awoke to loud banging on the doors and windows of her apartment. She opened the door because when she asked who was there, the people at the door told her that they were police. They said that they were looking for a male criminal. They wore vests with the word "Police" and came in without warrants, even though no man had lived in the apartment for the seven years she had occupied it.

Maria opened the door thinking it was the police. She thought she should help them with a criminal investigation. When she realized they were immigration agents, she gathered her documents to show them. She told them that she had been awarded Temporary Protection Status (TPS) and was waiting to receive her new TPS card in the mail. They put her papers down, refusing to read them.

The agents watched Maria change out of her night clothes and told her that she would not be receiving a new card this year. She was denied an attorney. Her jewelry and Salvadoran passport were taken away. They arrested Maria before transporting her to a facility where she spent over 24 hours without food or water. She was released without explanation on January 30 at 3:00 p.m., more than 36 hours after she was detained.

Source: Tirella, Tricia, "Immigration agents came at 4:30 a.m. NB woman says she was detained unfairly," Hudson Reporter (Hudson County, N.J.), July 21, 2008

Questions for Discussion

- **What, if anything, could Maria have done differently?**
- **Do you think the officers were acting lawfully in the way they entered Maria's house?**

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Case Study #2

One Thursday afternoon, shortly after the second shift began at the Micro Solutions Enterprises factory in Van Nuys, Calif., hundreds of workers' lives suddenly were thrown into chaos. Approximately 100 armed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents entered the plant, sealing off the exits. Agents ordered workers to stop what they were doing and then proceeded to place workers into three separate lines based upon immigration status: U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident or those who had legal permission to work in the United States, and undocumented workers.

ICE agents ordered all the workers into the cafeteria. The agents would not release documented workers or U.S. citizens until they presented evidence of their lawful immigration status. Workers were not free to leave and had no choice but to go into the designated ICE holding area. Workers, including pregnant women and parents of small children, were not allowed to use their cell phones or go to the restroom.

ICE had arrest warrants for eight employees charged with criminal violations. Although no other employees had criminal charges pending against them, the agents did not limit the enforcement operation to the workers for whom they had warrants. Instead, they detained approximately 150 workers.

Questions for Discussion

- **Did the workers have any rights? If so, what were they?**
- **Is it legal for immigration officials to ask workers to identify their immigration status and country of origin?**
- **What would you do in a similar situation?**

Case Study #3

On the afternoon of May 8, immigration agents raided Agriprocessors, a meat-packing plant in Postville, Iowa. As agents entered the plant, they immediately asked workers to separate themselves into two lines: one for U.S. citizens and another for everyone else. Because many of those present had participated in Know Your Rights trainings before this event took place, many people stood silently and still in the middle of the room. Since the officials did not have any information about them, those workers were released.

Question for Discussion

- **Which of the four rights did the workers use?**