

**Statement on the Recent Mississippi Immigration Raids  
and Protocols to Protect the Rights of Children**

**August 9, 2019**

On August 7, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers conducted work-day raids across Mississippi and arrested nearly 700 people, many of whom had children at school. At the end of the school day—on what was these children’s first day back to school—educators and volunteers had to devise emergency plans to provide food and shelter, emotional support, and age-appropriate explanations to confused and terrified children. These raids ignored federal guidelines designed to minimize the harms of workplace raids on children of arrested parents, ensure that social service agencies are notified prior to arrests so that they could develop plans to meet the needs of affected children, and require ICE to release caregivers of minor children as quickly as possible.

Through our nearly nine decades of work, Osborne has worked to mitigate the harm of family separation that has its roots in chattel slavery and its branches in the criminal legal system. We have developed and supported policies and practices designed to minimize related trauma, maintain family connections, and center the rights and needs of children. We are disgusted by ICE’s increasingly barbaric practices—fueled by hateful and racist speech from right-wing politicians and news media—that subject children to their worst nightmares and put children at grave risk for long-term developmental harm to their health and wellbeing. **These harms are not the unintended “collateral consequences” of our national policies; these raids are actively terrorizing children, parents, and communities.**

In New York, Osborne staff continue to work to reduce the harms and trauma caused by parental arrest and incarceration. For nearly ten years, we have worked to implement child sensitive arrest protocols in our home city and state and to advocate for such practices globally. On Wednesday, the same day that ICE agents swept through Mississippi, Jazmine Headley filed a federal civil rights lawsuit in NYC that highlights the trauma and harm of violently separating parents and children. In December, when Ms. Headley was arrested for sitting on the floor of a Human Resources Administration office, her one-year-old son was violently ripped from her arms, and she was forced to spend two days in Rikers Island.

The overlapping elements of these stories—these lives—cannot be ignored. We are horrified by practices and policies that show little concern for child and family wellbeing. The parent-child relationship is urgently and critically important—we have only to think of our own children and our own childhoods. **The American Academy of Pediatrics warns against separating children and parents, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention includes parent-child separation among its Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that can have negative consequences for health and wellbeing into adulthood.** And yet the increasingly common immigration raids throughout our country needlessly and cruelly separate children from their parents. It is immoral and of dubious public safety benefit to treat anyone in this manner, much less to do this to children. Children need and love their parents. Families should be kept together no matter their immigration status or their ultimate ability to remain in the United States.

Osborne has successfully worked with law enforcement and correctional agencies to implement policies to protect and support children and families. We have a long history that shows us that such agencies can act with compassion and are more effective when they choose to do so. **All law enforcement agencies—from immigration enforcement to the security staff at the Human Resources Administration—can and should train their officers and implement strict protocols to ensure that the needs of children and families are actively considered before an arrest or a raid, and throughout a parent’s involvement in the immigration or legal systems.**

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**About the Osborne Association / 809 Westchester Avenue, Bronx, NY 10455      [www.osborneny.org](http://www.osborneny.org)**

The Osborne Association has an 85-year history of leadership working with currently and formerly incarcerated adults and adolescents, and with children and families affected by the incarceration of a loved one. Osborne is known for developing effective programs that offer a broad range of treatment, education, family, and vocational services to more than 12,000 people each year. Osborne is the oldest and most experienced direct service organization in New York State serving men and women involved with the criminal justice system. We operate at several sites throughout the state, including the Bronx, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Manhattan, Newburgh, and in more than 30 prisons and jails.

For more information, contact Jonathan Stenger, Public Information Officer for the Osborne Association, at [jstenger@osborneny.org](mailto:jstenger@osborneny.org).