



Ahead of ICE raids, NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio says Trump trying to 'divide' America

Kate Sullivan and Veronica Stracqualursi

July 14, 2019

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called for a path to citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants in the US in response to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids beginning Sunday in major cities across the country.

"Let's do comprehensive immigration reform, let's have a path to citizenship for 11 or 12 million people who have been here," de Blasio, a Democratic 2020 presidential candidate, said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" with Jake Tapper.

For decades, he said, the US has had "millions and millions of undocumented folks, and they're core to our economy at this point and they're part of our communities."

When asked by Tapper about President Donald Trump's motivation for the ICE raids, de Blasio said it was a political move and not about securing our borders. It's "political strategy to keep people divided to the maximum extent possible, gin up his base and take people's eyes off all of the other things going on," de Blasio told Tapper.

Trump's "slogan should be: Make America hate again, because he's trying to foment division as a political campaign," he said.

Deportations under Obama

Asked by Tapper if former Vice President Joe Biden, also a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, needs to "answer for" the high number of deportations carried out by the Obama administration, de Blasio said "Absolutely."

"We need to be real blunt about the facts that Democrats made mistakes here, too," de Blasio said, adding there needed to be a "very different approach."

More than 12 million people were "deported" -- either removed or returned -- from the US during the Clinton administration, more than 10 million were deported during the Bush administration, and far fewer -- more than 5 million -- were deported during the Obama administration.

Trump has not reached the level of interior removals as the early Obama administration, according to the libertarian Cato Institute's analysis of data through 2018.

ICE raids

Later on "State of the Union," United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Acting Director Ken Cuccinelli came to Trump's defense on those saying the President is using ICE as a political stunt. "While lots of people in this government were saying it's a manufactured crisis ... those people are now coming to the border and realizing we do have a real crisis," Cuccinelli said.

A senior immigration official confirmed to CNN the operation is expected to target some 2,000 undocumented immigrants with court orders of removal and take place over several days in cities across the nation -- Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York and San Francisco.

Trump revealed in June on Twitter that ICE would begin arresting and deporting undocumented immigrants in the US. Then the day before the ICE raids were set to begin, Trump announced that he would delay the operation for two weeks to see if Congress could "work out a solution to the Asylum and Loophole problems at the Southern Border."

The raids will include "collateral" deportations in which "authorities might detain immigrants who happened to be on the scene, even though they were not targets of the raids."

In the past, de Blasio has called for ICE, an agency within the Department of Homeland Security, to be abolished and shown support for his city's immigrant community.

Ahead of the raids, the mayor shared information for New Yorkers on what to do if approached by federal immigration enforcement.

De Blasio entered the 2020 race in May, taking direct aim at Trump in his campaign announcement video.

The two-term mayor touted his progressive policy achievements in New York City including universal Pre-K and his successful push for a \$15 minimum wage.

He managed to make it to the first Democratic presidential primary debate. But his polling numbers have remained low and he's struggling to stand out among the large Democratic primary field.