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What would Jesus do about immigration, Governor Lee? Not this | Opinion

Our focus should be addressing areas with high crime rates, not targeting specific communities based on appearance or ethnicity.

Mark Proctor Guest Columnist

Updated May 13, 2025, 12:41 p.m. CT

Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

A retired Tennessee Highway Patrol Captain questions the recent partnership between ICE and THP that led to over 100 detentions, primarily targeting the Latino community.

He contrasts this approach with the focus on crime and traffic incidents under Governor Haslam, advocating for a return to a law enforcement philosophy rooted in justice and compassion.

Violent criminals should be held accountable, but immigrants who contribute positively to the community deserve a path to citizenship.

During my tenure with the Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP), I had the privilege of serving alongside many dedicated officers and interacting with countless members of the Latino community. A vast majority of these individuals are striving to build a better life for their families, and they embody the hardworking spirit that defines our nation.

Also, as a Christian, I believe in welcoming and supporting our neighbors, not instilling fear.

Reflecting on our history, if Native Americans had an enforcement agency akin to today's ICE, many of us would not be here. This perspective should guide our approach to immigration today.

As a retired THP Captain, I fully support bringing violent criminals—regardless of their background—to justice. However, this must be done through lawful and humane means. Immigrants who contribute positively to our communities and are not involved in violent crime deserve a path to citizenship, not the threat of deportation.

The recent partnership between ICE and THP in South Nashville, [which led to over 100 detentions](#), has raised significant concerns. This operation, conducted without prior notification to local officials, disproportionately targeted the Latino community and has instilled fear among law-abiding residents.

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Nashville's immigrant population, constituting about nine percent of the metro area, includes many who are essential to our local economy and culture.

Critics, including the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, [have condemned these actions](#) as racial profiling and an erosion of trust in law enforcement. Local leaders, such as Mayor Freddie O'Connell, have [expressed opposition to these tactics](#), emphasizing that they conflict with Nashville's values of inclusivity and safety.

More: [Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell: Recent ICE arrests caused 'deep community harm'](#)

I do not fault the officers involved; they are carrying out orders. However, I question the leadership that sanctions such operations. Under Governor Bill Haslam, our focus was on addressing areas with high crime rates and traffic incidents, not targeting specific communities based on appearance or ethnicity.

The recent legislation requiring local law enforcement to assist federal immigration authorities has further complicated this issue. While proponents argue it enhances public safety, opponents warn it could lead to additional racial profiling and undermine community trust.

Governor Lee, I urge you to consider the moral implications of these policies. Would Jesus, who taught us to love our neighbors, support actions that instill fear and division?

I believe the answer is clear.

It's time for Tennessee to return to a law enforcement philosophy rooted in justice, compassion and leadership, that serves all people equally.

Retired Captain Mark Proctor served with the Tennessee Highway Patrol for 25+ years, including in Command roles under Governor Bill Haslam. He is a lifelong Tennessean and resides in Nashville.