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BREAKING NEWS: SNAKE GODS BREAK NEPAL DROUGHT?

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Published: July 27, 2009

Op-Ed Contributor

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By J. CoCo Chang

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Ads by Google On July 22, 2009, [The New York Times](#), ran an article about the study - reporting that ICE representatives

defended the raids by saying they were focusing on dangerous criminals.

As I read defense statements made by the government justifying why they conduct these raids in such an undignified and borderline brutal manner, I feel compelled to share my family's own immigration violation experience that has pretty much left us scarred for life, not to mention fearful of our own government.

In November 2007, my father was detained by immigration officers in his home, of which he lived for over 16 years. At 5:30 in the morning, three huge ICE officers came to pick up my 65-year old, 5'4", 145-pound father. No warrant was ever shown to him, but they did inform him that he was being detained by order of ICE under Homeland Security. That morning, they literally took him away in his pajamas and only left him time to get identification and nothing else.

For the next three months, they locked him in three deportation centers across the country - Pennsylvania, Texas and New Mexico - which are basically jail facilities for immigrants. Many of these facilities are shared facilities with convicted criminals, which made my father's treatment in these facilities no different than those convicted of their crimes.

I found it outrageous how difficult they made it for my family to communicate with my father. My family was never informed in advance of my father's moves to the three deportation centers and it drove my family to tears every time it happened as the way we would find out he was moved was when we would try to visit him, and would be told that he was not there anymore. Officers would not answer any other questions or give any additional information about where he was moved to or how we could find out where he was.

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Thank goodness for the lawyers we secured, [Bretz and Coven](#), who were able to get him out on bail by the third month. They were also vital in helping advise us on where ICE was probably going to send him next, but I admit they were not cheap.

When my father was granted bail, I made sure to be there to pick him up from the deportation center in Texas. What I didn't expect was to wait almost 15 hours. It was almost midnight when they finally released him and actually seeing how they released him was the most heart-breaking moment I have ever experienced. Officers literally dropped him off, out of a van and onto a curbside with nothing else but the shirt he came in with, which was still his pajamas, and shoes with no shoe laces.

What was even more infuriating was that my father told me that as he was being processed for release, immigration officers called him racial names and when he questioned why they were doing so, an officer threatened to put him back inside the detention center.

For the next year and four months, my father had to go to several immigration hearings where his entire life was to be put on trial for the immigration judge to decide whether he should be deported or not. In June 2009, my father and family, won our victory by having the judge grant my father permission to stay and dropping all deportation charges against him. What was even more surprising was that my father's trial did not even last 10 minutes in court, which says to me that my father's immigration case was not even a serious one. Yet the rest of his life is now scarred by an immigration process that took him more than a year to finish.

My father is actually one of the lucky ones. He had family support, good lawyers and he had lived in this country long enough to know when injustice was being thrust upon him. While inside the detention centers, my father said he saw entire families inside, who had no one visiting them and some couldn't even speak English to ask questions. Additionally, a friend my father made, while inside the detention center, even passed away before he was able to have his day in court, and simply from not getting proper medical care. He left behind a wife and a new-born child.

As an American citizen, I am outraged by this treatment of immigrants and those, like my father, who really can't be categorized as an immigrant after residing in the U.S. for almost 40 years. I understand the need to protect America's borders, but since when is humanity optional to those who are not citizens.

I hope this new study is able to shed some light into a particular aspect of the immigration issue that often gets lost during debates. But even more important, I hope that immigrants, old and new, start to realize the critical need for them to get their own injustice stories out, as a vital next step in helping to reform the immigration laws in a direction that is right and proper for all immigrants.

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