

Pregnant immigrant miscarries after being abused by federal agents

Peter Daniels
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Asian-Americans and others demonstrated in both Philadelphia and New York City on February 15 to protest the abuse of a pregnant Chinese woman by federal immigration officers. The 32-year-old woman, Zhenxing Jiang, was carrying twins and suffered a miscarriage as a result.

Ms. Jiang, who lives in Philadelphia with her husband and two sons, 4 and 7 years old, went to a previously scheduled appointment with immigration authorities on the morning of February 7. She had exhausted her own appeals after being denied political asylum on the basis of China's one-child policy, but had been allowed to remain in the country while her husband's case was pending.

On February 7, however, immigration agents abruptly told her she was being deported immediately, without warning. While her husband and children waited for her outside the Philadelphia office, she was manhandled, thrown into a van and driven to Kennedy Airport in New York City.

According to a lawyer who is representing Ms. Jiang, the agents bruised her and bumped her abdomen, and then ignored her cries of pain until about 5 p.m. The agents mocked her, telling her that she would have to give birth in China, meaning that her new children would not be US citizens.

Tian Xiao Zhang, the woman's husband, said his wife was "crying and asking for an ambulance," which was finally called for by bystanders, not the immigration officers. Ms. Jiang was taken to Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in Queens, where doctors told her that she had lost the twins she was carrying.

After being released from the hospital and returning to her Philadelphia home on February 9, the distraught and fearful woman disappeared for several days. At a press conference in New York on February 15, her

brother-in-law said she had returned home but was severely depressed. Jiang, "who lost her twin babies on Feb. 7 when she was being deported by two heartless federal officers, is a hardworking woman with lots of love in her," said the brother-in-law, Tien Chen Zhang.

Ms. Jiang originally arrived in the US in 1996. She met her husband, who had come in 1994, and they married in 1999. "They shared the same dream: to build a happy family together, in this land of freedom; to have two, maybe three children laughing and running around at home; to stand on their own feet and be proud of themselves," said Mr. Zhang.

Immigration officials denied that Ms. Jiang had been mistreated, but issued a callous statement full of bureaucratic euphemisms, saying that her "arranged departure to China from JFK International Airport was delayed for medical reasons that were addressed immediately by New York Fire Department emergency medical technicians.... Following her treatment at a New York hospital, Jiang was released from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody so she could further address her medical needs. Once she is cleared medically, efforts to effectuate her repatriation will resume."

This latest incident is part of a growing crackdown on undocumented immigrants. Less than a week ago, the *New York Times* reported on its front page about a pattern of abuses against foreign visitors who have been guilty of nothing but minor technical mistakes.

The *Times* highlighted the case of Jose Arroyo Rodas, a 7-year-old whose mother was raised in Guatemala but is now an American citizen. Jose was born in Canada, and immigration officials have tried to deport him since he returned from a brief visit to Canada without proper paperwork two years ago. His mother, Emily Arroyo, has spent \$10,000 in legal fees to prevent her son's

deportation. The case was finally dismissed on February 13, three days after the report in the *Times*.

Government spokesmen claim that cases like that of Jose and several others detailed in the news report are exceptional, but a lawyer from the American Immigration Lawyers Association pointed out that some immigration agents, apparently encouraged by the growing campaigns against undocumented immigrants, are using their power to express their hostility by trying to deny or delay entry whenever possible. One visitor was told, “You’re just trying to take jobs away from Americans.”



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