

Hundreds protest as long-time US resident and mother of two is deported

Genevieve Leigh
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Hundreds of protesters gathered outside of the central Phoenix offices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Wednesday afternoon seeking to block the detention of long-time US resident and undocumented immigrant, Guadalupe García de Rayos. Wednesday's visit to the local ICE office in Phoenix was part of García de Rayos' regularly scheduled check-in with the office, which has taken place every year, and more recently every six months, following a 2008 felony conviction for having false ID papers.

Concerned that this routine would be ended by the recent executive order enacted by the Trump administration on immigration, friends and family of García de Rayos preemptively organized a protest. More than 200 people gathered to rally in her defense, and in defense of immigrant rights more broadly. They camped out outside of the Phoenix office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement as García de Rayos was detained and plans for her deportation were set into motion.

Police dressed in riot gear began to move in sometime after 10 p.m. as the protesters refused to allow federal vehicles to leave the ICE facility. One man tied himself to the front wheels of a van in an attempt to prevent it from leaving; a total of seven people were arrested. These vehicles, lined with bars and heavily guarded, are the buses and vans used to transport people to detention centers or to the border for deportation. Devastating pictures of García de Rayos detained within the bars of one such vehicle as her son and daughter helplessly look on, have flooded the Internet. Her deportation was carried out Thursday morning around 10 a.m. through a Nogales border crossing.

García de Rayos has been a US resident since 1996, coming to the United States with her parents when she was just 14 years old, the same age as her daughter now. Now 36, she has spent over two decades north of the border and is the mother of two teenage children, both of

whom were born in the United States. García de Rayos' husband, Aaron Reyes, is also undocumented, but so far has been allowed to remain in Arizona with their children.

García de Rayos was initially arrested for the "crime" of using a fake Social Security number at her workplace during a raid in 2008 at a water park in Mesa. These workplace raids are one of the most callous elements of US immigration enforcement under the program begun under Bush, and vastly expanded under Obama, called "Secure Communities." The program combined federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies with ICE in an effort to deport immigrants who were already living in communities, as opposed to those attempting to cross the border.

A study by UC Berkeley found that only 52 percent of individuals arrested through the program were slated to have a hearing before an immigration judge and that 39 percent of individuals arrested had a spouse or children who were US citizens. A total of 88,000 families that included US citizens were affected.

After spending six months in jail, García de Rayos was released on the condition that she check in regularly with the ICE office, which she did faithfully from then on. In 2013 a judge issued a deportation order against her, but she was ultimately not sent back to Mexico because of a shift in the Obama administration policy which prioritized removing people deemed to be threats to US security.

Under the Trump administration's January 25 executive order, the restrictions on deportations under Obama were abandoned. Now, undocumented workers who have committed "chargeable criminal offenses" will be prioritized for deportation. Such language can be applied to virtually all undocumented immigrants who are often forced to violate legal bans in order to support themselves and their families. The fake Social Security number used by García de Rayos is one example.

The actions of the Trump administration, particularly in

regards to immigration, undoubtedly mark a watershed in the decay of bourgeois rule in the United States. There is something qualitatively different in the form and scope of repression being carried out against immigrants and refugees, measures which should be seen as a dangerous attack on the entire working class internationally. The actions of the Trump administration build on the policies of the Obama administration, which were anything but “lenient” and “humane” as many news outlets have begun to suggest.

The García de Rayos family will suffer a grim emotional and economic impact, after she was torn from her children and husband by the armed state agents—to say nothing of the effect on Guadalupe herself, separated from her loved ones and shipped off to a land largely foreign to her now.

However, what is most devastating about the experience of García de Rayos and family is that their situation is anything but unique. Similar, and even more tragic situations took place in record numbers under the Obama administration, which deported more than 2.7 million people over the past eight years, more than any other US administration in history.

The corporate media and the two capitalist political parties seek to limit “debate” over immigration to whether Obama was “better” or “worse” for immigrants than George W. Bush, or whether Hillary Clinton’s “fence” would somehow have been less draconian than Trump’s “wall.”

The real issue facing the working class is how to put an end to the entire vile apparatus of borders, fences, walls, detention camps and other repressive measures against the free movement of people. This means the struggle against capitalism and the nation-state system on which it is based, through uniting the working class as an international force on the basis of socialist policies.



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