

Ann Arbor, Michigan father of two faces deportation

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A spirited rally was held Monday in front of Detroit's Department of Homeland Security headquarters to show support for an Ann Arbor, Michigan father of two who faces deportation to Mexico.

Jose Luis Sanchez-Ronquillo, an undocumented worker who has lived in Ann Arbor for nearly 20 years, faces deportation for the second time in three years as a result of the Trump administration's aggressive anti-immigrant crackdown. He was considered a model citizen and had no criminal record.

On April 19 Sanchez-Ronquillo went to the US Immigration Court to file paperwork requesting a stay on his deportation, so that he could begin application for a green card allowing him to work in the US. Accompanying Sanchez-Ronquillo was his son and Leticia Valdez, a friend.

Not long after Sanchez-Ronquillo entered the ICE offices, an officer came out to announce he had been detained. When his son asked to see his father, the agent told him, "Not never, but it will be years," according to MLive.

"It was just heartbreaking to have to watch him have to digest that information," Valdez said.

Both of Sanchez-Ronquillo's children are American citizens and attend Ann Arbor public schools, Bach Elementary School and Pioneer High School.

Sanchez-Ronquillo is being held in a prison in Port Huron, Michigan and faces possible deportation as early as April 25, said family members.

Monica Smith, Sanchez-Ronquillo's attorney, told the rally that she had filed an emergency stay on Sanchez-Ronquillo's deportation that was accepted by ICE. She said they planned to work through the night on a resolution and that a decision was expected on the day the deportation is scheduled.

Smith said she had only received the case the night

before, but understood that Sanchez-Ronquillo had been applying to have his removal status canceled. According to Smith, certain undocumented immigrants can apply for adjustment of their status if they have lived in the US for several years, have not committed any crimes and meet other legal criteria.

Family and friends report that Sanchez-Ronquillo had been a long-time employee at an Ann Arbor restaurant, working his way up from being the dishwasher to the head chef. He is also the breadwinner in the family, meaning that his deportation would throw the family into devastating poverty.

Sanchez-Ronquillo was also threatened with deportation in 2014, under the Obama administration. At that time a letter-writing campaign and calls by community leaders resulted in a one-year stay from removal with many people testifying to his good character.

The latest deportation threat comes amid a widening crackdown by the Trump administration. Just last week, on April 14, another longstanding immigrant resident of the Detroit area, Mario Hernandez-Delacruz, was deported to Mexico, leaving his wife Estrella and three young daughters, Lucero, Matilde and Diana behind.

Born in Chiapas, a southern state in Mexico, Hernandez-Delacruz immigrated with his wife and four-year-old daughter to Texas in 1998, later settling in Detroit. After moving to Detroit, He started a carpeting business and established himself in the southwest Detroit community.

Leticia Valdez, whose husband was with Sanchez-Ronquillo when he was detained, told the crowd that Sanchez-Ronquillo's youngest son goes to school with her fifth-grade son. "I have known this family for six years, since we moved here from California. I'm so distraught that they would take someone away from our

community for no reason.

“I keep getting asked, ‘What did he do?’ But he didn’t do anything. Nothing. He doesn’t have a criminal record. The only thing he did is that he is from another country.”

She noted that Sanchez-Ronquillo works hard, takes care of his family and plays with the children. “The kids need him. We need him. The school needs him. The family financially will be destroyed. His kids will have a very difficult time going to school. Why is this man being deported?”

“This is destroying the fiber of our community. It is instilling fear. This is making people very vulnerable. Afraid. This is not who we are.”

Amory Xhou, a Pioneer High School student, also addressed the rally. He later spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site*. “It’s totally unfair. He’s just a hard-working member who is contributing to the community. His kids go to our schools. He doesn’t cause trouble. His family doesn’t cause trouble. Even if he did, he doesn’t deserve to be just whisked away, never to see his family again.”

Amory added there was widespread opposition in Ann Arbor to the threatened deportations. “These are our classmates. In many ways I feel privileged that we have such diversity of families in Ann Arbor.

“It’s a privilege to be able to surround oneself with such diversity of culture, background and socio-economic status. These deportations affect the families of our classmates, our friends. These are people whose birthday parties we go to and those we do homework with, people we sit next to in class. They are not some scary strangers or foreigners. These are just our friends.

“Deportations in general are an inhuman practice. My understanding now is that people are being picked up for parking tickets. That’s not even a misdemeanor.”

Eleanor Davis, a fellow classmate of Amory at Pioneer, added that it was especially unfair to the children: “They are just trying to live their lives and get through school.” She explained that another one of her friends’ father had been threatened with deportation. That was the case of Yousef Ajin, a Jordanian immigrant who had been threatened with deportation at the beginning of March, but whose case was waived by the judge due to “extreme hardship” in a very unusual ruling.

“Having their father just taken away from them is

wrong,” stated Eleanor. Pointing to Amory she continued, “You know what it is like not living with a dad. It’s terrible. It leaves a big impact and these kids that have done nothing wrong to deserve this.”

“It’s outrageous,” stated David Epstein, a friend of Sanchez-Ronquillo who also spoke at the rally. “Would someone who poses a danger go to the immigration office and file paperwork?”

“ICE has no idea who will take care of his children,” said Epstein, stating that he himself had been an orphan. “I don’t think it is legal to take all of the money he paid into the government. Or that it is legal to make his children orphans.

“If they deport him you have two kids to deal with. That costs a lot of money to society. They are full American citizens, those kids. They have every right to be here.

“Who is Jose [Sanchez-Ronquillo]? He is a man who cooks in a restaurant. He’s the head chef. You take him off the street and what happens? The restaurant doesn’t have a head chef. Take away the head chef and the waitress has no food to serve the table. The guy who owns the restaurant then can’t pay the rent.

“This is a father who is trying to do the right thing. He goes to an organization, not to turn himself in, but to say, ‘Hey, I’m here, what can I do?’ This is not a criminal that you are supposed to get rid of. These are hard working, industrious people.”



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