

Maryland prosecutors drop false rape charges against immigrant boys witch-hunted by Trump

Eric London
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The decision by Maryland prosecutors to drop charges against two immigrant youth charged with raping a classmate exposes the Trump administration's efforts to whip up a violent anti-immigrant hysteria to advance his plans for mass deportation.

According to the *Washington Post*, Montgomery County prosecutors dropped the charges because they uncovered evidence proving the alleged victim was not telling the truth.

"The original charges cannot be sustained and prosecution is untenable" because of "substantial inconsistencies," a prosecutor said.

In March, 18-year-old Henry Sanchez Milian and 17-year-old Jose Montano—both undocumented immigrants—were arrested after a 14-year-old classmate told police and school officials the two boys pushed her into a bathroom, forced her to undress, and assaulted her. Prosecutors announced they would seek life sentences for the two boys, and Montano, a minor, would be tried as an adult. A judge ordered that both be held without bail, ruling that they were "dangerous" and "flight risks."

Shortly after the boys were charged, officials published details of the young men's lives, including the fact that they were living in the US without documentation.

The Trump administration threw the full weight of the state against the two boys, amplifying their case as proof that immigrants are "rapists" and "criminals," as Trump previously claimed.

Just days after their arrest, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers targeted and arrested Montano's 43-year-old father, Adolfo Sanchez-Reyes, placed him into deportation proceedings, and locked him up in an

immigrant detention center.

Press Secretary Sean Spicer announced in a nationally televised press conference: "It's horrendous and horrible and disgusting what this young woman in Rockville [Maryland] went through." He said Trump's mass deportation plan was a priority "because of tragedies like this" and that "immigration pays its toll on our people."

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos said, "As a mother of two daughters and grandmother of four young girls, my heart aches for the young woman and her family at the center of these terrible circumstances."

Fox News's Ainsley Earhardt said those who fail to denounce immigrants are "telling our little girls that this little girl's life doesn't matter as much as these illegal immigrants' lives matter because they don't want to spread a negative story." A Fox guest said immigrants "are raping and killing our people." *Breitbart* featured banner headlines about the "Rockville Rape," claiming the story "generated national outrage."

This campaign mobilized extreme-right wing forces and was aimed at sparking acts of violence against immigrants. A spokesman for the school district said he was receiving many phone calls from people who threatened that "they're going to shoot up the illegals in our school."

In fact, the boys are innocent. According to prosecutors, text messages sent by the 14-year-old classmate show she planned on having consensual sex with the two boys and had sent them lewd photos. In addition, security video and medical and computer records were inconsistent with the girl's accusations.

Prosecutors are still charging the boys with possession of child pornography because of the photos the girl voluntarily sent. Andrew Jelic, an attorney for Sanchez-Milian, called the charges “selective prosecution of elective promiscuity,” and said that sending lewd text messages “is hardly uncommon behavior for teenagers.”

The two immigrant youth have spent the last several weeks in jail—a tragic climax of their thousand-mile escape from their violent homelands.

Jose Montano was born in El Salvador, where he was orphaned as a child. He made the journey to the US in roughly August 2016 as an unaccompanied minor, but was stopped at the border. He had been living in the US for just seven months before his arrest. Henry Sanchez Milian is from Guatemala and entered the US also as an unaccompanied minor in July 2016.

The boys were both in ninth grade, likely because they received little formal education in Central America and were held back in the US, where ninth graders are typically 14 years old. Both face likely deportation and now have a drastically reduced likelihood of winning asylum. Lawyers say the two were fleeing persecution at the hands of dangerous drug cartels, which torture and murder thousands and specifically target young men.

The toxic climate in which the Trump administration launched its campaign against these two immigrant youth was prepared through the marriage of anti-immigrant xenophobia with years of campaigns aimed at attacking the legal rights of criminal defendants accused of sexual crimes.

“Women’s rights” advocate Bridgette Stumpf, the Director of Network for Victim Recovery of DC, told a Baltimore CBS affiliate that even though the Rockville girl consented to have sex with the two immigrants, “Consent is not ongoing, and whether or not it’s true that explicit pictures were sent, those do not themselves convey in any way that this young woman was or was not raped, as she’s claimed.”

This case is the latest in a string of attempts to whip up a tough-on-crime fervor against individuals accused of sexual crimes to advance the right-wing political aims of the ruling class. At the New Year 2016 celebration, police in Cologne, Germany claimed immigrant men sexually assaulted “dozens” of German women in an attempt to generate antipathy toward

refugees fleeing war in the Middle East.

Later that year, a network of feminist groups, police, prosecutors and Democratic Party politicians attacked California Judge Aaron Persky for issuing what they called an excessively “lenient” sentence on Stanford student Brock Allen Turner, who was convicted of sexually assaulting a woman at a fraternity party.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote on June 11, 2016, “The American political and media establishment has, through long practice, made a science out of turning tragedies into profitable sensations and political opportunities ... Hysterical ‘sexual violence’ campaigns, such as the one now underway with respect to the Stanford case, are designed to pollute the political atmosphere, prevent an objective and rational discussion of the most pressing issues.”

The professors and tough-on-crime politicians who attacked Persky for his “leniency” sought to capitalize by directing attention away from public discussion of inequality and war and toward gender identity and “college sexual assaults.” But their anti-democratic method coincides with those of the fascistic elements around the Trump administration who attempt to scapegoat immigrants by mimicking the Nazi press’s 1930s ravings about the “Criminal Jew.” It is significant that no major Democratic politician publicly defended the democratic rights of the two innocent immigrant boys or condemned the witch-hunt against them.



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