

Wave of immigrant arrests, deportations in Michigan

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A series of arrests and deportations of immigrants in the state of Michigan over the last week points to a broader escalation of the Trump administration's reactionary crackdown on immigrants and undocumented workers across the United States.

On January 16, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers arrested Lukasz Niec, a 43-year-old physician, at his home in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Niec immigrated to the US from Poland as a five-year-old in 1979 along with both of his parents. He obtained a Green Card, which grants permanent residency status, in 1989, and has lived and worked in Michigan almost his entire life.

Niec, who does not speak any Polish and has no family in Poland, remains in a county jail awaiting a bond hearing and potential deportation order based on two criminal convictions when he was a teenager 26 years ago. One of the incidents reportedly involved an altercation with a driver after a car crash. The second incident was expunged from his criminal record, but can still be used against him as grounds for deportation.

Also on January 16, Ded Rranzburgaj, a 48-year-old Detroit worker, announced he was seeking refuge in the Central United Methodist Church in a desperate last-ditch effort to prevent his planned deportation on January 25.

Rranzburgaj came to the United States from Albania in 2000, along with his wife, Flora, aged 44, and eldest son, Laurence, who is now 24 years old. He was denied legal residency but has been allowed to remain in the US for the last 11 years, reportedly under humanitarian status, because he is the sole caregiver and provider for his wife Flora, who is wheelchair-bound and suffers from multiple sclerosis, a debilitating autoimmune disease. Ded has worked in construction and as a cook in a Detroit Coney Island restaurant to provide for his

family.

In comments cited by the *Detroit Free Press* on January 16, Rranzburgaj said: "My family needs me. I take care of my wife, and I work to support my sons, every day. If they deport me after taking care of my wife for 11 years, I may never see her again. My sons would need to leave school to take care of her. It would be devastating for my family."

His wife commented: "I am scared that they will deport my husband. He takes care of me every day. Every day he helps me shower, change clothes, he cooks my food. If they deport him, there will be nobody to take care of me."

Rranzburgaj's youngest son Erik was born in the US and is now 12 years old and attends a high school in Southgate. Laurence Rranzburgaj, who attends the University of Michigan Dearborn, is currently enrolled under the DACA program, which provides temporary residency to people who entered the United States as children. Last September, the Trump administration announced that it was rescinding the DACA program.

House Democrats announced today they would vote to end the weekend federal government shutdown without obtaining any agreement from Republicans on the maintenance of the DACA program, bringing to an end the political charade by which the Democrats had absurdly postured as defenders of immigrants.

ICE has refused comment on whether it will raid the church to arrest Rranzburgaj. ICE's "sensitive locations" policy states that raids and arrests should only be carried out in churches and schools in "limited circumstances" and should "generally be avoided," but there is no law preventing such actions.

These incidents follow the January 15 deportation of Jorge Garcia, 39, a Lincoln Park resident who has lived in the US for three decades. Garcia, now staying with

his aunt in Mexico City while seeking re-entry to the United States, has been forcibly separated from his wife, Cindy, a former worker at the Ford Dearborn Truck Assembly Plant, from his 15-year-old daughter Soleil, and his 12-year-old son Jorge Garcia Jr. All three are US citizens.

Jorge had arrived in the US from Mexico as a 10-year-old with an undocumented family member. In 2005, he applied for a Green Card, but his attorney filed the wrong paperwork. As a result, Garcia's application was denied, automatically initiating deportation proceedings. Since then, Garcia had been forced to apply for stays of deportation each year. Last November, immigration officials informed him that he would be detained for deportation.

Diego Bonesatti, legal services director at Michigan United, a non-profit immigrant rights organization that has provided assistance to Garcia and his family, told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the soonest that Jorge could hope to return to the US would be in 18 months, assuming his application is approved. Jorge's wife Cindy has filed two waivers that are needed to allow him to re-enter the US despite having been deported for being in the country unlawfully. Cindy has stated that the family has already spent \$125,000 on legal fees. Completing the fees for the waivers alone will cost between \$5,000 and \$7,500.

Cindy Garcia told NBC News on January 18: "It's going to be very tough because I'm medically disabled from Ford Motor Company, and am retired. So I am living off low income. It will be very rough. I have to support two households: mine and Jorge in Mexico, until he gets a job."

The wave of arrests in Michigan is part of a broader escalation of Trump's anti-immigrant crackdown across the country. On January 10, ICE agents conducted mass workplace raids on 100 7-Eleven convenience stores, arresting 21 workers. Last week, immigrant communities across California were thrown into panic after a local newspaper reported that ICE was planning a mass police-state dragnet aimed at rounding up 1,500 undocumented workers.

The administration's attacks on immigrants are aimed at promoting racial and ethnic divisions in the working class, as a spearhead of the efforts of both parties to attack democratic rights and prepare for dictatorship. This is being carried out by Trump

through the promotion of an extreme-right and fascistic base of support, and by the Democratic Party through the demands for stepped up police-state censorship of politically oppositional websites on the Internet, under the McCarthyite banner of targeting "Russian influence."

The Democratic Party has picked up the case of Jorge Garcia and is seeking to exploit it in an utterly cynical manner, as part of the party's campaign in the 2018 midterm elections. Debbie Dingell, the Democratic Congresswoman from the district including Dearborn, announced on January 18 that she had invited Cindy Garcia to be her guest at Trump's 2018 State of the Union address in Washington, DC.

Dingell stated that it is "time for Congress and the President to find the political will to do what is right, not what is convenient, and fulfill this nation's promise to those who come here seeking a better life..."

What a fraud! Where was the Democratic Party's supposed support for those "seeking a better life" under the Obama administration? Obama appropriately earned the title of "deporter-in-chief" because he deported more immigrants than any president before him. Despite Trump's mass roundups of immigrants, he deported fewer immigrants in 2017 than were deported in the Obama administration's final full year in office. Obama was responsible for the massive militarization of the southern wall along the US-Mexico border, including with predator drones, which has led to hundreds of migrant deaths in the desert borderlands.



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