

Davino Watson, US citizen wrongfully detained by ICE, calls for the defense of immigrants facing deportation

Nick Barrickman
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Davino Watson, a US citizen illegally detained for three-and-a-half years by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) between 2008 and 2011, spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about the mounting government attack on immigrants in the US.

Watson's interview with the WSWs occurred in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision that immigrants detained and awaiting disposition of their cases were not entitled to bail hearings, effectively subjecting them to indefinite detention without due process. Watson's suit against the US government for his near-deportation and years of detention in ICE's maximum security prisons was dismissed last summer on the specious grounds that his opportunity to sue had elapsed while he was still detained and fighting deportation.

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Nick Barrickman: What is your reaction to the recent Supreme Court decision denying immigrants the right to seek bail?

Davino Watson: It's very disturbing that they can now detain immigrants for this amount of time. It's morally wrong. There are a lot of people who will be affected by this, emotionally, and I'm just hoping that this decision will be overturned in the future.

NB: The decision basically creates a class of people in America who are not protected by the US Constitution. Relating this to your own experience, there's very little keeping the US government from expanding this treatment to American citizens.

DW: Right. That was my initial thought and that's what I feel happened to me, too. I feel like my constitutional rights were violated.

It's not going to just be immigrants. It will also be American citizens caught inside this as well. It's kind

of like a Catch-22 in a sense, because you're going to have American citizens locked in jail for these long periods of time and they will not be able to file a lawsuit, because the government will say they thought you were an "illegal alien" and these are the proper procedures. It's devastating.

I can't even imagine how the immigrants feel, especially the DACA recipients. Trump was talking at the recent Conservative Political Action Conference and he stated, "Our immigration laws are so bad that when we catch [immigrants], it's called 'catch and release.' We have to by law catch them and release them."

I look at my case and ask: Why couldn't you "catch and release" me? For me to be locked up for three-and-a-half years when they had all of my information on hand is very wrong. If they had checked the paperwork that I had forwarded to their superiors in ICE, I wouldn't have spent so much time in jail. If that were to happen to me now it would be that much more traumatizing.

When Trump talks about immigrants I believe he's engaging in stereotypes. Not all immigrants are criminals. You have immigrants that work hard, you have people that come and want to pursue their dreams. That's what "makes America great," the diversity of the people.

NB: We live in an international society right now...

DW: I think that ending DACA will shine a really negative light on the government. People are going to hate the US for this. The Dreamers have a right to be in this country and better themselves. I was watching a lot of videos of how families were reacting to this, the kids. You could see a sense of betrayal in their

reactions. This was something extended to them, and now it's being taken away.

Eight hundred thousand people will be affected by this. That is not a small number. That's a violation of their constitutional rights. These kids didn't beg to come here; their parents brought them. They've been here for a long period of time and are striving to do better. I believe Trump is racist to put immigrants in the same category as criminals and gangs.

When I was in the detention center in Buffalo, New York for those years, there was this one Mexican, his name was Aguilar. I remember I would try to talk to him. He couldn't really speak English, but he was always so nice. He would tell me about where he lived. There was so much murder and every day he said he "walks in fear."

He came to America and he would work on farms and things like that. He would get locked up because, you know of course, people would call immigration and ICE and throw him in detention. He would tell me, "I'm going to come back," and I'd ask, "Why?" He said he had no choice.

I felt bad that he would go through this cycle of coming to America, trying to establish himself, praying not to be arrested, then—boom—he gets caught, thrown into detention and deported. It's heart-touching. He has kids, he's like, "I don't do anything wrong, I'm just trying to work." It's very disturbing.

NB: If the government begins deporting DACA recipients, this would represent one of the largest forced migrations in history, on the scale of the US internment of the Japanese during World War II and the Nazis sending European Jews to ghettos in Warsaw, for instance.

DW: I believe it. I can imagine people being deported in large numbers back to certain countries. These are people leaving their countries because of wars, because they were being terrorized by gangs and narcos. They've possibly seen their friends and family members being killed. To send these people back to that environment is totally wrong. Not to mention, these countries would also have to prepare to take in these large numbers of people.

NB: Our organization, the Socialist Equality Party, calls for working people to build their own political party. What do you think of a party that would unite people, not based upon their race or what country they

were born in, but based on their role as the creators of society's wealth, the working class?

DW: I think that would be great. As working class people, we see what's really going on. I think that having a party to represent these people, to speak to their issues and contest things, I think that would be awesome. That's what America needs right now at this time.



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