

Bullied over family's immigration status, Texas 11-year-old takes own life

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19 February 2025

Jocelynn Rojo Carranza, an 11-year-old sixth grader in North Texas took her own life this month after being bullied for months at school over her family's immigration status.

Carranza's classmates allegedly made threats to inform Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in order to deport her family and said she would be all alone following her family's deportation.

On February 3, the young girl's mother, Marbella Carranza, received a call informing her that her daughter attempted to take her life.

Jocelynn was rushed from the family's home in Gainesville, Texas, about an hour north of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, to an intensive care unit. She passed away on February 8 in Dallas after five days in the hospital.

Her tragic death is a result of the mass deportation campaign led by the Trump administration and embraced by both the Democratic and Republican parties.

"I waited a whole week for a miracle that my daughter would be well, but unfortunately nothing could be done," Marbella said in an interview with Univision. "My daughter will always live for me, and I will always love her."

A crowdfunding effort on GoFundMe set up on February 5 to help pay for hospital bills has raised over \$29,000 from almost 700 donors, showing the widespread sympathy for Jocelynn. Many donations expressed their condolences to the family and left heartfelt messages.

One person, writing in Spanish, said "My deepest condolences—there are no words. Fight for justice for your beloved Jocelynn, and hopefully one day you will feel peace knowing that she is no longer suffering and that so many have her in their thoughts and prayers."

School officials knew about the bullying yet no action was taken even after it got more aggressive. Her parents were never notified. The death itself was not acknowledged by Gainesville Independent School District when asked to comment by *The Independent*. Instead, the school administration merely pointed to their anti-bullying policy.

Texas governor Greg Abbott has deployed the Texas National Guard to the border as part of Operation Lone Star, along with several other National Guard components from other states and a contingent of US soldiers sent by Trump. A climate of intimidation has been whipped up against any opposition to the attacks on immigrants, creating the conditions where anti-immigrant bullying can happen without any recourse for the victims who are essentially left to their fate.

School workers, many of whom oppose these reactionary politics, find themselves wedged between a far-right administration which would have them fired for speaking up, and a union bureaucracy which has made clear they will do absolutely nothing to protect them from victimization. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA), the two main teacher unions, have done nothing to mobilize their membership and from day one downplayed Trump's assault on education.

Bullying is an issue which is well known in US schools. Among students ages 12–18 in grades 6–12, almost one in five are bullied in US schools as of the 2021–2022 school year, according to government data. Bullying certainly isn't unique to US schools. It is symptomatic of poverty levels as a UNESCO study detailed. The poorer students are, the more vulnerable they tend to be to bullying.

The children who committed the bullying, while exhibiting inexcusable behavior, are just that, children.

They are extremely impressionable and vulnerable to the pressures of society and are emulating what they are seeing carried out at the highest level of the government and political establishment.

Jocelynn's death comes amid a mass deportation campaign carried out by the Trump administration with the support of both big business parties, Republican and Democratic.

It has much in common with another suicide of a school child, that of NeX Benedict. Benedict was bullied for being non-binary after a far-right campaign was waged at the highest levels of the Republican Party promoting anti-trans bigotry, with no opposition from the nominal Democratic Party opposition.

The fascist Trump administration and the Republican Party bear immediate responsibility for these deaths, but the rot goes much deeper.

Trump's policy would be impossible without the ongoing complicity of the Democrats and their role in promoting decades of promotion of anti-immigrant chauvinism. The Democrats voted for the anti-immigrant Laken Riley Act which is part of the plans for the "largest deportation operation" in history. A recent deportation of a Miami teacher further exposed the bipartisan character of the attack on immigrants, and especially in schools.

It is a widely known fact that the Obama administration deported more immigrants than any other administration to date, with the Biden administration taking second place. Kamala Harris, the failed right-wing candidate of the Democratic Party and former vice president under Biden infamously told migrants fleeing destitution and rampant violence in Central America "Do not come, do not come ... if you come to our border, you will be turned back."



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