Detroit high-school student arrested by ICE on a field trip, sent to prison in Michigan's remote Upper Peninsula

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29 May 2025

On May 20, an 18-year-old student at Western International High School in Detroit, Michigan, was arrested by police during a traffic stop and then turned over to immigration agents. He is now being held at Chippewa County Correctional Facility in Michigan's remote Upper Peninsula, more than five-hours away by car, where he faces deportation proceedings.

The teenager was driving himself and three classmates to attend a school field trip at Lake Erie Metropark when they were pulled over by Rockwood, Michigan, police officers, who then called Customs and Border Protection (CPB). The CPB operates across the entire state of Michigan, because it lies within 100 miles of the Canadian border.

One of the students' teachers explained to this reporter what happened next. "The students in the car contacted me, to say, 'We are in trouble! ICE is here! Help!' I went to the field trip via bus and I didn't have a car, so I asked park workers to drive me to the scene. There were about seven police and border patrol cars there."

"Police officers told me they called Border Patrol and checked immigration status of all the kids," she continued. "When I told them these were high school students, they were like, 'Oh they're students? This would look bad if we arrest them all. Maybe you can take some of them back.' The driver of the car was 18 and he had an overstay on his papers, so they said they were definitely taking him. But then eventually they let me drive the others back."

Thus, the teacher's courageous intervention may have saved the other students from suffering the same fate, at least for now.

The imprisoned student is a Colombian immigrant who had been in Detroit for over a year. He is not accused of any crime.

"He's a very sweet kid," his teacher said. "And very much still a kid. He's not a student who's getting in trouble. This is a student who wants to graduate high school. And he has a lot of friends. People love him! He arrived in the US about two years ago and only recently turned 18. So he was a minor when he arrived and he had no control over coming here."

The arrest has sent shock waves through the community. Western International High School is the main high school in southwest Detroit, a part of the city that has been a hub for Latin American immigrants for over 100 years.

"Everybody is upset and everybody is scared," the teacher explained. "The students who were in the car with him are not OK. They all need a lot of love and compassion and they aren't getting that. Everyone's hurting. Some of his friends made a petition to send to his lawyer for students to support his release. It's crazy they sent him to the U.P.!"

Michigan's Upper Peninsula, known as the U.P., is a remote and sparsely populated portion of the state, and the Chippewa County Correctional Facility is over 300 miles from Detroit.

Meanwhile, the Detroit Federation of Teachers union, "has not done anything," the teacher explained. "I reached out to the union president [Lakia Wilson-Lumpkins] and told her what happened and she didn't respond. Which is outrageous. Workers everywhere need to unite and support each other in these situations."

The student is only the latest victim caught up in Trump's anti-immigrant dragnet, which not only

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targets those without documents. Earlier this year, also in southwest Detroit, less than a mile away from Western High, Ricardo Prada Vásquez, a 32-year-old Venezuelan-born delivery driver living in the country legally, was arrested and deported to a concentration camp in El Salvador after he took a wrong turn and found himself accidentally at the Detroit-Windsor border crossing.

These arrests are part of the Trump administration's ongoing mass deportation operation and are an attack on the democratic rights of the entire working class. The fact that high school students are now being targeted exposes the right-wing lies that immigrants are violent criminals and a threat to society.

"We know they are not seeking out criminals," the teacher said. "Seven police and ICE cars is outrageous, for a car of harmless teenagers. They were all sitting around hungry for this. We've seen videos of ICE pulling up to construction sites and tackling people without knowing who they are, people who are working," she said, referring to the workplace raid that took place just yesterday in Florida, in which over 100 construction workers have been arrested.

Other Detroit teachers also spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about the incident. One said, "As a teacher that facilitates international travel, this has become a major concern. Dual citizenship holders, US-born students of immigrant families, all of them feel like gray areas where I have to be extra concerned about kids under my care getting taken at borders."

Another teacher said, "Even though I'm an immigrant who came into the country with papers and obtained American citizenship on my own via the usual process, the cruelty and disregard for the Constitution that the current administration and those complicit with it have repeatedly shown makes me feel unsafe anyway. I have students who have family vacations and study abroad programs coming up over the summer and I worry about them coming back into the country even though they're American citizens and/or green card holders."

The attacks on immigrant workers and their families must be resisted by the entire working class, regardless of citizenship status. Trump has already threatened to go after "homegrowns." There is no question that the detention and deportation of so-called "illegal" workers will be expanded to include all those who resist the Trump administration's drive toward dictatorship.

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