

Voices Without Faces: “We are workers, not criminals!” — A DACA recipient speaks on fear, family and solidarity

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Voices Without Faces is a new series of articles on the World Socialist Web Site. Our purpose is to focus on and give a voice to immigrant workers who are isolated from and out of the view of other workers, and the capitalist press, by raising real life conditions as well as, importantly, political issues. Readers and workers are encouraged to participate. Your anonymity will be guaranteed.

At least 21 US states, all but one with Republican governors, have announced deployment of National Guard troops to support Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in managing detained migrants.

By mid-2025, the Trump administration’s second term is on track to exceed 400,000 deportations by year’s end, a pace not seen since deporter-in-chief Barack Obama. The administration has escalated large-scale workplace raids and militarized sweeps, using fascistic rhetoric about “dangerous rapists” and “criminals” to justify what is, in reality, an assault on the working class.

These mass expulsions are part of a broader ongoing coup in Washington D.C., where democratic rights are being dismantled to consolidate authoritarian rule. As immigrants are rounded up, imprisoned and deported, the government is sending a clear message: those who labor in the fields, warehouses, restaurants and homes of America are expendable.

Patricia, a DACA recipient brought to the United States as a child, shared her story with the *World Socialist Web Site*. Her experience lays bare the realities of capitalism: decades of hard work, sacrifice, and solidarity, met with constant fear, exploitation and threats of deportation.

A mother’s impossible choice

Patricia’s story begins with a decision no parent should ever have to make: entrusting a stranger with her life.

“My mom was young when she crossed,” Patricia recalls. “She had to give me to the coyotes so I could get across. She couldn’t come with me because they caught her the first time.”

Her mother later succeeded on a second attempt, wading through the Rio Grande in the dead of night. “She told me she thought she was going to drown,” Patricia says quietly. “She’s never wanted to talk about it since. None of our parents really do.

“For a mother to take that risk—to hand over her baby to strangers—it

means there’s nothing left where you are. People don’t leave for fun. They leave because there’s no choice.”

From garage to garage

Once reunited, the family’s first years in the US were defined by instability and a very humble beginning.

“We lived from garage to garage,” Patricia says. “Sometimes five, six people in one room. I had nightmares for years after the crossing—images of running, hiding, drowning. I didn’t even understand where the dreams came from until I got older.”

The trauma of her father’s crossing was just as profound. “One time, [her father and others] were being smuggled in a truck,” she explains. “The driver hit speed bumps too fast, and they were tossed around like rag dolls. When he finally came home, he was a zombie. He couldn’t even speak for a week. He didn’t know if he’d survive.”

Her father risked everything for a chance to see his own mother one last time in Mexico. “He was terrified it would be the last time he saw her,” Patricia says. “Every time someone leaves, you don’t know if they’ll make it back.”

Family values in a climate of hate

While Trump’s rhetoric paints immigrant families as criminals, Patricia’s story reveals the opposite: sacrifice, humility, productivity and deep love.

“My parents worked every day, never complained, and gave up everything for us,” she says. “We’ve always valued family first. We take care of each other.”

As the oldest, Patricia took on a parental role for her younger siblings, helping with schoolwork, meals, and household responsibilities. “It wasn’t a burden,” she says. “It’s just what you do. You help your family survive.”

All these values stand in sharp contrast to the caricature used to justify mass deportations. “They talk about us like we’re criminals,” Patricia says. “But we work harder than anyone. We love our families. We contribute. We belong here.”

Living under DACA: “It’s not protection. It’s a leash.”

Patricia first obtained DACA status when she was a teenager. At the time, it felt like freedom—but she quickly realized its limitations.

“DACA isn’t security,” she says. “It’s a leash. They know where you live, where you work, everything. At any moment, they can take it away.”

Now, as courts weaponize deportation proceedings, the stakes are higher than ever. “If I lose DACA at my next renewal, I could be detained right there in court,” Patricia says. “It’s a trap.”

Her younger siblings, all US citizens, live with the same fear. “They’ve grown up knowing ICE could take me away. They’ve learned that citizenship doesn’t always protect you. Not when the government decides otherwise.”

Patricia’s father still makes daily trips to the area where he works despite living in constant fear of ICE raids. “He’s on social media all day, following every alert,” Patricia explains. “He stays in touch with us constantly, asking where we are, making sure we’re safe.”

This constant vigilance—tracking ICE checkpoints, sharing locations of raids, warning neighbors—has become part of daily life. “We’ve learned to survive like this,” Patricia says, “but it shouldn’t have to be this way.”

The illusion of sanctuary

California brands itself a “sanctuary state,” and cities like Los Angeles advertise themselves as safe havens for immigrants. Patricia is not convinced.

“They say California is a sanctuary, but ICE still comes here,” she says. “They raid workplaces, schools, neighborhoods. They coordinate with local police. It’s not protection—it’s a false sense of security.”

The August 14 militarized operation in Los Angeles underscores her point. That day, dozens of heavily armed Border Patrol agents in full tactical gear descended on the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo—timed precisely with Governor Gavin Newsom’s press conference promoting a Democratic redistricting initiative ahead of the 2026 midterms.

“They put on a show,” Patricia says bitterly. “Democrats act like our defenders, but they’re using us as political pawns while letting the raids happen.”

Race, class and division

Patricia is deeply frustrated with the political establishment—including Democrats and the growing number of Latino officials who claim to represent immigrant communities but fail to deliver real change.

“There is no voice available for the immigrant community,” she

explains. “We have so many organizations, so many lawyers, so many people with good intentions trying to support us. But it’s really, really frustrating when we see Latino identities in the government and the true conversations that need to be had aren’t being had.”

Patricia emphasizes that even the language used to frame these debates has become a tool of exclusion and confusion, designed to hide the real class questions at stake.

“There’s so much language being used to disguise this conversation,” she says. “For a lot of undocumented folks who don’t have the background or the vocabulary, it becomes hard to follow. But we do understand the ideas. We feel them in our lives.”

“And what we understand is that it’s no longer just fear for ourselves, regardless of citizenship, regardless of race, regardless of nationality. Class is definitely a very, very big conversation that needs to happen.”

For Patricia, the promotion of identity politics has become a deliberate distraction from that conversation. “They put people in power who look like us but don’t fight for us,” she says. “Meanwhile, all workers—white, Black, Latino, Asian—we’re all facing the same exploitation. That’s what they don’t want us to see.”

A fight for the whole working class

Patricia sees her community, made up overwhelmingly of immigrant and working class families, as a living proof of collective survival.

“Where we live, people take care of each other,” she says. “If someone’s short on rent, neighbors help. If ICE is in the area, everyone texts each other. That’s community.”

She rejects the capitalist obsession with individualism, where people are pitted against one another for survival. “They teach us to compete instead of cooperate,” Patricia says. “But we survive because we stand together. Without everyone else, we’d have nothing.”

Patricia’s voice sharpens when she addresses the broader political context. “We came here to work. My parents worked themselves to the bone. I’ve worked since I was a teenager. We’re not criminals—we’re the workforce that keeps this country alive.”

The Trump administration’s deportation machine, she argues, is not about “protecting public safety” but consolidating power for the ruling elite. “They’re criminalizing workers,” she says. “First immigrants, then anyone who protests, then anyone who speaks out.”

Patricia’s story is one among millions—but it illuminates the stakes for the entire working class. As deportations accelerate and democratic rights are shredded, the alternative cannot be reliance on either corporate-controlled party.

“We’ve learned nobody’s going to save us,” she says. “Not the Democrats, not the Republicans. We have to protect each other.”

The fight against deportations and attacks on immigrants must be bound to the fight of all workers—native-born and immigrant alike—for political power and control over the wealth they create.



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