

Customs and Border Patrol abducts 2 16-year-old Detroit high school students in predawn raid

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Two students from Western International High School (WIHS) in Detroit—16-year-old cousins from Venezuela—were seized by federal immigration agents in a predawn raid on November 20. US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents swept into their home on Detroit's east side with a search warrant for another individual. Not finding their target, the CBP seized the young students together with one parent from each family.

The youths are Venezuelan asylum seekers with active cases and valid work permits. They both worked at a Chili's restaurant and were described as "excellent students." The young boys and their family members are now imprisoned in the South Texas Family Residential Center, an ICE facility.

Attorney George Washington, who is part of the family's legal team, told the *Detroit Free Press* that ICE agents entered the home while the occupants were sleeping. "Suddenly, ICE appears at the door, busts into the place, and tells them that they're all being arrested." All four who were detained had pending asylum petitions, Washington said. "We have a tremendous immigration lawyer from Detroit who did everything he could," to assist the four while they remained in Michigan. But, Washington said, they were sent to Texas "too quick." "He's going to continue representing them, and we're going to get them out," Washington said.

These children are not the first Western International students to be abducted. On May 20, 2025, Maykol Bogoya-Duarte was pulled over by Rockwood, Michigan police while on his way to a school field trip. Unable to produce a driver's license, he was arrested by Border Patrol and deported to Colombia in June.

There is no national or statewide database of how many students or youth have been abducted, detained or deported, although the Detroit ICE field office oversaw

the deportation of approximately 2,300 people to more than 80 countries in the first six months of 2025. The available information indicates that these deportees include at least 40 children under 16, the youngest of whom is three or four years old.

"This is very wrong! Kids shouldn't be taken," a Western International student told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "School is supposed to be a safe space. They were kidnapped by ICE even though they were following the rules. This is kidnapping, no matter how you cut it. Kidnapping in its finest form. Kids should be able to go to school without having to be worried about if ICE is going to take them or not."

High school students nationally are incensed at the brutal attacks on their classmates. Last week, more than 56,000 students in districts across North Carolina walked out or did not go to school to protest the presence of ICE and Border Patrol. Western International students walked out last March to protest Trump's deportations.

A Western International teacher, speaking to the WSWs, explained that fliers in the school first said the students were "missing." "We just thought they were missing. Everyone thought that it was a non-governmental, ordinary criminal who kidnapped them. Then we found out it was ICE.

"The abduction is quick, but the process takes so long when ICE abducts people. Even when someone is arrested for a crime they are given due process, then everyone knows what happened and where they are.

"How do they get away with this? Not letting anyone know? The rapidity of this is outrageous. If you can't identify yourself and explain what you're doing, you are trying to outrun due process, and that is wrong. It is illegal and should be stopped.

"There is a comparison to GITMO [the US military

prison in Guantanamo Bay]. They abducted and detained people who they said were potential terrorists, these are children who have done nothing wrong.

“I had a student in a terrible situation, she was separated from her father, and she didn’t have any paperwork. He had all of her paperwork. She was living in Warren [Michigan] and was trying to make it to Southwest Detroit every day to school. We worked it out for her to come once a week.

“Then all of a sudden, I didn’t hear from her again. She was an NHS [National Honor Society] student, and I still have her senior picture on my desk. She did very well, all the things she was supposed to do, and now she’s gone. It’s devastating.

“Over 70% of our students are ELL [English Language Learners] and newcomers. We have the procedure for defending them if ICE comes. We call down to the district and they send a battery of lawyers. I don’t want to say how many times this has happened but our attendance has dropped dramatically, as you can imagine.

“Students try to keep their heads down and stay under the radar. This is aimed at everybody. There will be a different reason for this type of behavior when they use it on the rest of us.”

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) campaigned at Western International last week, alerting students of the abduction of their classmates. Most had not yet been informed. The IYSSE not only demanded the immediate release of the students, but put forward a program to build rank-and-file committees among students, teachers and workers to organize independent resistance. The IYSSE stressed that young people had to turn to the working class—the social force that had the power to cut off the flow of profits to the oligarchy and drive Trump and his fascist cabal from office.

This meant mobilizing the collective strength of workers in the auto, healthcare, logistics and other industries fighting job cuts and deadly working conditions, federal and other government workers fighting budget cuts and mass layoffs and other sections of the working class.

Such a fight could only be waged if workers organized independently of the union bureaucracies and the Democratic Party, which have done everything possible to block resistance by workers and young people to these attacks. The industrial counter-offensive of the working class being championed by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees had to be

combined a political counter-offensive against Trump and his Democratic Party enablers and for workers’ power and socialism.

By contrast, on the same day, the pseudo-left People’s Assembly held a small rally, bringing together various “activists” and Democratic Party officials at nearby Clark Park to distribute whistles. A representative from the Democratic Party-aligned 482Forward organization made explicit their policy, “We need all Detroiters to stand up against these kidnappings... calling on all Detroiters, including elected officials, to do all they can to get the immediate release of these young people and their family.”

In other words, the message was that protests must be limited to pleading with the Democrats. In the audience were leading Democrats, including Michigan Senator Stephanie Chang and US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, who have worked to contain opposition within the capitalist Democratic Party.

Far from opposing Trump, The Democrats have facilitated the fascist president’s policy of mass deportations every step of the way, including providing critical support to the Laken Riley Act, which has normalized the criminalization of immigrant workers and channels funding and police powers into federal immigration enforcement, enabling mass roundups. Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer backed federal proposals to “make it easier for immigration officers to remove those who are here unlawfully,” and even supported deploying the National Guard to the border—moves that politically and materially facilitate Trump’s illegal war against immigrants and the working class as a whole.

No amount of “alarm” whistles can conceal the dead end of placing hope in the Democrats. The defense of immigrant communities requires the fight for independent rank-and-file committees and the mobilization of the working class in Detroit and beyond to demand a halt to the raids, the expulsion of ICE and CBP and the liberation of all detainees.

To join the fight for rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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