

The deportation of Brian Morales García: the war on immigrants is a war on the entire working class

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On his way to his job as a construction worker in April, Brian José Morales García, a 25-year-old from Austin, Texas, was arrested by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. He spent five days in the Gillespie County Jail, where agents berated him as a liar. Morales García had told the truth: he was born in Denver, Colorado, a native-born American citizen.

But he spoke no English, was denied a phone call to his family or a lawyer and was told he faced five years in federal prison for immigration fraud unless he signed papers consenting to his own “voluntary” departure. On April 7, under coercion, he signed papers containing fabricated details of an unlawful border crossing, which ICE then used to expel him to Mexico.

Only in late August did the Department of Justice, confronted with certified hospital records, Colorado vital statistics and witness affidavits produced by attorney Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, agree to permit his return. The government has yet to admit wrongdoing, and litigation over his wrongful exile continues.

The mechanism by which Morales García was expelled exposes the fraud at the heart of the Trump administration’s claims to be enforcing “the law.” The young worker never appeared before an immigration judge. He was presented, instead, with a choice manufactured by his captors: sign a confession of illegal status or face criminal prosecution. The threat of a five-year sentence against a non-English-speaking worker denied counsel and terrified of losing his wife and newborn daughter produced a signed document that purported to make his expulsion consensual.

The “voluntary departure” instrument is the modern equivalent of the confession extracted under duress, a device by which the state manufactures its own legal

cover. And it is directed with particular ferocity at those least equipped to resist: workers without English fluency, without money, without access to counsel.

The second element of the case is equally significant. Federal agents had, at their fingertips, the means to establish Morales García’s citizenship: his Social Security record, his hospital birth records, and the fact that he had lawfully entered the country as recently as January 2025, by presenting his Colorado birth certificate to CBP officers at the El Paso port of entry.

They ignored all of this. Instead, they seized on a clerical discrepancy in a Mexican civil registry—where a municipal clerk in Aguascalientes had recorded his name as “Bryan,” not Brian, and entered an incorrect birth date when his parents registered him as a toddler—as proof of fraud.

Lincoln-Goldfinch correctly warned that the case exposes an “alarming pattern of behavior” in which individuals must produce “more than just civil documentation” simply to stay in their own country. The case threatens to establish the principle that every citizen carries, at all times, the burden of proving their citizenship to the satisfaction of any armed agent who demands it.

The implications are sinister: if a certified birth record, a Social Security file and a prior lawful entry are insufficient, then no document is. Citizenship ceases to be a fundamental right and becomes a temporary privilege granted by law enforcement.

The United States is no stranger to mass deportations and the targeting of citizens. During the Great Depression, the “Mexican Repatriation” campaigns of 1929–1936, carried out by federal, state and local authorities, expelled up to 2 million people of Mexican

ancestry, an estimated 60 percent of them birthright US citizens, as documented in the 2006 book *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* by Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez.

Operation Wetback in 1954, Eisenhower's militarized sweep of the Southwest, deported over a million people on the basis of street stops and visual profiling, sweeping up tens of thousands of citizens in the process.

The Government Accountability Office found that between fiscal 2015 and 2020 ICE arrested 674 potential US citizens, detained 121 confirmed citizens, and actually removed 70.

Moreover, Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) counted at least 2,840 citizens wrongly identified as removal targets between 2002 and 2017. Among these, Pedro Guzman, a developmentally disabled California-born citizen deported in 2007 and lost in Mexico for months, and Mark Lyttle, a mentally ill citizen deported in 2008 despite having no ties whatsoever to Mexico.

Additionally, in 2018, the State Department was systematically denying passports to citizens born in the Texas border region—including a former US soldier—on the pretext that midwife-attended births might be fraudulent, a policy pursued under Bush, Obama and Trump alike.

The deportation machine Trump now directs was built and expanded under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Obama, the “deporter-in-chief,” expelled more than 3 million people and constructed the very detention infrastructure ICE now employs.

The regime and its apologists present the deportation campaign as a targeted operation against “criminals” and “illegals.” The facts expose this lie: according to a ProPublica investigation, 170 documented citizens were detained in the first nine months of Trump's second term; data from TRAC indicates that approximately 70 percent of individuals in ICE detention have no criminal convictions.

The state violence has already proved lethal: Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti were shot dead by ICE/CBP agents during enforcement operations in Minneapolis; Lorenzo Salgado Araujo was killed during an immigration raid in Houston; and Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero was killed by federal agents

during a raid in Biddeford.

As the resolution adopted last month by the Ninth National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party states, the war on immigrants is “the spearhead of a broader drive toward dictatorship.” A force that can, with impunity, seize a construction worker on his way to work, hold him incommunicado, coerce a false confession and expel him from the country of his birth is a force that can and will be turned against strikers, demonstrators and every form of working-class opposition.

Morales García's lawyer is right to warn of a malignant precedent. But litigation, legislative reform and statutory liability cannot stop what is being built. The state and all its agencies have spent decades dismantling the very accountability mechanisms on which such a strategy depends, while the Democratic Party stages performative 'no' votes even as it helps fund ICE and CBP to the tune of \$69.5 billion through 2029 under the Secure America Act, on top of the \$170 billion for the Department of Homeland Security in last year's One Big Beautiful Bill..

The defense of immigrants cannot be separated from the defense of the working class as a whole. The world's wealth is produced by the collaborative labor of workers of all countries; the immigrant worker is the living embodiment of the international unity of the working class.

No worker, citizen or immigrant, should be subject to a regime of deportations. Workers must demand the immediate and unconditional abolition of ICE, the Border Patrol and the entire Department of Homeland Security; the release of every detainee; full rights for all workers regardless of where they were born. None of this can be accomplished outside the independent mobilization of the working class in a struggle for socialism.



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