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# **National Insecurities: The Apprehension of Criminal and Fugitive Aliens**

Tanya Golash-Boza

*ICE makes America safer by identifying, apprehending, and removing criminal and other illegal aliens from the United States. (FY 2011 DHS Budget request, p. 66)*

*A top priority for ICE has been to target the “worst of the worst” in the illegal population – criminal aliens incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails; ... and fugitive aliens who have been ordered removed from the United States but have failed to depart. (ICE FY 2008 annual report, p. 13).*

One Sunday morning in 2009, immigration agents pounded on Vern’s door. When he opened the door, they arrested him – in front of his wife and two children – aged 12 and 9. They took Vern to a detention center and deported him to Guatemala a few days later.

Vern had lived in the United States for nearly twenty years. When he first arrived, he applied for political asylum. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) issued him a work permit while his case was being processed. Vern found a job in a frozen food plant in Ohio, where he met a Honduran woman, Maria, also applying for political asylum, with whom he became romantically involved. Each year, Vern and Maria renewed their work permits that allowed them to continue working legally. Confident they would eventually achieve legal permanent residency, Vern and Maria married, and had their first child in 1996.

In 1998, Vern received a notice that he should leave the United States – his asylum application had been denied. Vern was devastated; he had established a life in the United States, and had few ties to Guatemala. He decided to stay, hoping his wife's application would be approved, and that she could apply for him to legalize his status. They had another child and continued to make their lives in Ohio. Vern and his family had a comfortable life, but Vern lived in fear that immigration agents would come for him. To avoid this, he stayed out of trouble. He did everything he could to avoid problems with the police – he never drank, avoided committing traffic violations, and abided the laws at all times. He learned English, took his kids on outings every weekend and tried to blend in as much as possible.

Vern's attempts to live under the radar and be a "model citizen" were not enough to prevent his deportation. Immigration agents targeted him because, by ignoring his deportation order, Vern became a "fugitive alien." Once he was arrested, there was nothing he could do to prevent his 1998 deportation order from being carried out.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) claims to be engaging in more effective immigration law enforcement by deporting the "worst of the worst." The "worst of the worst" includes any non-citizen convicted of a crime, people the administration calls "criminal aliens" and any person who has missed their immigration court date, who the administration refers to as "fugitive aliens." In many cases, criminal aliens' convictions are minor; moreover, they often are long-term legal permanent residents who have

children and families in the United States and no ties abroad. As for “fugitive aliens,” many of them spent years in the United States waiting for their court date, only to be denied legalization after establishing families in this country.

Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) is the division of ICE that carries out arrests. On an average day, Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) officers arrest 471 immigrants with criminal convictions and deport 1,120 people (ICE, 2012).

To target criminal and fugitive aliens, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has implemented several programs, including the Criminal Alien Program (CAP), National Fugitive Operations Program (NFOP), Secure Communities, and the 287(g) Immigration Enforcement Authority. Through these programs, ICE has been able to increase the number of people deported from inside the United States. According to ICE, these tactics are making America safer.

These programs represent a merger between immigration law enforcement and criminal law enforcement. The Criminal Alien Program (CAP) screens all inmates in federal, state and local prisons, ensuring that non-citizens who pass through the criminal justice system are deported if they are eligible for deportation. The Secure Communities Program builds on CAP by targeting non-citizens in custody of local, state, and federal law enforcement authorities. The 287(g) program allows state and local law enforcement to cooperate with immigration authorities and check suspects' immigration status in any law enforcement encounter. The National Fugitive

Operations Program targets people like Vern who have been ordered deported but who have not left the country.

CAP, Secure Communities, and 287(g) work together to create a situation where any non-citizen who comes into contact with law enforcement authorities can be checked to determine their eligibility to remain in the country. These programs ensure that convicted murderers and rapists are deported after serving their time in prison. However, they also ensure that when police officers stop Latinos for alleged traffic violations, the police officer can do a routine immigration check while writing a speeding ticket. If it turns out that the driver has a deportation order, then this routine traffic stop can turn into a “fugitive alien” being deported. If it turns out that the driver was convicted of possession of marijuana in 1986, then this stop can turn into a “criminal alien” being deported. And, if the driver overstayed his tourist visa, then he also faces deportation as an “illegal alien.”

In its reports and budgetary requests, ICE uses this dehumanizing language of criminal, fugitive, and illegal aliens and argues that it is making America safer by removing these non-citizens. There is little evidence, however, that these non-citizens are actually dangerous. In fact, only 12 percent of deportees in 2013 had been convicted of what ICE refers to as a “Level 1” offense (TRAC, 2014). And, although “fugitive aliens” sounds ominous, it refers to people like Vern who were released from ICE custody yet did not report back to their immigration hearings.

Since taking office, President Obama has argued that his immigration law enforcement has focused on dangerous criminals. In April 2012, Obama again defended his deportation policy, saying his tactic has been to target “criminals, gang bangers, people who are hurting the community” (Hing, 2012). In November 2014, Obama reiterated that immigration law enforcement focuses on “felons, not families” (Acosta, and Collinson 2014). The President alleged that catching criminals was the primary focus of deportation policy and promised it would remain that way.

The evidence that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been doing exactly the opposite is hard to ignore. Vern’s story provides one example. Although Vern did not have so much as a traffic ticket, somehow his case made it to the top of the enforcement priority list, and he was deported to Guatemala.

On April 6, 2014, *The New York Times* reported that nearly two-thirds of the two million deportations since Obama took office have involved either people like Vern with no criminal records or those convicted of minor crimes (Thompson & Cohen, 2014). Just two days later, The Transactional Records Access Clearing House (TRAC), based at Syracuse University, issued an even more detailed, and more damning, report (TRAC, 2014). The report, which looks at deportations carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), found that 57 percent of ICE deportations in 2013 were of people who had criminal convictions. However, this statistic hides the fact that most of these convictions are minor. The authors write:

ICE currently uses an exceedingly broad definition of criminal behavior: even very minor infractions are included. For example, anyone with a traffic ticket for exceeding the speed limit on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway who sends in their check to pay their fine has just entered ICE's "convicted criminal" category. If the same definitions were applied to every citizen ... evidence suggests that the majority of U.S. citizens would be considered convicted criminals (TRAC, 2014).

In other words, not only have nearly half of all deportations involved people with no criminal record whatsoever, large numbers of "criminal" deportations involve people with traffic offenses. The TRAC report is notable because it provides a close look on the criminal convictions of deportees - data that has not previously been available.

The data reveal that about half of the two million people deported during the Obama administration, like Vern, had no criminal convictions. According to the TRAC report, each year of the Obama administration, the percentage of deportations that involve a criminal conviction has increased.

However, most of these convictions were minor. Some of these convictions would only be considered criminal in a very broad definition of the term. For example, about a quarter of the criminal convictions involved the immigration crime of "illegal entry." The difference between a person deported on non-criminal grounds for being undocumented and one deported on criminal grounds for "illegal entry" is almost entirely a question

of prosecutorial decisions. In other words, these 47,000 people deported for illegal entry were converted into criminals for reporting purposes.

The next largest category is traffic offenses – the majority driving under the influence or speeding – which account for nearly another quarter of all criminal deportations. Although safe driving is valued in this country, in common parlance in the United States, we do not generally refer to people with traffic convictions as “criminals.” The third largest category is drug offenses. Notably, the most common offense in this category was marijuana possession, which has been legalized in Washington, Colorado, and other locations.

The TRAC (2014) analysis renders it clear that the increase in the number of noncitizens who have been deported on criminal grounds under the Obama administration is mostly a consequence of an increase in the deportation of non-citizens with immigration and traffic violations – convictions that are only considered criminal in a very broad definition of the term. In fact, based on ICE’s own definition of a serious or “Level 1” offense, only 12 percent of all deportations in 2013 were of people convicted of such offenses.

### **Is Mass Deportation Making Us Safer?**

How does the United States get away with a policy of mass deportation that almost exclusively targets people from Latin America and the Caribbean, that tears apart families, and that occurs with almost no Constitutional protections? The United States is able to do this by framing mass deportation



in terms of national security. This raises the question: Does mass deportation make us safer? If the question is asked in terms of protecting the United States from terrorist attacks, the answer is clearly “no.” Massive roundups of Latin American workers are unrelated to the prevention of terrorist attacks.

Under U.S. law, you do not have to have been convicted of a crime to be deported; you only have to be undocumented. However, with ten million undocumented immigrants, the Executive Branch has to set priorities. The goal of immigration law enforcement is not to deport all ten million undocumented immigrants. Instead, the stated goals are two-fold: 1) to deport 400,000 people a year; and 2) to focus on non-citizens convicted of crimes. It appears that those two goals are at odds. In trying to reach 400,000 deportations a year, many immigrants without criminal convictions have been caught up in the deportation dragnet.

In an internal memo made public in March, 2010, ICE director James M. Chaparro reminded ICE Field Office Directors that they have goals they need to meet. The first goal for FY 2010 was to deport 150,000 criminal aliens. The second was an overall goal of deporting 400,000 people. As made evident in this memo and in ICE annual reports, ICE prioritizes the capture of criminal aliens. The focus on criminal aliens has allowed ICE to claim it is enhancing national security by removing record numbers of criminal aliens. The rate of removal of criminal aliens in FY 2010 was 60 percent higher than in the last year of the Bush administration (TRAC, 2010).

The quota of 400,000 deportees is an arbitrary number, based on estimates of ICE's capacity, not on actual numbers of immigration law violators. For this reason, the quota has not decreased even though the Border Patrol apprehended one-third fewer people in 2010 than it did in 2008 (Table 35: Yearbook of Immigration Statistics). The failure to reduce the quota has meant that increasing numbers of deportees are people who have lived in the United States for decades and who have strong ties here.

Let's take a closer look at these programs such that we can see how these programs operate and what happens when people are deported. These examples of deportations of criminal and fugitive aliens provide a human face to this issue. I gathered these narratives from deportees in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica as part of a research project designed to understand what happens to people once they are deported.

### **National Fugitive Operations Program: Deporting Fugitives with Families**

In 1986, Rafael witnessed an extrajudicial killing in his home country of Guatemala. Once the assassins learned who he was, he began to receive death threats. Rafael fled to the United States. His wife, Mariluna, and their two children, Katy and Alejandra, came soon afterwards. They made a life for themselves in Louisiana, and Rafael set up a successful car detailing business. All they had built crumbled, however, when immigration agents raided their home in 2000.

Mariluna told me: “they came in, as if we were criminals, as if we were murderers.” When Mariluna recounted the story to me, her voice broke and tears streamed down her face. When the immigration agents raided their home, they told them they would have to take two of them into custody to ensure that they would depart. Rafael surrendered, and they had to choose whether to send their daughter Alejandra or the mother, Mariluna, to immigration detention, as Katy was still under the age of 18. Alejandra volunteered, and was taken to a county jail.

The immigration agents took Rafael to an immigration detention center. However, there was not a center for women close by, and Alejandra had to spend four days in the county jail. She was 20 years old. She still has nightmares about the experience. Another inmate tried to rape her when she was inside, but she waited years before telling her parents about the incident as she did not want them to feel guilty. When Mariluna recalled that her daughter had been taken to prison, tears streamed down her face.

With Alejandra and Rafael in custody, and her life in shambles, Mariluna was in shock. Her friends helped her pack her things, but she could barely think straight. With four days to do everything, Mariluna was not able to get all of their belongings shipped to Guatemala. She was able to get a few things into a container and to pack eight suitcases, only six of which she was able to take with her. They left their house and five cars in Louisiana.

When they were deported to Guatemala, Katy could not believe how drastically her life had changed. They were fortunate that they had a place

to go – Katy’s grandmother had left them a house. However, it was a simple dwelling, with adobe walls and a tin roof. Katy went from living in a spacious, luxurious home in Louisiana to a one-bedroom shack with an outdoor toilet in Guatemala City. It is already difficult to be an adolescent, and Katy did not deal well with this fall from riches to rags. She fell into a deep depression, and barely left the house for over a year. Unable to read or write Spanish, she never went back to school. In the United States, Katy had only finished the ninth grade.

In Louisiana, Katy excelled in school, was popular with her friends, and never got into trouble. She had dreams of becoming a veterinarian, and her sister was already studying to be a doctor. When they were deported to Guatemala, her dreams were shattered.

When we spoke, they had been back in Guatemala for nine years, but the wounds were deep, and Katy still hurt from what happened to her when she was fifteen. She shed tears for most of the interview. Just thinking about what happened to her and her family was too much to bear.

The deportation of this family happened through the predecessor to the NFOP Program – an abscondee removal team. Since its creation in 2003, NFOP has expanded this sort of arrest dramatically. A recent report by the Migration Policy Institute criticizes the program, primarily, because of its failure to arrest dangerous fugitives—“NFOP has failed to focus its resources on the priorities Congress intended when it authorized the program. In effect, NFOP has succeeded in apprehending the easiest targets, not the most

dangerous fugitives” (Mendelson, Strom, and Wishnie 2009: 2). Although NFOP is designed to deport dangerous criminals, nearly three-quarters of the people they apprehended between 2003 and 2008, like Rafael, had no criminal records. In 2007, with a \$183 million budget, NFOP arrested only 672 fugitive aliens that ICE considered to be dangerous. The other 30,000 arrested were people with deportation orders (15,646), undocumented migrants (12,084), or noncitizens who had been convicted of nonviolent crimes, such as shoplifting (2,005). Mendelson et al. of the Migration Policy Institute point out that “the number of fugitive aliens with criminal convictions arrested . . . remained relatively constant between FY 2004 and FY 2008. Congressional allocations to NFOP, by contrast, grew 17-fold over the same period” (2009: 15).

Rafael had requested asylum once he arrived in the United States. Nearly a decade after applying for asylum, his application was denied. By that point, Rafael had already set up a successful business in Louisiana. He could not imagine uprooting his family yet again, and they decided to stay. With outstanding deportation orders, Rafael and his family were “fugitive aliens,” and thus made it to the top of the priority list.

### **287 (g): Walter: A Criminal Alien Guilty of Immigration Fraud**

Walter, a citizen of the Dominican Republic, took a boat to Puerto Rico when he was 15 years old and attempted to enter the U.S. illegally to join his brother who lived in New York. However, he was caught and deported. When he was 19, Walter decided to try to migrate again and made it all the way to

New York City. Two years later, Walter met and married a U.S. citizen and obtained legalization in 1998 through family reunification laws. He intended to make his life in the U.S.; he worked at JFK airport to support his wife and their two children. In 2004, Walter was stopped by police officers for a traffic violation. When they checked his immigration status, the officer discovered he had an immigration hold. It turns out that Walter had an order to appear at immigration court because immigration investigators discovered that Walter had failed to mention on his application for legalization that he had been deported from Puerto Rico when he was 15. This accusation of immigration fraud resulted in Walter's residency being rescinded. Walter spent four years fighting his case, but in 2008 he lost and was deported to the Dominican Republic – as a “criminal alien.” His crime: immigration fraud. One out of six people deported on criminal grounds are deported for immigration crimes such as these.

Walter was deported after being pulled over by a local police officer. When local police officers collaborate with immigration law enforcement, tensions between police officers and community members increase, as does the distrust people feel towards law enforcement. ICE officials argue that collaboration between local and immigration law enforcement is important because it gives police officers the resources they need to fight human trafficking and organized crime. In theory, inter-agency collaboration could enhance national security. In practice, the adoption of 287 (g) decreases local-level security.

287 (g) gives police officers the authority to call immigration agents to find out if any person they encounter is undocumented. This means that people who are undocumented or whose loved ones are undocumented will be less likely to call the police to report crimes, even when they are the victims. Because of the heavy policing of Latino neighborhoods, 287(g) could even lead to people being scared to take their children to the hospital.

When I lived in a primarily Latino community in Chicago, Little Village, one of my neighbors recounted to me what happened when her daughter fell off of a piece of playground equipment. The girl came home crying that she was hurt, and my neighbor rushed her nine-year old daughter to the hospital. Doctors put a cast on the girl's arm, and eventually she healed. Because of this incident, a police officer came to question the mother to find out if there was a case of child abuse in the home. The officer determined that there was not, and that was the end of the investigation.

My neighbor remembered this vividly, and it was well-known in this neighborhood that when any accident happens, police can get involved. In another case, my other neighbor came home from drinking with friends and injured his arm when he fell on a wire gate. Police officers subsequently interviewed his wife to find out if there had been any domestic violence. Both my neighbor who took her daughter to the hospital and my neighbor whose husband injured his arm are undocumented. If Chicago police were to co-operate with immigration law enforcement agents, people in immigrant

communities may think twice about calling an ambulance or taking their loved ones to the hospital after experiencing an injury.

### **Criminal Alien Program (CAP) - The Worst of the Worst?**

CAP is designed to apprehend convicted criminals serving time in federal and state prisons. ICE touts this program as identifying the “worst of the worst” in the non-citizen population. However, many of the people identified in this program are in fact long-term legal permanent residents of the United States who are deported for relatively minor crimes. Whereas undocumented people can be deported regardless of whether or not they have criminal convictions, legal permanent residents only face deportation if they have been convicted of a crime. In these cases, they are deported after serving time for their criminal convictions.

O’Ryan, for example, moved to the US from Jamaica when he was 6 years old. When he was in his early twenties, O’Ryan was a passenger in a car where drugs were found. He was sentenced to three to nine years for drug trafficking. He chose to do boot camp, so he only spent 18 months in jail. After serving his time, he was deported to Jamaica. All of O’Ryan’s family members are US citizens – his mother, his sister, his fiancé and his daughter. He also had applied for citizenship, but the application was still pending when he was arrested. O’Ryan has only distant relatives in Jamaica. When I met him, he had been in Jamaica for seven years and saw his deportation as a cruel punishment for a mistake for which he had already paid.



Human Rights Watch (2009) reports that 897,099 people were deported on criminal grounds between April 1, 1997, and August 1, 2007, and that 94 percent of these people were from just ten countries – Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Colombia, Jamaica, Canada, Brazil, and Haiti. Just under ten percent of those people – 87,844 – were legal permanent residents of the United States, and about 20 percent – 179,038 – were legally present in the United States as either legal permanent residents, asylees, parolees, or on a temporary visa. Very few of the “criminal aliens” that are deported are people who present any real danger to society. In fact, their deportation often has negative consequences for their family members left behind. O’Ryan, for example, left behind his newborn daughter – who will now be raised by a single mother.

The majority of criminal deportees were long-term residents of the United States – half of the people deported between 1997 and 2006 for aggravated felonies had spent more than fourteen years in the United States (TRAC, 2006). The fact that increasing numbers of deportees are people who have been in the United States for extended periods of time means that deportations affect more people in the United States, and that the effects are more widespread. For example, if a migrant farm worker comes to the United States to work for six months, and is deported after three months, he and his family in Mexico feel the most immediate harm. The principal effect of this deportation is the loss of the wages for the farm worker and the loss of labor to the farm owner. This is quite distinct from the deportation of a person who

has been in the United States for two decades, has children in the United States, and has strong community ties. His deportation entails much more than the loss of wages. His children lose a father, his wife a husband, and his community members a valuable and productive member.

### **Secure Communities - Suspected, Arrested, Deported**

When I was in Guatemala in 2009, I witnessed thousands of deportees returning to their country of birth. Four to six planeloads of deportees arrive at the Guatemalan Air Force Base each week – a total of over 44,000 people displaced in 2013 (Prensa Libre, 2013). Eric is one of the deportees I met at the Guatemalan Air Force Base. When we met, I asked if I could contact him after he had a chance to get settled in. He agreed.

Just over a month after Eric arrived, we met up in Metro Norte, a modern shopping center in one of the rougher neighborhoods of Guatemala City – Zona 18 – close to where Eric was staying. Eric told me he had traveled to the United States when he was eleven years old, to join his mother, who had left three years before. He went on an airplane alone, with a tourist visa, as his undocumented mother could not come for her son or apply for an immigrant visa for him. Eric enrolled in middle school in Inglewood, Los Angeles, where his mother worked at a garment factory. In his last year of high school, Eric's mother injured her back and was unable to continue working. Eric had to drop out of school and get a job to keep the family afloat. He had no trouble finding low-wage work, and worked two jobs. He

met a Salvadoran woman who is a legal permanent resident of the United States, and they got married.

Once Eric had a job, he purchased a car to drive to work each morning. On weekends, Eric spent time with his wife and friends. One Saturday afternoon, Eric's friend asked him for a ride, and Eric took him to other side of town. Shortly after he dropped his friend off, a police officer pulled Eric over, and arrested him as an accomplice in the car theft his friend had allegedly committed. The police checked Eric's immigration status, as the police district participated in the Secure Communities Program. This program, designed to find and deport dangerous non-citizens, enables police officers to determine if an arrestee is in the country legally. The police discovered he had overstayed his visa and held him until immigration agents came to take him into custody, even though the car theft charges had been dropped. Immigration agents took Eric to a Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) detention center and held him until he was deported from the United States. Neither Eric's innocence of car theft nor his pending application for legalization on the basis of his marriage prevented his deportation, and he had to leave his mother and pregnant wife behind.

In Guatemala City, Eric moved into his aunt's house, where he had lived prior to leaving the country when he was eleven. Soon after arriving, Eric secured a job at a call center where he answers calls from customers in the United States. As a bilingual deportee familiar with the United States, he is an ideal worker for this transnational corporation. His labor is also

significantly cheaper than it would be in the United States: his job pays just \$400 a month.

Once Eric was arrested, deportation was practically inevitable. When he was taken into custody at Los Angeles County Jail, because of the Secure Communities Program, they ran his fingerprints through an immigration database. That revealed that Eric had overstayed his temporary visa and was eligible for deportation. The police officers thus held Eric – even though they did not have any criminal charges against him – until immigration agents arrived and took Eric to an immigration detention facility.

## **Conclusion**

Most criminal and fugitive aliens do not present a threat to society. The main reason that ICE targets criminal and fugitive aliens is that doing so allows them to claim they are making America safer through the use of dehumanizing rhetoric that conjures up images of malignant characters. The reality is that criminal and fugitive aliens are often people with families in the United States. Their deportation does not make the country any safer, yet often has pernicious effects on their families.

The cooperation between criminal and immigration law enforcement agents means that many of the problems we have with our criminal justice system are exacerbated. After riding in a car where drugs were found, O’Ryan not only spent over a year behind bars, he also was deported. Eric seems to have been a victim of racial profiling – police officers saw two young Latinos driving in Los Angeles and suspected they had been involved

in a car theft. In addition to the hassle involved in being arrested and taken downtown, Eric was deported. Walter was pulled over for speeding. The propensity of police officers to pull over African Americans more often than whites is so prevalent that the moniker “driving while black” has emerged to explain this

phenomenon. In the early 1990s, statistician John Lamberth conducted a detailed investigation of police stops on the New Jersey turnpike. This study revealed that only 13 percent of all cars on the New Jersey turnpike had a black driver or passenger but that 35 percent of those stopped on the turnpike were black, and 73.2 percent of those arrested were black. Blacks were much more likely than whites to be stopped even though blacks and whites violated traffic laws at almost exactly the same rate (Lamberth, 1994). Racial profiling also extends to Hispanics. A study in Volusia County in Florida, for example, revealed that blacks and Hispanics were more likely to be pulled over, and much more likely to be searched than whites once pulled over (Mauer, 1999). When deportation is a collateral consequence of racial profiling, the consequences of this profiling are exacerbated.

The removal of these men from their communities will have reverberating effects. Vern may never see his children again. Walter’s wife was obliged to turn to public aid after his deportation as her minimum-wage job did not pay enough for her to support their children. O’Ryan’s daughter has grown up only knowing her father as a voice on the other end of the telephone. Eric’s wife was pregnant when he was deported, and he may

never meet his child. In addition to the immediate effects felt by these families, the stories of their deportations circulate in communities, leading to fear and resentment – especially with regard to local law enforcement. Police cooperation with ICE thus leads to less – not more – secure communities.

In November 2014, Jeh Johnson, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, issued a memo that announced that the Secure Communities Program would be replaced with the “Priority Enforcement Program” (PEP). In this memo, Johnson indicated that ICE should only go to jails to detain people who have been convicted of an offense that is a high priority for ICE removal. Under this new program, people should only be placed in removal proceedings if they have been convicted of a felony or more than one misdemeanor. As of this writing in April 2015, PEP is still being implemented and it is too early to tell whether or not this change in priorities will mean that people like Eric will not be deported.

The narratives and data presented in this chapter make it clear that immigration reform is necessary. However, insofar as immigrants continue to be conflated with criminals, fugitives, terrorists, and gang members, it will be difficult to get comprehensive immigration reform through Congress. There is a paradox where U.S. citizens who know immigrants often consider those immigrants to be upstanding members of the community. However, many U.S. citizens continue to imagine immigrants as “other,” as unassimilable foreigners who come to this country to wreak havoc and take advantage of public aid. Shifting this discourse will be a hefty task. However, it is hard to

imagine how we will be able to achieve immigration reform without changing how we talk about immigrants.

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