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Eloisa P. Haynes  
*Baylor University*, [eloisa\\_haynes@baylor.edu](mailto:eloisa_haynes@baylor.edu)

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# Mixed-Status Families and the Threat of Deportation

ELOISA P. HAYNES

Baylor University

*This article offers a description of deportation, explores the effects of deportation in the lives of mixed-status families, and outlines the social and economic cost of deportations to American communities. This article argues that the toll imposed on U.S. citizens, both relatives of those deported and members of the community, renders deportation, in most circumstances, an unfavorable policy that does more harm than good. A policy which is intended to protect Americans and curtail unauthorized migration instead creates injustice, fragments families and communities, and creates a significant negative impact on the U.S. economy.*

*Key words: mixed-status families, deportation, undocumented immigrants, mental health*

*Ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments.*

*Maximilien Robespierre, Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789*

Beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, one can trace a consistent past of exclusionary immigration laws in the United States, with three major periods of deportation since the First World War. During the Great Depression, Mexican immigrants were often blamed for the economic hardship experienced by some Americans, which made them targets for deportation (Hagan, Rodriguez, & Castro, 2011). The United States deported approximately one million individuals of Mexican origin, of which, some estimate, about sixty percent were American citizens ("America's Forgotten History," 2015).

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Then in 1954, Operation Wetback went into effect, and under this program more than one million Mexican immigrants were deported. The most recent wave of deportations have been under the watch of President Barack Obama (Hagan et al., 2011), who has been called by critics "the Deporter in Chief." He earned this affectionate title after the Department of Homeland Security confirmed that more than two million immigrants were deported during Obama's administration (Epstein, 2014).

## Introduction

It is estimated that there are over 11 million non-citizens living in the United States without proper immigration documents (Schueths & Lawston, 2015). Reading such a statistic might mislead legislators and unapprised observers to believe that communities in the United States are neatly separated into two types of groups or families: one composed of American citizens, with full claims to all the rights and responsibilities as outlined in the United States Constitution, and another type of family composed of immigrants, whose rights are conditional and whose loyalties are ever under scrutiny. However, as Fix and Zimmerman (2001) affirm, families in the United States are multifarious. It is estimated that one in ten families is a mixed-status family. Such families can be comprised of a mixture of members who are American citizens by birth, undocumented, legal permanent residents, refugees, naturalized citizens, and so on. In addition, immigrant members of mixed-status families may obtain or lose legal status for a variety of reasons, which further complicates the implementation of immigration law (Fix & Zimmermann, 2001).

Concealed behind the contentious and fiercely debated topic of immigration are the United States citizen husbands, wives, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters of immigrants. All of these United States citizens are unintended victims of the broken immigration system (Zayas, 2010). Under President Obama's administration, more than two million non-citizens were deported from the United States (Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). Zayas (2010) estimates that for every two adult individuals deported, one American child is directly

affected. Unfortunately, there are no statistics on the number of United States citizen spouses who are adversely affected by the current immigration system. Most research and scholarly work about mixed-status families focuses on mixed-status parents and children, while overlooking married couples without children.

### The Deportation Threat

The most crucial difference between a citizen and a non-citizen (documented or not) is the ever looming possibility of deportation. A deportation order is as serious and as permanent as death itself. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines deportation as "the formal removal of an alien from the United States when the alien has been found removable for violating the immigration laws" (USCIS, n.d.). However, this definition fails to paint an accurate picture of what deportation means, not only to the individual expelled from the United States, but to everyone who cares for him or her. For many non-citizens their "formal removal" often includes mandatory detention, unreasonable searches, and selective prosecution. Two-thirds of those in deportation proceedings do not have access to legal counsel, and not one of them has the right to an attorney appointed by the state. The so-called "formal removal" of non-citizens is decided in many cases by government employees and is precluded from review by an immigration judge (Kanstroom, 2007).

Non-citizens can be arrested for "looking" undocumented, overstaying a visa, or for a criminal violation. Arrest could happen after a workplace raid, an anonymous tip to the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office, or a simple traffic infraction. Unlike defendants in the criminal system, non-citizens navigating the immigration system have minimal rights. Any evidence obtained in violation of the Fourth Amendment against non-citizens is likely to be used against them in immigration court. They will not be read "Miranda rights" or be told that they have the right to an attorney—they do, in fact, have the right to an attorney, but at their own expense. As mentioned earlier, the federal government will not appoint counsel to non-citizens when it comes to

immigration violations, and they do not have the right to a jury trial. The few non-citizens that have the opportunity to appear before an immigration judge will have the right to be heard, to have the evidence examined, and to receive a written decision. Non-citizens will carry the burden of proof, and if they receive a deportation order, appealing the decision often means facing incarceration during the length of the appeal—which can take years (Kanstroom, 2007).

Sadly, deportation is not the only harsh government-imposed reality that mixed-status families have to face. Besides the terrifying prospect of being torn apart from a spouse or a parent, United States citizens often unexpectedly face the inseparable companion of deportation—mandatory detention of a loved one. Detention is a euphemism for incarceration in sub-standard conditions. Most individuals in detention centers are there because they lack proper documents or while they are awaiting the review of an asylum application. Some of them are there for minor non-violent infractions, such as possession of marijuana for personal use or traffic violations. The detention system in the United States is robust and is made up of about 250 detention facilities (Snyder, Bell, & Busch-Armendariz, 2015).

The American Civil Liberties Union and the National Immigration Law Center report that oftentimes the conditions in detention centers are "appalling and reveal substantial and pervasive violations of government standards" (Snyder et al., 2015, p. 165). For individuals detained and their American relatives, detention means unfathomable isolation and a state of uncertainty. The American spouse or child of the detainee is often unable to visit, due to the geographical location of detention centers. It is common for immigrant mothers and fathers to be detained hundreds of miles away from their families. Immigrant spouses are arbitrarily transferred to detention centers across the country, further precluding legal counsel and visits from family members. At times, relatives have no knowledge of where their loved one is being held (Snyder et al., 2015).

Furthermore, detention centers charge as much as five dollars per minute for telephone calls, which makes calling an attorney or a loved one price prohibitive for many families.

Solitary confinement is frequently used to discipline individuals in detention, and it is not uncommon for them to be isolated for more than fifteen days at a time. Punishing individuals in detention in this manner is particularly concerning, since serious mental health issues occur with prolonged isolation. Members of the LGBTQ community are usually targeted for solitary confinement for what authorities claim is "their own protection." Reports of verbal, physical and sexual abuse are widespread in detention facilities (Snyder et al., 2015).

Between 2003 and 2011, 107 individuals died in immigration detention. Such a number might seem small, considering the hundreds of thousands of people that go through the detention system. However, each and every death highlights that detention and deportation are systems with little oversight and accountability. For example, lack of public record has made it exceedingly difficult to obtain information on those who have perished in detention—in the past, it has required the joint efforts of *The New York Times*, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Freedom of Information Act to acquire such data (Wong, 2015).

Due to the increased number of individuals being processed for deportation, incarcerated immigrants have become the fastest growing people group in federal custody. In turn, the incarceration of immigrants creates a profitable and growing market for prison corporations. The partnership between the federal government and private corporations creates what Doty and Wheatley (2013) call the "privatization of sovereign functions." This phenomenon does not equate to a reduction of power of the federal government, but rather to a lack of transparency and reduced oversight that enables the state to work in a concealed manner. Lack of transparency leaves non-citizens in detention in an utterly vulnerable situation and at the mercy of private for-profit businesses with delegated power from the state (Doty & Wheatley, 2013).

In addition, private companies which directly benefit from the incarceration of non-citizens heavily lobby at the federal and state levels in order to create policies that benefit their financial interests. In 2006, prison corporations played an important role in influencing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to begin prosecuting unauthorized immigrants

for infractions that once were considered misdemeanors. The federal government agreed in a contract to have at least 34,000 persons in detention at any given time (Doty & Wheatley, 2013). In short, the combination of politicians scoring political points for being tough on "illegals," and the enticing profit that the incarceration of non-citizens creates for corporations have become the breeding ground for a detention-industrial complex in the United States (Bernstein, 2011).

However, scoring political points is not the only driving force behind politicians' tough stand on immigration. Prison companies spend millions of dollars in campaign contributions supporting politicians who adopt stringent immigration laws. Arizona's SB 1070, the infamous anti-immigrant law, is an example of the unethical relationship between elected officials and prison corporations. More than thirty legislators who co-sponsored the bill received campaign contributions from Corrections Corporation of America, Management and Training Corporation, The Geo Group, and prison lobbyists. The governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer, who signed SB 1070 into law, also has ties to prison corporations. Brewer's principal consultants, Paul Senseman and her campaign manager, Chuck Coughlin, are both former lobbyists for prison corporations ("Prison Economics," 2010).

### Becoming One Flesh: U.S. Citizen Spouses Forced to Live the Undocumented Immigrant Life

They've been shocked. Every single person who has heard: their eyes get big, their mouths drop open. They're absolutely shocked. ... When I say deported, they all look at me funny and say, "But you're American. Shouldn't he have just been switched over?" So it's a common misconception that everybody has, that it's just fine and fancy free for these noncitizens to become citizens if they marry a U.S. citizen.

Camille, American wife of an undocumented Guatemalan (López, 2015, p. 94)

The majority of people in the United States erroneously believe that once a United States citizen marries a foreigner

almost immediately and in a seamless manner the foreign partner becomes an American citizen. Misleading media reports and Hollywood movies, such as *The Proposal*, play a part in further misinforming the average American (Schueths, 2012). Navigating the immigration system is a complex, expensive, and laborious process for anyone who undertakes it. However, it is particularly challenging for United States citizen spouses, who in a manner of speaking are required to walk the immigrant journey. Besides paying fees for applications and attorneys, and providing official documents such as a marriage license and identity papers, American citizens are required to prove that their marriage relationship is legitimate. The American spouse has to provide pictures, personal letters, journals, sworn affidavits of friends and relatives, and financial statements in order to prove that the marriage is genuine. Tacitly, the state requires the American citizen to prove his or her allegiance and commitment to the country itself—and so begins the slow but very real stripping of rights of the American citizen spouse. Mixed-status couples undergo scrutiny by the state in a manner that American citizen couples never do (López, 2015).

Since the 1990s, exclusionary immigration policies intended to decrease and discourage unauthorized immigration have had deep and terrible consequences on United States citizens who are partnered with immigrants (Farina, 2013). The process of adjusting a spouse's immigration status is further complicated if he or she entered the United States without authorization. First, the foreign partner must return to his or her home country to attend a consular interview and apply for re-entry. In the mid-1990s, the United States Congress imposed immigration bars on foreigners lacking proper documents. Anyone who has lived in the United States without a valid permit for more than 180 days is barred from adjusting their immigration status and from re-entering the country for three years; any individual who has lived without a permit in the United States for a year or more is barred from adjusting status and re-entering the country for ten years. The law is clear—any non-citizen living in the United States without proper documents is subject to the bar. This is regardless of who they are married to, how



long they have lived in the United States, whether they have close family ties to United States citizens, the circumstances that brought them to the United States, the conditions in their home country, or the assets they possess in the United States (Schueths, 2012).

The only recourse these couples have in order to adjust the immigrant partner's immigration status is to apply for a waiver to overcome the bar by proving that should the couple be separated, the United States citizen spouse would suffer "extreme hardship" (Schueths, 2012). The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) defines extreme hardship ambiguously, and the decision-making of granting a waiver is discretionary in nature.

[T]he alien must provide evidence of harm to his spouse, parent or child substantially beyond that which ordinarily would be expected to result from the alien's deportation ... Similarly, showing that an alien's United States citizen child would fare less well in the alien's country of nationality than in the United States does not establish "exceptional" or "extremely unusual" hardship and thus would not support a grant of relief under this provision. (Farina, 2013, p. 160)

Proving "extreme hardship" is exceptionally difficult and particularly risky. If the couple is denied the waiver, the decision is final—the couple has no option for an appeal. As could be expected, many mixed-status couples simply desist in trying to adjust status. The denial of a waiver can only mean one of two things to a family: (1) the United States citizen becomes an exile in the spouse's home country (or any other country where they can live together); or (2) they have to live apart from each other (Schueths, 2012).

United States citizen spouses who are forced to leave the United States in order to keep their marriages intact express feelings of deep isolation and betrayal from the country that is supposed to be home to them. Many feel as if they do not belong in the United States because their own country has made them exiles or forced migrants. Others consider the value of American citizenship as null, since the most important thing to them—the ability to live in their country with those they

love—is denied by federal immigration law (López, 2015).

Mixed-status couples who choose to remain in the United States while one partner is undocumented face serious challenges. The United States citizen partner begins to live the undocumented life (López, 2015). The life a United States citizen partner must face is marked with fear and anxiety over the ever present threat of detention and deportation, social isolation in order to protect the undocumented partner, economic restrictions due to the undocumented partner's lack of labor mobility, inability to travel freely, and social marginalization due to the stigma attached to being undocumented (Brabeck, Lykes, & Hunter, 2014). An American citizen husband describes his feelings this way:

Despite being a U.S. citizen, I am not free. I cannot live the American Dream. It is difficult to describe, but try to imagine if you can. Though we try our best to live normal lives, the fear and threat of separation and deportation constantly hangs over our heads ... when she is deported I will be deported as well. That means no more holidays with family. We may lose our house, our jobs, and everything we hold dear, except each other. (Haynes, 2015, para. 6)

Unfortunately, United States citizen spouses are not the only ones who suffer greatly due to the current immigration system. United States born citizen children who belong to mixed-status families face challenges that children of native parents never have to encounter.

### Challenges Faced by United States Citizen Children in Mixed-Status Families

According to the United States Constitution, anyone born within the country's boundaries is a United States citizen. The right to citizenship applies to children of immigrants born in the United States—regardless of the parents' immigration status (Colvin, 2008). However, these soon-to-be community members face serious challenges before they are born due to their mothers' limited access to healthcare. Undocumented women in the United States are more likely than citizens to

delay seeking prenatal care, that is, if they are able to seek care at all. Undocumented mothers are more likely to develop complications during delivery. However, research shows that most of these complications could easily be prevented through basic prenatal care—care that their mothers cannot access because of their immigration status (Reed, Westfall, Bublitz, Battaglia, & Fickenscher, 2005). Once the non-citizen mother gives birth to her baby, the child is born an American citizen.

Unfortunately, that does not mean that the child will enjoy the same privileges and rights as the children of native parents. For example, in 2015, Texas created new identification requirements to obtain birth certificates, making it very difficult for undocumented parents to obtain necessary documents for their American children (Sakuma, 2015). A birth certificate serves two important purposes: the first one is to function as legal proof of the individual's nationality and citizenship. The second purpose is to serve as legal proof that the individual is indeed the child of the parent(s) mentioned in the birth certificate. However, Texas will not accept consular ID cards or foreign passports without a valid visa—the only two documents that most undocumented parents could provide as identification. Several undocumented parents filed a lawsuit against the state of Texas. In October 2015, U.S. district Judge Robert Pitman argued that "while the Court is very troubled at the prospect of Texas-born children, and their parents, being denied issuance of a birth certificate ... a birth certificate is a vital and important document. As such, Texas has a clear interest in protecting access to that document" (Sakuma, 2015, para. 4). As of the summer of 2016, American children of undocumented parents in Texas can be denied the one document that proves their United States citizenship. Without a birth certificate, American children in mixed-status families become second-class citizens and begin experiencing the same limitations as their undocumented parents.

### The Mental Health of American Children in Mixed-Status Families

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health not as the absence of a mental illness but rather a "state

of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2016, para. 2). The WHO argues that good mental health is essential to humanity's individual and collective capacity to reason, feel, interact with one another, make a living, and appreciate life. Therefore, protecting individuals' mental health and advocating for policies that protect and restore mental health should be considered of major concern to individuals and society at large (WHO, 2016).

Research indicates that children with an undocumented parent are subject to daily stressors that shape their mental health. Such children are highly cognizant of their families' legal condition and experience anxiety, fear of separation, and confusion about their ethnic and cultural heritage. Although the existing research is limited, some studies indicate that ten to fifteen percent of children in mixed-status families suffer from depression (Gulbas et al., 2016).

United States citizen children who have gone through the traumatic experience of parental deportation display depression, anxiety, rule-breaking conduct, attention problems, and social withdrawal. These children are collateral damage of the deportation machine in the United States. Some of these young Americans suffer the trauma of parental deportation on United States soil, while others are uprooted from their homes in order to keep the family together. Research shows that American children who are reunited with a deported parent have a painful transition. Besides experiencing a culture and language shock, many see their parents' relationship deteriorate for a variety of reasons, including working long hours to meet the most basic needs and blaming the deportee for the family's current situation. At times, due to the violence in the home country, families are unable to engage in recreational activities together, such as going to the park or other public places (Gulbas et al., 2016).

In some cases, the entire family is so preoccupied with the immigration issues and possible deportation of the undocumented parent or sibling, that the American child feels neglected. The result is that children engage in risky behaviors, neglect school work, and lose interest in everyday activities.

Most recently, researchers have begun to consider immigration status as an important contributing factor of health (Gulbas et al., 2016).

Arguably, the most tragic situation for an American child is to be placed in the foster care system due to the deportation of his or her caregiver(s). In some cases, once the parent is detained by immigration enforcement agents, the detainee has little recourse to make arrangements for his or her children to be looked after. The current system creates the environment for undocumented parents to lose parental rights permanently. Many young Americans are torn from loving parents and channeled into foster care (Oliviero, 2013).

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for undocumented parents to lose parental rights. Sadly, loving and committed parents are forced to prove in court and before welfare agencies that it is in the best interest of their child for them to resume or keep custody. This is particularly concerning, because decisions based on best interest are by nature highly subjective. Determinations on custody are often based on the assessor's biased impression of the parents' ethnic background and socioeconomic status. Those with the power of making such decisions may perceive immigrant parents as a negative influence on the child, or may misguidedly place higher value on raising a child in the American culture than keeping the parent and child together. This perception has disastrous consequences for mixed-status families. A pattern has developed in the way state agencies and family courts rule; more often than not they conclude that allowing a parent in deportation proceedings to keep parental rights and possibly "condemn" the American child to forfeit an American upbringing is against the child's long-term well-being (Yablon-Zug, 2012).

### The Economic Cost of Deportation

The media has been efficient at portraying undocumented individuals as the source of many ills in American society. Politicians and media outlets alike assert that unauthorized migrants enter the United States for calculated economic gains such as taking advantage of American social services, stealing

jobs from the native population, and to unashamedly commit other crimes (Browning, 2009).

Often, those who call for the deportation of all deportable "aliens" argue that it is vital for the survival and well-being of any democratic nation to obey, uphold, and enforce the law of the land, period. Such an argument implies that immigration laws are impartial, fair, and for the benefit of the citizenry. The problem with this argument is that, as described in this paper, immigration laws are not fair, impartial or for the benefit of United States citizens. Deportation has been discussed in inflammatory ways during the 2016 presidential election cycle. Then Republican presidential nominee, Donald J. Trump, fervently promised that should he be elected the next president of the United States, he would deport every single one of the 11 million unauthorized non-citizens living in the country (BBC News, 2015).

The current deportation system, which enabled former President Obama to deport more than two million non-citizens in less than eight years, is described by scholars as a "formidable machinery" consisting of a "complex cross-agency system that is interconnected in an unprecedented fashion" (Kanstroom, 2015, p. 466). In fiscal year 2012, the Department of Homeland security spent approximately \$18 billion on immigration enforcement. The costs associated with mass deportation (as the one for which Mr. Trump advocated) is calculated in the billions of dollars, which would be used to locate, apprehend, detain, and transport non-citizens to their countries of origin. The effects of mass deportation would be felt long after the last unauthorized non-citizen is expelled. Just as families are composed of a mixture of citizens and non-citizens, so the United States economy is comprised of an integration of citizens and non-citizens. Immigrants are interwoven into the American social and economic fabric.

For example, one in twenty workers is undocumented (Pew Research Center, 2015a). This means that individuals without proper documents build our stadiums, clean our offices, cook our meals at local restaurants, grow the fruits and vegetables we ate for lunch today, and even brew our cup of Starbucks. Furthermore, approximately 2.8 million, or 19%, of the nation's 14.6 million self-employed workers are immigrants. Contrary

to popular belief, research affirms that "immigrants are also responsible for a good share of the jobs created by self-employed workers, hiring workers at virtually the same rate as the U.S. born" (Pew Research Center, 2015b). In the case of a massive wave of deportation, the United States construction and agricultural industries would suffer significantly due to the vital role that immigrants play in those two areas of the economy (Passel & Cohn, 2015).

In August 2015, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, in collaboration with the Center for North American Studies, released a report outlining the extent to which immigrant labor sustains the dairy industry. In their study, they concluded that if dairy producers were to lose access to one-half of the immigrant labor they currently have, it

... would reduce U.S. dairy herd size by 1.04 million cows, leading to a 24.2 billion pound decline in milk production and 3,506 fewer farms. As a result, retail milk prices would rise by nearly one-third. Total elimination of immigrant labor would reduce herd size by 2.08 million cows, lower milk production by 48.4 billion pounds, and result in 7,011 fewer farms. As a result, retail milk prices would increase by 90 percent. (Adcock, Anderson, Rosson, & Hanselka, 2015, p. 20)

The construction sector of the economy would also be adversely affected by mass deportations. California's and Texas' construction workforce consists of 41 and 39 percent immigrant workers respectively (National Association of Home Builders, 2015). Associated Builders and Contractors Inc. contends that the construction industry is a powerful driver of the United States economy. It cites as an example that overbuilding in the early to mid-2000s played an important role in bringing about the Great Recession. Furthermore, the slow increase of business and residential construction has played a part in the slower-than-usual economic recovery ("The Importance of Construction," n.d.). The consistent and relentless deportation efforts by the Obama administration led to labor shortages in the construction industry. In recent years, the National Association of Home Builders has expressed concern about

workers shortage, especially in states which heavily rely on non-citizens to fill vacancies (National Association of Home Builders, 2015).

A detailed account of the effects of deportation in every area of the economy is outside the scope of this paper. However, one can infer from the examples above that mass deportation of immigrants would have a negative domino effect in the United States economy. If the price of milk were to increase by 90 percent, everyone in the nation who consumes milk and milk products would feel the economic impact of such a price increase. If construction companies cannot find enough workers to meet demand, then projects would take longer to be completed and would be more costly. It is difficult to see the economic argument for spending billions of taxpayer dollars to tear families apart and deport those who, in great part, do the agricultural work necessary to feed the nation.

## Conclusion

As discussed earlier, the marital union of a United States citizen and an immigrant does not automatically confer rights and privileges to the non-citizen partner. On the contrary, the United States citizen shares the burdens of the immigrant journey and the limitations of the undocumented life. United States citizen children born with one or two immigrant parents also share in the threats and restrictions imposed by the immigration system. With more than 16 million individuals belonging to mixed-status families, the current immigration system and the detention/deportation regime effectively results in multigenerational punishment—the reproduction of inequality and injustice (Enriquez, 2015).

Deportation, being by far the most common and severe consequence for violating immigration law, is harmful to individuals and families. Fear of deportation creates marginalization for the entire family. Spouses, parents, and children in mixed-status families enter a never-ending, constant state of hypervigilance and fright. Scholars Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego named this process "legal violence" or "the suffering that results from and is made possible through the implementation of the body of laws that delimit and shape individuals'



lives on a routine basis" (Enriquez, 2015, p. 940). Such legal violence has become normal and acceptable in our society, because it is viewed as rooted in appropriate and reasonable laws.

If immigration laws do not change soon, American communities will have to suffer the long-term consequences of a broken system. Research shows that American infants and children in mixed-status families already demonstrate delayed cognitive development due to their parents' immigration status. Citizen children in mixed-status families usually fare worse educationally and economically than children with native parents. Detention and deportation have detrimental effects on the mental health of mixed-status families including anxiety, withdrawal from society, depression, changes in eating and sleep habits, and disdain for their immigrant background. The limitations and violence imposed by the current immigration system is creating members of our communities who are neither allowed to achieve their highest potential nor are able to socially and economically contribute to the best of their abilities (Enriquez, 2015).

The United States is in dire need of overhauling the existing immigration system. The first step in creating sound policies to address the immigration conundrum is to internalize what research proves—that immigrants are intricately woven into the social and economic fabric of American society. Second, legislators must create policies that protect family unity and preserve the rights of United States citizens in mixed-status families. If necessary, Republican legislators could refer to their own 2016 party platform on the importance of family, which reads:

It has been proven by both experience and endless social science studies that ... children raised in intact married families are more likely to attend college, are physically and emotionally healthier, are less likely to use drugs or alcohol, engage in crime, or get pregnant outside of marriage. The success of marriage directly impacts the economic well-being of individuals ... The lack of family formation not only leads to more government costs, but also to more government control

over the lives of its citizens in all aspects ... we believe that marriage, the union of one man and one woman must be upheld as the national standard, a goal to stand for, encourage, and promote through laws governing marriage. ("Republican Platform," 2016)

Few laws affect marriages and families in such a direct and all-encompassing manner as immigration laws. Research and evidence confirm that deportation leads to family fragmentation or family exile, which in turn creates social, economic, and emotional vulnerabilities for mixed-status families (Oliviero, 2013). It is unwise and expensive for the wide-spread, indiscriminate detention and deportation regime to continue to expand. The cost is too high for American husbands, wives, children, brothers, sisters, and American communities to bear.

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