

# Michigan Father Deported After Living in U.S. for 30 Years

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## ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Jorge Garcia was brought to the United States from Mexico illegally when he was 10. “We’ re trying to be strong, pull ourselves together and tell our story,” his wife said.

## FULL TEXT

A father of two who lived in a Detroit suburb and was brought into the country illegally nearly 30 years ago, when he was 10 years old, was deported to Mexico on Monday after his removal had been postponed for several years. A video showed the man, Jorge Garcia, of Lincoln Park, Mich., surrounded by his emotional family members at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Mr. Garcia’ s story is but one example among many, and the latest to capture the nation’ s attention.

“We’ re devastated. We’ re sad, we’ re depressed,” Cindy Garcia, his wife, said in a phone interview on Tuesday.

“We’ re trying to be strong, pull ourselves together and tell our story.”

Ms. Garcia is a United States citizen. She said her husband, 39, worked as a landscaper and did not have a criminal record. He had tried to change his immigration status in 2005 by applying for a green card, but “the lawyer that we had at that time was incompetent and she filed the wrong paperwork,” Ms. Garcia said.

For Mr. Garcia, one of an estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States, getting a green card was not easy.

“The interviews and processing of green cards is extraordinarily slow and challenging,” said Sara Curran, a migration expert and the director of the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology at the University of Washington.

That is especially true for those who are living in the country illegally.

“Not only could you put yourself at risk, but if you don’ t have a good enough attorney, then it’ s pretty hard to get through the system without being caught up by a technicality,” Ms. Curran said.

Mr. Garcia was ordered removed by an immigration judge in 2006, said Khaalid Walls, a spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in a statement on Tuesday. Mr. Garcia appealed the ruling, Mr. Walls said, and was told he could voluntarily leave.

“After he failed to depart within the timeline of the agreement, he became subject to a final order of removal in 2009,” the statement said. “ICE exercised prosecutorial discretion on multiple prior occasions in Mr. Garcia-Martinez’ s case in 2011, 2012 and 2014.”

Mr. Garcia’ s deportation was continually delayed during his annual meetings with immigration officials, Ms. Garcia said.

“They knew we were trying to fix his status,” Ms. Garcia said.

This year, however, was different.

“The officer told us because of the new Trump administration, because he had an order of supervision and an order of deportation, he had to leave,” Ms. Garcia said.

In fiscal year 2017 , which ended on Sept. 30, ICE removed 226,119 unauthorized immigrants, which is nearly 6 percent fewer than the number deported in 2016 under President Barack Obama, and 45 percent fewer than in 2012, when Mr.

Obama deported an unprecedented 409,849 people.

The number of unauthorized immigrants arrested, however, has risen during the Trump administration. In fiscal year 2017, ICE conducted 143,470 immigration-related arrests, 30 percent more than in 2016.

Mr. Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, in 2012 to protect “Dreamers”—young immigrants who, like Mr. Garcia, were brought to the country illegally as children. The program does not apply to Mr. Garcia, however, because of its age limit.

With the program, Mr. Obama was aiming to “appease his fairly well-mobilized DACA community—mobilized in part because of the crackdown he initiated,” Ms. Curran said.

Mr. Trump said in September that he wanted to end DACA, and critics of that decision sued his administration. Last week, a federal judge ordered the government to accept renewal requests for the program, but the legal battle continues.

Ms. Garcia said her husband had asked the immigration officials to wait until new DACA legislation passed, with the hope that the age limit might be modified, but the request was denied.

“As ICE Deputy Director Thomas Homan has made clear, ICE does not exempt classes or categories of removable aliens from potential enforcement,” Mr. Walls said in the statement.

Mr. Garcia is still pursuing a green card, his wife said. But it could take up to 18 months to arrange a visit with the consulate in Mexico.

She urged others to be sympathetic toward the issue of immigration.

“Get to know the facts before you make a judgment,” she said. “And realize that children are being affected emotionally, psychologically.”

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Credit: CHRISTINA CARON

## DETAILS

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