
Campaign Seeks to Block Deportations of Undocumented Grandparents

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The movement started 10 days ago when Apolinar Sanchez Cornejo, 67, was arrested at his home in Los Angeles County by immigration agents who drove up in four vans.

Yadira Sanchez, his granddaughter, immediately attracted the support of hundreds of followers on social networks and won the provisional release of her grandfather.

Now she and the activists who joined her cause want to use the popularity of their movement to help other undocumented immigrants.

“My grandpa was the one who opened the way for all of us. He never hurt anyone but they came to arrest him as if he were a common criminal, which is what should be ICE’s priority – and he’s not the only elderly person going through this misery,” Yadira Sanchez, an activist with the Immigrant Youth Coalition, told EFE.

According to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 1,588 immigrants between ages 60-69 were deported in 2012, and the following year the number climbed to 1,982.

The same day that cops arrested “Grandpa Poly,” as his seven grandkids call him, he was sent to the border to be deported.

In less than eight hours Yadira Sanchez and her IYC group got pro-immigrant organizations, activists and social network users to pressure ICE into halting the deportation.

"My grandfather should not be a priority for the ICE, but since they have to meet their quota of deportations, they went for him – they didn't even give the lawyer time to show up," the granddaughter said.

Now that Apolinar Sanchez has regained his freedom and while he seeks a meeting with a judge, the campaign is out to help other elderly undocumented immigrants.

"They're seniors who have their families here, who gave the best years of their lives to working in this country and no longer have any connections in the country they came from," Sanchez said.

For Pablo Alvarado, director of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Grandpa Poly's case shows that ICE is unaware of the agency's internal rule to focus its arrests on criminals.

"It's hypocrisy, its making criminals out of people whose only infraction is not having their papers," he said.

Close to 41 percent of the undocumented who were deported during the first 11 months of fiscal year 2015, which ended Sept. 30, had no criminal record, according to ICE records.

Apolinar Sanchez must appear before ICE on Oct. 22 and hope that his granddaughter Yadira can help him stay in the country and continue as the family patriarch.

"I hope that something can be done – I'm a hardworking man who never asked for a dime from this government, and at my age, it's a little late to start over in Mexico," the grandfather said.
