

Jamil Misses His Family: A Story of Detention, Deportation, and Indefinite Separation

Twelve-year-old Jamil is a U.S. citizen, presently separated from his mother, father, and older sister. When Jamil was nine years old, U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) came to his home in Jersey City, and took his father away, placing him in immigration detention. His mother and sister were not home; so they were not taken. Jamil didn't understand why his father was taken or what was ICE. Later immigration officers came back to his home and took his mother away. Jamil and his then twelve-year-old sister were scared.

Immigration eventually let his mother go, with orders of supervision, because the children were young. Jamil's father remained incarcerated and separated from them for over two months. Jamil's mother, father, and sister were asked to sign and accept voluntary departure, which they did.

Jamil's sister was brought to the United States when she was just a baby. She grew up believing she was a U.S. citizen. It was not until ICE deported her and her parents that she found out that she had not been born in the United States. Jamil was devastated when ICE deported his family. He had no choice but to leave with them. He was only nine years old at the time.

Jamil's father struggled to find a job and provide for the family in Honduras. Jamil and his sister could not speak Spanish and were bullied and called horrible names. He did not feel that he belonged in Honduras. After three years in Honduras, he learned Spanish and went to a bilingual school. Still he was bullied and unhappy.

Then, one day, Jamil was attacked outside his home in Honduras. His attackers held a knife against his stomach. Although he was unharmed, he remains traumatized. His family, fearing for his life, knew they had to send him back to the United States, where they felt he would be safe. With the grace of God and compassion, Jamil's older cousin is caring for him and has enrolled him in his old school in New Jersey. Jamil is happy to be back in the United States, but he misses his family.

It is impossible to imagine the pain of a thirteen-year-old separated from his family or a mother's agony at the loss of her only son. Through his tears, Jamil swears to bring his family safely back to United States. His sister qualifies as a DREAMER and should not have been deported. No one in his family has criminal convictions. They were not high priority cases for deportation, but they were nevertheless detained, deported, and indefinitely separated.