

What Having I.C.E. in our Jails Does to New Yorkers?

FAMILY DESTROYED AFTER A FIGHT AT A PARTY

In December 2004, a group of New Yorkers originally from Mexico was holding a private party in an apartment. Two men came uninvited and a fight broke out. One man, Alberto, was stabbed. A person at the party panicked and called the police. When the police arrived, they indiscriminately arrested a dozen young men at the scene, including Alberto's brother. Shortly after the arrest, the group of men was taken to Riker's Island, where they were interviewed by ICE agents within one day of arriving. They were held at the jail for three months without being indicted. Even though the District Attorney had no witnesses, he would not drop the charges. Ultimately, the criminal cases were dismissed, yet the men remained in jail on immigration detainers. When they finally entered immigration custody, all but one was ordered deported.

Alberto and his other family members remain shocked. "How could they deport him?" Alberto asks. "We are never calling the police or ambulance again."

SON TAKEN FROM AILING MOTHER AND JAILED FOR 4 YEARS



Prince with his mother who he cared for.

Prince Brown is a 43-year-old Jamaican man who came to the United States more than 20 years ago as a legal permanent resident. In 2000, Mr. Brown served time in the Rikers Island jail for the relatively minor crime of "unauthorized use of a vehicle". One day, a corrections officer told Mr. Brown that he had a "visit" from his attorney. In fact, the officer took him to be interviewed by an immigration officer, who never identified himself. As a result, Mr. Brown was placed in deportation proceedings.

He spent the next four and a half years of his life in immigration detention, at three different facilities, two of which were in Louisiana, thousands of miles away from his family, friends, and legal resources. It was extremely difficult for him to defend his immigration case.

Mr. Brown's case went up to court twice before he won his right to a hearing. The judge cancelled his order of removal from the US and returned his green card in 2007. This victory, however, was bittersweet. Mr. Brown will never get the many years of his life back that he spent in detention. In his own words: "In the United States, the right to a speedy and fair trial is available to its citizens. I believe I am entitled to the same right, but did not get the same respect and dignity."

CHANGING IN WRONG ALLEY LEAVES TEEN WITH UNCERTAIN FUTURE

V.S. is a young person who was born in Haiti and has lived in New York City for ten years. On her way to school one morning in September 2006, V.S. ducked into an alleyway off of the main street to change her clothes. The police arrived shortly thereafter and arrested her. V.S. was charged with trespass and attempted burglary. Only 17 at the time, this was V.S.'s first interaction with the police. Unable to post bail, she was transferred to Rikers where she was interviewed by ICE agents. Eventually, she ultimately pleaded guilty to "Trespass," which is a violation—not even a crime—and she was not sentenced to any jail time. However, due to her interview which revealed her lack of status, V.S. is now in removal proceedings, facing deportation.