



Common Sense Needed in Immigration Cases

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The [Dallas Morning News](#) has an excellent editorial today pointing out the inequities in our current immigration system, particularly deportation. Few people would object to the deportation of criminals or of those who knowingly came here illegally as adults and made no effort to work within the system. But the editorial mentions the plights of other immigrants who, through no real fault of their own, have been placed in terrible situations by seemingly arbitrary decisions by the federal government.

The editorial is important enough to be reprinted in full:

Justice isn't always blind when it comes to immigration enforcement. U.S. authorities exercise apparently wide latitude to impose the letter of the law or inject compassion, especially in cases of political expediency. Too often, simple common sense doesn't seem to factor into the equation. Three recent cases illustrate the point.

Olivera Snyder and her sister, Jelena Boldt, were born in the former Yugoslavia and brought here as children by their parents in 1985. They know little of their Serbian homeland. Both married Americans, and Olivera has three American children. Through one of the stranger twists in U.S. immigration enforcement, the Dallas-area sisters are bracing for deportation, despite having filed all the required paperwork and completed every step of the process.

Kraft & Associates
2777 Stemmons Freeway
Suite 1300
Dallas, Texas 75207
Toll Free: (800) 989-9999
FAX: (214) 637-2118
E-mail: info@kraftlaw.com

Their immigrant mother won permission to stay. They have no criminal history. Someone in the bowels of Immigration and Customs Enforcement decided it was time to close their cases and move on. Their lawyer says he can't get an explanation and describes the case as "one of the most disturbing departures from rational thinking I have ever witnessed."

Eric Balderas is a Harvard student who grew up in the United States and has virtually no memory of his early childhood before his parents brought him to Texas from Mexico. He lost his passport and wound up in the sights of an ICE official as he boarded a flight from San Antonio to Boston. Now he faces deportation. Harvard dignitaries are trying to help, but the 19-year-old's future hangs in limbo until a July 6 deportation hearing.

Hervé Fonkou Takoulo is a Cameroonian facing deportation after losing an asylum bid. He and his American wife, Caroline Jamieson, are professionals in Manhattan. Jamieson wrote to President Barack Obama in a desperate attempt to stave off the deportation, and in apparent retaliation, two immigration agents went to the couple's house, mentioned the Obama letter and then took Takoulo away in handcuffs. An inquiry by The New York Times led to Takoulo's quick release.

Thousands of such cases never make it into the media spotlight, so there's no telling how many horror stories are out there. It shouldn't take a reporter's inquiry or an embarrassing news article to make immigration authorities recognize that these are human beings whose lives face irrevocable destruction.

Yes, we want a predictable and consistent system of immigration laws that apply equally to all. But common sense also must come into play. These three cases underscore the real human hardship created by America's broken immigration system and overburdened immigration courts. Comprehensive immigration reform, with tough but fair measures to help people attain legal status in this country, is the best way to break this chain of tragedy.

Robert A. Kraft | Kraft & Associates | Suite 1300 | 2777 Stemmons Freeway | Dallas,
Texas 75207 | Phone: 214.999.9999

Kraft & Associates
2777 Stemmons Freeway
Suite 1300
Dallas, Texas 75207
Toll Free: (800) 989-9999
FAX: (214) 637-2118
E-mail: info@kraftlaw.com