

Immigration reform should consider families, social ties, prof says

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Immigration judges should be allowed to consider a person's family and social ties to the United States before ordering the deportation of legal permanent residents for minor offenses, says a professor at the University of California, Merced.

"The reason legal permanent residents can be deported for minor crimes—even if they have lived in the United States for many years—is that there is little to no due process in immigration courts," sociology Professor Tanya Golash-Boza said. "Under current laws, if a person has a prior conviction for a wide range of crimes, the judge has no [judicial discretion](#)."

Ninety-eight percent of all deportees are sent to Latin America and the Caribbean even though people from those countries do not make up 98 percent of all immigrants, she said.

"U.S. deportation policies are draconian and target specific populations," Golash-Boza said. "Unfortunately, in the current immigration reform debate, this has little chance of changing."

At the 108th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Golash-Boza will present her paper, "The Deportation of 1.5 Generation Immigrants: Policing, Profiling, and Assimilation," which focuses on male immigrants from Jamaica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic.

Golash-Boza interviewed about 130 men who were born outside the U.S., immigrated legally at a young age, and grew up within the country. They fall between being first- and second-generation immigrants; they're 1.5-generation immigrants.

Jamaican and Dominican immigrants often live in heavily policed neighborhoods, and are more likely to be picked up on drug charges, Golash-Boza said. Even though Jamaicans and Dominicans use drugs at similar rates to other immigrants, they are more likely to face [deportation](#) for drug convictions because of where they live and because of [racial profiling](#). As an immigrant, a person's mistakes have much more serious consequences for the individual and for family members who remain in the United States, according to Golash-Boza.

"It is jarring for people to be deported if they have spent 40 of their 42 years in the U.S.," she said. "For many of the deportees, they were the primary breadwinners and now have to live apart from their families—and know that they and their families live in poverty."

More information: The paper, "The Deportation of 1.5 Generation Immigrants: Policing, Profiling, and Assimilation," will be presented on Saturday, Aug. 10, at 2:30 p.m. EDT in New York City at the American Sociological Association's 108th Annual Meeting.

Provided by American Sociological Association

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