

UC Berkeley student arrested by border patrol

By David Brown
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On Saturday, UC Berkeley student Luis Mora, 20, was detained by border patrol agents in Jamul, California at an internal checkpoint about 20 miles from the Mexican border. Mora came to the US from Colombia as a child and stayed after his visa expired. Like millions of other undocumented immigrants, Mora has lived under the constant threat of arbitrary detention and deportation.

Last weekend, Mora was driving back from a party with his girlfriend Jaleen Udarbe, 21, when they missed their turn and found themselves trapped by the checkpoint. In an interview with the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Udarbe described Mora's reaction when he realized he had to go through the checkpoint. "This is it for me," he told her, "I'm sorry."

After the border agents realized Mora's visa had expired, they took him into custody and to an overcrowded holding cell in a border patrol station with about 60 other detainees. He was kept there for over 85 hours until being transferred to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Otay Mesa Wednesday afternoon.

According to a 2008 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) memorandum, the border patrol's temporary holding cells are not fit for long-term occupation and detainees should be processed and transferred within 12 hours. A 2016 study by the American Immigration Council found that two-thirds of those detained are kept in temporary holding cells for longer than 24 hours.

Udarbe, a US citizen who met Mora while they were both students at Southwestern Community College, spent New Year's Eve trying to find legal help for Mora and contact his mother in Ecuador. Eventually, through RISE, a Berkeley student group that supports undocumented students, Mora's case was taken by

Prerna Lal of the East Bay Community Law Center. Mora was able to meet with his lawyer for the first time Thursday afternoon, five days after he was detained.

Legally, ICE can only hold people if they are a flight risk or dangerous, but so far Mora has not been released on bond. Lal told the *San Diego Union-Tribune* she hopes he will be released in time to attend classes when they resume on January 16.

Mora is a junior transfer student studying political science in a pre-law program. He was home on break from his first semester at Berkeley when he was detained. In a July Facebook post shortly after he was admitted to the university, Mora expressed a deep joy and optimism that ICE is threatening to destroy:

In today's world, everything seems to fade away; out of reach, out of touch. "An impossible journey lays ahead—dreams are dreams, be realistic!", I was constantly told. Nonetheless, as of today I can stand sharp and assure you to be hopeful. To not let any barriers, whether seen or unseen, hinder you from reaching anything you might desire. During the best stage of my life, and as I head to continue my education and fulfill my dreams at the # 1 Public University in the world, UC Berkeley, it is today that with great confidence, I can ensure you that dreams do in fact become a reality.

There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States and the overwhelming majority of them, like Mora, are just ordinary people trying to support themselves and their families.

Undocumented workers who have spent years and decades building their lives in the US can be detained at checkpoints 100 miles from the border, arrested when ICE raids their workplace or after leaving the hospital or testifying in court.

As part of his presidential campaign, Trump

promised to deport more immigrants and build a border wall with Mexico. In September 2017 he has reversed the Obama administration's Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order, which delayed deportation of undocumented immigrants who entered the country before they were 16 if they registered with the federal government. Nearly 800,000 immigrants were registered under DACA.

The Democrats in Congress are currently negotiating with the Trump presidency to "preserve" DACA as part of an immigration reform bill that would further militarize the US borders and victimize immigrants.

Youth and students have grown increasingly angry at the support of Democratic politicians for the record number of deportations carried out under the Obama administration and the increasingly brutal and arbitrary activity of ICE. When Democrats began negotiating with Trump in September, undocumented protesters disrupted a press conference called by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

One of the protest statements read "We, the undocumented youth, will not be a bargaining chip for Trump's xenophobic agenda, deporting millions of people and further militarizing the border."

Another protester criticized the Democrats' indifference to most immigrants, telling the press: "Democrats continue to only push for Dreamers, which is only about 800,000 of us. We are 11 million, we're not 800,000. We have our parents, our community members, everybody."

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