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“ALL-AMERICAN” FAMILY PREPARES FOR LAST 4TH OF JULY

DEPORTATION HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

Gonzalez Family to Say Final Goodbye, Thank Community for Support

(Jefferson City, MO) After more than 14 years of contributing and being upstanding citizens in their community, the Gonzalez family will have to depart the U.S., leaving behind the support of their entire community. The family—Marvin, Marina, and Marie (age 19)—have been given their voluntary departure notice by the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, forcing them to deport to their native Costa Rica by July 5th.

Their story highlights the shortcomings of the U.S. immigration system and the need for an immigration system that creates a path to citizenship and offers opportunities for the safe, future migration of hardworking immigrants and their families.

The Gonzalez family came to the U.S. on a legal tourist visa more than a decade ago, hoping to provide a better life for their daughter Marie, who at the time was 5 years old. They misunderstood the immigration laws by believing they could apply for residency after living in the U.S. for a period of time, but that option disappeared after a 1997 law was repealed.

The Gonzalezes have lived the American dream. For years, the Gonzalez family owned and operated a Chinese restaurant in Jefferson City. At one point, Marvin even served former Missouri Governor Bob Holden as a courier for his office. They own a home and are active members of their church and community and contribute to the United States economy by paying state and payroll taxes.

“I love this country. I was raised and schooled in this country. This is the only country that I know. To me America is my home,” said Marie.

Marie was an honor student who graduated from Helias High School last May. She was a member of the National Honors Society and tennis and track teams. Marie even found time to volunteer for the VITAE Society and the youth group at her church. She had hoped to continue her education here in America and become a lawyer.

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Marie, like 65,000 other high school students each year, would have benefited from the DREAM Act, proposed last year with strong bi-partisan support in Congress. The bill would allow undocumented immigrant students like Marie, who have grown up in this country and graduated from U.S. high schools, to pursue their dreams of attending college and becoming citizens. Now, it is too late for Marie to benefit from the DREAM Act that has yet to be reintroduced this year, but advocates are hoping for a private bill from her Senators to keep her here.

Marie and her family represent the urgency for comprehensive immigration reform, including passage of the DREAM Act. The Gonzalezes will celebrate their last Fourth of July, thanking their local community who have stood by and encouraged them throughout their deportation process. As the Gonzalezes prepare to sell their home and family cars, they will continue their pleas to remain in the U.S. with media events in the nation's capital and in Jefferson City in the upcoming weeks.

For more information or interviews, please contact Jennifer Fuson-202-339-9350 or Carlos Vogel-202-339-9316

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The Center for Community Change is a nonprofit, nonpartisan low income advocacy group that promotes the development of community organizing as a national force for social and economic justice. FIRM (Fair Immigration Reform Movement) is a coalition of grassroots community organizations nationwide, working on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform and immigrant rights.