



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Families Demand Justice from ICE for Wrongful Deportations

Under Biden Administration's Instructions to ICE, Denis and Julio Should Be Allowed Back Into the U.S.

Philadelphia, PA - Denis Calderón, Julio Maldonado, their family members, attorneys and supporters held a press conference today from Peru and the U.S. calling on ICE to let Denis and Julio reunite with their families after 12 years of exile. **Denis and Julio--cousins born in Peru who came to the U.S. as young children--were victims of a racial attack by a mob of white men in Philadelphia. Police arrested Denis and Julio instead of the attackers, and the two cousins were wrongfully convicted by disgraced former District Attorney Seth Williams.** After serving a prison sentence, Denis and Julio were then wrongfully deported and have spent the last decade separated from their families in exile in Peru. These men, their families, and the Philadelphia community have suffered for too long as a result of this injustice.

In 1996, a mob of angry white men assaulted Denis and Julio in an attack motivated by racism in Denis' neighborhood in Northeast Philadelphia. When the police arrived, the victims --Denis and Julio-- were arrested. Following the attack, then-assistant district attorney Seth Williams used Denis and Julio's case to launch his first campaign for District Attorney before later being convicted for bribery. After serving a sentence for the wrongful conviction for aggravated assault, Denis and Julio suffered further when they were wrongfully deported and separated from their families more than ten years ago.

"I was a family man with two small children when I was brutally attacked, along with my cousin, and wrongfully accused and convicted for something we didn't do. We are seeking justice to clear our names, so I can return home to my family [in the U.S.], said **Denis Calderón**, who is currently living in Peru. "Although I am grateful to have had the chance to spend some time and watch my daughter grow for her first couple of years, I did not get that opportunity with my son like a father should. They took all those special moments away from us that we will never get back. Yes I am a free man, but to be so far apart from the ones you love is another type of sentence."

"When this incident happened, I was 5 years old and it impacted me and my family's mental health", said **Jesenia Calderón**, 29-year-old daughter of Denis Calderón. "We are still coping with the fact that my father is not with us in the U.S. He has missed out on a lot of milestones, including me and my brother's military graduations. We just want justice to be served."

"Our whole family has suffered hardship over a conviction that should have never happened. Denis really needs to be here with his family and kids, to make up for all the lost time", said **María Calderón**, cousin to Julio Maldonado and older sister to Denis Calderón.

Current District Attorney Larry Krasner's office is now reviewing Denis and Julio's case for prosecutorial misconduct. "I applaud DA Krasner's office for looking into this matter," said **Marni Jo Snyder**, Denis' criminal attorney. "We have uncovered evidence that shows, at least, that Denis and Julio's convictions should not stand and we are hoping that the District Attorney's Office strongly supports our efforts to find justice for these men".

Denis and Julio were U.S. permanent residents when they were attacked in Philadelphia. However due to the wrongful convictions, they were subject to deportation. "I think it's wrong, we have been punished extremely", said **Julio Maldonado**, who was forcibly removed from the U.S. to Peru more than a decade ago. "I find myself in South America, and although this is my birthplace, I want to go back to the U.S. where I belong, that's my home." Today, under a new administration, there is a way for these families to receive the justice for which they are overdue. **Under the Biden administration's guidance to ICE, Denis and Julio are not a priority and should be allowed back into the U.S. However, ICE is not following this guidance in many cases, and the Biden administration still has not issued final instructions to ICE 126 days into its term.**

"President Biden can begin to fulfill his promises to the immigrant community by correcting past injustices," said **David Bennion**, Denis and Julio's current immigration lawyer. "Exile through deportation is family separation, too. **We need ICE lawyers to follow the guidance that has been issued by the Biden administration and agree to reopen the deportation orders so these families can be reunited.**"

"Denis and Julio were charged with an aggravated assault by a disgraced DA, resulting in them being punished twice for a crime they did not commit - a decision that carried extremely cruel consequences and not only affected them as individuals, but their families, and our community.", said **Erika Guadalupe Núñez**, Executive Director of Juntos. "We applaud recently re-elected DA Larry Krasner's decision to review this case for prosecutorial misconduct, but there is still so much work to be done. We echo the call for ICE to follow the interim guidance. This is how we begin to right the wrong that happened to Denis and Julio, this is how we begin steps towards a new and more just future."

For more information, please visit:

- Website: <https://freemigrationproject.org/justice-for-denis-2/>
- Press conference May 26, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mfu996v2ItQ>

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***Free Migration Project** is a nonprofit organization that represents immigrant clients in their legal proceedings, provides legal support and training to organizers, and advocates for fair and open immigration laws.*

***Juntos** is a community-led, Latinx immigrant organization in South Philadelphia fighting for our human rights as workers, parents, youth, and immigrants.*