

# dealing with DEPORTATION

It is constantly in the news and politicians refer to it as a pressing matter. To teens, though, it feels like an issue far-removed from everyday life; the sad reality is that it is not. The topic of illegal immigration and subsequent deportation is all too real for siblings Lorena Torres-Ramirez and Javier Torres. In January 2013, their father was deported to their hometown in Mexico and is not allowed to return to the United States until 2023.

The dynamic of their lives has forever changed.

It was a typical Wednesday morning for Lorena, sr., and Javier, soph. The last they knew, their dad was going to drop off their sister at school then go to their aunt's house.

However, when Lorena and Javier's father arrived at the home not only was he greeted by their aunt, but also by Immigration Services.

"They asked my dad what he knew about my uncle," Lorena said. "Immigration had already taken (our uncle) away."

Their father was taken downtown to be held at Immigration Services—for approximately a week—until further transportation.

Immigration Services allowed the sibling's uncle to stay for a limited amount of time because he and his wife had just had a baby who was born premature.

"They took my dad to a little town in the desert," Javier said. "From there he went back to Mexico."

Lorena and Javier's mother was only able to take him a few things before he left Wichita.

"She did not know how much to pack so she only brought him two pairs of pants and two shirts," Javier said. "He wasn't even able to take his cell phone, gold (jewelry), or anything he had on him."

But the most heart-wrenching part of the Torres' situation is that they did not get to see their father before he left.

"The only way we would have been able to see him was through a lawyer," Lorena said.

An option to talk to him via a phone was available, however, the calls cost per minute.

"The soonest my dad can come back is in 10 years," Lorena said. "If he tries to come back before that, he'll go to jail for 10 years."

## LIFE-CHANGING

Lorena and Javier's father played a big role in their family. Not only was he a dad but he also helped out their mom with the food truck their family runs as well as taking care of their three- and six-year-old sisters.

"My sisters are always asking about my dad and when he is going to come back," Lorena said.

Along with helping her mom, Lorena also has to worry about her own family. She was married last year and now has a four-month-old daughter.

"My husband helps out by taking my sisters to school and I help by watching them when my mom is working," Lorena said. "In exchange, my mom watches my daughter when I cannot."

"Once they take one of your parents it's really hard to keep up around the house," Javier said. "My dad would cook, clean and he had his regular job. I really miss him though because he's not here to see me grow up and teach me how to change a tire or change sparkplugs—things I need to know since I'm getting older."

Lorena and Javier try to keep a positive attitude at school and in public although no one can understand how much they miss their dad.

"Sometimes I go home and my sister starts asking about my dad and I just cry," Lorena said. "The lawyer my mom used told me to talk to a social worker but that is not going to help me—they can't understand how I feel."

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Lorena and Javier's father is currently in Puebla, Mexico working in construction.

"In my parent's religion, a man and a wife are supposed to stay together until death so my mom's thinking about going to Mexico and taking the little ones," Javier said. "The little ones can go and come back more easily because they have citizenship."

Both Lorena and Javier are applying for their own types of citizenship certification that may enable them to visit their family in Mexico in the future.

Once she graduates, Lorena will move into her parents house with her husband and daughter. Javier will live with a family member until his graduation in 2015.

Lorena and Javier would like to start a club for other students at East with parents or family members who have been deported.

"We'd like to start a club for people who have been in situations like us," Javier said. "When we lived in California, we were able to participate in parades and peaceful protests against certain immigration laws and we'd like to do stuff like that here."

