

September 12, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: Luis Lopez Acabal A#088-670-167

Dear Mr. President and the Hon. Jeh Johnson:

I am the pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Tempe, Arizona, where Luis Lopez Acabal (A#088-670-167) has sought sanctuary from a deportation order issued against him by our immigration court system. I write to urge you to act on Mr. Lopez Acabal's behalf, and on behalf of the millions of others who are in similar situations, by offering relief from deportation so he can work and support his family.

Mr. Lopez came to the U.S. from Guatemala to escape gang violence and a country with the fifth highest homicide rate in the world. At the age of 16 he was given 24 hours to either join a gang, leave, or be killed. Within hours of the threat he fled to the U.S., traveling through Mexico by bus for more than a month, in order to seek refuge and build a better life. Within months of arriving here in 2007 he was stopped by police while driving home from work without a license, which resulted in his being arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement due to his being an undocumented immigrant. Since then he has committed no crimes, has sought to work legally while his case was pending, fallen in love with and married a wonderful woman from Mexico who is a legal resident in the U.S., and has become a father to her two children, Kimberly (2) and Kevin (5) who has autism.

During his immigration proceedings, in which he sought asylum from the violence raging in Guatemala, he has become a faithful member of our community. After his work permit was taken away and a final order of deportation was issued, he came knocking on the doors of our church because he did not know where to turn. Returning to Guatemala is a sure death sentence. While Jon Gurule, director of the Phoenix ICE office, has stated that he has no intention of executing the order of removal against Mr. Lopez pursuant to the broad prosecutorial discretion granted ICE, Mr. Lopez is not safe. He could easily be stopped again by police for no reason and be ripped from his wife and family through deportation. He is not safe. In accordance with ICE policies, which stipulate that ICE agents are to refrain from engaging in immigration enforcement in or around schools, hospitals and places of worship, and the

ancient religious practices of the Christian tradition, we have offered Mr. Lopez sanctuary on our property until he can receive relief from the deportation order and return to his family.

I write to beg of you to use your power and authority to offer relief to Mr. Lopez and others in similar situations by granting him deferred action until a more solid resolution to fix our severely broken, misguided, and inconsistent immigration system can be established. If ICE has no intent of executing an order of deportation against individuals who pose *no threat* to the United States and are a low priority for the administration, why continue to allow these orders of deportation to stand?

My congregation and I are deeply disappointed by your decision to delay fulfilling the promise you have made a number of times in the past year to take executive action to offer relief to millions who have been part of our communities but forced to live in the shadows due to our broken system. I recognize this is an election season, but we cannot make the survival of millions of people an election issue. This is a humanitarian issue. People are dying and millions of others are afraid of being ripped from their families, many of whom no longer know the countries from which they came.

In most of the world's major religions we are taught the value of hospitality and welcoming the stranger, even treating the foreigner as one of our own. I am ashamed of people who call themselves Christians but spew all kinds of hate and vitriol against those who are simply trying to seek a better life for themselves and their families by coming to the U.S. Some say these folks should "get in line." The problem is, there is no line. The laws are being applied inconsistently, taking no fewer than seven to ten years and in upwards of twenty years for some people to come here legally. This is not immigration. It is pure racism. More than 80% of people in the U.S. want some path to citizenship or legal residency for people who have lived in the U.S. for more than three years. It is time to act!

Luis and so many like him came to the U.S. to work and be part of a community where they are not afraid to be killed or conscripted into deadly gangs. They want to raise their families and allow their children to go to school just like the rest of us, something so many coming never had the opportunity to do. They want something better for their families as well as themselves. As a citizen of this great country, I am asking you to take action to fix this and allow these good people to come out of the shadows and contribute more forthrightly to the wellbeing of our communities, starting with Luis. *Please instruct Director Jon Gurule to issue a stay of deportation or some other administrative action that will allow Luis to stay legally, work, and support his wife and children.* Let's work together to be part of the solution and not perpetuate the problem.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
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