

## IMMIGRANTS SENT PACKIN'

By ALBOR RUIZ, Daily News Staff Writer  
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Juan Diego Jiménez got a letter from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services asking him to show up Sept. 3 at the agency's lower Manhattan offices.

The 19-year-old Dominican thought it was for a routine visit related to his application to become a U.S. citizen. Instead, when he arrived at 26 Federal Plaza, he was told he had a deportation order pending, was detained and put on a plane out of the country.

"I asked them to let me call a lawyer," Jiménez said in a telephone interview from Santo Domingo. "They told me 'later,' but they never did."

Immigration officials are cracking down on immigrants with outstanding deportation orders - luring them into their offices in New York and around the nation and quickly booting them out of the country.

The increase in enforcement appears to be part of the Absconder Apprehension Initiative launched last year by the U.S. Department of Justice to track down immigrants with deportation orders against them.

It was first supposed to focus on people from countries with an Al Qaeda presence, followed by those with criminal records, and then noncriminal cases.

"We are an enforcement agency and we use many different kinds of enforcement methods," said Garrison Courtney, a spokesman for the seven-month-old U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

"If you have a deportation order we will look for you as long as you live. We may not get you in a week, or a month, but we'll get you," he added.

But immigrants and their advocates charge the feds are using bait-and-switch tactics to lure unsuspecting legal immigrants with no criminal background to their offices for quick deportation.

"It seems that more and more this is the way things are going," said Subhas Kateel, of Families for Freedom, a nonprofit group that helps families with relatives in immigration detention. "It's unheard of."

There are 400,000 people nationwide with outstanding deportation orders for anything from overstaying a visitor's visa to suspected criminal activity, Courtney said. Technically, the estimated 8 million people who are in the U.S. illegally, also would face deportation if caught.

## **Nationwide panic**

Advocates say the crackdown has sent waves of panic throughout immigrant communities in Los Angeles, Miami and New York. That could lead to people not showing up at immigration offices for routine matters, they said.

Howard Facey, a Jamaican married to an American citizen and the father of four U.S.-born children, went to Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan in early August to inquire about the status of his green card application.

He was asked to come back in a couple of days to pick up his work permit.

Instead, Facey, 38, was told he had an old deportation order; he was detained and sent back to Jamaica four days later on Aug. 20, his wife, Georgiana, said. "I'm praying and hoping for him to come back," said Georgiana, 38, a pharmacy clerk. "I can't support the children by myself."

In both cases, the deportees said they had been dealing with the bureau, and its predecessor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for years.

But Courtney said Jiménez and Facey had final orders of deportation, which means they are sent back to their countries of origin as soon as they are caught.

Facey had overstayed his visa and had appeared in front of an immigration judge, Courtney said. He knew about the order that dated back to 1995, the spokesman said.

Jiménez, who first came to the U.S. at 13, said he already had passed the citizenship test, had traveled to and from the Dominican Republic several times and had been in the federal building on numerous occasions.

Courtney said Jiménez's green card application had been derivative of his mother's. She was denied permanent residency because of a fraudulent marriage. At the time, his green card was also denied, he said.

"It is one of those cases in which the children are punished for the sins of the parents," Courtney said.