

IMMIGRATION

Federal government allows return of U.S. citizen deported after traffic stop in Central Texas

Brian José Morales García maintained he was born in Denver after the federal government accused him of having entered the country illegally.

BY **ALEJANDRO SERRANO**

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Brian José Morales García (right) with his brother, Miguel Morales, has a birth certificate showing he was born in Denver. Homeland Security accused him of entering the country illegally and deported him to Mexico. Courtesy of Brian Morales

A 25-year-old man from Central Texas who was deported to Mexico despite insisting he was an American citizen returned to the country Sunday after the federal government reached an agreement with his lawyers in light of new evidence they provided about his citizenship, his attorneys said.

The federal government deported Brian José Morales García in April following a police stop near Fredericksburg. In a previous interview with The Texas Tribune, he said that he was born in Denver, grew up in Mexico and had been living and working in Texas. Officers who stopped the vehicle he was riding in did not believe him and called the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Morales said he repeatedly told authorities that he was born in the United States and that he had copies of his birth certificate and social security number at his home in Austin that he could share with them. He was deported, anyway. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security disputed his account and accused Morales of having entered the country illegally.

According to Morales's lawyers, that changed as they provided more documents as part of a lawsuit challenging his removal. His legal team submitted additional hospital records, affidavits from witnesses and his certified birth record from Colorado. The U.S. Department of Justice allowed Morales to enter the country while a lawsuit regarding his detention and deportation proceeds, his lawyers said. His lawyer, Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, picked him up in Laredo, she said.

DHS and DOJ spokespersons did not immediately respond to a request for comment Sunday.

"Brian's case raises an alarming pattern of behavior on the part of the federal government, demonstrating that they're willing to racially profile, detain and deport U.S. citizens," Lincoln-Goldfinch said. "In order to prove citizenship, someone who is born in this country has to provide more than just civil documentation about who they are, and the federal government being permitted to require this level of evidence for someone to simply reside in the U.S. is extremely concerning and unacceptable."

Morales and his lawyer had previously provided the Tribune copies of his Social Security card and birth certificate, which shows he was born in Denver. He has dual citizenship in Mexico.

The Tribune also reviewed Morales' Mexican identification, which had a different spelling of his first name and a different date of birth. A clerk in Mexico had used common Spanish

spelling for his first name — Bryan — and changed the birth date without double checking his American paperwork, his mother previously said.

It is rare for American citizens to be wrongly deported, but the practice still occurs. A congressional government watchdog found that immigration agents “arrested 674, detained 121, and removed 70 potential U.S. citizens” between 2015 and 2020, according to a [July 2021 report](#).

An investigation from ProPublica found more than 170 U.S. citizens were detained by immigration agents in the first nine months of President Trump’s second administration. But the report didn’t identify anyone who was deported.

Morales’s civil rights lawsuit in federal court remains pending.