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This country of immigrants turning against its own

MICHIANA POINT OF VIEW

By **JILL UNDERHILL**

I'm writing this because I feel sad about the way our Department of Homeland Security handled the deportation of Huseyin Parlak on May 14. I also feel somewhat helpless and I'm wondering if anyone else out there feels this way.

Things have gone haywire in this country regarding our immigration laws and the way we have chosen to treat immigrants in these post-Sept. 11 times. It's worth repeating that America is a country of immigrants. What has happened to our core values? Do people know that Huseyin was in this country legally, contrary to the statement made to the press by a representative of Immigration and Customs Enforcement? And did people also know that there are lots of *illegal* immigrants with criminal convictions freely walking our streets?

Huseyin is a very shy and quiet man. He spent most of his waking hours working very hard at his brother's restaurant, Café Gulistan. And when he wasn't doing that, he was working in the yard and gardens that surround the restaurant. He always had a smile and was cheerful, but I doubt that Huseyin ever asked anyone for anything. Unfortunately, in our current atmosphere of xenophobia, his application for asylum was denied, along with hundreds of others.

Our government's denial of his asylum application doesn't mean it was the right decision. Huseyin's appeal is working its way through our court system. Meanwhile, someone in our government decided that Huseyin's deportation took priority over other immigrants who are in this country illegally with criminal convictions, and spent thousands of tax dollars to whisk him away, with no notice, without a simple good-bye to his brother and nieces, and without any of his belongings. He was placed on a plane along with two ICE agents and they all flew to Turkey where they left him at the airport terminal like some kind of discarded baggage. Is this all right with everyone? Have we become so hardened and paranoid that it is now acceptable to all of us that immigrants are treated like sub humans? These are people with dreams and feelings just like all of us.

This didn't just happen to Huseyin. Every month there are dozens of immigrants being deported in the middle of the night so that people don't find out about it. Please speak up and tell your elected officials and the news media that this is wrong and unacceptable. America is the bright shining light for the world with our unique Declaration of Independence that states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness ... "