

**Testimony of Marie Justeen Mancha before the
House Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees,
Border Security and International Law
February 13, 2008**

“Hearing on Problems with ICE Interrogation, Detention, and Removal Procedures”

Hi, my name is Marie Justeen Mancha, but I go by Justeen. I'm 17 years old and am a Junior at Tattnall County High school in Reidsville, Georgia. I'm originally from Texas where I was born, but moved to Reidsville with my family when I was about seven years old. So, I consider Reidsville my hometown. I've grown up in Reidsville going to school and hanging out with my friends. Everyone in my family was born in the United States. We're known as "Mexican-Americans." Never did I expect my family or me to go through the terrible experience we all went through in September of 2006.

It all started because I was running late, and Momma went up town to run an errand while I got dressed for school. I was home alone. I was in my bedroom when I first heard the noises outside. It sounded like car door slamming, so I looked outside my window but didn't see anyone. So then I went to the living room and made sure the door was unlocked for momma, but also made sure it was closed because if not Momma would pitch a fit. So I walked back in my room and started to watch T.V. while I waited. Not too long after that I heard male voices coming from inside my house. I was so scared. I had no idea what was going on.

I got up and started walking down the hallway towards the living room and I started to hear the words, "Police! Illegals!" It seems as if those words still ring in my head today giving me that fear of them busting into my home. I walked around the corner from the hallway and saw a tall man reach toward his gun and look straight at me.

I saw a group of law enforcement agents standing in the living room blocking the front door. My heart just dropped. I didn't know what was about to happen. It just about brings tears to my eyes to think, "what if my little sister was there?" "What if she had seen this, or felt what I felt?" I didn't know what to do. When the tall man reached for his gun I just stood there feeling so scared. I could've busted out in tears, but I had to be strong and hold it in. I looked around and there were about four or five men in my house and more coming up the stairs.

They began to ask me questions. I started to feel closed in, like I couldn't say no or not answer them because they were blocking the front door. They were asking me if there was anyone else in the house and if my momma had worked at Crider Poultry and why she had quit. Also, they asked me if my mom was a Mexican and if she had her papers or a green card. I felt so awful and low that they were asking me all these questions because I'm Mexican. At times, I didn't want to be Mexican because of what we go through and how people look at us different and treat us and assume we're all illegal. But, just going through all this made me see how strong Mexicans can be and I wouldn't change that for anything. I'm proud to be Mexican.

I answered all their questions—telling them my momma didn't need a green card— that she was born in Florida. Finally, I got the courage to ask them why they were in my home. One of the agents just said that they were looking for illegals. They began to walk outside and I heard them telling each other that they should all go to the gas station because they'd find a lot of Mexicans there. I asked if they were leaving and they said they'd be in the area looking for the rest of "them." I walked outside and they were everywhere. Luckily, they all got in their cars and started to drive off.

About that time momma pulled in and I ran to her and started crying – telling her what just happened. I was so scared. I still am. I carry that fear with me everyday—wondering when they’ll come back.

I have also attached a copy of the complaint in the lawsuit in which I am a plaintiff, which I would like to be considered as part of the record before this Subcommittee.