

**LEGAL RIGHTS**



**By Atty. Johnson Lazaro**

# To Catch an Alien

deportation or removal. The losses are many. You lose the right to live and work in the U.S. You lose your job, your house, and other properties that you worked hard for. You lose your friends and family. You lose your community and possibly part of your identity. On top of that, deported persons who come back into

citizens, if you are accused of a crime, speak to a public defender or an attorney right away. It is dangerous to go through the process without first getting good legal advice. A criminal conviction could result in a permanent deportation or removal. The criminal attorney must investigate all immigration consequences

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NO, we’re not talking about UFOs or *Star Wars*. In the immigration context, an alien is the term the government uses when referring to illegal immigrants. If you don’t have a “green card” you are an alien. It doesn’t matter if you’ve been staying in the U.S. for over ten years — you are still considered an alien. Sometimes, even if you are lawful permanent resident, you can still be considered an alien and you are given an “alien card.”

The news is filled with stories of immigration raids in work places. Men in green uniforms chasing down men without work permits. Ever since Congress failed to pass a comprehensive reform, we are seeing more immigration enforcement. They’ve increased the guards at the borders. On the judicial end, immigration trial attorneys and judges are without mercy – working hard to remove aliens from the United States.

The numbers are staggering. In 2005, nearly 90,000 immigrants with criminal convictions were deported. If you add those who were deported who don’t have criminal convictions, the figures go up enormously. If you have a previous conviction on file, no matter how minor it may be, be prepared for a visit from the immigration police. If you have been processed in any U.S. jail, immigration will place a hold on you. Sometimes even a minor traffic stop can catch their attention.

There is tremendous emotional toll for anyone facing

the US illegally commit a federal felony offense, carrying a maximum from two to 20 years in federal prison.

The current immigration enforcement is so tight that an alien who has been overstaying for even just a day may not slip through the crack. Any application for immigration benefits may raise a red flag if you’re an overstaying alien. The net has been cast so wide that even the smallest fish will get caught. This is a very broad statute making an individual subject to deportation if he or she violates any of the immigration rules. We know of a case when immigration authorities arrested someone in a party after the she told a friend about her overstay. One common misconception is that once you file for an extension of stay, you’re safe. At least one immigration officer stated that this is not true. The immigration enforcers are able, ready and willing.

For those who are not US

at the outset. As a client, you must be vigilant in insisting how important it is to avoid deportation. The criminal law attorney must seek immigration counsel if you are an alien. Finally, do not talk to police, district attorney, or immigration authorities before you speak to a lawyer or a public defender. Even aliens have the right to speak to counsel.

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