

1. **Mark your confusion.**
2. **Show evidence of a close reading.**
3. **Write a 1+ page reflection.**

Deported Mothers Make New Lives in Tijuana
Separated families part of the debate over U.S. immigration policy

Source: Tatiana Sanchez, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, August 21, 2016

It was 3:30 a.m. when Emma Sanchez kissed her husband goodbye as he left for work one June morning. As Michael Paulsen took the couple's three children back across the U.S.-Mexico border, Sanchez went back to bed. Hours later, she woke up to an empty two-story house on the outskirts of Tijuana.

The couple have followed the same routine for a decade. Deported to Mexico in 2006, Sanchez has lived in Tijuana while Paulsen and their three young sons, all U.S. citizens, live in Vista, Calif.

Their cross-border lives form part of the national debate over U.S. immigration policy. Activists point to the human cost of keeping families apart, while critics say the families could stay together if they choose to live in a place where the parents have legal status.

In the first half of 2014, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported 22,088 unauthorized immigrants who claimed to have at least one U.S.-born child, according to the agency's most recent data. Experts and activists estimate that hundreds of these parents live in Tijuana.

"The degree to which the family unit and women and children have become the [immigration] flashpoint is without precedent," said Ev Meade, director of the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego. "Historically, we've never had a situation where families have been separated like this."

Unauthorized immigrant parents were a key element of a plan by President Obama to provide deportation relief to as many as 5 million people. Though his plan would not have affected parents such as Sanchez, who have already been deported, it would have offered legal protections to parents who remain in the country illegally.

There were about 5 million children under the age of 18 living with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent between 2009 and 2013, according to a January report by the Migration Policy Institute. An estimated 4 million of these children were U.S. citizens.

A Supreme Court deadlock in June let stand a lower court decision blocking Obama's executive action.

Critics say immigrants who knowingly cross the border illegally do not have a right to be in the United States, where they take resources and employment opportunities from legal residents and citizens. Deportation is the rightful punishment for those actions, they argue.

ICE officials said 97% of the immigrant parents deported in 2014 met at least one of the agency's enforcement priorities, which include people with previous criminal convictions and previous deportations.

Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, said the term "family reunification" has been appropriated by "people who voluntarily decide to break immigration laws and then turn around and say they're entitled to equitable relief of the consequences of their own behavior."

"We're talking about people who simply feel that they want their children to have a better life and are willing to break our laws to get it," he said.

Sanchez acknowledges that she illegally immigrated to the U.S. but says her punishment was too severe.

“I understand that I’m unauthorized and I know I did something wrong that went against U.S. law, but I’m not a criminal,” she said. “I haven’t committed any serious offenses such as robbery, murder or prostitution.”

Sanchez entered the United States illegally in 2000. Before that, she had attempted to illegally come through the San Ysidro Port of Entry, but agents turned her away.

She met Paulsen in Vista shortly after arriving. He noticed her at the bus stop in front of the body shop where he worked as a mechanic. Paulsen didn’t know a word of Spanish at the time, and the two used an acquaintance as an interpreter. The couple married just one month after they met, in a civil ceremony in Vista.

Sanchez was filing paperwork for legalization in 2006 when she was summoned out of the country, to an appointment with immigration authorities at the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez. Authorities told her she would be prohibited from returning home to Vista for 10 years, despite the fact that Paulsen, 51, is a U.S. citizen and a Marine veteran.

Immigration law at the time stipulated that applicants seeking legal status must return to their country of origin. But once an applicant who had been living in the United States without permission left the country, they were automatically barred from re-entering for at least three years, sometimes for up to a decade.

“My whole world came crashing down.... You can’t believe that in one minute they’re destroying your life, your family,” Sanchez said in Spanish from her home in Tijuana. She told her husband they should divorce.

“I thought to myself, ‘How are we going to live like this, me in Mexico and my husband in the United States?’ ”

During her first three months in Mexico, Sanchez stayed with her three sons in the popular resort town of Los Cabos, where a brother worked as a physician. Her oldest child, Alex, was 5; Ryan, 3; and Brannon, 2 months.

But Paulsen wanted to be closer to his family, so he rented Sanchez a house in Tijuana. Though Paulsen contemplated moving to Tijuana, he said employment opportunities in Mexico were meager, and crossing the border every day for work would have been too difficult. In Vista, Paulsen and the boys rent a home with Sanchez’s mother. Paulsen makes the 80-mile drive every weekend to the home in Tijuana.

He pays two rents on a mechanic’s salary, more than \$50 in weekly gas money and groceries to sustain both households. Sanchez rarely leaves her home, saying she fears crime in the neighborhood. She sells crafts from her stoop a few times a week and paints in her free time.

“I tell people, ‘I’ve got to go see my wife, she lives in another country.’ It’s hard,” Paulsen said. “I’d like to one day come home and say, ‘Honey, what’s for dinner?’ I want to do that one day.” Typically, a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident can petition for his spouse to receive a green card or permanent residence. Children over age 21 can petition on a parent’s behalf, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Sanchez, banned from the U.S. for 10 years, is eligible to apply for re-entry.

The boys lived in Mexico for a while, but Sanchez and Paulsen said health and educational resources for U.S.-born children living there were minimal and felt their sons were entitled to public education in the U.S., where they were born.

“Although I see them on the weekends and during breaks from school, I know that I’m absent during their illnesses and for their day-to-day activities,” Sanchez said. “I know that they need me and that I’ve been absent during the most important times of their lives.”

Possible Response Questions:

- What are your thoughts regarding deportation?
- Do you agree or disagree with Sanchez? Explain.
- Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.