This is my story

My name is Milca Kouame. I am the third of four children. I was born in NJ on April 2000. My family is from Ivory Coast. Two of my siblings are in Ivory Coast. I live in Newark, New Jersey with my mother and my younger brother. My younger brother is 7 years old now. We both go to the same school.

My father was deported in 2007 after he was arrested. I was only 7 years old and my brother was between 3 and 4 years old. When I was sleeping, I overheard stomping coming from up the stairs to my room. When I got up in the morning, I found out that the police broke into his room and snatched him away even before I could see him. I couldn’t find him anywhere. I asked my mom what was going on. She refused to tell me. I got to find out later when my mother, my brother and I went to see my father’s lawyer. Then the truth came out.

I found out that my father was arrested. But at first I didn’t know that he was deported until I was about 10 years old. I thought he was in jail all this time. My mother spent her days crying her eyes out. My brother could not talk clearly for a long time, so people couldn’t understand him. He cried a lot all the time because he missed daddy. I suffer from extremely low self-esteem. I was a victim of bullying because my clothes were not in style. My friends were laughing at me because I was not in style and I feel angry all the times. I had low self-esteem because everybody in school had his father and I did not. Sometime I wish my dad was here. So things would be different. I would have new clothes.

Because my dad was not here, my mom is not able to buy me the things I want. I have been asking for Nitendo DS for a long time, but my mom could not afford it. When my dad was here, we used to go the restaurant a lot. But now, he is not here, and we cannot go anywhere.

It feels like one of my parents will be gone for good. It’s not fair for the children. It’s not fair for the children that have to go through this. If you don’t want your family to be separated, why are you destroying the family of the children who were born and raised here by immigrant parents? It is not fair to stay in another country leaving your family behind.

I want to tell congress that immigrants deserve human rights. Immigrants deserve to stay with their families. If you change the laws, you are doing the right thing.