

ELCA pastor deported to Colombia

Betty Rendón, who is also a doctoral student at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, was arrested when ICE raided her home.

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [June 19, 2019](#) issue



Betty Rendón. Courtesy photo.

Betty Rendón, a pastor at Emaus Lutheran Church in Racine, Wisconsin, was deported on May 28, along with her husband, Carlos Hincapie.

Church members and supporters had rallied around Rendón, who was beginning doctoral studies in preaching at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Paul Erickson, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Greater Milwaukee Synod, had encouraged people to send cards to Rendón and her husband while they were detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, to show "how many people are waiting and watching with her."

Rendón and her family came to the United States from Colombia in 2004 after she received a death threat from guerrilla fighters whom she wouldn't allow to recruit students at the school where she was the principal, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported. The school was attacked, and several teachers were assaulted.

"She applied for asylum in the US, but was eventually denied due to the lack of a police report [on the attack], although she says everyone in the area knew of the attack," Emaus Lutheran Church [wrote on its website](#). "Once her appeals were exhausted, she was issued an order of deportation, but it was never executed. We are at a loss to explain why ICE should have decided to execute it now."

The family owned a home in Chicago a few miles southwest of the seminary and "maintained spotless criminal records" with local law enforcement, the *Sun-Times* wrote. Each week Rendón drove more than two hours to preside at the Spanish-language service at Emaus.

ICE officers raided Rendón's house on May 8 after arresting her daughter, Paula Hincapie-Rendón, while she was driving her own daughter to school. The church wrote that Hincapie-Rendón "was stopped by ICE officers who admitted they were looking specifically for her." Hincapie-Rendón has Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status, by which undocumented people are allowed to remain in the United States and be eligible to work. The status does not permit regular travel outside of the United States.

ICE officers released Hincapie-Rendón, while Rendón, her husband, and a cousin who was staying in their home remained in ICE custody.

In the midst of the raid, Rendón sent a text message to the church “to inform us that she would likely not be able to preach on Sunday. Pastor Rendón was particularly struck by the celebratory tone of the officers. They were jubilant because they had managed to arrest so many people in a single raid.”

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