

Deported in Error, Missing and Months Later Home

The New York Times
August 8, 2007

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 7 — An American missing in [Mexico](#) for nearly three months after being wrongfully deported has been found and reunited with his family here.

The man, Pedro Guzman, 29, was taken into custody on Sunday at the border crossing in Calexico, Calif., as he tried to enter the United States, said Mark D. Rosenbaum, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, which has represented the family.

Mr. Guzman, appearing exhausted and confused, did not offer much information on where he had been, Mr. Rosenbaum said. Relatives have said he is mildly developmentally disabled. State Department officials said the family had told them that he had no mental incapacity.

The A.C.L.U. released a statement saying Mr. Guzman told family members on Tuesday that he had walked from Tijuana, Mexico, to Mexicali, across from Calexico, a distance of some 100 miles, and ate out of trash cans.

A spokeswoman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Lori Haley, declined to comment, because the family was suing the government. The agency has said it followed proper procedure in deporting Mr. Guzman.

Mr. Guzman had served about 20 days of a jail sentence for misdemeanor trespassing and vandalism until May 11, when, in a screening of inmates' status, he apparently indicated he was from Mexico and was turned over to the [immigration](#) agency, which deported him to Tijuana.

Family members said that Mr. Guzman, who was born and raised here, called them from Tijuana but that the conversation ended before he could say more precisely where he was and that they did not hear from him again.

The family and its lawyers said the deportation demonstrated a failure on the part of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and immigration authorities to verify properly his status.

An immigration agent, Pilar Garcia, said in a deposition that agents did not normally investigate whether someone claiming to be foreigner was a United States citizen.