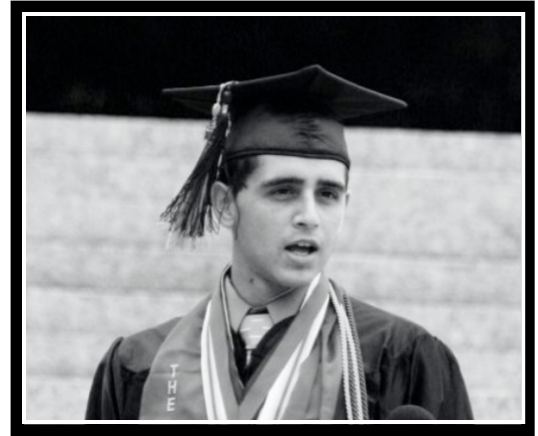


# Snapshot Biography:

## Walter Lara

As featured in Wednesday's *New York Times* opinion page, Walter Lara is a 23 year-old honor student facing deportation on July 6, 2009. Walter's family immigrated from Argentina when he was three years old. Having no recollection of his entry into this country, Walter was raised as an American with no knowledge of his immigration status. He has only known life as an American, and proudly declares that "the United States is my home." Walter attended elementary, middle, and high school in Miami, Florida. He graduated high school with an astounding 4.7 GPA and more than 1,000 hours of community service. Walter finished 4<sup>th</sup> in his high school class, and was active in sports. He has received many awards for both his academic and athletic ability.



During his senior year of high school, Walter learned of his immigration status while applying to colleges. Walter's status prohibited him from attending many of the four-year universities of which he dreamed. Walter was denied many of the scholarship opportunities he would have been eligible for if he were a U.S. resident, and was instead accepted into the Honors Program at Miami Dade College as an international student. He graduated Miami Dade with a 3.7 GPA and a major in Computer Animation. Walter made Dean's List every semester. In addition, during his college career, Walter devoted hundreds of hours to his community as a math tutor for middle school students in downtown Miami.

Walter's talents for computer animation led him to occasional employment in the field of information technology. At one job assignment, he was apprehended and detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), where he was detained for 20 days at the Broward Transitional Center (BTC). Walter was provided an attorney, who successfully encouraged the impressionable young man to consent to a voluntary departure, because "he would be allowed to get a visa and come right back to the United States." Sadly, this lawyer, who also recommended that Walter marry an American to stay in this country, was mistaken. If deported, Walter will not be eligible to return with a work visa for at least a decade.

Walter has never been arrested; his criminal record in the United States is impeccable.

Walter has been scheduled to be deported **on Monday, July 6, 2009**. His home state Senators Mel Martinez and Bill Nelson have written letters to support a review of his situation by the Department of Homeland Security. With Congress poised to recess until July 7, Walter's options on the legislative front are limited. His only hope to remain in the U.S. rests with Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano to immediately review the case and avert Walter's deportation.

Walter's story is the epitome of the American Dream. He has taken advantage of every opportunity provided to him and has given back to this country and his community whenever possible. Our nation's investments in the education of this intelligent, articulate, and clean-cut young professional will be squandered if he is deported. Walter was raised as an American from age three and knows no other country but this one. Within days, he will face deportation to a country he has never known.