

TIRED OF LIFE IN LIMBO, IMMIGRANTS RISK IT ALL

By asking the government to deport them, a couple hopes their family can stay in the U.S.

BY RUTH MORRIS
STAFF WRITER

On the surface, Marco and Rosa Braga have grasped the American dream: weekend barbecues and fishing trips, a home fringed with mango trees.

So why would this couple from Boca Raton ask the government to deport them?

"I've started to feel scared when people ask me for ID," said Rosa Braga, who overstayed a tourist visa years ago. "We want to live by the laws."

In an uncommon legal maneuver, the Bragas, both undocumented immigrants from Brazil, seek to enter deportation proceedings so they can ask a judge for leniency — and permission to stay in the United States. It's a dicey proposal, but like many who are in the country without authorization, they are increasingly eager to legalize their status, mainly for fear their adopted home is growing hostile to undocu-

mented immigrants.

Like others, they have watched politicians on television demand tighter controls on immigration, and champion a law President Bush signed Thursday that provides for 700 miles of fencing along the Mexican border. Many of Florida's undocumented have also seen their drivers' licenses expire under a state law blocking them from renewing. And they have watched as a Senate bill, meant to legalize about 8 million people, stalled.

"The debate is flaring, and it's become very anti-immigrant," said Olga Rojas, of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. "I have one client who told me, 'I'm just tired of being afraid.'"

After three unsuccessful attempts to obtain work visas, and with no immediate family members here to sponsor them for green cards,

■ DEPORTATION CONTINUES ON 2A

THE OTHER SIDE:

Daniel Braga, 5, left, and brother Joao Braga, 4, play with their 3-month-old sister, Victoria, through a window. The family will ask a judge to open deportation proceedings and then ask for leniency, on behalf of their children, in the hope that they can obtain legal status. "I've started to feel scared when people ask me for ID," said Rosa Braga, the children's mother, right. "We want to live by the laws." Staff photo/Carey Wagner

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