

**American GI Forum proudly presents:  
21st Annual Joe Cardenas Memorial Scholarship Fundraiser  
Keynote speaker, U.S. Army veteran Hector Barajas-Varela**



Hector Barajas-Varela , a deported U.S. Army veteran celebrate with Norma Chavez-Peterson, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of San Diego and Imperial counties, after he was granted his American citizenship in Tijuana, on Thursday March 15, 2018 . (Joel Angel Juarez/AP)

***The Washington Post***  
***Democracy dies in darkness***

**Excerpt from story written by Kristine Phillips, March 31, 2018**

Cameras [surrounded](#) a smiling Hector Barajas-Varela as he stood outside a small building known as “The Bunker,” a support house for deported U.S. military veterans in Tijuana, Mexico, not far from the California border. Tucked in his left arm was a blue folder with a letter from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, delivering the good news he had waited more than a decade to hear. As cameras clicked, Barajas-Varela held a cellphone in his right hand, telling his mother in Southern California that he’s coming home. Then he turned to a friend and gave him a high five and a hug.

“I got it,” he [said](#), laughing. “I got it, bro. Two weeks.”