

MAKING THE D.R.E.A.M. ACT MORE THAN JUST A DREAM

by

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Introducing the D.R.E.A.M. Act

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, otherwise known as the DREAM Act, is a piece of bipartisan legislation, pioneered by Senator Orin Hatch and Senator Richard Dublin that can solve a great injustice in our society. Passing the DREAM Act would ensure that “qualifying undocumented youth would be eligible for a 6 year long conditional path to citizenship that requires completion of a college degree or two years of military service” (“The DREAM Act”). By no means is this act an easy or free path into citizenship. If the DREAM Act were to pass, only those who meet certain restrictions would have the opportunity to earn their green card.

In 2012, the DREAMers movement paved the way for President Barack Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy. As stated on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website, “certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible for work authorization” (“Consideration of Deferred”). The DACA action has provided the opportunity for many DREAMers to attend college or post-secondary schools as well as to work, drive, and not be in constant fear of deportation.

Although this action is a blessing, it still leaves DREAMers in immigration limbo because it does not provide them lawful status. According to the American Immigration Council, “the deferred action provides temporary relief from enforcement but may be revoked at any time. Deferred action is not amnesty or immunity. It does not provide lawful immigration status or a path to a green card or citizenship” (“Deferred Action for”). Because of this, DREAMers are left

fearing that the protection will be taken away, and it in no way fixes the very broken bureaucratic immigration system.

Many people struggle making educated decisions when voting for laws or government officials because they do not do their own research about the topics. The DREAM Act and the Immigration Reform are both matters that affect numerous people in the U.S.A and that is one of the reasons for why citizens need to be better educated about the realities and repercussions of these matters. Everyone has the right to their own opinions on such controversial topics, but if someone chooses to have an opinion, and base their actions on that opinion, then they need to be fully aware of the facts and the effects that that those actions will create. It is crucial that Americans make themselves aware of the realities that DREAMers face because of the economic, moral, and legal benefits a reform can offer, not only for DREAMers themselves, but for the entire nation.

It Pays America to D.R.E.A.M.: The Economic Truth

“Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent every year to control the public mind.”

- Noam Chomsky

The world revolves around money. It can blind people to moral truths and cause many to dehumanize others because greed motivates people to support whatever benefits them the most. Opponents of the DREAM Act have played upon this by claiming that the DREAM Act takes jobs away from the American economy. Evidence to the contrary is widely available; however, many conservative politicians and extremists still get on national television and lie because they know that the fear of losing the one thing that everyone’s life revolves around will scare people

into losing sight of the truth. The necessity of the act makes their dishonesty all the worse. It is imperative for the U.S. that the DREAM Act becomes a law so that young undocumented immigrants who are already in this country are able to obtain an education and create more jobs. The DREAMers who have been contributing members in American society deserve a chance to earn something back after all they have given and worked for. The economically positive precedent established through the DACA policy reveals that DREAMers can be successful members in society if provided with the same opportunities as U.S. citizens.

Many Republican politicians and conservative extremists use media outlets to fool U.S. citizens into believing blatant lies about undocumented immigrants. Michael Snyder's article "18 Facts Prove Illegal Immigration Is Absolute Nightmare for U.S. Economy" is a perfect example of fear mongering. In his article, Snyder uses the Lump of Labor Fallacy to support his argument. The Lump of Labor fallacy is "the erroneous notion that there is only so much work to be done and that no one can get a job without taking one from someone else" (Davidson). As logical as this may seem from a distance, in reality, it is nonsensical. If it were true, every time a new graduating class enters the workforce, the economy would suffer. In reality, the opposite is true. According to Brent Radcliffe, author of "How Education and Training Affect the Economy," "a country's economy becomes more productive as the proportion of educated workers increases, since educated workers are able to more efficiently carry out tasks that require literacy and critical thinking" (Radcliffe). The claim that more people working takes away jobs from others is inaccurate because when there is an increase in the number of low-skill and high-skill jobs, there is also a higher demand for them through the wages being used to pay for rent, food, goods, and services. The demand for all of those purchases needs to be met with more jobs (Davidson). Those jobs can vary from the architects who will design the buildings where people

will live or shop at, to the retail workers who will sell the goods or services that people will purchase.

Opponents of the DREAM Act reform rely on skewing data in order to convince their audience. In his article, Snyder uses several links as support; however, when one clicks on the links, the data tells a much different story. For example, Snyder claims that there is proof through the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau that “legal and illegal immigrants gained over a million additional jobs between 2008 and 2010 even as millions of American citizens were losing their jobs during that same time period” (Snyder). The hyperlink associated with this statement leads to an online article by Ed Stoddard titled “Exclusive: Over a Million Immigrants Land U.S. Jobs in 2008-10.” Stoddard’s article does not show any information to support Snyder’s claim. Ironically, Stoddard argues that employees are encouraged to hire undocumented immigrants because they “do not have to pay health benefits or basic payroll taxes” (Stoddard). This only makes it clearer that undocumented immigrants are being exploited by American companies because they can pay them lower wages and deny them certain benefits like dental care or health insurance. Often, these are the jobs that U.S. citizens turn their noses up to. If undocumented immigrants were on a pathway to citizenship, companies would be forced to pay higher wages and more U.S. citizens would also apply for those positions because the pay would be worth the work. It is convenient for conservative extremists to make such arguments. They want to keep their companies paying low wages so that they can make higher profits by selling products at a lower price.

Snyder also falsely accuses undocumented immigrants of being a drain on the social safety net. He states that, “although illegal aliens pay next to nothing in taxes, they have no problem receiving tens of billions of dollars worth of free education benefits, free health care

benefits . . . —and free food stamp benefits” (Snyder). On a logical standpoint, the idea that undocumented immigrants do not have to pay taxes is ludicrous because, at the very least, everyone has to pay sales tax on merchandise. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP), “Undocumented immigrants contribute significantly to state and local taxes, collectively paying an estimated \$11.84 billion in 2012” (“Undocumented”). Besides local taxes that everyone must pay, like sales tax on goods and utilities, many undocumented individuals are required to pay property taxes either as a result of owning their own homes or renting. Numerous immigrants also have to pay income taxes if they live in states that require them to. ITEP found that “at least 50 percent of undocumented immigrant households currently file income tax returns using Individual Tax Identification Numbers” (“Undocumented Immigrants”). Many of the undocumented immigrants who do not have to pay income taxes still have to pay taxes in their paychecks. Ultimately, this all means that regardless of what legal status one possesses, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is receiving money from the individual no matter what—even though the employer might not be paying since many employers exploit undocumented workers by receiving the benefit of their labor without having to document or pay the same taxes that they would have to pay for documented workers. This is often done when employers hire undocumented immigrants for their cheap labor and pay them under the table. If undocumented immigrants were given a pathway to citizenship, employers would be forced to document their workers and pay taxes for them as well.

When it comes to education and the DREAM Act, it is fair to say that public education is “relatively” free, if you look past the taxes and minimal fees—like school uniforms, supplies, and lunches that undocumented parents have to pay. Schools are defined as “good” or “bad” by the number of students who succeed in the standardized tests. Steve Kastenbaum, writer for CNN

and author of “The High Stakes of Standardized Tests,” says that “for the past few years, scores from statewide tests in English and math have been used to determine which schools are doing a good job of educating students and which are ‘failing’” (Kastenbaum). When DREAMers perform well on these standardized tests, they are ideally contributing to the success of their schools and, by result, the funding that their schools receive. In spite of this, many of these students are not able to attend college after graduation. As shown in an article by the American Immigration Council, “it is estimated that only between 5 and 10 percent of undocumented high-school graduates go to college—not because they don’t want to, but because they cannot afford it or because some schools will not allow them to enroll” (“The DREAM Act”). Although some might argue that this does not personally affect them, the truth is that the undocumented students who have high-potential and are unable to enroll in college, finish their degrees, and enter their high-skilled occupations are often the same students who could grow up to greatly benefit the U.S. economy by becoming valuable assets to the labor force. In 2012, just two years after the initiation of the DACA policy, at least 45% of DACA applicants reported an increase in job earnings (“Two Years and Counting”). With more people working high skilled jobs, there will be an increase in economic strength as more contributive consumers are added. It is anticipated that passing the DREAM Act would create a \$329 billion dollar gain for the U.S. economy and a probable contingent of 1.4 million new job openings by 2030 (Guzmán and Jara 4). This would primarily be due to the countless number of young undocumented students who would be able to enter college and then later the American workforce.

The biggest lie about undocumented immigrants is that they receive a significant amount of federal assistance, including but not limited to healthcare and food stamps. In truth, those federal benefits are only available to U.S. citizens. Reasonably, if one is undocumented, then by

definition they do not have the documentation necessary to prove they need federal help. Anyone who has ever had to fill out a government application for any sort of assistance knows that completing those forms is no easy task. The number of documents one has to provide to prove that they are a U.S. citizen and in need of financial assistance is insurmountable. Although the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as “Obamacare,” claims to help all people save the most money on their health care, it is one of those federal coverages that does not benefit most undocumented immigrants (“Health Care”). On the HealthCare.gov site, there is a short list of immigrants who qualify for the Affordable Care Act which includes only certain types of undocumented immigrants like refugees and asylees. These groups make up the smallest percentage of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Undocumented immigrants who are considered to be deferred action status do qualify, but those who are DACA are not eligible (“Immigration Status”). Because of this, DREAMers under the DACA protection still do not qualify for the Affordable Care Act. According to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), “the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, limits eligibility for SNAP benefits to U.S citizens and certain lawfully present non-citizens. Generally, a non-citizen must be a qualified alien (“Guidance on Non-Citizen”). While the SNAP guidelines do specify that “certain groups of non-citizens are not qualified aliens but still may be eligible for SNAP” (“Guidance on Non-citizen”), the “qualified non-citizens” that do qualify for food stamps are asylees, refugees, or certain American Indians born abroad (“Guidance on Non-citizen”).

Malala Yousafzai once said, “I speak not for myself but for those without voice . . . — those who have fought for their rights . . . —their right to live in peace, their right to be treated with dignity, their right to equality of opportunity, their right to be educated” (United Nations). Without government assistance, it can be very difficult for undocumented immigrants to provide

for their families. This is why it is crucial that the DREAM Act be enacted. If DREAMers can attain a pathway to citizenship, then they can qualify for certain benefits that can help them support their families and in turn be more financially successful. DREAMers only want the same financial opportunities that U.S. citizens receive so that they may be contributing members to the U.S. economy. In essence, passing the DREAM Act is investing in America's economic success.

D.R.E.A.M.ing of Equality: America's Moral Obligation and Opportunity

“When a society loses sight of the distinction between fact and fiction, truth-telling and lying, what happens is that truth, critical thought, and fact-finding . . . —are rendered trivial . . . — which in turn reinforces moral indifference.”

- *Henry A. Geroux, Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism*

When social pressure is induced by arrogant hate, it can force society to close its eyes to the truth behind critical topics like the DREAM Act and place other human beings into morally unjust situations. The effect from this reverberates throughout the social body. When society closes its eyes and ears to the truth (and therefore the morally just thing), its citizens, whether they realize it or not, have made a significant choice. It is one that compromises their ideals and corrodes the nation's soul. No country that ignores the truth can hope to be a moral or just place. It is crucial for citizens to be aware of the importance of seeking truth about the DREAM Act because DREAMers are human and a part of society, even if some would prefer to think otherwise. American citizens have a moral obligation to work toward learning about the realities that young, undocumented immigrants have to face because only through truth-seeking can society influence the rest of the nation to take action through social pressure.

The “don’t hear, don’t see” mentality is one that negatively affects society in the way that people choose to not acknowledge or search for the truth that is right in front of them.

Inconvenient truths like war and terrorism in foreign countries, starving children all around the world, and different types of oppression like sexism and discrimination against people in the LGBTQ community are hidden from sight in public discussions. This mentality is dangerous because it prevents people from being able to reach a level of global and personal awareness. Ultimately, this means that when people are not aware of the events happening around them, they have no chance to make a positive difference.

When people judge young hard-working immigrants, they often do so on their race, although they will not admit it. Choosing to be blind to discrimination that affects undocumented immigrants is the same as when people claim to be “colorblind” to racism. Writing in *The Guardian*, Zach Stafford claims that “‘Colorblindness’ doesn’t acknowledge the very real ways in which racism has existed and continues to exist, both in individuals and systematically. By professing not to see race, you’re just ignoring racism, not solving it.” Even if one, personally, does not consider themselves racist toward the typical Hispanic undocumented immigrant, by not taking a stand and doing something about the prejudice that exists, they are themselves guilty of choosing to be “colorblind” and therefore “morally blind.” This not only affects undocumented Hispanics, but every person in the United States. If American citizens keep their minds closed off to this injustice, it can increase the level of racism and oppression all over the nation because of “racial ambiguity.” According to a master’s thesis done by Wayne State University student Cindy Veronica Vargas, racial ambiguity is “used to refer to the difficulty that a person of mixed race has when wanting to choose his or her racial/ethnic identity.” The United States is a melting pot of races, colors, and languages. One cannot always know the race or ethnicity of anyone

simply based off the way they look. This opens the door for misdirected racism (not that any racism is ever justified) because someone who looks Hispanic may not necessarily be so, and yet at the same time they may be cursed “wetback” or “illegal” in the streets because their racial identity may be mistaken.¹ As one can imagine, this scenario would be a rather frightening and scarring experience for anyone to go through, and that is precisely why Americans needs to be aware of the racial discrimination that is facing their society today. When American society tolerates hate speech and discrimination to any of its members, it is accepting it for all.

One of the main reasons many U.S. citizens are against DREAMers is because they are afraid of the changes that could following granting DREAMers legal status. The thought of change is frightening because with change, comes risk and unfamiliarity. With their different cultures, backgrounds, and personalities, DREAMers are a relatively unknown group of people and many citizens suffer from media- and public-induced xenophobia about them. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines xenophobia as the name of an “intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries” (“Xenophobia”). This irrational fear is more common than one would think, and it is often due to misconceptions about what these cultural differences could mean. According to an article written by Alexander Dawoody, author of “Xenophobia, the Other Face of Racism,”

Xenophobia is burping out as a reaction to paranoia, resentments and hatred, especially by those who feel threatened and marginalized by cooperative globalization. Hence, racism is resurfacing once again but within an innovative

¹ Although these slurs are extremely offensive, it is imperative that they are used to demonstrate the hostility that many people face every day.

form of phobia by targeting groups of human beings who are now considered as the new outsiders.

The media is a powerful influence when it comes to public opinion and the way that U.S. citizens view undocumented immigrants and other outsiders. Unfortunately, when certain media outlets like NewsMax and Fox News spew lies to advance their own talking points about undocumented immigrants, it creates a general climate of xenophobia.

NewsMax reporter, Jim Meyers offers an ideal case study titled “16 Reasons Trump is Not Wrong on Illegal Immigration.” In his article, he presents supposed “proof” for his arguments about how destructive and dangerous immigrants are. One of his claims is that undocumented immigrants are rapists. As support, he relates that “an undocumented alien was arrested in Baltimore for raping a 9-year-old girl. [And] In Austin, Texas, police arrested two Mexican nationals who allegedly participated in the gang rape of a 13-year old girl in June” (Meyers). What is shocking about this claim and its “support” is that beyond the anecdotal evidence noted above, Meyers does not use a single piece of factual, statistical information to support his claim. While the incidents mentioned above were indeed horrific, those men do not represent all undocumented immigrants, or even a large percent, and it is reprehensible to insinuate they do. A study done at the Pew Research Center shows that second-generation and native-born citizens have more criminal offenses than first generation immigrants, a title designating DREAMers and U.S. born children of undocumented immigrants, often referred to as “anchor babies” (Morin). These news media outlets’ strategy of playing with the fears of citizens by making claims that induce xenophobia into their minds is unfair and dangerous.

Many undocumented immigrants who turn to crime do so because it is their only option besides going back to their country of origin—where they will face extreme hardships or death.

Undocumented immigrants just want to be accepted and do what they can to take care of themselves and their families. Texas Public Radio reporter, Joey Palacios, wrote an article titled “Immigrants Working Illegally in the U.S. File Tax Returns without the Fear of Deportation.” In his report, he interviews a woman going by the name of Claudia. Claudia works using a fake social security number because she is an undocumented immigrant. The report states that even though she faces the risk of getting a felony and serving jail time, she explains that she still reports her taxes because “she doesn’t want to be one of the immigrants you hear about—who’s described as a burden on the system” (Palacios). There are many more otherwise law-abiding citizens like Claudia, who operate outside the law because of their legal situations.

As for the small percentage of undocumented immigrants, specifically DREAMers, who do have other criminal offenses, these people are often products of their environments. When a DREAMer is belittled and made to believe that he or she is a bad person, from childhood, this can severely affect the person who they become. According to social scientist, Joachim Vogt Isaksen, “The self-fulfilling prophecy is a concept used by the American sociologist Robert Merton to describe how a statement may alter actions and therefore become true. In situations where many individuals act on the basis of an expectation, they may actually influence whether an incident will take place or not” (Isaksen). When DREAMers are told that they are criminals, eventually they are made to believe it, which can lead them to actually perform criminal acts. This is very similar to when a child falsely accuses another child of hitting him or her and then an adult punishes the second child even though that child never did anything wrong. It can become very easy for that second child to actually start to hit the first child since they are getting in trouble for it anyway and are forced to play the role of a “misbehaving child” by those in authority. In the same way, an undocumented immigrant who is unfairly taunted “criminal”

might begin to perform criminal acts due “to a vicious cycle, where their negative mindset strengthens their self-fulfilling prophecies” (Isaksen). In other words, the person internalizes and then enacts the cultural story that is told about them.

Fortunately, there is a way to prevent all of this from happening. When citizens make the effort to become aware about the truth behind the DREAM Act, they have the opportunity to learn about the many wonderful young people who bear the title of “DREAMer.” Many DREAMers are at the top of their classes, are very involved in their communities, and are made all the more hard-working because of what they have been through. In the video “I’m a Dreamer,” Jessica Esparza, a DREAMer in college working toward her Associate's degree in nursing, speaks about the obstacles she has faced because of her legal status (“I’m a Dreamer”). In this short documentary, DREAMers are portrayed as the hard working individuals they are. Esparza expresses her frustration with her immigration status, but she is also gracious for how it has made her who she is today (“I’m a Dreamer”).

The reality is that many DREAMers, like Esparza, are still keeping their identities hidden. U.S. citizens already know DREAMers and just do not realize it. Many DREAMers are their friends, the people they go to church with, the people who babysit their children, and the people who package their groceries and cut their hair. The reality is that the addition of new cultures and traditions from these DREAMers is a positive change. With the acceptance and tolerance of different cultures, languages, and traditions, people can become more globally aware, and can use their knowledge as a strategy for winning the hearts and minds of the rest of American society. Being culturally aware can only help to add to human knowledge. Robert Green Ingersoll once said “tolerance is giving to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself” (qtd. in Wilcox and George 295). It is only when people can be welcoming of

different lifestyles that the human race is able to advance itself in healthy and cooperative ways. It is much easier to discuss a global issue when one is fully informed about what others are going through. This is a mentality that needs to begin right now, and it can only be done when society takes the opportunity to make learning about the DREAM Act its obligation.

D.R.E.A.M.ing of Justice: America's Path to Adjusting the Scales

“To deny any person their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

- Nelson Mandela

The U.S. Constitution is central to the United States' identity as a nation, establishing the fundamental and unalienable rights that every citizen and member of the United States must not only uphold, but also be guaranteed. Since it was first written, the Constitution has remained as one of the most sacred and valued documents in U.S. history. Even most political opponents will agree that the Constitution is the foundation upon which this nation was built. Given this, why are the constitutional rights of so many undocumented immigrants and DREAMers being violated?

It is the responsibility of the Supreme Court to best utilize the Constitution in order to guarantee justice to all of its people. According to the Cornerstone Address made by former Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes, “As the final arbiter of the law, the Court is charged with ensuring the American people the promise of equal justice under law and, thereby, also functions as guardian and interpreter of the Constitution” (Hughes). Because it is the Supreme Court's ultimate decision to determine how the Constitution is followed, it is crucial that the President nominates and the Senate confirms the appointment of virtuous and honest

Justices. Unfortunately, there are certain times when this process does not take place properly, and it can have serious repercussions on the government's ability to make good on the Constitution's guarantees.

In June of 2016, the Supreme Court failed to make a decision about the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), which was an expansion of President Barack Obama's first Executive Action DACA. As stated on the National Immigration Law Center, DAPA was designed for the parents of U.S citizens and lawful permanent residents who have lived in the United States since January of 2010 ("Frequently Asked Questions"). DAPA was going to be a real opportunity for the United States because it would have provided undocumented parents with the chance to work and drive without the fear of deportation. After the successful results of the DACA policy, many were hopeful that DAPA would be passed without any problems. However, because of the actions taken by the Republicans in the Senate, the DAPA policy was deemed inconclusive during the Supreme Court hearing which ultimately means it did not pass. The problem with this is that Republicans did not give the policy a chance to be properly voted on by the Supreme Court because they would not confirm the president's nomination for a ninth Justice, which ensured that there would be no tie breaker. During a statement about the Supreme Court's ruling, President Barack Obama said, "this is part of the consequence of the Republican failure so far to give a fair hearing to Mr. Merrick Garland, my nominee to the Supreme Court . . . the expanded set of common-sense deferred action policies . . . can't go forward at this stage, until there is a ninth justice on the Court to break the tie" (qtd. in Garunay). When the Supreme Court is the only court considered responsible enough to represent the Constitution of the United States and it is used as a political weapon, no fair or just decision can be made, and this has suspended undocumented immigrants in a state of legal limbo.

Now that the final decision regarding any sort of Immigration Reform has been made during President Obama's administration, it is time to shift the focus onto how immigration will impact the United States in the upcoming election. According to an article by Stephen Balkaran, a writer at *The Huffington Post*, "immigration reform has more implications for America's future than many of us can foresee; not only socially, culturally and economically, but Hispanic political presence, is already shaping and defining a new American political landscape" (Balkaran). The two top presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, have been very vocal throughout their respective campaigns about their views on immigration, and this has opened up a lot of political debate within American society. On the official Hillary Clinton website, she shows her support for immigration reform by saying, "if we claim we are for family, then we have to pull together and resolve the outstanding issues around our broken immigration system. . . . We can't wait any longer for a path to full and equal citizenship" (Clinton). Clearly, Clinton supports a nation that follows the values set by the Constitution. In contrast, Donald Trump's official website states that "U.S. taxpayers have been asked to pick up hundreds of billions in healthcare costs, housing costs, education costs, welfare costs, etc" ("Immigration Reform"). This shows that Trump uses data that has been proven to be fake to scare Americans into believing that an immigration reform would be detrimental to the U.S. (a scare tactic dissected earlier in this essay). Fortunately, a number of young Hispanic citizens will be voting in this election, and many of them are children of undocumented immigrants and may have older siblings who are DREAMers as well.

The Hispanic, and the broader immigration vote in general, is a driving force for this election because of the high number of first-generation American citizens. The assumption is often made that most Republican voters adhere to the party line on immigration, but a study from

the *New American Economy* shows that “only about one in five GOP primary voters is an anti-immigration voter” (“Why Immigration”). This means that some Republican voters might vote for Hillary Clinton for the Presidential Election because they may feel put-off by Trump’s obvious disdain for undocumented immigrants, DREAMers, Mexicans, and relatively anyone else who happens to be an immigrant. In addition, most Hispanic voters who would otherwise vote Republican will be swayed this upcoming election because of Trump’s hate speech towards (but not limited to) Hispanics and immigrants. The *New American Economy* again shows that “Foreign-born citizens are more than twice as likely as the general U.S. population to hold Republican or very conservative views, yet identify as Democrats” (“Why Immigration”). One can only assume that this is due to the fact that even though most immigrants might agree with other Republicans on many social issues or hold conservative values, a majority feel threatened and offended by the Right’s rhetoric about their communities.

There is a rising tide of immigrant voters who are united in their quest for the election of a president who is pro-immigration reform. The website *Unite Here* invites people from all across the United States to join their union in support for a fair and extensive immigration reform. According to their site, “Unite Here, in conjunction with the AFL-CIO and thousands of immigrant rights activists, is pushing for comprehensive, worker-centered, and commonsense immigration reform and an end to criminalizing enforcement strategies” (“Standing Strong”). Unions and organizations like this are popping up all over the U.S. and finding broad public support because their goals are to show that all members in American society need to stick together, and not be torn apart by radical Republicans like Donald Trump. Trump’s toxic mentality is harmful for American society because it pushes the American people away from the

true meaning of Constitutional values. When DREAMers and other undocumented immigrants are denied their constitutional rights, where is the line drawn?

The reality is that Trump plans to take away the constitutional rights of many if he becomes president. According to *Huffington Post* contributor Bill Blum, Trump's most dangerous idea is his proposal to "end[] 'birthright citizenship' for so-called anchor babies" (Blum). This proposal is not only against the 14th Amendment, but would roll back years of social justice in the United States. This country was a nation built of immigrants; if Donald Trump wins the election and proceeds to end birthright citizenship, he will be turning the United States into a nation of ultimate hypocrisy. Balkaran exposes the truth when he writes, "Donald Trump's racist remark[s] reminds us that the hatred towards immigrants is alive and well in a country that practices integration and acceptance of all" (Balkaran). This upcoming election is in the hands of the American people and it is their duty to make sure that the presidency is not given to Donald Trump because his racism, bigotry, and xenophobia can only divide the nation.

The United States is a nation that was built by the blood, sweat, and tears of immigrants, and it still belongs to its citizens. It is everyone's responsibility to fight for immigrants' rights because if one group of people's rights can be denied, what is there to stop everyone's rights from being taken away? The Constitution was put in place to protect Americans; and DREAMers are a part of the American people. The principles that this nation was founded upon include equality and acceptance for all. There is no clause that states, "except for: undocumented immigrants, DREAMers, anchor babies, and Hispanics." This is a nation of hardworking, honest, and kind individuals and that is why it is the duty of every citizen to make sure that all of its members are treated with the same fairness that the Constitution guarantees.

D.R.E.A.M.ing On

“You have to understand / that no one puts their children in a boat / unless the water is safer than the land.”

- Warsan Shire, *“Home”*

As a DREAMer who came to the United States at a very young age, I was lucky enough to have come in legally, so I never experienced much of the trauma that many immigrants do face when coming to America. I was not forced to hike up dangerous trails, only to have to hide every few seconds behind a prickly bush. I did not face the possibility of drowning or getting hypothermia from having to swim across a freezing body of water in the middle of the night. I was too young to understand that I was saying goodbye to my family, and did not know that I might never see them again. I was lucky because unlike many other immigrants, I did not suffer. This is not to say that moving to the United States was easy; I remember watching my mother go without eating for days just so that my grandmother and I would have something to eat and so that the bills in the efficiency we lived in would be paid. I remember when a friend from church would come by with some donated desserts and used toys and it felt like Christmas. I guess that my experience made me realize how blessed I was to at least have a warm bed to sleep in and a family who loves me.

Even now as an adult, I cannot imagine what my mother faced when she first came to this country. It makes one wonder what could possibly bring someone to move to a foreign country, without the knowledge that they would find a place to live, or a job, especially without even knowing the language. The reality is that the choice to move to a new country and become an undocumented immigrant is not easy, and it is not one that anyone truly wants to make. Like

most immigrants, my mother brought me to this country because she thought she could provide me a better life than in Peru, where I was born. At the time, Peru was dealing with a lot of terrorism. It was so violent that bombs exploded down the street where we lived almost every day. My mother lived in constant fear that we would lose our lives. At the same time, I was about to start school for the first time and paying for private school was an expense she could not afford. Her only other option besides coming to America was to send me to public school, which was hardly school at all since teachers were volunteers in the community and the school had no walls or desks and, even lacked concrete floors.

Even when we moved to the United States, my mother always made sure to instill in me the values that she learned from her parents. She always told me that even if I was judged for being an immigrant, I should always be proud of where I come from and who I am. She taught me that if I wanted the world's views to change, I would have to change it myself. When I was young, I did not understand the prejudices that people held against me. Or, more accurately, I understood that I was judged for being an immigrant; I just never understood why. As far as I knew, I was the same as everyone else. I grew up reciting the American national anthem at school, eating McDonald Happy meals, and reading Judy Blume books. It was not until I reached adulthood that I realized why people judge DREAMers. I decided to make it my life's mission to change the meaning of the label. Carrying the title of DREAMer made me realize that I would always face judgements that come with the name, but I now also know that we are not who society makes us out to be. DREAMers are hardworking students who want nothing more than to be part of society, giving and working toward the success of this Nation. We deserve a chance to earn citizenship because we are Americans who love this country. We only ask for the chance to

be accepted and the opportunity to earn our stay. It is time for all Americans to fight for the rights of the DREAMers and the soul of our country.

I am proud of being a DREAMer, and I will dream on.

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