# Contents

**GENERAL RESOURCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Briefing: The DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The DREAM Act: Correcting Myths and Misperceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DREAM Act Talking Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinco razones centrales para apoyar el DREAM Act (Talking Points in Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the United States Conference of Mayors Urging Support of the DREAM Act...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Military Impact and Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Defense Secretary Robert Gates In Support of the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Sheet: The DREAM Act Would Benefit U.S. Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotes from Military Experts Supporting the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Educational Impact and Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in Support of the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the American Council on Education and Higher Education Associations Urging Passage of the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities Which Have Endorsed or Passed Resolutions in Support of the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic Impact and Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Fred Humphries, Microsoft Managing Director of U.S. Government Affairs, in Support of the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and a Coalition of CEOs In Support of the DREAM Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The DREAM Act: Creating Economic Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No DREAMers Left Behind: The Economic Potential of DREAM Act Beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Editorials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Republic: Dream Act students risk deportation to win support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change.org: The Fight to Keep Tucson DREAMer Araceli Torres-Ruiz Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Republic: Editorial - Pass Dream Act the right way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Republic: Editorial--The Dream Act is long overdue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Ramirez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Mei Lau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Michael (JROTC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter: Marlen Moreno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arkansas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: Editorial—Fairness to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**California**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Letter from the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Urging Support for the DREAM Act.......................................................... 52
Sacramento Bee: Editorial—Take small step on immigration, pass DREAM Act .......................................................... 53
Los Angeles Times: Students want the DREAM Act to become reality.......................................................... 54
Santa Rosa Press-Democrat: Editorial—Step forward ........................................................................... 57
Fresno Bee: Editorial—Sorting out hypocrisy on illegal immigration .......................................................... 58
Catholic News Service: Hunger strike, arrests, other lobbying aim to push DREAM Act forward ......................................................................... 60
OC Register: Immigration activists rally from O.C. to D.C .......................................................... 62
Associated Press: Student body president in CA is illegal immigrant .......................................................... 64
Los Angeles Times: Editorial—A path to college ........................................................................... 66
Sacramento Bee: Editorial—DREAM Act should be the law of the land ........................................................................... 67
Change.org: Steve Li’s Deportation on Hold ........................................................................... 68
San Francisco Chronicle: Feinstein seeks to block Steve Li’s deportation .......................................................... 69
Colorlines: DREAM Act’s Defeat Spells One Family’s Imminent Loss .......................................................... 71
Associated Press: Immigrant vets face deportation despite service ........................................................................... 73
San Jose Mercury News: Friends, professors rally behind student caught in immigration fight ........................................................................... 76
The New York Times Magazine: Coming Out Illegal ........................................................................... 78
OC Register: Vigil tonight for failed illegal immigrant student act ........................................................................... 83
San Francisco Chronicle: Editorial - Senate should pass DREAM Act ........................................................................... 84
Wall Street Journal: A Route to Citizenship in Defense Bill ........................................................................... 85
San Jose Mercury News: Editorial—DREAM Act should transcend immigration debate ........................................................................... 87
Myrna Ortiz ........................................................................................................................................ 88
Osvaldo Vences ........................................................................................................................................ 89
Gladys Castro ........................................................................................................................................ 89
Ivan Rosales ........................................................................................................................................ 89
Matias Ramos ........................................................................................................................................ 89
Jessica Lopez ........................................................................................................................................ 90
Story: Alex ........................................................................................................................................ 90
Story: Alma ........................................................................................................................................ 91
Story: Betsy ........................................................................................................................................ 91
Story: Belina ........................................................................................................................................ 92
Story: Carl ........................................................................................................................................ 92
Story: Carlos L ........................................................................................................................................ 93
Story: Cinthya ........................................................................................................................................ 94
Story: Christopher ........................................................................................................................................ 95
Story: David ........................................................................................................................................ 95
Story: Edward O ........................................................................................................................................ 96
Story: Ernesto ........................................................................................................................................ 98
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miami Herald: Editorial - An investment in the American Dream</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associated Press: Students, activists urge LeMieux to back Dream Act</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miami Herald: Miami Student Leader Reveals He Is An Undocumented Immigrant</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA Today: Alien Minors Act Could Boost U.S. Military Ranks</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bradenton Herald: Local crowd ‘dreams’ of changes to immigration</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tallahassee Democrat: Editorial—Dare to DREAM</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danbury News-Times: Sisters share a dream for all young immigrants</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The News Journal: Education could be ticket to citizenship</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denver Post: Editorial—To-do list for short session</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aurora Sentinel: Editorial - Colin Powell is the right's voice on immigration</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aurora Sentinel: Editorial - Everyone benefits when this DREAM comes true</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boulder Daily Camera: Lafayette Cesar Chavez march expands, will start from Boulder</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denver Post: Tuition hurdle tires out illegal immigrant kids and counselors</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rocky Mountain News: Clock ticks as students near age 18</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rocky Mountain News: Editorial--Kids without a country; DREAM Act would help legalize their status</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denver Post: Immigrant kids chase dream; Congress weighs helping students into college, military</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story: Hans</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter: Chih Tsung Kao</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Yoshinori</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Zeenat</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter: Lizbeth Mateo</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter: David Cho</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter: Yahaira Carrillo</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Lily</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Marcos</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Myagmarsuren Ireedui</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Noemi</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Ruth L.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Sandra</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Isaac</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Ivan</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Jamie</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Jessica</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STORY: Jorge</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sun-Sentinel: Sharing a DREAM; Students push for the DREAM Act as a path to get degrees, citizenship................................................................. 143
Miami Herald: Editorial—Pass DREAM Act ................................................................. 144
Camilo Yepes.............................................................................................................. 145
Manuel Guerra ......................................................................................................... 146
Luis ......................................................................................................................... 146
Erika Grispino......................................................................................................... 146
Story: Belle .......................................................................................................... 147
Story: Dan ............................................................................................................. 148
Story: Liliana ......................................................................................................... 149
Letter: Gaby Pacheco ............................................................................................ 150
Letter: Carlos Roa Jr. ........................................................................................... 152

Georgia......................................................................................................................... 154
Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Jury Finds Kennesaw State student Colotl guilty on one of two charges ................................................................. 154
Mundo Hispanico: Todavía se puede soñar ............................................................... 155
Atlanta Journal-Constitution: A Dream come true ............................................ 157
Story: Diana ........................................................................................................... 159

Illinois.......................................................................................................................... 161
Chicago Sun-Times: Editorial: Give kids here illegally chance to go to college .... 161
Carlos and Rafael Robles ...................................................................................... 162
Story: Blanka ......................................................................................................... 162
Letter: Salvador Maldonado .................................................................................. 164
Letter: Tania Unzueta ........................................................................................... 166

Indiana.......................................................................................................................... 168
Story: Jamie ............................................................................................................ 168

Kansas.......................................................................................................................... 169
The New York Times Magazine: Coming Out Illegal ............................................ 169
Kansas City Star: Students support giving undocumented people path to citizenship via education .......................................................... 175
Wichita Eagle: No leadership on immigration ..................................................... 181
Letter from the Chancellor of the University of Kansas Urging Support of the DREAM Act .................................................................................. 182
Letter from Kansas City Public Schools Superintendent Urging Support of the DREAM Act .......................................................... 183
Ricardo Quinones .................................................................................................. 184

Kentucky..................................................................................................................... 185
Change.org: Victory: Jennifer Abreu Is Out of Detention .................................. 185
Story: Jennifer Abreu ............................................................................................ 185

Maine.......................................................................................................................... 187
Maine Public Broadcasting Network: Undocumented Students in Maine Urge Passage of
DREAM Act .................................................................................................................. 188
Letter: Selvin Arevalo Ovidio .................................................................................. 189

Maryland ...................................................................................................................... 191
Washington Post: New push planned for DREAM Act ............................................. 191
Washington Post: 'Angels behind me' ....................................................................... 193
Letter: Yves Gomes .................................................................................................. 195

Massachusetts .............................................................................................................. 197
Boston Globe: Editorial--Kids of illegals deserve a shot .......................................... 197
Berkshire Eagle: Editorial—Reform is a pipe dream ............................................... 197
Boston Globe: Case of Harvard student shows urgency of immigration reform .......... 198
Boston Globe: Students here illegally rally in hope of living American dream .......... 199
Boston Globe: Desperate action; Many blame Brazilian immigrant's suicide on the pressures, limitations of illegal status .................................................................................. 201
Associated Press: Tufts president asks aid for undocumented students .................. 204
Boston Globe: Illegal status gives Harvard grad few options .................................. 205
Boston Globe: Harvard’s Faust backs path to legal residency; Illegal immigrant bill called ‘lifeline’ .................................................................................................................. 208
Boston Globe: From In-Crowd to Out: Illegal immigrants often find the road to college blocked .................................................................................................................. 209
Eric Balderas ............................................................................................................. 212
Story: Gabrielle M. ................................................................................................. 212
Story: Madison B. ..................................................................................................... 217
Story: Mariana R. ..................................................................................................... 218
Story: Nick L. ........................................................................................................... 220

Michigan ......................................................................................................................... 222
Battle Creek Enquirer: Editorial—Step toward real reform .................................... 222
Story: Guillermo ....................................................................................................... 222
Story: Isabel Reyes ................................................................................................. 223
Story: Rahmin ......................................................................................................... 224
Story: Sung ................................................................................................................ 226
Letter: Mohammad Abdollahi .................................................................................. 226
Letter: Ivan Nikolov .................................................................................................. 228

Missouri ......................................................................................................................... 228
Kansas City Star: Students support giving undocumented people path to citizenship via education ........................................................................................................ 228
Kansas City Star: Protests could block American dream ........................................ 234
St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Watching dreams unravel ............................................... 236
St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Editorial—Helping Marie ................................................. 238
Letter from Rockhurst University President Urging Support of DREAM Act .......... 240

New Jersey .................................................................................................................... 241
Daily Targum: Students share stories of tuition burdens ................................................................. 241
El Diario-La Prensa: Dedicar desfile al Dream Act ................................................................. 243
Story: Camila ................................................................................................................................. 244
Story: Ivan .................................................................................................................................... 244
Story: Maria ................................................................................................................................. 245
Story: Marisol Hernandez ......................................................................................................... 247
Story: Piash ................................................................................................................................. 248
New York ....................................................................................................................................... 250
Letter from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and a Coalition of CEOs In Support of
the DREAM Act ......................................................................................................................... 250
FOX News: DREAM Act Students Volunteer to Serve in the Military ........................................ 250
New York Daily News: Protesters rally in Brooklyn to push for approval of DREAM Act for
illegal immigrant youth ............................................................................................................. 254
Newsday: Editorial—Create a path to citizenship ..................................................................... 254
Daily News: Column—‘No papers’ but endless courage ............................................................. 255
Newsday: Students rally for DREAM ......................................................................................... 256
Story: Carol ................................................................................................................................. 257
Story: Cesar ................................................................................................................................. 258
Story: Juan Ramirez .................................................................................................................... 259
Story: Marco ............................................................................................................................... 260
Story: Nick ....................................................................................................................................... 264
Story: Yelky .................................................................................................................................... 264
Letter: Wendy ............................................................................................................................... 265
Nevada .......................................................................................................................................... 268
Prensa Latina: Editorial: Algún día se cumplirá el sueño ............................................................. 268
North Carolina .............................................................................................................................. 270
Change.org: Hat-Trick: ICE Releases Fredd Reyes .................................................................... 270
Winston-Salem Journal: Immigrants push for DREAM education .............................................. 270
The Herald-Sun: Editorial—More American Dreamers ............................................................... 272
Charlotte Observer: Immigrant succeeds here, for now ............................................................. 273
Charlotte Observer: Play tells of undocumented students living in ‘Limbo’ ............................... 276
Rosario Lopez, Viridiana Martinez and Loida Silva ................................................................. 277
Story: Fredd Reyes ...................................................................................................................... 277
Ohio .............................................................................................................................................. 279
Cleveland Plain Dealer: Editorial - Harsh realities of a broken immigration system ................. 279
Cincinnati Enquirer: Bernard Pastor’s friends visit possible deportee in jail ............................ 280
WLWT.com: Friends: Teen Deserves Chance to Avoid Deportation ........................................ 282
Cincinnati Enquirer: Longtime Ohio resident’s deportation postponed .................................... 283
Change.org: Victory! Senator Brown Intervenes on Behalf of Ohio Student in Deportation ...... 284
Kentucky Post: Youth pastor faces possible deportation .............................................................. 285
Cincinnati Enquirer: Reading grad faces deportation ................................................................. 286
Akron Beacon Journal: DREAM of an act ................................................................. 289
Toledo Blade: German-born teen to graduate tomorrow; Bartsch follows immigration bill closely, hoping he can stay in U.S. ................................................................. 291
Story: Marco ........................................................................................................ 293

**Oklahoma** ........................................................................................................ 298
Washington Post: Editorial—Congress can help young immigrants fulfill their promise through the DREAM Act .................................................................................. 298

**Oregon** ........................................................................................................... 300
Oregonian: Milwaukie man's case shows why immigration law is needed, friends and supporters say ........................................................................................................... 300

**Pennsylvania** .................................................................................................. 302
Associated Press: Immigrant vets face deportation despite service ........................................ 302
Philadelphia Inquirer: Reaching for a dream ............................................................... 305
Philadelphia Inquirer: Editorial—They're not going away ........................................... 306
Story: Maria ........................................................................................................... 307

**Rhode Island** .................................................................................................... 310
Story: Christian Escareno ....................................................................................... 310

**South Carolina** .................................................................................................. 314
Myrtle Beach Sun-News: Editorial—Dream deferred .................................................... 314
Rock Hill Herald: Editorial—Give DREAM Act a chance .............................................. 315
Dayana Rodrigues .................................................................................................. 316

**Tennessee** ......................................................................................................... 317
Leaf-Chronicle (Clarksville, Tenn.): Editorial—DREAM of being a citizen ...................... 317
Patricio Gonzalez .................................................................................................... 318
Abril Marcial ........................................................................................................... 318

**Texas** ................................................................................................................. 319
FOX News: DREAM Act Students Volunteer to Serve in the Military .............................. 319
San Antonio Express News: DREAM Act hunger strike spreads .................................... 320
Catholic News Service: Hunger strike, arrests, other lobbying aim to push DREAM Act forward ............................................................................................................... 321
San Antonio Express-News: Students Stage DREAM Act Hunger Strike ........................ 323
Huffington Post: A Q&A With Deported Student Saad Nabeel: ICE Abuses, Strip Searching, and Cell Confinement ................................................................................. 325
Fort Worth Star Telegram: Politics interrupts a dream ................................................... 328
Washington Post: Editorial—Dream Act could save immigrant students from deportation... 329
Fort Worth Star Telegram: Deporting students isn't the best answer to immigration problems .............................................................................................................. 330
Janet Reyes .............................................................................................................. 332
Edith Paulin .............................................................................................................. 332
Story: Adan ............................................................................................................. 332
Story: Benita Veliz .................................................................................................... 334
Story: Gloria .................................................................................................................. 334
Story: Kay .................................................................................................................. 336
Story: Mike .................................................................................................................. 338
Story: Nelly .................................................................................................................. 339
Letter: Saad Nabeel ................................................................................................... 339

Utah .............................................................................................................................. 341
Deseret News: Editorial—Pass the DREAM Act ......................................................... 341
Salt Lake Tribune: Utah’s undocumented students stand up for a future ................ 342
Letter from Voices for Utah Children, University of Utah Students and Community Leaders and Community Organizations ...................................................... 344

Washington ............................................................................................................... 346
Letter from Fred Humphries, Microsoft Managing Director of U.S. Government Affairs, in Support of the DREAM Act ........................................................................ 346
Seattle Times: Pass the Dream Act to give undocumented young people a future ... 347

Wisconsin ..................................................................................................................... 349
Sheboygan Press: Editorial—DREAM Act has merit, but do it right way ............. 349
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Editorial - Dreams deferred ....................................... 350
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Editorial—The Dream Act: a path for dreams to come true ... 351
GENERAL RESOURCES

General Information

Background Briefing: The DREAM Act
America’s Voice, September 15, 2010

The DREAM Act is bipartisan legislation that would give eligible young people who were brought to the U.S. as children the opportunity to legalize their immigration status and work towards citizenship.

To move from being undocumented to being a U.S. citizen, eligible young people would be required to pass background checks, be of good moral character, graduate from high school and go on to attend college or serve in the military. It is estimated that each year, 65,000 young people graduate from high school in the U.S. who find themselves unable to work, join the military or go to college because of their immigration status. Approximately 800,000 young people would be eligible for the DREAM Act upon passage.

The stories of these young people are truly tragic. For example, at the age of 12, Ivan Nikolov missed a court date after he and his mother came to the U.S. the year before. A decade later, federal agents raided his family home and his mother, who was married to a U.S. citizen, was deported. Ivan had been sitting in prison for three months because of an immigration violation, even though he had committed no crime and had no role in the decision to stay in the U.S. without papers. Ivan grew up in Michigan, graduated from high school, has a U.S. citizen stepfather and fiancée, and speaks nearly no Russian. Ivan considers himself an American, yet was scheduled to be deported to Russia, where he would have been forced to join their military or be sent to a Russian prison. After a flurry of activity by Ivan’s family and advocates around the country, the Department of Homeland Security released from jail and his deportation was deferred. But our broken immigration system cannot be fixed one case at a time.

The DREAM Act would enable eligible young people like Ivan, who are American in all but paperwork, to resolve their immigration status and become fully contributing members of our society.

Now is the time for Congress to pass the DREAM Act

While broader immigration reform appears to be stalled due to partisanship, targeted immigration measures like the DREAM Act enjoy bipartisan support and should advance now as a down payment on comprehensive immigration reform. This month, La Opinión, Roll Call and CQ reported that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said he would like to advance the DREAM Act this year, and the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe and other newspapers have written editorials in support of the DREAM Act.
70 percent of voters support the DREAM Act

A June 2010 national poll of 1,008 adults, conducted by Opinion Research Corporation for First Focus, revealed that support for the DREAM Act cuts across regional and party lines with 70 percent overall support. Sixty percent of Republicans and 80% of Democrats polled supported the DREAM Act.

The DREAM Act enjoys bipartisan support

At a time when the immigration debate in Congress appears deadlocked and polarized, the DREAM Act provides a rare opportunity for bipartisan lawmaking. S. 729, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009, is currently co-sponsored by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL), Richard Lugar (R-IN) and 39 of their colleagues. Its companion bill, H.R. 1751, the American DREAM Act, is co-sponsored by Reps. Howard Berman (D-CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), and Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), as well as 125 of their colleagues in the House of Representatives.

Education, military, religious and business leaders support the DREAM Act

The legislation is supported by a wide range of leaders from the education, military, and business fields, and from religious orders including the United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society; the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; the evangelical movement, the Jewish community; and many others.

The DREAM Act makes economic sense

The DREAM Act is a great return on our country’s investment, and will allow future leaders to develop and advance. The students who would benefit from the DREAM Act have been raised and educated in the U.S. State and local taxpayers have already invested in the education of these children in elementary and secondary school, and it helps no one to keep them from realizing their full potential. Leading businesses like Microsoft have endorsed the DREAM Act because they want these students to be able to stay and contribute to American innovation.

On August 11, 2010, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee explained to NPR the economic sense of allowing undocumented children to earn their citizenship:

"When a kid comes to his country, and he's four years old and he had no choice in it – his parents came illegally. He still, because he is in this state, it's the state's responsibility - in fact, it is the state's legal mandate - to make sure that child is in school. So let's say that kid goes to school. That kid is in our school from kindergarten through the 12th grade. He graduates as valedictorian because he's a smart kid and he works his rear end off and he becomes the valedictorian of the school. The question is: Is he better off going to college and becoming a neurosurgeon or a banker or whatever he might become, and becoming a taxpayer, and in the process having to apply for and achieve citizenship, or should we make him pick tomatoes? I think it's better if he goes to college and becomes a citizen."
The DREAM Act would reduce high school dropout rates and boost college attendance

Unfortunately, immigration status and the associated barriers to higher education contribute to a higher-than-average dropout rate among foreign-born students, which costs taxpayers and the economy billions of dollars each year. The DREAM Act would provide encouragement for students who might otherwise drop out to stay in school and go on to college.

The DREAM Act would increase the pool of highly qualified recruits for the U.S. armed forces

There is a strong tradition of military service in immigrant families, but the lack of immigration status prevents many of those who wish to serve from enlisting. According to Margaret Stock, Lieutenant Colonel in the Military Police Corps of the U.S. Army Reserve and an Associate Professor of Law at the United States Military Academy (West Point, NY), the DREAM Act “would allow military recruiters to enlist this highly qualified cohort of young people, and enactment of the DREAM Act would be a ‘win-win’ scenario for the Department of Defense and the United States. Deporting these young people … deprives the United States of a valuable human asset that can be put to work in the Global War on Terrorism.”

Our broken immigration laws are getting in the way of these students and young leaders pursuing the American dream and realizing their full potential. Congress should clear the way now so they can achieve their goals. The DREAM Act is an achievable piece of legislation that will pave the way towards comprehensive immigration reform and must become law this year.

The DREAM Act: Correcting Myths and Misperceptions
National Immigration Law Center, November 22, 2010

The DREAM Act is a piece of legislation that would give undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children a path toward legal status if they attend college or serve in the military. For more information, see http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/index.htm.

MYTH: DREAM students will cut the line and become U.S. citizens before those who are here legally.

• The DREAM Act would not allow students to jump ahead of those who are here legally. Those who came legally will keep their same place in the existing line and will not be harmed in any way. Instead, the Department of Homeland Security would create a separate process for individuals who have grown up here but have no existing path to legal status.

MYTH: U.S. taxpayers have to cover the cost of the education of these illegal students.

• The DREAM Act would not cost money; it would make money for taxpayers. A very conservative estimate finds that the average DREAM Act student will make $1 million more over his or her lifetime simply by obtaining legal status, which will net tens of thousands of additional dollars per student for federal, state, and local treasuries.
• These students will be an asset to our future economy. The DREAM Act is needed so that they can more fully contribute to America’s future prosperity. Business leaders, including companies like Microsoft, have endorsed the DREAM Act because they recognize that we can’t afford to waste precious talent if we are going to compete in the global economy.

**MYTH: American students will lose spots in college due to passage of the DREAM Act.**

- Most undocumented students are likely to have **zero impact** on admission rates of native born students: Since 2001, 10 states have made it easier for undocumented state residents to attend college by offering in-state tuition to those that qualify. A significant portion of the students that took advantage of this opportunity have done so in community colleges, which have open enrollment. The small numbers of students who will attend 4-year universities are not significant enough to affect the opportunities of others.
- Legalizing DREAM Act students will increase school revenue, and in the long run, will increase the tax base, thereby allowing more students to attend college.

**MYTH: The DREAM Act is a massive amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants.**

- **The DREAM Act is not an amnesty:** The DREAM Act is not a giveaway to undocumented youth, even those who have lived here all of their lives. Rather, it creates a well-defined process to legalize only those who grew up here and who earn status by staying in school and maintaining good moral character.
- **The DREAM Act is narrowly tailored:** Our immigration law currently has no mechanism to consider the special equities and circumstances of these students. The DREAM Act would eliminate this flaw. To apply for relief under the DREAM Act, these young people would have to graduate from high school or earn a GED, have good moral character, have come to the U.S. when they were young and show that they have lived in the U.S. for at least five years. Students would then be eligible to apply for conditional status. During the 6-year conditional status, students would have to either complete at least two years of higher education or two years of military service. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that the likely total number of students to **ever** benefit from the DREAM Act is 825,000.

**MYTH: The DREAM act tells parents who have sent their children to out-of-state colleges that they will have to pay higher tuition bills than illegal immigrants.**

- Undocumented residents of a state would not get any benefit not granted to U.S. citizen residents. The rationale behind in-state tuition is to credit state residents for their past and likely future economic contributions to the state. Eligible undocumented students and their families – like other residents of the state – are contributing to the economy of the state and will likely stay in the state after graduation. Because of their economic
contributions, undocumented students should be credited through in-state tuition programs. If undocumented students choose to attend a university outside of their home state, they will pay the same rates as other out-of-state students.

- **In-state tuition is a smart investment:** Students who attend college will move into better paying jobs and pay more taxes and have more money to spend in the state. The average college graduate earns over 60 percent more than the average high school graduate over their careers. Higher earnings translate directly to higher tax revenue and spending power. Contributions that DREAM Act students will make over their lifetimes, once college educated, would dwarf the small additional investment in their education beyond high school.

**MYTH: The DREAM Act will grant amnesty to illegal immigrants no matter how old they are.**

- **There is a limit on how old a student can be to qualify for the DREAM Act:** Students must have entered the United States at the age of 15 or younger. In addition, the Senate version of the DREAM Act includes an upper age cap – you have to be under 35 years of age in order to benefit under the bill.
- **Rewarding Success and Hard Work:** The DREAM Act would allow a very limited number of students over the age cap to apply for conditional status if and only if they have exceeded the initial requirements. Specifically, these students must have already completed the educational requirements. These students are less than 1 percent of potential DREAM Act beneficiaries.
- **The DREAM Act should include students who have waited nine years for its passage:** Since Senators Durbin (D-IL) and Hatch (R-UT) first introduced the DREAM Act in 2001, students across the country who grew up in the United States have eagerly awaited its passage. At the time of introduction, the age limit for students who qualified under the bill to apply was 26. Because these same students are still waiting for passage of the DREAM Act today, the current version of the bill (S. 729) adjusts the maximum age of qualification to 35 in order to include them. Some argue that these students are no longer children; however, these students came to this country through migration decisions made by their parents and were raised here just like their younger counterparts. These students know no other country. And they are eagerly waiting for the opportunity to contribute to the neediest sectors of the economy.

**MYTH: Illegal aliens only have to submit a petition in which they claim to meet the requirements. There is not a single provision in the DREAM Act that requires them to provide proof that they have met the requirements.**

- The DREAM Act requires the Department of Homeland Security to develop rules governing how potential DREAM Act students will apply for relief after the bill is enacted.
- **Qualifications for the DREAM act can be easily verified:** Most of the requirements for eligibility can be verified through documents created and housed within U.S. institutions. These include school enrollment dates, graduation dates and proof of degrees. These records make it easy for immigration officers to independently verify claims from applicants.
MYTH: Beneficiaries of the DREAM can sponsor their relatives—the parents who brought them here illegally, any siblings left in the home country, and then aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on.

- Even when DREAM beneficiaries attain citizenship, they can never sponsor their aunts/uncles or cousins. Immigration law doesn’t allow it.
- Many parents will be ineligible to adjust: Students who fulfill all of the requirements prescribed in the DREAM Act can adjust their status and eventually apply to become U.S. citizens. If they apply and become citizens, like other U.S. citizens, they can petition for their parents when they turn 21. However, if their parents originally entered the country without inspection, they will not be eligible to get relief. While parents who entered without inspection may apply for an immigrant visa at a consulate abroad, they will likely be barred from entering the U.S. for ten years if they have been unlawfully present in the U.S. for over six months.

DREAM Act Talking Points
America’s Voice, November 2010

KEY POINTS

- **The time to pass the DREAM Act is NOW.**
  - The DREAM Act deals with an important aspect of our broken immigration system. It creates a way for bright and talented young people who grew up in America to legalize their status and achieve their dreams. It is a bipartisan measure that has been around for a decade, and must be enacted before Congress adjourns this year.
  - By passing the DREAM Act, Congress has a chance to show that it can rise above the heated rhetoric of the campaign season and work on a bipartisan basis to pass common sense immigration reform.

- **The DREAM Act is a practical solution to an important problem.**
  - The DREAM Act allows young people who grew up as Americans, but lack legal immigration status, a chance to earn citizenship if they meet certain requirements and enroll in college or the U.S. military. Not only does it help them by allowing them to achieve their dreams, but it also helps our country. We would all benefit from these bright young people being able to realize their full potential.
  - The DREAM Act is supported by a majority of Americans and benefits both our economy and our nation’s military.
  - Our government has a clear choice: it can either deport high-achieving young people, or help them become citizens of the only country they know as home. To us, there is only one option: pass the DREAM Act.
• **The DREAM Act is in line with our values as a nation.**
  o For years, voters have demanded that Congress step up to the plate and fix our broken immigration system. By passing the DREAM Act, Congress has a chance to show Americans that it can work on a bipartisan basis to pass common sense immigration reform.
  o The young people who qualify for the DREAM Act are Americans in every way but their citizenship. They came here in the arms of their parents, and have no knowledge of the country they left behind. They excelled in American schools and J-ROTC programs, and they simply want a chance to succeed in the only country they know as home.
  o America is the land of opportunity, where every individual has a chance to succeed or fail on his or her own merits. The DREAM Act was crafted in that spirit. Congress should do the right thing, and pass the DREAM Act now.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND MESSAGE POINTS**

**What is the DREAM Act?**

• The DREAM Act is bipartisan legislation that enables high-achieving young people—immigrants who have been raised here, graduated from high school, and pursue higher education or serve in the military—to achieve the American Dream. It applies only to people currently in the U.S. who came to this country as children.

• Specifically, the bill gives eligible young people who were brought to the U.S. as children the opportunity to resolve their immigration status and work towards citizenship. To move from being undocumented to being a U.S. citizen, those eligible will have to pass background checks and be of good moral character, graduate from high school, and go on to complete additional requirements including attending college or completing military service.

• The Migration Policy Institute estimates that approximately 800,000 young people will benefit from the DREAM Act.

**The DREAM Act will be voted on by Congress in late November or early December 2010.**

• Senator Reid and Speaker Nancy Pelosi have pledged to bring the DREAM Act up for a vote before the end of the year. They have been joined by key Republican Members of Congress, such as Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

• It is time for supporters of the DREAM Act to stand up and be counted!

**The DREAM Act is a long-time, bipartisan bill whose time has come.**
• The DREAM Act has been around for ten years, and was even co-authored by a conservative Republican, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT).

• Throughout its history, the DREAM Act has been a bipartisan bill. This year, it is co-sponsored by Reps. Howard Berman (D-CA), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), as well as Sens. Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Richard Lugar (R-IN).

• The legislation was approved twice by the Senate Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan basis; once in 2003 with a vote of 16-3, and then as an amendment to the comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2006 (on a voice vote). In 2007, the bill was brought to the Senate floor and twelve Republicans voted to debate it, but it failed to clear the 60 vote threshold. In 2010, there are eleven remaining Republican senators who have voted for the DREAM Act at some point.

The DREAM Act is supported by a majority of Americans and is very important to Latino voters.

• **70 percent** of voters support the DREAM Act, according to a poll of 1,008 adults, conducted by Opinion Research Corporation for First Focus in June 2010. This includes 60% support from Republicans and 80% support from Democrats. A new poll from Lake Research Partners in November 2010 found nearly identical results.

• **75% of Latino voters** say that passing the DREAM Act quickly is extremely or very important, according to a recent poll by Latino Decisions. Only 13% said it was somewhat important and 7% said it was not important.

• University presidents and educational associations, as well as military recruiters, business and religious leaders have all called on Congress to pass the DREAM Act.

Young people who would benefit from the DREAM Act are model Americans.

• Every beneficiary of the DREAM Act would be a college or military-bound high school graduate. They have been raised in America, are fully assimilated into the American way of life and are ready to give back to the country they consider home.

• DREAMers are commanders in their high school JROTC programs who dream of serving in the U.S. military. They are also high school valedictorians who aspire to be nurses, teachers, and businesspeople.

The DREAM Act is good for the economy.

• Because higher education is a prerequisite, the young people affected by the DREAM Act would support themselves in the labor market. These college educated workers or military veterans will then contribute to our nation’s economy, communities, and tax coffers.
• It is in America’s interest to benefit from the investment already made in educating these talented young people. It is in no-one’s interest for a high school valedictorian to work an “under the table” job far below their potential, while in constant fear of deportation. Passing the DREAM Act adds real money to our nation’s tax coffers; deporting these young people or relegating them to the underground economy costs us all.

• The young people that would benefit from the DREAM Act would generate some $1.38 trillion in income over their lifetimes, according to a study by the UCLA North American Integration and Development Center. According to the IRS, a typical single person who graduates with a Bachelor’s degree makes an average annual salary of $60,000.00, and would generate about $11,194.00 in tax revenue every year.

• Leading businesses such as Microsoft have endorsed the DREAM Act because they recognize that our broken immigration system is draining our economy of the talent and resources needed to compete in the global economy.

The DREAM Act would increase the pool of highly qualified recruits for the U.S. Armed Forces.

• U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates supports the DREAM Act: “There is a rich precedent supporting the service of non-citizens in the U.S. military. Since the Revolutionary War, non-citizens have enlisted in the armed forces for service during periods of national emergency. Today, about 35,000 non-citizens serve, and about 8,000 permanent resident aliens enlist every year. The DREAM Act represents an opportunity to expand this pool, to the advantage of military recruitment and readiness."

• The U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness’ strategic plan for FY 2010-2012 recommends the DREAM Act to help the military “shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force.”

Contrary to popular belief, there is no “line” for these young immigrants to enter. Their only hope of joining the lawfully present workforce is through the DREAM Act.

Cinco razones centrales para apoyar el DREAM Act (Talking Points in Spanish)
America’s Voice, November 29, 2010

El DREAM Act es un proyecto de ley bipartidista. Daría la oportunidad a algunos jóvenes indocumentados criados y educados en los Estados Unidos, de hacer realidad el Sueño Americano.

• En concreto: el proyecto de ley permite que algunos jóvenes indocumentados, cuyos padres los trajeron a los EEUU como menores de edad, ajusten su situación migratoria.
- Para ser elegibles tendrían que someterse a una verificación de antecedentes criminales, ser considerados de buen carácter moral y haberse graduado de la secundaria. También tendrían que matricularse en una universidad o inscribirse en las fuerzas armadas.

- Aproximadamente 800,000 jóvenes podrían beneficiarse del DREAM Act.

**El DREAM Act beneficiaría a nuestra economía.**

- La economía global de hoy día requiere una fuerza laboral educada y capaz. La aprobación del DREAM Act permitiría que cientos de miles de trabajadores talentosos, multilingües, y multicultural, entren a la fuerza laboral de este país y le ayuden a competir a nivel global.

- Los estudiantes que serían beneficiados por el DREAM Act han sido criados y educados en los Estados Unidos. A nivel estatal y local, nuestros impuestos ya han sido invertidos en la educación primaria y secundaria de estos jóvenes. Merecemos sacarle provecho a nuestra inversión.

- El Departamento de Estadísticas Laborales estima que “la mayoría de las profesiones que verán más crecimiento en los próximos años van a depender de trabajadores sumamente preparados. De las 15 profesiones que van a crecer más, 10 requerirán un grado asociado o más. De acuerdo al departamento “Es sumamente importante establecer políticas…que permitan que estos jóvenes talentosos se puedan matricular en estudios pos-secundarios y formar parte de la fuerza laboral como residentes legales.”

**La aprobación del DREAM Act beneficiaría a nuestras fuerzas armadas, y a su vez, a la seguridad de nuestro país.**

- El DREAM Act aumentaría dramáticamente la tasa de candidatos capacitados para servir en las fuerzas armadas. Al tener la opción de alistarse en el ejército para poder obtener ciudadanía, cientos de miles de jóvenes, ya graduados de secundaria, podrán elegir ingresar y defender al único país que conocen.

- El Departamento de Defensa recomienda la aprobación del DREAM Act en su plan estratégico del 2010-2012 porque “beneficiaría el perfil y el mantenimiento de las fuerzas voluntarias.”

- El Secretario de Defensa, Robert Gates, está a favor del DREAM Act y le ha recomendado al Congreso que lo apruebe.

**El público en general apoya el DREAM Act al igual que líderes militares, universitarios, empresariales y religiosos.**

- Una encuesta nacional de 1,008 adultos, realizada por la empresa Opinion Research Corporation para First Focus en junio del 2010 indica que la aprobación del DREAM Act no se limita ni a regiones particulares ni a un partido político. Un 70% de todos los que respondieron a la encuesta aprueban el DREAM Act, 60% de los Republicanos lo apoyan; y 80% de los Demócratas lo apoyan.

- El Secretario de Educación, Arne Duncan, apoya el DREAM Act y le ha pedido al Congreso que lo apruebe.
Empresas importantes como Microsoft han respaldado el DREAM Act porque reconocen que nuestro sistema migratorio no funciona y está privando a nuestro país del talento y los recursos necesarios para competir en el mercado global.

Los jóvenes que serían beneficiados por el DREAM Act son víctimas de nuestro sistema migratorio. Son americanos en todos los sentidos menos en el documento oficial. La mayoría de los jóvenes que podrían ajustar su estado migratorio si se aprueba el DREAM Act no conocen otro país. Fueron criados en nuestras comunidades, educados en nuestras escuelas e influenciados por nuestra cultura. Lo único que quieren es poder contribuir oficialmente a los Estados Unidos y que se reconozca su presencia.

Letter from the United States Conference of Mayors Urging Support of the DREAM Act
November 30, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Reid:

I write on behalf of the nation’s mayors to indicate our strong support for the DREAM Act and to urge passage of the bill during the lame duck session.

The DREAM Act, which has bipartisan support, is intended to address the situation faced by young people who were brought to the United States years ago as undocumented immigrant children and who have since grown up here, stayed in school, and kept out of trouble – about 65,000 students each year. They are young people who have lived in the U.S. for most of their lives, but face unique barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally in the U.S., and often live in constant fear of detection by immigration authorities.

The DREAM Act also would have a beneficial effect on the country by allowing these students to attend and graduate from college, hold jobs in the U.S., and pay taxes. It would provide an opportunity for them to live up to their full potential and make greater contributions to the U.S. economy and society.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously adopted a resolution in support of the DREAM Act last year. We urge Congress to similarly act in a bipartisan manner and pass this important legislation this year.

Sincerely,

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
Military Impact and Support

Letter from Defense Secretary Robert Gates In Support of the DREAM Act
September 21, 2010

Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

I welcomed the opportunity to talk this morning regarding the DREAM Act. As we have been discussing since 2007, I continue to support those elements of this proposal that provide children of non-resident immigrants a clear path to U.S. citizenship through military service.

Setting aside the question of the process by which Congress should consider this legislation, there is a rich precedent supporting the service of non-citizens in the U.S. military. Since the Revolutionary War, non-citizens have enlisted in the armed forces for service during periods of national emergency. Today, about 35,000 non-citizens serve, and about 8,000 permanent resident aliens enlist every year. The DREAM Act represents an opportunity to expand this pool, to the advantage of military recruiting and readiness.

The expansion of the pool of eligible youth that would result from the DREAM Act provides an important opportunity to selectively manage against the highest qualification standards. This will result in improved recruitment results and attendant gains in unit manning and military performance. Accordingly, I support this initiative and appreciate your continued efforts to bring about this important policy change.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Gates

Fact Sheet: The DREAM Act Would Benefit U.S. Military
America’s Voice, September 2010

Immigrants have a proud tradition of serving in the military. Right now there are thousands of men and women in uniform who weren’t born in the United States, yet they are willing to sacrifice everything for our country. The Department of Defense understands the importance of the foreign-born to our fighting forces – one of the reasons it supports the DREAM Act.

The Department Of Defense said the DREAM Act would help the military in its efforts to recruit an unparalleled all-volunteer force. In its FY2010-12 Strategic Plan, the Department of Defense set forth the performance objective “Recruit the All-Volunteer Force by finding smart
ways to sustain quality assurance” and listed the DREAM Act as one of the means to do so. [FY2010-FY2012 Strategic Plan, Department of Defense, 12/30/09]

The information below helps underscore why the U.S. Department of Defense believes the military is strengthened by the foreign-born.

**One of the First Service Members to Die In Iraq: Lance Cpl. Gutierrez**

Lance Cpl. Jose Gutierrez, an Immigrant From Guatemala, Was Killed In a Tank Battle In Iraq in March 2003. According to CBS News, “The heroism and sacrifice of non-citizens was barely known — until Lance Cpl. Jose Gutierrez died in battle in Iraq. He came from Guatemala, and he came to the United States illegally. We can tell you how his story ended. He was killed in a tank battle in southern Iraq on March 21 [2003].” [CBS News, 8/20/03]

Gutierrez Was Granted Citizenship Posthumously. According to CBS News, “No death of any soldier goes un-mourned. But the death of a man who died for a country that was not his -- that proved especially poignant to many Americans, including President Bush who visited two wounded non-citizen soldiers and made them citizens on the spot. Jose was also granted American citizenship posthumously, and that’s also when he became a hero. A cardinal officiated at a memorial service in a Los Angeles suburb, where many poor people, including Latinos, attended.” [CBS News, 8/20/03]

**The U.S. Military Relies on Immigrants**

The Military Relies On Immigrants To Help Reach Its Recruiting Goals. According to the Immigration Policy Center, “Over the past eight years, Congress has amended military related enlistment and naturalization rules to allow expanded benefits for immigrants and their families and encourage recruitment of immigrants into the U.S. Armed Forces. The U.S. military has also implemented new programs to encourage the enlistment and rapid naturalization of non-citizens who serve honorably during the current conflict. Without the contributions of immigrants, the military could not meet its recruiting goals and could not fill its need for foreign-language translators, interpreters, and cultural experts.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]

Immigrants Serve In All Branches of the Military and Are a Vital Resource In The U.S. War On Terror. According to the Immigration Policy Center, “From the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, immigrants have made significant contributions to the United States by serving in our military forces. Today, immigrants voluntarily serve in all branches of the U.S. military and are a vital resource in the ongoing conflict against Al Qaeda and its affiliates.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]

**Large Numbers of Immigrants Already Serve In the Military**

As Of 2009, There Were 114,601 Foreign-Born Individuals Serving In The Military; 12% Of Them Were Not U.S. Citizens. The Immigration Policy Center reported, “As of June 30, 2009, there were 114,601 foreign-born individuals serving in the armed forces, representing 7.91
percent of the 1.4 million military personnel on active duty. Roughly 80.97 percent of foreign-born service members were naturalized U.S. citizens, while 12.66 percent were not U.S. citizens.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]

Since September 11th, More Than 53,000 Immigrants Have Taken Advantage Of Wartime Military Naturalization. According to the Immigration Policy Center, “The September 11 attacks precipitated immediate changes in policies on immigrants in the military. Once the nation was at war, immigrants in the armed forces were eligible for naturalization under the special wartime military naturalization statute. As of October 2009, more than 53,000 immigrants had taken advantage of this provision to become U.S. citizens.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]

More Than 100 Immigrants Have Been Granted Posthumous Citizenship After Dying In Combat In Iraq And Afghanistan. According to the Immigration Policy Center, “President Bush’s declaration that immigrants in the military were eligible for expedited naturalization also triggered the application of Section 329A of the INA, an existing statute allowing for posthumous U.S. citizenship to be granted to immigrants who die on active duty during periods of conflict. By mid-2009, more than 119 immigrant military members had earned their citizenship posthumously after dying in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]

As Of 2008, The Highest Percentage Of Foreign-Born Military Personnel Was From Latin America and The Caribbean. According to the Migration Policy Institute, “Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for the largest percentage of the foreign born [military personnel], followed closely by Asia. Foreign-born military personnel from Latin America and the Caribbean constituted 38.7 percent (23,926) of all the foreign born in the armed forces while 35.9 percent (22,226) were from Asia.” [Migration Policy Institute, 5/08]

As Of 2008, Nearly 11% Of Individuals Serving In The Armed Forces Were Of Hispanic Origin. According to the Migration Policy Institute, “Nearly 11 percent of those serving in the armed forces are of Hispanic origin. Soldiers of Hispanic origin accounted for 10.5 percent (142,318) of the 1,361,458 men and women serving in the armed forces as of February 2008. Hispanics made up 13.9 percent (45,551) of the 327,680 men and women in the navy; 12.6 percent (23,813) of the 188,511 serving in the marines; 10.8 percent (56,078) of the 520,386 in the army; and 5.2 percent (16,876) of the 324,881 air force personnel.” [Migration Policy Institute, 5/08]

Notable Immigrant Veterans

Alfred Rascon, An Immigrant Who Served In Vietnam, Won The Medal of Honor and Later Became The Director Of The Selective Service System.
According to the Immigration Policy Center, “Immigrants who have served in the U.S. military and by so doing earned their citizenship include Alfred Rascon, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who won the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War and later became a U.S. citizen and eventually the Director of the Selective Service System.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]
John Shalikashvili, The Former Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Was An Immigrant From Poland and Served In WWII.
According to the Immigration Policy Center, “Immigrants also have been promoted to the highest ranks of the U.S. military. The most prominent contemporary example is General John Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who came to the United States from Poland shortly after World War II.” [Margaret D. Stock, Immigration Policy Center, 11/09]

Quotes from Military Experts Supporting the DREAM Act
America’s Voice, November 2010

Immigrant families have a long and proud tradition of serving in the U.S. military and giving back to their adopted country. Currently, almost eight percent of the U.S. armed forces are foreign-born. Many military leaders support the DREAM Act as a way of helping the nation’s armed forces remain strong and vibrant.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates
“The expansion of the pool of eligible youth that would result from the DREAM Act provides an important opportunity to selectively manage against the highest qualification standards. This will result in improved recruitment results and attendant gains in unit manning and military performance. Accordingly, I support this initiative.” [Robert M. Gates, Letter to Richard Durbin, September 21, 2010]

The Department of Defense, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
According to the Department of Defense’s FY2010-12 Strategic Plan, the DREAM Act is recommended by the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to help the military “shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force.” [See page 8 in the plan.]

David S. C. Chu, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness under George W. Bush
“If their parents are undocumented or in immigration limbo, most of these young people have no mechanism to obtain legal residency even if they have lived most of their lives here. Yet many of these young people may wish to join the military, and have the attributes needed - education, aptitude, fitness, and moral qualifications.” [CQ Congressional Testimony; “Immigration and the Military”; July 10, 2006]

Margaret Stock, Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve (retired); former professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point; adjunct professor at the University of Alaska, Anchorage
“Potential DREAM Act beneficiaries are also likely to be a military recruiter’s dream candidates for enlistment … In a time when qualified recruits—particularly ones with foreign language skills and foreign cultural awareness – are in short supply, enforcing deportation laws against these young people makes no sense. Americans who care about our national security should

Bill Carr, former Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy
Carr called DREAM “very appealing” to the military “because it would apply to the ‘cream of the crop’ of students. Mr. Carr concluded that the DREAM Act would be "good for [military] readiness." [Donna Miles, “Officials Hope to Rekindle Interest in Immigration Bill Provision.” American Forces Press Service. June 11, 2007]

Military and veterans’ advocacy organization VoteVets.org
“America has a proud tradition of immigrants serving in the American armed forces and every year, hundreds of active duty immigrants take the oath of citizenship, becoming full members of the nation have sworn to defend. But because they were brought to the United States as children without authorization, many highly qualified immigrants who grew up in the United States, graduated from American schools and who wish to wear the uniform of our country and put their own lives at risk to protect American citizens are prevented from serving. The DREAM Act would, rightfully, give young high school graduates who wish to serve, the ability to do so and a path to citizenship. This bipartisan legislation would strengthen the ranks of our armed forces and must be passed. It simply is the right thing to do.” [Ashwin Madia, Interim Chairman of VoteVets.org, Statement on the DREAM Act, November 22, 2010]

Max Boot, conservative military scholar
“It's a substantial pool of people and I think it's crazy we are not tapping into it.” The DREAM Act “would not only offer a welcome path toward citizenship for many promising young people but also might ease some of the recruitment problems that Army has been facing of late.” [Max Boot, “Dream a Little Dream,” Commentary Magazine, September 20, 2007]

The Center for Naval Analyses

General Colin Powell, Former Bush Administration Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
“Our minorities are not getting educated well enough now. Fifty percent of our minority kids are not finishing high school. We've got to invest in education. We should use the Dream Act as one way to do it.” [Carrie Budoff Brown, “Powell favors DREAM Act,” Politico,September 19, 2010. http://www.politico.com/blogs/politicolive/0910/Powell_favors_DREAM_Act.html]

Louis Caldera, Former Director of the White House Military Office and Secretary of the Army
“The DREAM Act will materially expand the pool of individuals qualified, ready and willing to serve their country in uniform. Of the 50,000 youth coming of age every year in the terrible predicament of being ineligible to work, enlist, or receive federal financial aid to attend college, many of those are not yet ready to pursue full time education. Military service is a highly appealing way to better themselves, give back to their country and earn their residency and eventually citizenship. I have no doubt many of these enlistees will be among the best soldiers in our Army.” [Press Conference Call, “Military Experts, Future Enlistees Discuss the DREAM Act and Defense Authorization Bill,” 9/17/10]

Major General Alfred Valenzuela (Ret.)
“I’ve seen the sacrifice that these immigrant men and women make to this country. They come here with the dream of becoming citizens & sign up to die for the country they call home but yet are never granted citizenship. We should pass the DREAM Act so that those individuals willing to give their lives to the U.S. can also be called citizens.” [Press Conference Call, “Military Experts, Future Enlistees Discuss the DREAM Act and Defense Authorization Bill,” 9/17/10]

Educational Impact and Support

Letter from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in Support of the DREAM Act
September 21, 2010

Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

It is my understanding that S. 729, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009 (“the DREAM Act”), will soon be offered as an amendment to legislation pending before the United States Senate. I am writing in support of Senate passage of the DREAM Act.

The DREAM Act would provide the means by which students who have lived most of their lives in our country, and through hard work have excelled and wish to obtain a college education, could do so. This important legislation would allow these individuals, who have been raised and educated in American schools, to obtain conditional lawful permanent resident status, and eventually citizenship if they satisfy certain requirements after a period of time. It would also restore power to the States to determine whether to extend in-state tuition rates to undocumented students.
By taking these steps, the DREAM Act will stop the punishment of innocent young people for the actions of their parents, and give them the chance to earn their legal status by pursuing a higher education, or by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Many of these individuals came to the United States as children and know no other country. Like their peers, they have done what was asked of them in their schools, and now hope to achieve even more through the pursuit of a college education.

I strongly urge the Senate to pass this bill because I believe it will play an important part in our efforts to meet the Administration’s goals of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. Even more, it will allow these young people to live up to their fullest potential and contribute to the economic growth of our country. I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this letter from the standpoint of the Administration’s program.

Sincerely,

Arne Duncan

Letter from the American Council on Education and Higher Education Associations Urging Passage of the DREAM Act
November 29, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader Minority Leader
United States Senate United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the American Council on Education and the undersigned higher education associations representing the nation’s two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities and the nearly 20 million students they serve, I write in support of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act and urge you to pass it this year.

The DREAM Act would do two things to make the future brighter for students who have worked hard, aspire to do more, and in whom this nation has already invested a great deal of resources. First, the bill would return to the states the ability to decide whether to extend in-state tuition to undocumented students, though it does not require them to take any particular action in this area.

Second, the DREAM Act would establish a six-year conditional permanent residency status for students who were brought to this country before the age of 16, have been here at least five years as of the enactment date, graduate from a U.S. high school or obtain a GED credential, and meet other requirements. DREAM-eligible individuals may qualify for permanent residency after six years by completing at least two years of higher education or military service.
This bill is designed to focus on the special case of undocumented young people who came to this country because of the actions of their parents. Many of them have no ties or even memories of the countries from which they came. They consider themselves to be American, just like their classmates, and in most ways they are.

The DREAM Act is an important tool for achieving our national goal of returning the United States to world leadership in higher education attainment. It has been estimated that 65,000 DREAM-eligible students graduate from American high schools each year.

These students often have to overcome significant barriers to graduate from high school, and we cannot afford to stymie their aspirations to continue their education and contribute to our economy and society.

We strongly urge you to pass the DREAM Act this year.

Sincerely,
Molly Corbett Broad
President

On behalf of:
ACPA – College Student Educators International
ACT, Inc.
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of American Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
College Board
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Council for Opportunity in Education
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Collegiate Athletic Association
UNCF
Universities Which Have Endorsed or Passed Resolutions in Support of the DREAM Act

National Immigration Law Center, DREAM Activist

- Go to [http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=105595806145447850030.00048098373b307a336c2](http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=105595806145447850030.00048098373b307a336c2) for a map displaying some of the colleges and universities that have endorsed or passed resolutions supporting the DREAM Act.

**Economic Impact and Support**

**Letter from Fred Humphries, Microsoft Managing Director of U.S. Government Affairs, in Support of the DREAM Act**

April 3, 2009

The Honorable Howard Berman
U.S. House of Representatives
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lincoln Diaz-Balart
U.S. House of Representatives
2244 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Berman and Representative Diaz-Balart:

We are writing to express Microsoft’s strong support for your recent re-introduction of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (The "DREAM Act"). We applaud your efforts to ensure that America fully empowers – and reaps benefits from – bright students who are dedicated to education and hard work. To maintain its position of leadership in the global economy, America must be the locus of the world’s best minds. It is essential to our nation’s competitiveness and success to nurture the talent we have and to incorporate bright, hardworking students into the workforce to become the next generation of leaders in this country.

As you know, strengthening education is one of Microsoft’s highest priorities. Microsoft sees great synergy between the DREAM Act and Microsoft’s initiatives to support education and workforce training in the United States. The DREAM Act reinforces and protects America’s substantial investments in the education of its youth, and ensures that America will reap the benefits of those investments. The DREAM Act rewards those who place high value on education, on hard work, and on service to country.
Microsoft is putting its dedication to work through a host of initiatives, including:

- Through our Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills program, in the US, we’ve invested $85 million in cash, software and training support to more than 4,500 community technology since 2003;
- Through our Partners in Learning program in the US, we have invested $35 million in resources and training in K-12, touching more than 2.3 million students and teachers to actively increase access to technology and improve its use in learning; and
- Through our recently launched Elevate America program we will offer 1 million learning vouchers for no cost that provide the skills needed for people of all ages who are preparing for job opportunities in today’s changing economy.

The overarching goal of all of these initiatives is to invest in and improve the education and skill levels so that America’s workforce can be the best in the world. This goal is frustrated when America loses that investment by turning the educated away when they are poised to enter the workforce – and when America is poised to reap the powerful benefits these bright individuals stand ready to offer.

Opening the door to the best intellectual resources our country can muster is essential to our future strength. Your introduction of the DREAM Act is an important step toward that goal, and an important sign of momentum toward the broader reforms that our country so urgently needs.

Sincerely,

Fred Humphries
Managing Director, U.S. Government Affairs

Letter from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and a Coalition of CEOs In Support of the DREAM Act
May 27, 2009

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Lugar
United States Senate
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin and Senator Lugar:

We are writing in support of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (The "DREAM Act") which would allow the children of immigrants who have grown up here a conditional path to citizenship in exchange for a mandatory two years in higher education or military service. Passage of The DREAM Act would go a long way towards correcting an inequitable situation that drains our economy of talent and resources.
Under current law, children who come to the United States with parents who enter illegally are condemned to a life in the shadows. Many excel in school and dream of going to college, but the opportunity is denied them. With an education, and as legal members of society, they can legally join the American labor force, start new companies, develop innovative technologies, or pioneer medical advances. In other words, these youngsters can become productive contributors to our economy.

In New York City, tens of thousands of public school students do not have legal status. We are investing in them all the same, which is required by federal law and – just as importantly – honors the values on which the United States was built. New York has increased education spending by billions of dollars over the past seven years, and we have raised graduation rates and test scores significantly. Our City – and our country – can only reap a return on that investment if Congress allows all students to pursue higher education and legitimate careers. In today’s global economy, we simply cannot afford to chase home-grown talent out of our country.

The DREAM Act is not a substitute for comprehensive immigration reform, which is much needed to restore the strength and competitive status of the American economy. Ideally, the DREAM Act should be one component of a comprehensive reform bill. But if comprehensive action is delayed, Congress should not hesitate to pass legislation that provides immediate relief to children who should not be denied the opportunity to secure an education and contribute to the American economy. The Dream Act offers a fair bargain benefiting both children and the country. As you work to pass it, you will have our full support.

Sincerely,
Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Candace K. Beinecke
Chair
Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP

Kevin Burke
Chairman, President, and CEO
Con Edison

Russell L. Carson
Co-Founder and General Partner
Welsh, Carson, Anderson & Stowe

Robert B. Catell
Chairman US
National Grid

Kenneth I. Chenault
Chairman and CEO
American Express Company
James Dimon
Chairman, President, and CEO
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Jeff Kindler
CEO and Chairman
Pfizer

Rochelle B. Lazarus
Chairman
Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide

Martin Lipton
Senior Partner
Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz

Terry J. Lundgren
Chairman, President, and CEO
Macy’s, Inc.

John J. Mack
Chairman and CEO
Morgan Stanley

K. Rupert Murdoch
Chairman and CEO
News Corporation

Richard Parsons
Chairman
Citigroup

Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Chairman and CEO
WL Ross & Co. LLC

Jerry I. Speyer
Chairman and Co-CEO
Tishman Speyer

Seth Waugh
CEO
Deutsche Bank Americas

Kathryn Wylde
There are an estimated 2.1 million undocumented children and young adults in the United States who might be eligible for legal status under the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) Act. For many of these young people, the United States is the only home they know and English is their first language. Each year, tens of thousands of them graduate from primary or secondary school, often at the top of their classes. They have the potential to be future doctors, nurses, teachers, and entrepreneurs, but they experience unique hurdles to achieving success in this country. Through no fault of their own, their lack of status may prevent them from attending college or working legally. The DREAM Act would provide an opportunity for them to live up to their full potential and make greater contributions to the U.S. economy and society.

The DREAM Act would give beneficiaries access to greater educational opportunities and better jobs, which in turn means more taxable income.

- A 2010 study by the UCLA North American Integration and Development Center estimates that the total earnings of DREAM Act beneficiaries over the course of their working lives would be between $1.4 trillion and $3.6 trillion.
- A 2008 study from Arizona State University found that an individual with a bachelor’s degree earns approximately $750,000 more over the course of his or her lifetime than an individual with only a high-school diploma.
- A 2007 study by the College Board found that, over the course of his or her working life, the average college graduate earns in excess of 60 percent more than a high-school graduate, and workers with advanced degrees earn two to three times as much as high-school graduates.
- As of 2006, workers without a high-school diploma earned only $419 per week and had an unemployment rate of 6.8 percent. In comparison, workers with a bachelor’s degree earned $962 per week and had an unemployment rate of 2.3 percent, while workers with a doctoral degree earned $1,441 per week and had an unemployment rate of 1.4 percent.
- The U.S. Department of Labor found that the wages of immigrants who benefitted from the 1986 legalization increased 15 percent over five years, and that legalized immigrants moved on to “significantly better jobs.”

The DREAM Act would save taxpayers money.

- A RAND study from 1999 shows that raising the college graduation rate of Hispanics to that of non-Hispanic whites would increase spending on public education by 10 percent.
nationwide, but the costs would be more than offset by savings in public health and benefits, as well as by increased tax revenues resulting from higher incomes.

- For example, a 30-year-old Mexican immigrant woman with a college degree will pay $5,300 more in taxes and use $3,900 less in government expenses each year compared to a high-school dropout with similar characteristics.  

The DREAM Act would encourage beneficiaries to invest in the U.S. economy.

- Dr. Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda of the University of California, Los Angeles, and other researchers have studied the impact of legalization and found important long-term improvements among previously undocumented immigrants. Specifically, removing the uncertainty of undocumented status not only allows legalized immigrants to earn higher wages and move into higher-paying occupations, but also encourages them to invest more in their own education, open bank accounts, buy homes, and start businesses.

The DREAM Act would likely reduce the drop-out rate for immigrant students.

- Currently, only 5-10 percent of undocumented high-school graduates go to college, and most undocumented youths are forced to work illegally in the cash economy as domestic servants, day laborers, and sweatshop factory workers. The DREAM Act would create a strong incentive for undocumented students to remain in school until graduation, would make them lawfully eligible to work, and would ultimately help fill positions like teachers and nurses—positions that have long been in demand in the United States.

The DREAM Act would help universities financially.

- The 10 states which, since 2001, have passed laws allowing undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition have not experienced a large influx of new immigrant students that displaces native-born students. These states (Texas, California, Utah, Washington, New York, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, and Nebraska) are home to about half of the nation’s undocumented immigrants. In fact, these laws actually tend to increase school revenues as students who would not normally attend college start to pay tuition.

The DREAM Act keeps talented students in the United States.

- Letting the talent of DREAM Act students go to waste “imposes economic and emotional costs on undocumented students and on U.S. society as a whole.” The DREAM Act would stop brain drain by allowing our most talented students to remain in the country.

The DREAM Act would not harm American workers.

- An August 2010 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco points out that “immigrants expand the U.S. economy’s productive capacity, stimulate investment, and promote specialization that in the long run boosts productivity,” and “there is no evidence that these effects take place at the expense of jobs for workers born in the United States.”

The plight of those undocumented youth who might benefit from the DREAM Act encapsulates many facets of today’s immigration crisis. Caught in a system where there is little, if any, means for legalizing their status, these smart, hard-working kids face an uncertain future because of
their inability to continue their education or work legally. Since 1996, when draconian immigration reforms eliminated many of the traditional forms of relief from deportation, a generation of young people caught between worlds has grown up without legal status. The loss of potential, productivity, and hope for these individuals is also a loss for this country. The United States is missing out on talented workers and entrepreneurs, and is losing vital tax revenues and other economic contributions. While fixing this particular problem will hardly resolve the need for comprehensive immigration reform, it will unlock the door to the American dream for thousands of young people each year.

Endnotes
12 Ibid.
No DREAMers Left Behind: The Economic Potential of DREAM Act Beneficiaries
North American Integration and Development Center, UCLA

Go to http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/No%20DREAMers%20Left%20Behind.pdf for a report by Raul Hinojosa Ojeda and Paule Cruz Takash of UCLA estimating that DREAM Act beneficiaries would earn $1.4 trillion to $2.6 trillion (in current dollars) over 40 years.
Editorials

Their stories are similar, that they entered the United States as children and now, as adults, live here illegally with virtually no way to change that.

For years their status did not greatly affect their achievements. They went through school with honors and entered universities and colleges. Some yearned to join the military. Most kept secret their lack of legal residency.

They pinned their hopes for the future on the Dream Act. The bill would grant a path to legal status for immigrants who crossed the border as children and have gone on to join the military or attend college. The bill died in Congress in September, just as it has during every congressional session over the past nine years.

The students have not given up. They set up a weeks-long vigil this summer outside the Phoenix office of Sen. John McCain. They hounded candidates during campaign stops and on Election Night. And this week put their faces on an advocacy billboard erected near Tempe Marketplace. (Reyna Montoya is the one in the graduation gown.)

They have deployed a new weapon in the fight: their faces and voices. Although they risk deportation, they hope that by revealing themselves and telling their stories, they can gain support of the public and push Congress to act during the lame-duck session that began this week.

Dulce Matuz

Age: 25.

Crossed the border: At age 15, on a tourist visa with her mother. "I didn't really know what was going on."
**Discovered legal status:** While trying to enroll at ASU. "One of the first questions is your first name, last name and your Social Security number. And that's when I realized I don't have one, and this is going to be an obstacle I have to tackle."

**Education:** Graduated from ASU in May 2009, with a degree in electrical engineering.

**On coming forward:** "The Dream Act, it's been nine years . . . and it never gets done. . . . I knew that we needed to escalate and do something else. . . . Somebody had to stand up and say, 'I'm no longer afraid. I'm going to say my name.'"

**Reyna Montoya**

**Age:** 19.

**Crossed the border:** At age 12, with her mother and brother, on a tourist visa.

**Discovered legal status:** Got hints in high school as she asked to get a learner's permit to drive, as her friends were doing. Then understood fully when applying for college. "Not having any options for scholarships, even though I was offered many because of my (grades)."

**Education:** ASU student with dual major in political science and transborder studies. Pursuing minor in dance.

**On coming forward:** "I've been scared all my life since I realized and acknowledged my situation. But I believe that if it's going to be me, (if) it's going to take me to speak out for those who are too afraid, I will do it."

**Evelin Rodriguez**

**Age:** 24.

**Crossed the border:** On her fifth birthday. "I don't remember much about it. I just remember my parents telling me we were going to the United States."

**Discovered legal status:** Her father was deported when she was in the third grade. "So that's when I found out about my situation." She felt she couldn't talk to friends about it. "I kind of segregated myself and was, I guess, a loner, you could say, for some of my elementary-school years."

**Education:** Senior at Arizona State University. Majoring in supply-chain management with a minor in communication. Working toward international business certificate.

**On coming forward:** "(People) don't want to put a face to the situation. . . . Like, the close friends I have told, they're always in shock. 'What do you mean you're undocumented? You dress like me. You talk like me.' We have similar personalities and likes and dislikes. I want them to
understand that we're not really that much different from most people living here in Arizona or probably any other state."

Michael Nazario

Age: 21.

Crossed the border: At age 2, with mother and brother. Returned to Mexico with family at age 5. Returned to America with family at age 7. Crossed by walking through inspection station, but doesn't know exactly how.

Discovered legal status: Told father he wanted to join the Marine Corps. His father had an ear-to-ear smile, but that soon dropped. "My father, the only thing he said is that upon graduating, I would be facing many more obstacles that not a lot of my friends would probably face."

Education: Pursuing degree in architecture at Phoenix College. Attempted to sign up for Marine Corps, but was refused.

On coming forward: "I watch the world go by, knowing I could very well be part of that world. . . . I want to do something greater. I want to be a Marine. I want to give back. Many people don't cherish what they have, (they) take for granted what they have here in America. We Dream Act students, we don't do that."

Jose Patiño

Age: 21.

Crossed the border: At age 6, with his mother, two sisters and older brother. Met father, who was waiting at a grocery-store parking lot in Nogales.

Discovered legal status: As a freshman in high school. His sister received a community college degree and couldn't go further because of a state law raising tuition for undocumented students. "That was when (I saw) this is real. This is going to happen to me."

Education: Senior at ASU, with mechanical engineering major, philosophy minor.

On coming forward: "You get tired. It's enough time living with fear."

Change.org: The Fight to Keep Tucson DREAMer Araceli Torres-Ruiz Home

By Alonso Chehade

October 26, 2010

http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/the_fight_to_keep_tucson_dreamer_araceli_torres-ruiz_home
At the age of seven, Araceli Torres-Ruiz was brought to the United States by her parents. Twenty years later, she finds herself a mother, wife, college student, home owner, and active member of her church -- facing deportation.

On March 18, 2008, Araceli was victim of an immigration raid at her job that put her in a detention center for five months. Because Congress hasn't passed the DREAM Act yet, which would provide eligible persons brought to the U.S. as kids who are now adults with a path to citizenship, time is running out for Araceli. She now faces deportation in early November of this year.

The enactment of the DREAM Act is inevitable. Since 2009, the DREAM Act movement has grown and raised awareness on the bill all across the nation. As the immigration debate keeps making the news, the DREAM Act has become an "at least must pass this year bill," and President Obama has promised to pass it during the next legislative session. When it's going to pass is "only a matter of when," said Senator Harry Reid when Republicans in the Senate recently blocked the DREAM Act as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill.

This close to justice for the undocumented youth, we can not allow Araceli's deportation, as she would qualify for legalization with the passage of the DREAM Act. With her deportation growing near, her fight to stay is gaining momentum: her Facebook support group currently reports over 3,500 faxes sent to DHS asking to stop the deportation of this hard-working mother from the only country she has ever known.

**Arizona Republic: Editorial - Pass Dream Act the right way**

*September 21, 2010*


You don't need a heart to support the Dream Act. You just need a head.

Every year, some 65,000 undocumented students graduate from public high school. Yet they're legally excluded from military service and effectively barred from college.

This is a senseless waste. Their education is an investment in our future. We need these students to help boost America's economic power as part of a highly skilled workforce. We need them to bolster our security by serving in the armed forces.

These are kids who simply got stuck in the middle of the illegal-immigration debate, brought here by their parents, often at such a young age that they don't even remember the trip.

We have a rich pool of bright, motivated young people who have grown up thoroughly American. But through no fault of their own, no matter how much they shine, they're locked out.

The Dream Act would open the door to these graduates' potential, authorizing them to enroll in college or join the military. Then, after graduation or two years in the military, they would have
the possibility of becoming a U.S. citizen if they met requirements that include a background check and showing good moral character.

Opponents who squawk "amnesty" are just plain wrong. Students would gain an opportunity to apply for citizenship only after proving their ability to make a contribution to the nation. And who would they be? Trained engineers, prospective teachers, military veterans, budding entrepreneurs - the type of young people who have made America great.

But this straightforward proposal keeps getting gummed up in politics.

Now Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, eager for Latino support as he faces a tough GOP challenge, has attached it as an amendment to the military authorization bill. This isn't illogical, since the Defense Department includes the Dream Act as part of its recruitment strategy.

But the political squeeze play, daring Republicans to vote against a military bill, is an unfortunate and risky election-year tactic. It guarantees opposition from powerful GOP senators, including Arizona's John McCain and Jon Kyl.

And while Democratic leaders are trying to leverage the Dream Act for votes, many candidates - mostly GOP but even a few Democrats - will likely turn it into a punching bag to show how tough they can be on illegal immigration.

The Dream Act should have a separate vote that clearly shows who is stuck in ideological cement and who understands how compassion intersects with our economic self-interest.

If done right, Congress can achieve a solid win for America by making the dream come true.

**Arizona Republic: Editorial--The Dream Act is long overdue**

August 19, 2010


It is not fiscally prudent to walk away from a 12-year investment just as it is about to pay off.

But, in stark economic terms, that's what happens tens of thousands of times a year all across the country. Taxpayers are denied their money's worth

Why does this continue even though a solution has been around since 2001?

Because the topic is undocumented students, and the nation's ability to deal with anything related to illegal immigration has gone up in the smoke of overheated rhetoric.

That is particularly tragic in this case because these students are true innocents.
These are children who were brought here by their parents, often when they were too young to remember the journey. Some of them didn't even know they were not American citizens until the time came to trade those good high-school grades for a spot at the university.

An estimated 65,000 undocumented students graduate from public school every year and are denied the chance to go on to college. Culturally and socially, these kids are as American as Mom's pie. They grew up pledging allegiance to our flag and have little or no connection to any other country.

It is unjust and inhumane to deny these kids the chance to continue building productive lives under the Stars and Stripes.

But for those who are not impressed by humane considerations, we offer the economic argument. By denying these talented children the chance to further their education, the nation is ensuring that the investment taxpayers made in their education cannot be maximized.

The solution, a bipartisan idea that was once not nearly as controversial as it is now, is a federal law called the Dream Act. It has been introduced in every Congress since 2001.

It is time it passed.

In a letter last month to presidents and chancellors of institutions of higher learning across the country, Arizona State University President Michael Crow and Cornell University President David Skorton urged a concerted effort to push Congress to finally pass the Dream Act.

"It is time to ensure access to higher education for the thousands of undocumented high-school graduates who have, through no fault of their own, been denied a college education," they wrote.

It is, indeed, past time for this legislation, S. 729 and HR 1751. The measures provide a path to citizenship for certain undocumented students who arrived as minors, have been in the country continuously for at least five years and either attend college or join the military.

It would take real political courage to stand up in Congress and support the Dream Act.

But it is both just and fiscally sound to give these kids a chance to legally become what they have grown up to be: Americans.

---

**Luis Ramirez:** A student at ASU who lost his scholarship after Arizona passed **Proposition 300**. “Luis Ramirez, a senior at ASU who is an undocumented immigrant, also lost his government scholarship after Proposition 300 was enacted. After losing a series of scholarships, he is continuing his education with the help of Chicanos por la Causa, but he can’t be sure that the money will always be there. ‘I wouldn’t even sometimes register for the coming semester because I wasn’t even sure if I was going to be able to go,’ Ramirez said. ‘They would
tell me they weren’t sure if they had the funding.’ The inability to qualify for in-state tuition and a driver’s license are inconvenient, but Martinez said he’s most frustrated by the limitations on where he can work. Right now, he works in a retail store, a job he was able to get only with the help of fake documents…More important is the question of where he will work once he graduates. ‘A lot of these management classes at ASU are preparing me for working at Fortune 500 companies, but the overwhelming majority of Fortune 500 companies don’t hire undocumented immigrants,’ he said. ‘That’s probably the most frustrating thing that my future is in question right now, because even though I’m as qualified as other people, and at times probably more qualified, I can’t enter certain career paths.’” [Arizona Capitol Times, 11/12/08]

---

**Story: Israel**

This Dream Act of 2009 is opportunity because I know there are many Latinos that want to be someone in this life and have high goals of achieving a degree. I am writing this because it fits me best as a young Latino man, trying to become an asset for this country but also a citizen for his country.

On May 25, 1985 is when my life started and since birth I have been a strong individual with the desire to succeed, but also work hard for what I want in life. I will be a proud father this August and am engaged to my beautiful fiancé of six years. I am a child of seven, my two older brothers Luis Ocampo and Daniel Ocampo also born in Mexico, have made life a bit challenging for us. My parents, Efrian and Hildegarda Ocampo are very traditional; with old country backgrounds and have very inspirational stories to tell as well. Born in Tijuana, Mexico, we battled troubles with money, a place to live in and call home. Tragedy struck my family early on when I was born, unfortunately my twin sister didn’t make the birth as I did. Stricken with death my father, with little money, made a big decision to have a better life for us. 2 weeks after my birth, we packed a few belongings and migrated into California. Walking many miles, hiding in trees, bushes and shrubs, and with fear in our minds we chose to make this decision for the American Dream and a better life for our family.

Growing up in California was tough for us because we never really had our place or yet alone have our own beds to sleep in. From sleeping in 1 bedroom apartment floors we were always cramped. Not many clothes to wear day by day really made living uncomfortable. Moving place to place was also hard because we weren’t able to afford some places to pay the rent. We lived in garages, one bedroom apartments and relatives spare bedrooms. Birthdays, Thanksgiving and Christmas would go by but my father wouldn’t have money to buy us our cakes, present, or even have parties. With money trouble and job trouble also brought family problems. My father became an alcoholic and that was tough seeing my parents arguing all the time. Quickly my brothers and I grew up and became real close during times like this and knew since we didn’t have all the present in the world we still have each other.

The birth of my brother Juan would be born on Oct 12, 1986 and throughout the years other siblings would follow. My first sister Jessica, was born in April 16, 1988 and finally Roxana on
March 20, 1989. The August of 1989, I would enter my first year of kindergarten. Only speaking Spanish it was hard for me to make friends and tough for me to learn how to write and read English. My father still had a drinking problem but it slowed down since we first moved to California. He had a steady job as an apprentice making cabinets and other wood products. I would soon be starting the second grade when I first heard news we were moving to Arizona to start over again. Learning English was very easy for me in and later reading and writing became a bit challenging. Meeting new friends and just getting the hang of school was fun.

June of 1992 is when we got all of our belongings together and flew over to Arizona. Leaving family, friends, and a bad past behind us was a great opportunity to start over. I would begin 3rd grades at a small elementary school in mesa. This is where my trouble with reading, writing, would start and I would attend a program after school called E.S.L. English as a Second Language was the best idea for me where I figured out how to put sentences together and also read fluently. I made new friends and my dad started his job with my uncle that we moved down here and stayed with. A year would pass by where we finally were able to get a place of our own. No more sleeping on floors and have beds to sleep on made everything better. My mother would soon be pregnant again and born December 21, 1992, Richard finally completed the seventh child in our family. What brought us closer as a family in we all enjoyed playing sports. With 6 kids running around wildly was a handful for my mom, but we were very competitive with each other. My dad bought us a basketball hoop, which we would play on it for hours, which later that hoop would be a big part of my life.

As I entered middle school, I became more active with after school sports. Football, basketball, and track were always on my mind and keeping my grades up. In my 7th grade year I received a letter from the principal that I was chosen to be a member of the National Junior Honor Society in 1999 and also my 8th grade year of 2000. Being part of the NJHS was a great deal for me because I was recognized with an assembly with a special diploma averaging over a 3.5 percent as my grade point average.

As I entered high school at Apache Junction High School my older brother Luis, was in his second year of college and was working full-time paying bills for the family. Daniel as well did the same and went to the same community college near by. I look up to them a lot because without their help we would have never been able to get a house of our dreams! After all the years of sleeping on the ground, sharing rooms with four people and having one bathroom. This was a big dream for my parents and us as well. I was proud to come home and relax and play around for the years to come. I played every sport that I could in high school. Football, basketball, baseball and finally track I would try out. All the years of playing basketball with my brothers would pay off. I made the varsity team as a sophomore in high school and had great years playing till I was a senior in high school. As a junior I was named All-region basketball player in 2003 and in 2004 made All-state honorable mentioned with the most dedicated as well for my school.

Shortly basketball season ended and so was my senior year with high school. I dedicated in helping out at my local church with a program called young life. Basically help with the church service and get more kids to join our group on Sunday and Thursday nights to talk about God. Some activities that I got hooked on were paintball; it was a great way to spread the word of god.
I helped out on weekends to referee and set up the fields for kids to play throughout the day. That kept me occupied for sometime; not knowing what I wanted to as my career soon the interest of fire fighting came up. It was an easy decision when most of my friends dads we already firemen and also knew me for a number of years that I went to school with their kids.

Graduating from Apache Junction High School on May 23, 2004 was great accomplishment, suddenly reality started to kick in. With the obvious started to make sense now I knew something had to be done for my future be a successful one. I started work with my dad at this construction job, which made me grow up very fast where I could make it in some career. Going to college was put on hold because I had to work and help pay bills at the house we lived in. Working 55 hours a week is very tough but the pay was good. I started to think that this isn’t what I want to for the rest of my life so I attend Mesa Community College and Central Arizona College in the spring of 2006.

Waking up early in the morning and working 10-hour days and after that going to school for a couple hours was exhausting. I went to school for a full year and taking classes was great. With Fire fighting on my mind, I was set to do this for the rest of my life. I would join an organization called fire cadets with the city of Gilbert. On Saturdays/ Sundays I would devote my time to be part of this group. There were plenty of activities we would do to get a feel of a fireman’s life. From training in the morning, volunteering in parades and attending real life ride longs was great. I could feel the rush and also get a great sense of the career I was getting into. Being seen by the public eye and showing professionalism as a fireman really gives back to the community and that’s what I want to be part of. I felt like I was really going somewhere till I received a letter in the mail.

Proposition 300 was something that haunts a lot of students like myself to be able to attend school. What it basically is out of state students pay double the amount of tuition money, which makes classes more expensive and harder to pay for. With family priorities and working lots of hours also put my school on halt. I believe the reason why I stop going to school was because of this proposition. I accumulated more than 20 credited hours and was near getting close to be accepted in the fire fighter academy at MCC. With this heartbreak happening I would go to marches with fellow students and activist to protest in the “Si Se Puede March” and “Dream Act March” in Phoenix. Words can’t be put on this paper what I felt but also the anger I felt at these historic marches.

I believe in my heart that if The Dream Act of 2009 passes I will be a fireman with the years to come. With the great support behind me and the will to succeed, I will get my degree in fire science, be a fireman, be a Capt., and someday be the chief of a fire station. I will do whatever it takes to have a successful career for myself but also to my beautiful baby girl and my wife.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Mei Lau**
My name is Mei Lau, a 15 year-old high school graduate. My brother and I arrived in US following our mother, who was an international student at the time, when I was nine and have been educated here ever since. But right now, I can't even be considered an international student anymore because mother cannot afford her tuition fee due the harsh economy for the past two years.

We both skipped two grades and entered high school at the age of 12. My IQ was proven and officially tested to be over 150. I maintained a 4.66 GPA in school with 4 AP classes and 2 college computer course, and finished all four years of high school math in my freshmen year. I went on to score a 5, highest score possible, in AP Calculus AB test in my sophomore year. Everyone including my counselor, teachers, friends, family, and myself was absolutely certain that with such a young age and brilliant record, I could get a full scholarship.

Quite a few were offered to me - with the requirement of being a permanent resident or US citizen. I was not. And several schools that accepted me regrettably informed me that they could not provide me with a full scholarship. Even the full scholarship the state university should provide to the students with 3 AIMS exceeded was denied to me because of my status despite the fact I completed my entire high school years here.

The most they could grant to a non-US citizen student like me cannot even cover my tuition that is essential if I wish to attend any college. My mother is a single-parent that had to take care of two kids while barely graduated high school. She was a student herself and had to work all day to cover her own tuition fee and our living expenses. I never saw her taking a break in four years from work other than during national holidays. She never bought anything for herself but still we struggle financially. She cannot possibly cover my college expenses.

I am underage, obviously, and cannot even get a student loan. Most scholarships either have an age or citizenship requirement. I can't even legally work because I don't have a social security number. I'm running out of ideas and have yet to find a solution.

I dread what the future may bring. Am I going to be forced to drop my education so young with my level of intelligence just because of where I was born? I lived here nearly as far as I remember. US is my home. I never knew another. Yet, opportunities are all being close to me because of the fact I was not born here. My brother is about to graduate within two years. If the DREAM Act is not passed by then, he is about to face the same dilemma I am facing. I really don't know what to do right now.

[Source: Change.org]

**Story: Michael (JROTC)**

I am Michael and I am 21 years old, fourteen years ago, my parents, brother and self arrived to the U.S. I grew in a time when my father worked as a construction worker who pulled arduous working hours to be able to put food on the table. I can clearly remember spending my eighth birthday picking pecans off the ground at my father’s boss house. As I grew older my father and mother had always told me to value my education, to try my best, that with an education I could
potentially obtain a good career. Seeing that my parents had always worked so hard to provide for my brother and me, I knew I had to follow their advice for a better future.

It was my junior year in high school; I had been enrolled in the Army JROTC program for two years now. I found the JROTC program benefitting since it was making me a better person in my community and offered me a chance to help others. There came a time when our JROTC battalion had a weeklong training at Fort Huachuca, it was there that I felt a passion towards discipline; I felt the call to serve. After the weeklong training I remember stepping off with my dad to the side of our living room and telling him that after High School I wanted to join the Marines. Never will I forget that frown in my father’s face, an expression of joy swallowed by tears. In front of me, my father stood, broken, I didn’t know why until he explained that I could not be a part of the military since I lacked a SSN. I asked him what that was and all he said was that it was my token to freedom.

I graduated in the summer of ‘07 from Maryvale High School. I enrolled at Phoenix College and am pursuing a degree in Architectural Engineering. Ever since, I’ve had to surpass many obstacles that range from having to pay out of state tuition and the very fact that I can’t serve this nation. As the years have gone my intentions to take part of the military have gotten stronger. I’m proud to say that I’ve trained among the best men who are now protecting our freedom. For now I will continue to pursue my career and hope to have a chance to join the U.S. Marine Corps. I will continue to uphold my values and that of this country when and after the Dream Act passes.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Michael**

My name is Michael and I am currently a first year medical student in Arizona. My family and I immigrated to the United States when I was 10 years old and I have been living as an illegal immigrant for the past 18 years.

I remember the first time that I felt the limitations of being an illegal immigrant. While my friends were getting ready for college or the military service during my senior year in high school, I was left trying to figure out what the available options were present for me. All the college applications required a statement of residency status. I was neither an American citizen, permanent resident, or had visa documentations. "What do I write in?" I asked myself. On most applications I just left that particular portion blank. Hoping that my residency status did not matter, but as expected I received numerous notifications stating that I needed to clarify exactly what my residency status was, or my application would not be considered complete.

I eventually chose to attend a local college, C.S.U. Stanislaus. As stated earlier, I really had no idea how to even apply for college given my immigration status, so initially I had a meeting with an admissions counselor. To my surprise, she turned out to be very supportive and helped me with the application process.
My professional aspirations initially was to become a lawyer, from my personal experiences of being an illegal immigrant, I knew first hand how laws directly affected people in society and I felt that I could really do some positive things for the minority community as a lawyer in the future.

How I came to be a medical student from a pre-law student is rather a lengthy story, but in short my mother was in a horrendous car accident during my first semester in college. My mother had severe laceration of the tongue, broken nose, and a major leg injury as well. Through going to the hospital and helping my mom go through the healing process, I got to see some of the positive aspects of being in a health care profession. I was inspired and from that point on to become a doctor and my current goal is to become a surgeon.

After attending California State University of Stanislaus for one year, due to financial constraint, I left school for two semesters, in hopes of returning with the tuition money to pay for the rest of the semesters. Thankfully AB 540 was passed in California just in time for my return, allowing me to pay instate tuition. The law definitely help lightened the financial load for my family, without it I don't think I would have been able to graduate.

While attending college, I took night courses and worked 40 hours a week at a local swap meet to earn the money for my tuition, although I was paying instate tuition, I was still unqualified for financial aid. In the winter of 2004 I graduated with a B.S. in Biology, but was for a second time faced with a daunting limited choices, due to my immigration status.

After graduation I worked in swap meets again for four years, until I gained the courage to try to get into medical school. I am now a first year student at a medical school in Arizona paying my tuition through a private loan. I still face the same daunting obstacles that were present when I graduated from college. The third year of my medical school will require that I rotate among various hospitals and doing so will require that I provide proper identifications, which I do not have at this time. And even if I were to graduate from medical school, I would still be faced with a limited opportunity that exists for many illegal immigrant students today. I would not be given the opportunity to apply for a medical license and would not be allowed to practice medicine in the U.S. I am hoping for the passing of the DREAM act, so that I may be able to become a great surgeon sometime in the near future.

[Source: Change.org]

---

**Letter: Marlen Moreno**

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Marlen Moreno and I am undocumented. I am also a possible beneficiary of the DREAM Act. On Sunday, August 8, I will be deported.

I was born in Nacozari, Mexico in 1984. My parents brought me to the United States when I was
only 13 years old. We were searching for a better life and we found it in Tucson, Arizona. Despite being born in Mexico, I don’t consider myself Mexican. I have been living in this country for over thirteen years. The United States is my country and Arizona is my home.

My parents have always told me to value education. I remember them telling me that they came to the United States, “the country of opportunity,” so I could live a better life than they did. I never took their sacrifice for granted. In 2002, I became the first and only member of my family to graduate from high school. I was proud of my achievements but scared that I could not go any further. Because of my status, I was not able to continue with my education. My goal is to become a pre-school teacher, because I believe education is the key to success. I want to help children achieve their full potential from a young age, so they can continue to excel in every aspect of their lives.

Despite my goals of higher education, I was forced to put them aside and work as an assistant cleaning houses and a maid in a hotel. This was not what I wanted to do with my life, but I was thankful for any job I was able to get. For four years, I worked hard to support myself and help my family financially knowing that someday I would be able to live out the American Dream.

In 2007, my first son was born, Freddy Alan. Thanks to him, I came to know what it means to be a mother. I never knew I could be this happy or love someone as much as I love him. I went back to work soon after his birth because I wanted to provide him with everything he deserved.

On March 28, 2008, my son and I were awakened by a loud bang on our door. Before I could fully figure out what was happening, ten heavily armed deputies came into my house and arrested me because I am undocumented. I was taken to jail and held without bail.

I was detained for over four months, when I was finally released and allowed to reunite with my son once again. When I came home, after four and a half months, I realized how much I had missed. My son had turned one and he had learned how to walk while I was in jail. It pains me to know that I never saw his first crawl, the first time he sat up, learned to play, his first bites of real food, or when he took his first steps. But what pains me the most is the fact that he didn’t recognize me, his own mother, after I got out of jail. It still brings tears to my eyes knowing my own son didn’t know who I was. It took us months to come back together, like we had been before we were separated.

I try not to think about the way I was treated during this time. I had been treated like a criminal, as if I had robbed a bank when all I was doing was working to provide for my son and my family. It was not the same America I had grown up knowing.

In 2009, I met my husband and we married. He came into my life at a time when I needed him the most. He provided the support and love that I needed, and I will never forget that. In November of 2009, I had my second son, Leobardo Jr. My husband is a Lawful Permanent Resident and both of my sons are citizens. I am the only person in my family who is undocumented, but I still cannot legalize my status.

For the past year I have been fighting my deportation but now I am at the end of that fight and I
am being told I must leave the United States by August 8th. I cannot think about being separated from my husband and my sons. I don’t want to think about going back to Mexico, a place I don’t consider my home.

I consider myself an American. This is where my husband and my children are and I don’t want to be separated from them. I want to continue living my life in this country and I want to contribute back. I am not a criminal. I am a wife, a mother, a daughter. I am a human being.

Please act to stop my deportation and to pass the DREAM Act so that I can have a chance at a life in the only country I know as my home.

Sincerely,

Marlen Moreno
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: Editorial—Fairness to others
October 21, 2004

BLANCHE LINCOLN chose a likely place to speak up for a bill designed to give children of illegal aliens a break on college tuition. The U.S. senator who's running for re-election backed the bipartisan Dream Act while speaking in Springdale, where the school district's enrollment is 30 percent Hispanic.

Some of those kids-nobody knows the exact number-are children of illegal aliens. When they graduate from high school, they could find the prospects of their going on to college clouded because of their questionable immigration status. And most lack the means to pursue a college degree with their own limited resources. The Dream Act would make it easier for such students to get an education by allowing them to qualify for in-state tuition-if they've got good records and bright prospects. Opponents of the act say it amounts to a form of amnesty for those who are in this country illegally, and that it would give the children of illegal immigrants a break that's not available to students who are American citizens.

Invoking fairness is a powerful argument, but fairness is just what the Dream Act is about. How fair is it to punish kids who are potential college students for something their parents did, and over which the kids had no control? Answer: Not very. These young folks had no choice about coming to this country with their families. They've had to struggle to overcome language, cultural and social barriers. Those who have succeeded to the point of becoming college material deserve a chance to earn a degree. A short-sighted policy that keeps these students from achieving all they can doesn't just punish them, it hurts the rest of us, too.

Some of these kids are among the best and the brightest. Making it harder for them to reach their full potential means they would be limited in their ability to return something to their community and country. To review Economics 101: The more education, the higher the earning power. The higher the earning power, the better the economy, the more taxes paid, and the better for everyone in general. Denying these kids a higher education is self-defeating.

Under the provisions of the act, kids who entered the United States before turning 16, who have lived here for five consecutive years and who have earned a high school diploma would qualify for state residency. This bill was introduced in the Senate by Orrin Hatch, a Republican, and has supporters from both parties, including Democrats Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor from Arkansas.

There's something deeply American about helping newcomers to this country get ahead and winning their gratitude to this land of opportunity. That's been the story of this country since its start. This is a nation of immigrants, although there's always been friction between the latest arrivals and those who have been here longer. But there's also been a vast store of good will that overcomes all our frictions. Let's dip into it again. Good will pays dividends in all kinds of ways.
Letter from the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Urging Support for the DREAM Act
September 20, 2010

Dear Senator:

As Hispanic business leaders, we are writing to ask for your support of the DREAM Act of 2009 (S.729) when it comes up for a vote as a part of the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 2011. Today’s global economy requires an educated and skilled workforce. Passage of the DREAM Act will contribute by adding more talented, multi-lingual and multi-cultural college educated workers to the workforce, helping America compete with innovators throughout the world.

The DREAM Act will provide a path to legal status for individuals brought to the U.S. as children. Each year, approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools. These students, most of whom came to the United States at a very young age, deserve a chance to attend college or serve in the military and apply to become legal residents of the only country they know, the country where they grew up, the United States.

Under the DREAM Act, most students with good moral character who came to the U.S. at age 15 or younger and have lived in the U.S. for at least five years before the date of the bill’s enactment would qualify for permanent resident status upon completion of at least two years of college or service in the military.

The DREAM Act would remove barriers to higher education by providing legal status to young members of our society who are American in every way but the paperwork, have demonstrated good character, excelled academically, and wish to contribute to our nation's security and well-being. Clearly, the DREAM Act is increasingly necessary as our nation aims to develop new industries that require a well-trained and educated workforce.

As Hispanic business leaders, we strongly believe that these youths deserve the opportunity to further their studies and become productive members of our workforce and economy. Therefore, we urge your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Sacramento Bee: Editorial—Take small step on immigration, pass DREAM Act
November 29, 2010

During the election campaign, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., promised to bring the DREAM Act (the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act) to a floor vote in December as a stand-alone bill. So did House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco. Californians should hold them to that pledge.

Senate Bill 3827 would resolve the immigration status of young people raised and educated in this country, but whose parents entered the country illegally. These kids live in a legal purgatory through no fault of their own – and this country, traditionally at least, has taken the view that kids shouldn't be punished for the crimes of their parents.

The Dream Act would give temporary legal status to those who arrived in the United States before age 16, have been in the country for five continuous years before the bill's passage, have graduated from a U.S. high school and have no criminal record. The bargain is that they have to go to college or join the U.S. military. Only then can they get a green card within six years – the first step on a path to citizenship.

The Dream Act grants no one automatic citizenship. Getting conditional status is a limited, rigorous privilege, not an entitlement.

If it passes, California would be the biggest beneficiary. A July analysis by the Migration Policy Institute titled "DREAM vs. Reality": An Analysis of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries" estimates that about 553,000 individuals educated and living in this state could be eligible.

Two recent, high-profile California cases highlight the need to remedy the situation for these out-of-status young people.

Steve Li, a 20-year-old student at San Francisco City College, was born in Peru, where his Chinese-born parents had fled in the 1980s. The family came to the United States on tourist visas in 2002 and applied for political asylum when Steve was 12, but they were denied.

Steve didn't know his parents were in the United States illegally. He attended high school in San Francisco, graduated and enrolled in City College of San Francisco, where he has been a stellar student.

He and his parents were arrested in mid-September and transferred to a jail in Sacramento County for three weeks. His parents were sent back to San Francisco and ordered to return to China. Steve Li was sent to an Arizona detention center to be processed for deportation to Peru.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., introduced a private bill delaying deportation, however, saying that his "removal would be unjust before the Senate gets a chance to vote on the Dream Act." As Feinstein said of Li, "He knows no one, nor has he any roots, elsewhere."
Another in that situation is Pedro Ramirez, the student government president at California State University, Fresno, who was brought to the United States from Mexico when he was 3 years old. He was unaware of his lack of citizenship status until he was a senior in high school. An anonymous e-mailer leaked his status to the media.

Both Li and Ramirez have become supporters of the Dream Act.

"I still believe America is a great nation, a moral nation, and that Americans, if given all the information, will do the right thing," said Li after Feinstein's action secured his release from detention.

"The Dream Act itself symbolizes what it is to be an American, which is our goal," said Ramirez. "We want to contribute to the United States, and utilize the degrees and skills we gained, to make it a better place."

The American people deserve an up or down vote on the Dream Act, getting every member of the Senate and House on record on this issue of opportunity and prosperity.

Los Angeles Times: Students want the DREAM Act to become reality
By Diana Marcum
November 28, 2010
http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-dream-act-20101128,0,607085,full.story

The student body president at Cal State Fresno. The drum major at UCLA. Student senators, class presidents, team captains and club officers at community colleges.

Scores of student leaders across California are illegal immigrants who came to this state as children.

With Congress expected to vote as early as this week on immigration reform that would give these students a pathway to legal status, a new generation of scholars who were raised in California but not born here are shedding their secrecy and speaking about their lives.

They have a sense of urgency. If the bill, known as the Dream Act, does not pass before a more conservative Congress takes power in January, it is unlikely to pass for years to come.

"At first my parents said, 'What are you doing? You're risking so much,' " said David Cho, the UCLA drum major. "But I told them, 'It's not only me. There are thousands of students like me trapped in a broken system. Unless our generation speaks out, the politicians won't tackle it. They have to see our faces.'"

Cho, 21, who conducts the 250-member UCLA marching band in front of 75,000 people at the Rose Bowl, came to the U.S. from South Korea at the age of 9. It wasn't until he was accepted to UCLA that his father showed him a letter saying the family's visa wasn't valid.
"I grew up here, worked hard, got into UCLA. And there I was staring at this letter telling me to go 'home,' when this is home," Cho said. "My whole world flipped upside down."

With no papers, Cho can attend school but not legally work, drive or receive financial aid. He sleeps on a friend's couch or sometimes at the UCLA library. He tutors SAT students 30 hours a week for cash. More than once he's depended on charitable "food closets" on campus to get something to eat.

He has a double major in international economics and Korean, maintains a 3.6 grade-point average and is on schedule to graduate a quarter early. He plays seven musical instruments.

He was terrified the night before he first stood at a rally in Los Angeles for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act and said: "I'm undocumented."

"I didn't know what would happen to me. Maybe I'd be deported," he said. "It seems funny now, but I wrote a will — a long, last letter to my family and friends."

Two weeks ago, when an anonymous tip forced Cal State Fresno student body president Pedro Ramirez to admit he is an illegal immigrant, it caused a national furor.

But William Perez, a professor at Claremont Graduate University who specializes in education and immigration, said undocumented student leaders are not uncommon.

He followed a group of 200 undocumented students primarily in California from high school through college and found that 78% held some sort of leadership position, from editor of the yearbook to captain of a sports team. Twenty-nine percent had a role in student government. Twelve percent were student body presidents.

"It wasn't what I was expecting to find. We always hear that poverty and legal struggles are predictors of academic failure," Perez said.

"I was scratching my head. I double-checked and triple-checked my numbers. But the more I presented my research, the more I came to believe this is the way the students expressed their American self-identity. People were telling them, 'You don't belong. You can't contribute.' This was their way of refuting that."

Maria Duque, 19, student body vice president at Fullerton College, has always been open about her illegal immigrant status. It was part of her platform when she ran for office.

"Speaking out and not being afraid is the only way of bringing change and a better life for my family, myself and all the others like me," she said.

Duque's parents, an accountant and a medical equipment supplies saleswoman, brought her to the U.S. at the age of 5 when Ecuador's economy collapsed. They lived in a garage the first year. Her father worked nights and her mother days in a furniture factory. From kindergarten on, Duque
got herself ready for school each morning. She graduated from high school with a 4.4 GPA.

"I'm working so hard for the Dream movement.... I wouldn't say I get discouraged, but sometimes I get tired," she said.

"My dad always gets me back up. He constantly says, 'Juventud que no hace temblar al mundo no es juventud' — youth that doesn't make the world tremble is no youth.' "

The Dream Act would give legal residency to immigrants who arrived before the age of 16, resided in the U.S. for at least five years, graduated from high school and completed two years of college or honorable military service. They would be subject to background checks and could not have a criminal record. Even if granted residency, they would not be eligible for federal grant scholarships. When enacted, the law would apply to those under 35.

Some 825,000 out of 2.1 million students who could be eligible would be likely to obtain permanent legal status, according to the Migration Policy Institute, a research organization. California has by far the largest number of potential beneficiaries, 553,000.

The bill was first introduced in 2001, but it has just been in the last two years — particularly the last two months — that a significant number of students who had gone to great lengths to protect their secret have been revealing their immigration status.

"There's a feeling that it's now or never. With all this anti-immigration sentiment growing, if it doesn't pass in the lame duck session of Congress, it might be years and years," said Ernesto Zumayo, a UCLA senior and Dream activist.

So the college sons and daughters of gardeners, nannies, and factory and field workers are stepping from the shadows and onto the stage.

"Their greatest concern about revealing their identities was never themselves, but their families," said Zumayo, 24. "Now the feeling is that if they don't speak out to help pass the Dream Act, what did their families sacrifice for?"

Zumayo's mother brought him to the U.S. from Ensenada, Mexico, when he was 18 months old. He grew up in East L.A. and is the only one in his family to attend college. He was 8 or 9 when he first heard of UCLA and decided that someday he would go there.

Before transferring, he was student body president at Rio Hondo College in Whittier. He confided to very few people that he was an illegal immigrant. Close friends pressured him to speak out. He balked before going public.

"I didn't want this label on me where people would suddenly think I didn't count," he said. "I felt sad when the Fresno State student body president was forced to come out as undocumented. I know the trauma, the inner conflict. But I kept thinking about my mother coming over here. She was 21."
Now, Zumayo said, it's all building to a finale. "Congress is about to vote. I'm about to graduate. If it doesn't pass...." He doesn't finish the sentence.

Bryon Castillo, 31, is a cook at a restaurant in Fresno. He has a bachelor's degree in social work he can't use.

He was smuggled into the U.S. from Guatemala when he was 11. He didn't realize he had no Social Security number until he tried to apply to college. He went to the Army recruiting station and found they couldn't take him either.

"I ended up in construction work and washing dishes," he said.

In 2001, when California passed AB 540, which allows undocumented California students to pay in-state rather than out-of-state tuition, Castillo went back to school. He worked a full-time job and two part-time jobs while attending Cal State Fresno and interning at a community college.

"I wanted to help students from around here transfer to four-year schools, get them into a school environment," he said. "I kept thinking something would happen with the immigration laws by the time I graduated."

It didn't. Recently, Castillo had to pass up a management job at the restaurant because he was afraid they would find out his status.

"People at work are always saying, 'What are you doing here, man? You're so smart. You have your degree.' I tell them, 'My passion is cooking!' It's not. I went to school to get out of the kitchen, but you have to play it off, you know?"

He said he's awed by the latest wave of undocumented students who have gone public with their status.

"They've got, like, these insane GPAs, they run for office and work, and they stand up and say who they are," he said. "Personally, I lost hope for myself, but I haven't lost hope for them."

Santa Rosa Press-Democrat: Editorial—Step forward
November 21, 2010
http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20101121/OPINION/101119407/1042?Title=PD-Editorial-Path-forward

For a vibrant economy, California needs more college graduates than it's currently producing. And turning students away isn't going to meet work-force demands.

That's a practical reason for the law allowing some non-residents, including some illegal immigrants, to pay lower, in-state tuition rates at California's colleges and universities. To qualify, they must complete three years of high school in California and, in the case of illegal immigrants, sign an affidavit pledging to apply for legal residence in the United States.
The policy was unanimously upheld by the state Supreme Court, which said the 9-year-old state law doesn't conflict with a federal law prohibiting states from offering benefits exclusively for illegal immigrants.

"If Congress had intended to prohibit states entirely from making unlawful aliens eligible for in-state tuition, it could easily have done so," wrote Justice Ming Chin, one of the more conservative members of the court.

Most of the beneficiaries aren't illegal immigrants, according to University of California officials, who say the total is about 600 of the 2,000 students at the 10 UC campuses paying in-state tuition rates under the law.

Regardless of the number of illegal immigrants, the taxpayers have an investment in all of those students. Why abandon it?

California spends about $8,000 per student on K-12 education every year. And the U.S. Supreme Court has said that states are constitutionally obligated to educate the children of illegal immigrants. It makes little sense to deny them an equal shot at a higher education, the building block of California's economy.

Not only does the state need the brainpower, these students arrived here as children and, presumably, had little say in their parents' decision to immigrate illegally. It's naive to think they'll leave voluntarily or that all of them can be rounded up and deported. Why not encourage them to be as productive as possible?

Nine other states, including New York and Texas, have the same policy. Congress has a chance to give it national reach, while removing the last big obstacle for these students: It's still illegal to employ them.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid have promised votes on the Dream Act, legislation that would create a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who arrived as children and attend college or serve in the military for two years.

In this nation built by immigrants, it would be an investment in our future.

**Fresno Bee: Editorial—Sorting out hypocrisy on illegal immigration**

November 19, 2010


Illegal immigration is a hot-button topic among politicians and voters, so you'd think the nation would have the political will to fix its broken immigration system. But the dirty little secret is that too many of us benefit from illegal immigration to do something about it.

A weeklong series in The Bee by Chris Collins exposed the widespread hypocrisy surrounding illegal immigration and the reasons that Democrats and Republicans refuse to act -- beyond the
demagoguing of the issue at public appearances. Americans say they oppose illegal immigration, but have come to expect its advantages, including low grocery prices and cheap yardwork and housecleaning services.

In the San Joaquin Valley, our major industry relies heavily on the labor of illegal workers. What would happen to our multibillion-dollar agricultural industry -- the foundation of the region's economy -- if illegal immigration were stopped in its tracks?

The Bee series also pointed out that illegal immigrants don't just work in agriculture. They are in restaurants, hotels and construction. They supply cheap labor that keep our costs down when we buy meals or rent hotel rooms.

If we are looking for villains, we should look in the mirror.

This is a key passage in The Bee series: "Some experts predict that the system will always be broken because too many people don't want change -- even if they say they do. Farmers get cheap labor, illegal immigrants get jobs, consumers pay less for services. No one wants to make difficult reforms that would disrupt this balance."

It's easy for illegal immigrants to get forged documents, and many employers don't even use E-Verify, the online government program to check an employee's legal status. To add to the hypocrisy, Congress won't even agree to make E-Verify a permanent program.

It's no wonder that there's no political will to implement meaningful immigration reform. Some don't even want to acknowledge the problem, contending that the term "undocumented worker" would be more fair than "illegal immigrant." On the other hand, the silence is deafening from businesses that benefit from the illegal immigrants. That is, until they are faced with aggressive enforcement. Then the businesses cry loudly.

Unfortunately, racism, bigotry and hatred are at the heart of some critics of immigration. But let us not forget that if all American immigrants were to "go home," we would be left with only Native Americans.

It is not racist, however, to tell the truth, and it is a fact that these immigrants are here illegally. Glossing it over with politically correct terms like "undocumented worker" only further obscures the real issues. Additionally, the use of this unproductive politically correct terminology only further inflames the issue.

We have long supported a comprehensive immigration reform that deals with the major challenges. That reform should include:

Enhanced border security to limit the growth of illegal immigration. That would also make our nation safer from terrorists intent on doing damage to our country.

We need a fair guest-worker program that provides a reliable pool of workers to industries needing foreign laborers.
There also should be an opportunity for those already here illegally to earn legal residency if they meet strict requirements, including paying fines and showing they have had a responsible work history.

We also believe the DREAM Act is a fair method to give legal status to those who have earned that right, and then to eventually pursue citizenship if they desire.

President George W. Bush offered a wise immigration reform package in 2007. But it fell apart in the Senate when Republicans and Democrats blocked it. They didn't want to fix the broken system because both parties had constituencies that benefited from the status quo.

We could solve the illegal immigration problem. But as The Bee series pointed out over the past week, that would threaten a way of life that works for too many people and business interests in America.

Catholic News Service: Hunger strike, arrests, other lobbying aim to push DREAM Act forward
November 19, 2010
By Patricia Zapor

Taking a page from civil rights protesters of another era, eight young adults in San Antonio are waging a hunger strike to try to pressure Congress to pass the DREAM Act, a law they say is their only real shot at having a successful future in the United States, the only country they know as home.

Trying to rally support for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act was also why Noemi Degante got arrested Nov. 17, charged with unlawful conduct and demonstrating in a building in the Capitol complex after failing in a daylong wait to meet with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and then staging a sit-in outside his office.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi have both said they would bring the measure to a vote as a stand-alone bill before the 111th Congress adjourns in December, leading to a flurry of activity across the country to round up votes in Congress.

The bill has long enjoyed bipartisan support in both houses of Congress, but it has repeatedly gotten hung up in procedural maneuvers or been defeated along with legislation to which it was attached. The latest version, introduced by Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., Nov. 18, had not yet been posted to the Library of Congress website as of Nov. 19.

In general, the legislation would give young adults who lack legal residency the chance to become legal residents and eventually citizens if they go to college or join the military. It would apply to people who were brought to the United States by their parents as minors.
In a teleconference with reporters Nov. 18, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said he and President Barack Obama have been and will continue to make calls to members of Congress pushing for their support of the bill, which Obama has promised to sign.

"This one's personal for me," Duncan said, because of his experience with the challenges facing immigrant students while he was CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, the advocacy organization which hosted a Nov. 18 news conference about the DREAM Act, said much of the current lobbying effort for the bill is directed at 11 Republican senators who have previously voted for versions of the DREAM Act. Some of those, have reversed their position, such as Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, who voted for it in 2003 but now says he wants enforcement at the border to come before the DREAM Act or any other immigration legislation.

A report by UCLA's North American Integration and Development Center estimates that up to 2 million people might be eligible to legalize their status under the DREAM Act, although less than 40 percent, or about 825,000, might ultimately be likely to take advantage of it because of academic requirements.

Supporters of the legislation estimate that about 65,000 such young people a year graduate from high school and are stymied in their ability to afford college or to work legally because they lack legal residency. Several states bar students without legal immigration status from obtaining in-state tuition or government-funded scholarships. Lacking Social Security numbers, such young people also are barred from working.

Los Angeles Coadjutor Archbishop Jose H. Gomez joined a chorus of advocates for the DREAM Act at the news conference, asking members of Congress "to remember how we are all immigrants or descendants of immigrants and ... to put aside politics in this instance and to vote on the merits of the proposal." He called the bill "the right thing to do."

Also speaking at the news conference, Ramiro Luna, who would be covered by the DREAM Act, said he has joined the eight Texas hunger strikers, marking his ninth day without food.

"This is our home," said the resident of Texas, who came to the United States from Mexico at age 7. "I am an American." He added that though he may be physically weak from his fast, he is highly motivated to advocate for the bill, which could mean the difference in whether he can legally work once he finishes his degree in bilingual education at Texas Tech University.

Degante and other young adults who were arrested outside McCain's office also were at the news conference. McCain also previously has voted for the DREAM Act.

Degante told Catholic News Service she and five other would-be beneficiaries of the DREAM Act waited all day in McCain's office, only to be rebuffed when he finally was sighted. Degante said the group followed McCain to an elevator and told him they wanted the chance to serve the country like he did. "Good, go serve," he told them.
She said they returned to the office to wait again. She and three others were arrested when the office closed and they refused to leave the hallway outside. The charges against them are misdemeanors.

A native of Mexico, Degante, 27, came to the United States at age 5. She holds a bachelor's degree in liberal studies, made possible because California, where she lives, does not require proof of legal U.S. residency for long-term residents to get in-state tuition.

The California Supreme Court on Nov. 15 upheld that policy.

**OC Register: Immigration activists rally from O.C. to D.C.**

By Cindy Carcamo

November 18, 2010


The movement for immigration reform gained momentum this week as young immigration activists staged sit-ins and press conferences – from Santa Ana to the nation's capital – to tout the possibility of action during the lame duck session of Congress.

Twitters and faxes were in full gear Wednesday to support and oppose the Development, Relief and Education for Minor Aliens Act, a bill that would give some students who are in the country illegally a pathway to U.S. citizenship.

The DREAM Act has been in the works for about a decade and has met opposition by anti-illegal immigration groups, such as NumbersUSA.com and defeat in the past at the hands of Congress.

Sen. Harry Reid announced Wednesday afternoon that he will introduce the DREAM Act as a stand-alone bill during the lame duck session, according a tweet sent out by Reid.

"This is their last-ditch effort," said NumbersUSA.com leader Roy Beck. "All those tens of millions of dollars in the pro-amnesty war chest ... they are being spent in any way possible during the lame duck. This is their last chance."

The aggressive push to pass this contentious bill prompted two Orange County students who are in the country illegally to stage a sit-in Wednesday at Sen. John McCain's Washington, D.C. office. The two, Jorge Gutierrez from Santa Ana and Noemi from Garden Grove, were arrested Wednesday afternoon along with two others, fellow activists said.

After years of obstacles, California Dream Network organizer Maria Rodriguez said she believes things may change.
"I think the biggest difference is that in this election we are seeing the importance of the Latino electorate," she said. "Democrats in the Senate are in power because the Latino vote came through in Colorado, California, Washington. Congress got a reminder in the 2010 election that they need to listen to Latino issues."

Anti-illegal immigration activists, such as NumbersUSA.com, e-mailed national alerts to their members, who in turn flooded legislators with calls and 250,000 faxes.

"We are reminding the defeated members of Congress, as well as the retiring members of Congress that if they ever hope to run for public office again and ... ram this amnesty through, that's going to stick with them forever," Beck said.

At the noon sit-in, Gutierrez made his case at McCain's office.

"I am queer, I am undocumented and I am unafraid," the 26-year-old said. "We're here to ask Senator McCain to continue to support the Dream Act as he has done it before and to remind him of his great leadership that he led with a few years ago."

McCain's office did not return a call for comment.

Gutierrez, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in English from California State University, Fullerton two years ago, said he'd like to continue on to graduate school but would ultimately like to put what he's learned into practice and to serve his community.

Gutierrez, who came to this country when he was 10, is one of five main characters in a documentary film called "Papers: Stories of Undocumented Youth."

"We love this country enough to put ourselves at risk of being arrested," he said.

Gutierrez was joined by Noemi, a 27-year-old who was brought to this country illegally when she was 5 years old.

"I don't blame my mom. My mom was just looking to have a better life for me and my brother," she said. "My mom is a single mom and she learned how to speak English and had never held a job before. She worked two jobs to put me through college."

Noemi, who only gave her first name out of fear of retribution, graduated with a degree in liberal studies from Cal State Fullerton. She said she'd like to get a graduate degree in Women's Studies.

The bill would allow students who are in the country illegally and who have finished at least two years of college or military service to apply for legal status. The bill would also protect them from deportation and make them eligible for student loans and federal work study programs.

Students would need to have lived here at least five years before the bill were enacted into law and have arrived before they were 16. Applicants would also need to be younger than 36.
Still, the bill's opponents call it a provisional amnesty, stating that it's flawed and contains major loopholes.

Beck said the bill doesn't have enough safeguards to keep applicants from lying about when they first came to this country.

"You'll have millions of people who will come forward to try to claim it," he said.

In addition, Beck said, the bill would encourage chain-migration, in which students would eventually be able to sponsor parents who are in the country illegally for U.S. citizenship.

He acknowledged that it's not an automatic process and that applicants would have to wait to gain legal status first and then wait five years before they would be eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. Only then would they be able to petition for a parent, which is a lengthy process in itself.

Rodriguez called Beck's claims "weak arguments." She said there's plenty of oversight to take care of false claims.

"It's very clear, you have to come here before you were 16-year-olds, graduated from high school, been here 5 years continuously before the legislation passes and be of good moral character. Within each guideline, you have to prove everything," she said. "No one is going to make up a yearbook and transcripts. Nobody is going to make up good moral character if they came across the law and the police. It will be in the record."

Beck said there are some compelling cases.

"There are definitely some students brought over as young kids and graduated from high school ... and they really don't have a country to go home to," he said.

Still, he said he would only support a bill if it were limited to those specific cases, paired with mandatory E-verify and do away with chain migration.

"But here's the thing all these people nonetheless will get work permits that will disadvantage American people who are unemployed now. Even if amnesty is deserved there is still harm to it."

Noemi said she doesn't believe she's taking anybody else's spot.

"Nobody is better than anybody," she said. "I think everybody deserves equal opportunity to follow their dreams and be educated."

**Associated Press: Student body president in CA is illegal immigrant**

By Garance Burke

November 17, 2010
The popular student body president at California State University, Fresno has publicly revealed a personal detail he long sought to keep secret: He is an illegal immigrant.

Pedro Ramirez, 22, previously told campus administrators in confidence that he was concerned about going public with his immigration status after winning the top post in student government.

But that changed Tuesday when The Collegian, the newspaper at the largest university in California's prolific farming region, disclosed his status after receiving an anonymous e-mail.

"I don't want this issue to be about me," Ramirez told The Associated Press Wednesday. "This is a big, big issue that should have been addressed a long time ago. My goal is to bring awareness to that."

Ramirez was expected to appear Friday at a campus rally in support of the federal "DREAM Act," which would create a path to citizenship for young people living in the country illegally who attend college or join the military.

Meanwhile, student leaders were preparing for impromptu immigration debates Wednesday at an Associated Students Inc. meeting that Ramirez was expected to attend.

Ramirez, who has a dual major in political science and agricultural economics, came to the U.S. with his family from a small community in Jalisco, Mexico, when he was 3. He went on to become valedictorian of his high school class in nearby Tulare County, where he prepared for his "long road in higher education," according to his website.

He said didn't know he lacked proper immigration papers until high school, when he told his parents he planned to join the military before applying to college and they told him he wasn't a citizen.

"It's a relief that I was able to come out in the open because I've been holding this for several years, and hearing stories from other students who have gotten deported or moved because of the fear," said Ramirez, who hopes to open his own business or become a civil rights attorney.

"Though this is an obstacle, I want to keep moving up, and I'll do what I can to change the situation and hopefully become a citizen," he said.

Ramirez first told Fresno State administrators about his status in June, after his successful campaign to become student body president with the slogan "New Leadership, New Ideas."

Administrators verified he would break no campus or student leadership rules by assuming the post, but encouraged him to take on the role as a volunteer because he couldn't legally accept payment, said Paul Oliaro, university vice president for student affairs.
"I think it does suggest that even though a student may be undocumented, they have a lot to contribute to the campus and come with skills, knowledge and a willingness to serve," Oliaro said.

David Schecter, chair of the political science department and Ramirez's adviser at the school, said Ramirez was a thoughtful, unassuming leader who was serious about student government.

Ramirez seemed unfazed by the controversy as they sat together at an athletics advisory council meeting about the risk of concussions in field sports, Schecter said, adding no one mentioned the immigration issue.

"Regardless of the uproar, he is still doing his job," Schecter said. "He's the personification of a much larger debate about the role of undocumented Latino Americans in our daily lives, and my hunch is he understands the symbolism here."

Ramirez benefits from a law that allows all California residents, regardless of immigration status, to qualify for in-state tuition rates.

The state's high court upheld the law this week.

**Los Angeles Times: Editorial—A path to college**

November 17, 2010


In a decision that could have ramifications for higher education across the country, the California Supreme Court ruled Monday that illegal immigrants who attend state high schools for at least three years and graduate can continue to pay the lower, in-state tuition rates at California's public universities and colleges. The decision, which reverses a lower court ruling, is a huge victory for many deserving students who otherwise might have been unable to afford a college education.

Under federal law, states must provide a free K-12 education to illegal immigrants, which, by some estimates, costs California close to $3 billion. We agree that this is a moral imperative. But we also wonder what the sense would have been in investing heavily in thousands of students, inspiring them to excel, and then putting higher education out of their financial reach.

Economically, it makes sense to encourage these students to go to college; if they become successful professionals, business owners and taxpayers in California, they will contribute to the state's coffers. Morally, it also makes sense; it would be unfair to penalize children who arrived in this country as minors and had no choice in the decision to come, and who themselves committed no crime.

California is one of 10 states that provide in-state tuition to illegal immigrants, an indication of the extent to which states, in the absence of guidance from Congress, have moved to address the educational, economic and social needs of the immigrant populations within their borders. The 2001 California law can reduce the cost of a community college education by $4,400 a year and the cost of a UC education by as much as $23,000. The class-action lawsuit contesting the law was brought by out-of-state students who argued that the requirement that they pay higher,
nonresident fees while illegal immigrants in California pay in-state tuition violated federal law.

It is true that federal law prohibits illegal immigrants from receiving college benefits based on residency. California's law, however, is based not on residency but on whether the student attended and graduated from a high school in the state. The justices ruled that because nonresidents who meet that standard also are eligible for in-state tuition, there is no conflict. That includes U.S. citizens who attended high school in California but whose families live elsewhere, and those who attended California boarding schools. Two similar lawsuits are pending in Texas and Nebraska.

The decision is only a step in the right direction. Both supporters and opponents note that there is an inescapable conflict brought up by the law: Once armed with college degrees, these students cannot be legally employed. Congress can and should correct this by passing the DREAM Act, which would set students who meet certain post-secondary requirements on a path to citizenship. California recognizes the importance of these young immigrants to our future, and the nation should too.

Sacramento Bee: Editorial—DREAM Act should be the law of the land
November 17, 2010

Every year, about 25,000 students graduate from California high schools and enter a sort of limbo.

Though they've been raised and schooled here, they find out at some point that they were brought here -- through no choice of their own -- by parents who arrived as unlawful immigrants.

The examples are legion. Remember Arthur Mkoyan? He arrived in Fresno as a 2-year-old from Armenia, graduated from high school as valedictorian and was accepted to the University of California, Davis. But his parents had overstayed their visas, so he faced deportation to Armenia, a country he didn't know and whose language he hardly spoke.

At a press conference on the Capitol steps in 2002, Rodrigo, who didn't give his last name and was a sophomore at University of California, Berkeley, joined others by telling his story publicly. He had been brought to the United States by his mother when he was 6 years old, graduated with a 4.0 grade-point average from a San Jose high school and was accepted to UC Berkeley.

California and nine other states have addressed this problem directly -- and the California Supreme Court issued an important 7-0 decision this week upholding their approach. Courts in other states should take notice.

Congress should follow California's lead and resolve the problem nationally by approving the federal version of the DREAM Act. California's AB 540 of 2001, whose authors were Democrat
Marco Firebaugh and Republican Abel Maldonado, passed overwhelmingly in the Assembly, 57-15, and Senate, 27-7.

This law allows students to pay in-state tuition in the public university system if they have attended a California high school for three years and have graduated. That means students like Arthur and Rodrigo are exempt from more expensive nonresident tuition. They are not eligible for financial aid, however; they must pay their own way.

As it turns out, most students who benefit from AB 540 are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants. For example, of 220,000 UC students, 1,941 students benefited from AB 540 in 2007-08. Of those, 1,326 were U.S. citizens or legal immigrants -- in California boarding schools or who stayed after their families left the state. Only 406 were unlawful immigrants. In the CSU and community college systems, 1 percent or fewer of students benefit from the law.

U.S. Rep. Brian Bilbray, R-Carlsbad, sued to overturn AB 540. He was upset that his children, who graduated from high schools in Virginia, had to pay out-of-state tuition. The odd thing is that if the court had thrown out AB 540 or it simply didn't exist, Bilbray's children would still have had to pay out-of-state tuition until they established residency in California.

The court made it clear that AB 540 is based on attendance and graduation from a California high school, not residence -- the "fatal flaw" in Bilbray's argument. Further, AB 540 in no way interferes with federal regulation of immigration, such as determining who should be admitted or may remain in the country.

For that, Congress will have to act. For kids brought here by their parents before age 16, Congress should make the DREAM Act a national law.

High school grads with no criminal record should be able to get a green card within six years if they go to college or the military, putting them on a path to citizenship.

It is in this nation's interest for students graduating from U.S. high schools, with attachments and loyalties to this country, to become educated and productive members of society.

**Change.org: Steve Li’s Deportation on Hold**

*By Alex DiBrando*

*November 15, 2010*

[http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/steve_lis_deportation_on_hold](http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/steve_lis_deportation_on_hold)

City College of San Francisco student Steve Li was set to be deported today, but last-minute actions by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) have put a hold on his removal.

If you [remember](http://www.change.org), 20-year-old Li was unaware that he didn't have legal status to be in his country, a case of his parents trying to protect him by keeping him in the dark. When Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) came to take him away, Li was shocked. He faces deportation to
Peru, a place he left at 11 years old and where he knows nobody. Li's parents will be deported separately to China, their country of origin. The fact that Li will be stranded in a strange country without his family has increased concern over his plight.

Students and campus groups have rallied in support of their peer, which seem to have paid off with the stalled deportation order. Rep. Pelosi had vowed to worked with other Congressional leaders on Li's behalf, and Sen. Feinstein is considering introducing a private bill for legal status, which would keep him in the United States while the bill was under review, and hopefully permanently when it was successful.

Steve Li is one of many hard-working students who would benefit from the passage of the DREAM Act, which would allow him to earn legalization through college attendance and pursue his dream of opening a medical clinic to serve immigrants. But while Congress drags its feet on that vital legislation, it could be too late for Li.

**San Francisco Chronicle: Feinstein seeks to block Steve Li's deportation**

By Jessica Kwong
November 15, 2010

http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/11/15/BAP01GC2FP.DTL

Sen. Dianne Feinstein has asked immigration authorities to halt the deportation of City College of San Francisco nursing student Steve "Shing Ma" Li while she considers introducing a bill that would allow him to stay in the United States temporarily, her office said Sunday.

The California Democrat's effort came as Li's attorney said his removal flight to Peru would no longer happen today, as initially planned. The lawyer, Sin Yen Ling, said the immigration officer that told her of the change of plans did not give her any more details.

"Why? I don't know," said Ling, whose client is at a detention center in Florence, Ariz. "They wouldn't provide me with additional information, but I do think it has a lot to do with the advocacy work that's been happening."

In a phone interview late Sunday, Li said, "It's a miracle. Not a big one, but it's still something, and every day that I'm here means I have a chance to not get deported and stay in San Francisco."

Li's case has attracted attention because the 20-year-old says he has no real connection to Peru, nor relatives or friends there. His parents were born in China but moved to Peru in the 1980s to escape the government's one-child policy. They brought Li to the United States at age 11.

The three were arrested in San Francisco Sept. 15 because they were only allowed to stay in the United States through the end of 2002. Li's parents were released and wear electronic ankle bracelets as they await deportation to China.
Many of Li's supporters, who include thousands of college students and visitors to his Facebook page, rallied outside Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer's office in San Francisco on Friday, trying to get her to intervene. Supporters have also engaged in letter-writing campaigns targeting Boxer, Feinstein and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco.

Dream Act supporter

Feinstein's office noted her support for the Dream Act, which if passed would grant undocumented immigrant children citizenship if they entered the United States before age 15 and were attending college. In a statement Sunday, Feinstein said it would be unjust to deport Li before the bill can be voted on.

"I have asked ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to halt the deportation proceedings while I consider introducing a private bill that will allow Mr. Li to remain in the United States on a temporary basis," Feinstein said.

Private bills are often last resorts in immigration cases. Only a small fraction of them are successfully passed by Congress. However, merely introducing a bill could put Li's deportation on hold, Ling said.

After meeting with Li's attorney and mother Friday, Boxer's staff reiterated her support for the Dream Act. Boxer does not introduce private bills, a spokesman said.

A spokesman for Pelosi, Drew Hammill, said she believes Li's case "is a textbook example of the pressing need for comprehensive immigration reform and passage of the Dream Act," and is "working with other members (of Congress) to recommend that ICE grant deferred action."

Reprieve denied

Ling asked for a deferral of Li's deportation after his arrest, but said she received a fax from Immigration and Customs Enforcement Friday denying the request. The decision was made in Arizona and could be reversed by ICE Director John Morton.

"The reality is ICE is as bureaucratic as any other federal agency," Ling said. "So it's just a matter of getting John Morton's attention to say look, the Arizona office denied deferred action and there's something wrong with the decision, and do something about it."

Virginia Kice, an ICE spokeswoman, said in an e-mail Sunday that the agency never confirms the timing of a removal in advance but that Li "remains in ICE custody while the agency seeks to make arrangements for his removal."

Friend has hope

One of Li's friends from City College, 20-year-old Christian Hip, said he was hopeful after learning Li will not be deported today.

"It means we get to do something at least for one more day," he said.
But Hip, who is also of Chinese descent but was born in the United States, is preparing for the worst. After finding out through Facebook that Li could be deported, he contacted his parents in Lima, Peru. The country has a large population of immigrants from China.

"My parents have additional rooms and they're retired, so they have time to pick him up and take care of him," he said. "It makes me feel relieved that he may have a hand even though I'm not there with him."

**Colorlines: DREAM Act’s Defeat Spells One Family’s Imminent Loss**

By Julianne Hing  
November 12, 2010  

The very same week that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid announced he would attempt to add the DREAM Act as an amendment to the defense authorization bill, Immigration and Customs Enforcement was readying itself to take a DREAM Act-eligible youth into custody for deportation. Days later, while the Senate preened and postured in D.C. over a failed move to pass the DREAM Act in September, a family on the other side of the country was being torn apart. On September 15, ICE arrived at 20-year-old Steve Li’s San Francisco home and took him into custody for his deportation to Peru, where Li was born but has no relatives or contacts. And now, despite a months-long public campaign to keep Li in the country, Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced he’ll be deported next Monday, his attorney Sin Yen Ling confirmed, unless California Sen. Barbara Boxer steps in to issue a private bill on his behalf.

For many people, Li’s story is not unfamiliar: Li’s parents, who face their own removal order, immigrated to Peru from China in the 1980s, partially to help Li’s aging grandparents and partially to escape China’s one-child policy. And there Li was born, before his family immigrated again in 2002 to the U.S. to escape political instability in Peru. His family filed for political asylum in the U.S. but were denied. A judge put out a removal order for their family in 2004, which Li’s parents quietly tried to ignore, all unbeknownst to Li.

In the meantime, Li made the Bay Area his home. He went to school, made friends, enrolled in community college in San Francisco to pursue his plans to become a nurse. Li volunteered at his church and at San Francisco General Hospital. “I told him hopefully he would finish studying here in the U.S. and give back to the country,” his mother Maria Ma Li told the [San Francisco Chronicle](http://www.sanfranciscochronicle.com/).  

When ICE arrived on Li’s doorstep on September 15 to take him and his parents into custody, he had no idea why they were there. He was transferred to a detention facility in Florence, Arizona, and has since been washing dishes for a dollar a day so he can pay for stamps for letters and phone calls back home.  

“I thought it was a mistake,” Li told the [Contra Costa Times](http://www.sfgate.com/) over one of those phone calls. “I’ve been living (in the United States), studying here. I feel like I’ve been here all my life. All my friends, my teachers, my family is here.”
“This is a good case of what’s wrong with the fugitive opps program,” Li’s attorney Ling said. “Fugitive opps was intended to shore up national security by going after terrorists. And obviously arresting 20-year-old students and deporting them doesn’t further our national security at all.” Ling added that Li would have been DREAM Act-eligible.

“This is a consequence of what happens when Congress doesn’t pass the DREAM Act,” Ling said.

Activists have been trying to pass a version of the DREAM Act for nearly a decade. The bill would allow undocumented youth with a clean criminal record and a two-year commitment to either the military or college to eventually become citizens. Reid faced criticism that he re-introduced the DREAM Act as a last-ditch effort to shore up Latino votes in his home state during a cutthroat campaign against Tea Party-backed Republican Sharron Angle; activists did not begrudge him his politicking and flooded the Senate with phone calls for a frenzied week. A Republican filibuster blocked the DREAM Act, along with a proposed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” repeal from being attached to the defense authorization bill.

Last year, the Obama administration deported a record 392,000 people. The administration boasted that more than half of those, about 195,000 people, had prior convictions on their record that made them too dangerous to be in the country. Except the bulk of those convictions came from traffic violations, or immigration issues like Li’s.

Earlier this year news reports tried to give credit to the Obama administration’s efficient immigration enforcement for granting clemency to DREAM Act-eligible youth who were facing removal proceedings. Yet, it’s consistently been high-profile public campaigns and old-fashioned organizing that have saved DREAM Act students from deportation, one at a time.

Since being taken into custody, the City College Board of Trustees adopted a resolution in support of Li. So did the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and this week the San Francisco Board of Education introduced a similar resolution. Li’s friends, professors and mentors have organized phone banking drives and rallies to try to win a stay for Li.

The campaign to keep Li in the country is ramping up in the final days. Organizers have planned an all-day vigil outside of Boxer’s downtown San Francisco office at 1700 Montgomery Street for today, from 10am through 5pm. They plan to deliver batches of postcards and messages from supporters to Boxer’s office every half hour.

Li has exhausted many of his other legal options. “As of right now, Boxer is sort of the only person who can really intervene by introducing a private bill,” Ling said.

Days before being re-elected Reid took to Spanish-language television to promise to bring the DREAM Act up for a vote again in a lame duck session. This week Nancy Pelosi said she has similar intentions. But its prospects are slim. Republicans have said they will focus the last few weeks of the year on extending Bush-era tax cuts and will not support a DADT repeal or the DREAM Act.
Ling has encouraged people to call Barbara Boxer's office encourage her to issue a private bill to keep Li in the country.

**Associated Press: Immigrant vets face deportation despite service**

October 24, 2010

[Link](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hA64ehSM_gMIII-I-3uIy5nQsIsYg?docId=2baf89df6bbf495397d9b8727b20eb74)

When Rohan Coombs joined the U.S. Marine Corps, he never thought one day he would be locked up in an immigration detention center and facing deportation from the country he had vowed to defend.

Coombs, 43, born in Jamaica, immigrated to the United States legally as a child with his family. He signed up to serve his adopted nation for six years — first in Japan and the Philippines, then in the Persian Gulf during the first war with Iraq.

Up to 8,000 non-citizens enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces every year and serve alongside American troops. As of May 2010, there were 16,966 non-citizens on active duty. The military does not allow illegal immigrants to enlist.

If non-citizens die while serving, they are given citizenship and a military funeral. If they live and get in trouble with the law, as Coombs did, they can get caught in the net of a 1996 immigration law that greatly expanded the list of crimes for which non-citizens can be deported.

"As far as I was concerned, I was a citizen," said Coombs, whose soft-spoken, introspective nature contrast with his physical presence. Coombs stands 6 foot 5 and weighs more than 260 pounds — a gentle giant, according to his fiancee, Robyn Sword.

Now advocates of non-citizen servicemen and women are trying to change that. Attorneys are taking cases like Coombs' to court, arguing that an immigrant who serves in the Armed Forces should be considered a U.S. national and protected from deportation.

"These are people who served us — whether they are model human beings or not," said Coombs' attorney, Craig Shagin of Harrisburg, Pa. "They served in our uniforms, in our wars. If they were POWs, they'd be considered American prisoners."

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, is looking into potential changes to the law so immigrants who serve in the military can avoid deportation.

"You come back from Iraq or Afghanistan today, you have put yourself on the line for this country," said Filner. "An incredible number of kids come back with an injury or illness that puts them in trouble with the law. To simply have these people deported is not a good way to thank them for their service."
Advocates estimate that thousands of veterans have been deported or are in detention. Government officials say they have no tally but plan to begin tracking the numbers.

The push comes as criminal courts are increasingly listening to arguments for leniency for veterans.

So-called veterans courts, which give them specialized treatment, now number more than 30, with a dozen more planned.

Next month, new U.S. Sentencing Commission rules will make it possible for federal judges to consider a criminal defendant's military service and mental and emotional condition to issue a lesser prison sentence. The rules, however, would not apply to immigration judges.

Most immigrants serve with distinction. The Center for Naval Analyses, a federally funded research and development center for the Navy and the Marine Corps, found that non-citizens are far more likely to complete their enlistment obligations successfully than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Coombs was one who did not make the grade.

He spent 10 months in the Persian Gulf and lost friends to combat, he said. After the war, he felt depressed and anxious. His family was far away in New York, and he said "whining" to fellow Marines didn't seem an option.

Instead, he got involved with drugs, and he got caught.

In 1992, he was court-martialed for possession of cocaine and marijuana with the intent to distribute, and was given 18 months of confinement and a dishonorable discharge.

He continued to struggle with drugs.

"Things would be going well, then something would happen," he said.

He got married, and that helped. When his wife died in 2001 of diabetes-related complications, he started smoking marijuana again.

In 2008, he was busted for selling marijuana to an undercover officer while working as a bouncer in an Orange County bar. He spent eight months in state prison.

"I don't want to make excuses. I made mistakes. I thought I knew the consequences — I served my time," he said in a telephone interview.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement found that his criminal convictions made him eligible for deportation, and he was turned over to ICE after serving his sentence. He has been held in a San Diego immigration detention center for 22 months and is appealing to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court.
Coombs was stunned to realize he could be forced to leave the country for his crimes.

"This is the only life I've known," he said. "The only time I left this country was when I was deployed overseas. This is my home."

On the other side of the country, Dardar Paye is appealing his deportation case to the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Paye came to the U.S. from war torn Liberia as a 13-year-old. He joined the Army in 1998, serving in Kuwait as part of Operation Desert Fox and then in a NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. He returned to New Jersey, where his family lives, to spend another year and a half with the Army National Guard.

In 2008, he was convicted of six weapons-related offenses, including two involving firearms dealing, and served time in federal prison. Now, like Coombs, he is facing deportation and is feeling betrayed.

"When I was in Kuwait, in Kosovo, I was like everyone else who was there, putting their lives on the line," said Paye, who in the Army was an armored vehicle crewman. "Now I feel like they just used me for what they wanted, and now they're throwing me away."

Advocates and immigration attorneys say that before the 1996 Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, few immigrant veterans were deported, because immigration authorities could take their service into consideration.

The law added crimes such as drug possession for sale to the list of serious crimes that could lead to deportation of a legal immigrant.

"Drugs, anger management, weapons charges, that's what a lot of vets are getting caught for, and there is no relief," said Margaret Stock, a recently retired Army reservist and immigration attorney who taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point. "The 1996 law really put the nails in their coffin."

Coombs' attorneys, Shagin and Heather Boxeth of San Diego, Calif., who have represented or advised immigrant veterans in similar straits, estimate up to 4,000 veterans who served as long ago as World War II are now in immigration detention or have been deported, but acknowledge that there are no hard numbers.

ICE spokeswoman Lori Haley said identifying and removing dangerous criminals from the country is an agency priority — and that the cases of people with prior military service are carefully reviewed.

Meantime, the military has started to offer a fast-track to citizenship to immigrants currently serving. Now, most joining the Army can expect to be citizens by the end of basic training, said Stock. Other branches are expected to join the effort by the end of the year.
That help doesn't extend to those who have already served such as Paye and Coombs.

"If I had died," said Coombs, they would have made me a citizen, given me a military funeral, and given the flag to my mom. But I didn't die. Here I am. I just want another chance."

**San Jose Mercury News: Friends, professors rally behind student caught in immigration fight**

By Matt O'Brien

October 22, 2010


College student Steve Li found out he was a fugitive on Sept. 15, when immigration agents arrived at sunrise at his Ingleside district home.

He was in the bathroom of the small apartment, cleaning up. His mother was still sleeping.

"One day, I was getting ready to go to school," said the 20-year-old student at City College of San Francisco. "The next day I was in the Sacramento County jail, in a cell."

The agents arrested the aspiring nurse and his mother, and asked for his dad -- the parents are separated -- then went to arrest the father in another part of the city. All three of them, Steve Li found out, were illegal immigrants who six years ago ignored a judge's written order that they go back home.

Home, however, was complicated. Steve Li was born in Peru. His parents were born in China. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is now seeking to deport all of them -- Steve Li to Peru and his parents to China.

Steve Li doesn't know anyone in Peru.

"I thought it was a mistake," Li said, speaking by phone Friday from a federal detention center in the Arizona town of Florence. "I've been living (in the United States), studying here. I feel like I've been here all my life. All my friends, my teachers, my family is here."

Monday will mark his 40th day in jail, but for a month hardly anyone knew his whereabouts.

His parents were also jailed, but the trio was separated and could not get in touch with each other.

A judge released the parents a few weeks ago, ordering them to wear electronic ankle bracelets as they await their next court hearing. Their son, however, for reasons still unclear to the family, was transported to the Arizona detention center to await his expulsion.
"I'm just waiting to be deported, basically," he said Friday. "I'm hoping it doesn't happen. I'm trying to do whatever I can."

Immigration spokeswoman Lori Haley confirmed his arrest and said the agency is making arrangements to deport him, but she declined to say why Steve Li was in Arizona while his parents were not. The agency bases deportation procedures on the "totality of the case" and concerns such as bed space, she said.

The detention has been a shocking change of course for Li, who dreamed of becoming a nurse and using his Spanish and Chinese language skills to serve the medical needs of San Francisco immigrant communities. He is proud of his Peruvian-Chinese heritage, but left Peru when he was 12 years old. His Spanish is not as polished as his English, he said, and he would be alone in a strange land.

His grandparents moved to Peru decades ago, opening a restaurant in Lima that served chifa, the Peruvian version of Chinese cuisine. His parents joined them in the late 1980s because of financial hardships in China, to help the aging grandparents with their business, and to escape China's one-child policy. They already had a daughter but wanted a second child. They had Li, whose full legal name is Shing Ma Li but who goes by Steve, in 1990.

The family sought political asylum after they came to the United States on tourist visas in 2002, but their application was denied. A judge ordered them to leave in 2004 and an appeals board reviewed the case and upheld the judge's decision in 2005. They stayed in the country anyway, and Li said his parents never talked to him about their complications as he went through middle and high school and now college.

"They always told me everything would be fine, as long as I study and get a degree," he said.

A team of friends, educators and a newly acquired lawyer is now scrambling to find a way to bring the student back from Arizona, sending letters to politicians and creating a Facebook page to raise awareness about his situation. Launched a few days ago, the page has more than 2,600 supporters.

His personal profile on Facebook says he likes chicha morada, the sugary Peruvian refreshment made of purple corn, but also the San Francisco Giants and the Fresh Prince of Bel Air.

"Growing up in a different country gave him a different perspective," said Sang Chi, a City College professor who taught Li in a history class. "He is definitely an American kid, there's no mistake about that. But his mind is a little broader than a lot of people his age."

Chi describes Li as friendly and inquisitive, someone who tries hard at school and has volunteered at film festivals and other community activities.

On Friday, immigration officials received a request from Li's lawyer, Sin Yen Ling, asking them to defer his deportation for at least a year. The San Francisco lawyer argued that Li would be eligible for the DREAM Act, the proposed legislation that would offer a path to citizenship for
undocumented students; that legislation was voted down by the Senate last month, but advocates expect it will be reintroduced.

Ling and family members believe Steve Li's deportation is more imminent, and more likely to happen, than the deportation of his parents. It is easier to deport someone to Peru than to China because China does not want to repatriate people who have sought political asylum in the United States, she said.

The agency, the lawyer says, is "just being sort of smart about it, strategic about it," because it knows the parents have a stronger case to stay.

"If he had been born in China, he'd probably be on the ankle bracelet, walking around San Francisco right now," said the lawyer. "The reality is, this fugitive operations clearly isn't fair."

Li said he has passed his time in the detention center reading newspapers and books and working for $1 an hour in the kitchen. The pay allows him enough money to buy stamps so he can write letters to plead for his release.

The New York Times Magazine: Coming Out Illegal
By Maggie Jones
October 21, 2010

Leslie, a history major at the University of California at Los Angeles and an aspiring marathon runner with three part-time jobs and plans for grad school, keeps a neatly folded dark blue T-shirt in her closet among her jeans and her U.C.L.A. Bruins sweatshirt. Like an intimate detail, she reveals it cautiously, wearing it to campus events but not on the streets of Orange County; to a rally with a group of friends, but not alone on a crosstown bus. A senior at U.C.L.A. and the only child of a single working mother, Leslie is brave but not reckless: in the wrong place under the wrong circumstances, the T-shirt’s two words across the chest — “I’m Undocumented” — are provocative enough to upend her life.

For most of her 22 years, Leslie — whose only memory of coming to the United States with her mother when she was 6 is of the bright lights along the L.A. freeway — kept her immigration status secret from even close friends. She knew that certain life experiences and rites of passage were out of her reach: visiting her grandparents in Mexico; voting; getting a driver’s license.

Even though she was an advanced-placement student, she feared college also might not be possible. During her senior year of high school, when she confided her immigration status to a guidance counselor — the first adult outside her family she told — the counselor admonished Leslie that not only was she ineligible for college, but had she known Leslie was illegal she never would have placed her in AP classes.
I met Leslie, who asked that I use only her first name, in August at her mother’s house in Pasadena. It was a rare summer day off from her jobs cleaning an apartment building, waitressing, helping her mother with her six-days-a-week housekeeping jobs along Pasadena’s “Millionaire’s Row.” Leslie greeted me at the front door, dressed in a pressed denim shirt cinched at the waist with a wide belt, shorts and strappy sandals. She showed me around the small two-bedroom house, a step up from the one-bedroom converted garage she and her mother lived in previously. The secondhand TV in the living room, along with Leslie’s bed and desk, were all gifts from families whose houses her mother cleans, as was the Chanel blush on her desk. “I would never buy Chanel for myself,” Leslie said, laughing at the extravagance.

Initially shy and sometimes self-deprecating, Leslie is also warm, charmingly frank and girlish, with cheeks that easily flush and bangs that she brushes from her forehead as she talks. She is also, by necessity and by experience, resourceful and intrepid.

Later in her senior year of high school, Leslie learned that, in fact, she could go to college and that California law AB 540 allows undocumented California students to pay in-state rather than out-of-state tuition; California is one of 11 states with such a law. (Earlier this month, Georgia banned undocumented immigrants from its most selective public colleges.)

In Leslie’s case it cuts an unthinkable $33,000 a year down to a daunting but within-the-realm-of-possibility tuition of roughly $10,000. But because she is undocumented, she is not eligible for the myriad federal and state aid programs that make college feasible for many working- and middle-class families. No Pell grants, no work-study programs.

Leslie’s “Undocumented” T-shirt, along with the rallies she attends and the lobbying she has done in Washington and Sacramento, is part of an effort to change her and other undocumented students’ lives through what’s known as the Dream Act. The federal bill, a version of which was introduced in Congress in 2001, would create a pathway to legal residency for immigrants who arrived in this country as children, have been in the United States for at least five years and have graduated from a U.S. high school or obtained a G.E.D. To gain status, they would have to finish two years of college or military service. Supporters argue that the legislation benefits ambitious, academically successful students who will go on to professional careers. Without the Dream Act, many of those same young people will be stuck, much like their parents, in the underground economy.

Some 825,000 immigrants are likely to become legal residents if the Dream Act passes, according to the Migration Policy Institute, a research group. But Steven A. Camarota, research director at the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors strict enforcement of immigration laws and opposes the Dream Act, argues that the legislation would create another avenue for immigration fraud and added incentive for immigrants to come to the United States. He noted that it rewards illegal behavior and takes college spots and financial aid from students who are legal residents.

Nonetheless, the Dream Act has some bipartisan support, and in this political climate, it’s one of the only immigration bills with any shot of passing. Last month, Senator Richard J. Durbin, the Illinois Democrat and chief sponsor of the bill, planned to attach the Dream Act as an
amendment to the defense authorization bill, which included the controversial repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” The package stalled when supporters were unable to muster the 60 votes needed to overcome a Republican filibuster. Among Dream Act opponents is Senator John McCain, who co-sponsored a version of the Dream Act in 2007. This year, during which he faced a tough-on-immigration candidate in the primaries, he said he would not support the Dream Act without tighter border controls. Meanwhile, Durbin plans to push it as a stand-alone bill, either in the coming lame-duck session or next year.

In the midst of the political wrangling, the Dream Act advocates — most of them in their early to mid-20s — have become the most outspoken and daring wing of the immigration movement. Borrowing tactics from the civil rights and gay rights movements, in the last year they have orchestrated dozens of demonstrations, hunger strikes, “coming out” events — publicly revealing their undocumented status — and sit-ins in federal offices, risking both arrest and deportation.

Several of these events — like much of the movement — have been largely powered by women, according to many advocates. At recent sit-ins, two-thirds of those arrested were women, including founders and leaders of their local Dream organizations. Women have also stuck with the movement long after many men have dropped out or burned out. Lizbeth Mateo, co-founder of Dream Team Los Angeles, said she and other leaders tried to get more undocumented men to participate in a sit-in in McCain’s Arizona office this year. “We wanted to balance it out,” she said. But with one exception, the men said they were not ready.

Many of these women are daughters of nannies, housekeepers, landscapers — a generation of immigrants who tended to keep a low profile. In contrast, their daughters have been schooled in a more vocal American culture. “We did what we were supposed to do,” Fabiola, an undocumented activist and a recent U.C.L.A. graduate who came to the United States from Mexico as a toddler, told me. “We are the cream of the crop. But because of something we had no choice in, our entire lives are on hold.” Living in the shadows, she said, is no longer acceptable.

The apartment where Leslie and four other students live during the school year is a 10-minute walk from campus and is well known among U.C.L.A.’s undocumented population. It’s called the Cabin because of its knotty-pine walls, which make the rooms feel both dark and rustic. The students pay $250 each for the 700-square-foot apartment. In many ways it is typical college housing: an Indian tapestry covers one wall, and flimsy curtains hang on some windows. On the kitchen countertop, cereal, Coffee-Mate and Cheetos Puffs share space with the staple of the college diet, ramen noodles. Up a set of stairs is the sleeping loft, with one small desk and five beds, leaving just enough remaining room to negotiate getting to and from the apartment’s one bathroom.

Before moving in, Leslie, like most of her Cabin roommates, commuted to save money on housing. She caught a 7 a.m. bus, the first of two that would take her two hours to U.C.L.A. from East Los Angeles. At night, she returned home again, sometimes with her friend Ilse. The bus, crowded with nannies and housekeepers traveling home from L.A.’s wealthy Westside, drove along Sunset Boulevard, passing Bel Air and Beverly Hills and the 20-foot hedges and equally tall gates guarding mansions, making the “Private Entry” signs seem redundant. For Ilse, whose
family is also from Mexico, it was a metaphor for her struggles to pay for school and to be part of the college experience. “It was like everything was telling us to keep out,” she said.

When two spots at the Cabin opened 18 months ago, “it was like coming home,” Ilse said. Leslie felt like a “normal” college student for the first time, walking to campus just before class, staying in the library as late as she needed.

Among their Cabin roommates last year were Fabiola, who graduated a few months ago in international development studies. Self-possessed and pretty, Fabiola has a maternal quality that draws friends to confide their worries. Both she and another roommate, Andrea, are the Cabin elders, having clocked more than three years in the apartment. (This summer, a new roommate, Lizeth, moved in to take Fabiola’s place.) A biology major originally from Mexico, Andrea is a self-described “music geek” who played in her high school’s drum line and ran a radio show at U.C.L.A.

More than anyone in the Cabin, Andrea knows what it is like to need a bed. Before moving in, she spent many nights floating around the campus to avoid commuting home. She showered in a U.C.L.A. gym; kept a blanket and a change of clothes in her locker. She slept on couches in the library; on the floor of a friend’s apartment; on a wide windowsill in a student activities office. She now leaves clean blankets on the Cabin couches during exams so commuters have a place to crash.

“Some people bond over music,” Ilse told me one morning. “We bond over this. You realize how many people have gone through what you’ve gone through.” In the Cabin, no one asks you why you don’t have a driver’s license or why you have to take a semester off to earn tuition money.

Each Cabin roommate has also played a leadership role in a U.C.L.A. group that is instrumental in the Dream movement. When it started in 2003, Ideas — an acronym for Improving Dreams, Equality, Access and Success — was a support group for a handful of undocumented students sharing tips on finding free meals and places to sleep. Now Ideas — Fabiola was an early chairwoman, and Leslie is in charge of fund-raising for scholarships — has a Web site, organizes Dream Act rallies and, through an annual conference that Andrea started, trains hundreds of U.C.L.A. and other students on grass-roots organizing, lobbying and working with the news media to promote the Dream Act.

Undocumented students often describe their early lives as molded by fear. They had nightmares about immigration agents showing up at the front door. They watched parents or older siblings be deported. So when a group of activists decided for the first time this year to purposely risk arrest and deportation for the Dream Act, it was a bold move — some called it impetuous — and one that played directly into some students’ deepest anxieties.

“You don’t wake up one day and say, ‘This is a good day to get arrested,’” said Yahaira Carrillo, who is 25 and founded the Kansas/Missouri Dream Alliance and has traveled all over the country speaking, lobbying and organizing for the legislation. When I called her several weeks ago, Carrillo, who hoped to join the U.S. Marines but can’t without legal status, was in Kansas cleaning someone’s house, trying to raise money to finish college.
Last winter Carrillo and other Dream leaders talked about ways to ignite the movement. Many activists, some of whom had worked on the Dream Act for more than a half-dozen years, were increasingly frustrated. They had vigorously campaigned for Obama and counted on him to usher in the legislation early in his presidency. Now, more than a year later, they felt the urgency to push their message harder, to move the Dream Act forward.

Dream leaders talked about Martin Luther King and sit-ins at lunch counters. They consulted with immigration attorneys about the risks of being arrested and deported: there were no guarantees. “When you’ve been doing everything else you think you can do, it’s the final step,” Carrillo said. If deported, she would return to Mexico, a country she left when she was 7.

In May, Carrillo traveled to Tucson with three other Dream leaders: Lizbeth Mateo, the co-founder of Dream Team L.A.; Tania Unzueta, a Chicago advocate who helped jump-start the national “coming out” campaign; and Mohammad Abdollahi, a co-founder of DreamActivists.org, a resource for undocumented students. In Tucson, Raul Alcaraz, an activist who is a legal resident, joined the group, which became known as the Dream Act 5.

Around 11:30 on the morning of May 17, the 56th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, while dozens of Dream Act supporters rallied outside, the five activists walked into John McCain’s office, dressed in matching royal blue graduation gowns and caps. (McCain was in Washington.) They sat down in the reception area under an American flag, and for more than six hours they refused to leave, calling for McCain to support the Dream Act and the bill’s passage.

Around 6 p.m., Tucson police officers arrested everyone in the group except Unzueta, who had agreed to serve as the group’s spokeswoman. The activists spent that night at the Pima County jail, before Carrillo, Mateo and Abdollahi were transferred to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement processing facility. Carrillo’s heart sank when she and Mateo were led into a windowless, concrete room with cement benches and a heavy metal door that shut behind them. Over the next several hours, Carrillo said, immigration officials repeatedly told her and Mateo that they would be sent to an immigration detention center, a fate undocumented immigrants assiduously try to avoid.

Then, after eight hours and with no explanation, Carrillo told me, they were released. Immigration and Customs Enforcement gave them orders to report to immigration agents every 30 days and to return for a hearing, the date of which has still not been set. While the Obama administration is deporting a record number of immigrants convicted of crimes, the Department of Homeland Security has so far spared undocumented youth who have been arrested during Dream Act protests. Still, the case against Carrillo, Mateo and Abdollahi has not been dismissed.

Yet the Dream Act 5 did succeed in at least some of its goals. While McCain has not changed his position, the sit-in received national and international media attention. Other youth activists, emboldened by the Arizona group, have orchestrated sit-ins and hunger strikes around the country, including in North Carolina, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington.
As for Carrillo, she confronted a fear that pervades undocumented immigrants’ lives. “It’s always, ‘You shouldn’t go here; you shouldn’t go there.’ I can be deported any time a cop stops me for something,” she said. “If it happened to me for a sit-in, at least I would have had some say in my life.”

Next June, among the thousands of graduates in U.C.L.A.’s class of 2011, around 30 will be undocumented students, including Leslie, Ilse and Andrea. During the commencement ceremony, the women will move their cap tassels from right to left. They will listen to commencement speeches with phrases like “moving forward” and “a new future.” They will know that many of the words do not apply to them. “It feels like a slam,” Ilse said. “It’s not closure for me. It doesn’t promote me.”

Like Ilse, Leslie will probably move home after her final quarter, losing the protection a university offers, where it is safe to take risks — to say, “I’m undocumented.” Leslie expects to work full time cleaning houses and waitressing. She says she hopes to earn a private scholarship for grad school, which would buy time for the Dream Act to pass, after which she could be employed legally. She’d like to be a social worker or a counselor or a lawyer for a nonprofit. For now, she knows the reality: many undocumented U.C.L.A. graduates are short-order cooks, waitresses, baby-sitters, doing jobs for which they do not need a high-school diploma.

Still, Leslie says she doesn’t feel completely powerless. On the morning of the Senate Dream Act vote in late September, she was getting ready to head downtown to hoist Dream Act banners above the 101 Freeway with other activists. Before leaving her house that morning, she sent me an e-mail: “I just wanted to let you know I’m wearing my ‘I’m Undocumented’ shirt right now,” she wrote. “As I was putting it on, I remembered telling you about my fears when it comes to wearing this shirt, but I didn’t feel like that today. I feel like I am finally taking control of my identity.”

**OC Register: Vigil tonight for failed illegal immigrant student act**

By Cindy Carcamo  
September 27, 2010  

Supporters of a bill that would have granted U.S. residency to students and military hopefuls in the country illegally expect about 100 people to attend a vigil scheduled for Monday night in Santa Ana.

The 6:30 p.m. event at Sasscer Park comes on the heels of last week's failed attempt to pass The DREAM Act—for Development, Relief and Education for Minor Aliens. The act would give those who qualify a pathway to U.S. citizenship.

Senators voted 56 to 43 for the bill, which fell short of the 60 votes needed to bring it to the floor.
Anti-illegal immigration activists have fervently denounced the bill, saying it would reward illegal behavior and would take already-scarce higher educational resources away from American students and give it to those who are in the country illegally.

Supporters of the act contend that most who stand to benefit from the bill were brought by their parents at a very young age and shouldn't be punished for something they had virtually no control of. In addition, supporters say, the measure would give students a chance to give back to America by allowing them to use their ability and education to become productive members of society.

Monday's vigil is an attempt by the Orange County Dream Team to keep the issue in the forefront.

"On Tuesday, the DREAM Act was voted on, as an attachment to the Defense Bill and did not pass. This does not mean the DREAM Act is dead. It only means we will fight harder," said Adrian in a statement to the press. Adrian, who didn't give his last name because he is in the country illegally, said he's a college graduate who aspires to become an interpreter for the deaf.

"Many students like Adrian will be attending the DREAM Act is Alive Vigil with a simple ask, 'Let me contribute to the only country I know as home,'" the statement said.

The proposed federal legislation -- introduced by Senators Richard Durbin of Illinois and Richard Lugar of Indiana and Reps. Howard Berman of California and Lincoln Diaz-Balart of Florida -- has been around since 2000 but has faced opposition and defeat in the past.

The bill would allow students who are in the country illegally and who have finished at least two years of college to apply for legal status. If the bill were to become law, those who are in the country illegally and serve at least two years of military service could also be eligible for legal residency. The bill would also allow those students to apply for legal permanent resident status, protect them from deportation and make them eligible for student loans and federal work study programs.

Students would need to have lived here at least five years and have arrived before they were 16.

**San Francisco Chronicle: Editorial - Senate should pass DREAM Act**

September 21, 2010


An overhaul of immigration laws is beyond the reach of polarized Washington. But the Senate can ease the problem by passing the DREAM Act, which offers a pathway to citizenship to a narrow category of young immigrants who came here illegally through no fault of their own.

Of an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living in this country, about 800,000 would be eligible for citizenship under the bill. Those qualifying came here between the ages of
5 and 16 and would be obliged to complete college or serve in the military. The idea isn't new - it fell short of passage three years ago - and it originally drew support from both parties.

This time, the politics are more fraught. It's close to the November elections, jobless rates are running high, and immigration remains divisive. Democrats are forcing the issue by tacking the measure onto a military spending bill, and the chief proponent is Nevada Democrat Harry Reid, who is in a toss-up re-election race in a state with a heavy Latino population. Arizona Republican John McCain, a onetime voice for reforming border policies and past backer of the measure, now opposes including it in the defense bill.

Tactics and timing are one thing. Essential fairness is another. The act - officially called the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act - taps into the upward-bound strivings of young people who came here illegally through no fault of their own. It's anything but amnesty, a favorite description used by opponents.

If the young illegal immigrants go to college or join the armed services, they can step out of the shadows and become citizens. The nation's educated workforce and its military benefit too.

In fact, one of the major backers of the bill is the Pentagon, which wants to encourage more sign-ups for the voluntary military. Putting the DREAM Act into the Defense Department spending measure, which could be voted on today, isn't so far-fetched.

The measure won't ease the nation's turmoil over illegal immigration. But it will end the anxiety and unfairness faced by many of the youngest people swept up in the debate. Offering them a route to citizenship is both equitable and in the nation's long-term interest.

**Wall Street Journal: A Route to Citizenship in Defense Bill**

*By Miriam Jordan*

*September 18, 2010*

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704858304575498072319915164.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704858304575498072319915164.html)

David Cho, an honor student and leader of the UCLA marching band, plans to join the U.S. Air Force after he graduates in the spring—if Congress lets him.

Mr. Cho is among the potential beneficiaries of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors bill—informally known as the Dream Act—that would give some illegal immigrants a shot at becoming U.S. citizens.

The bill would grant six years of legal residency to high-school graduates who have lived in the U.S. continuously for five years and arrived by the age of 15. They would become eligible for citizenship if they attend college or serve in the military for two years during the legal residency period.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D., Nev.) said this week that he planned to attach the Dream Act to the defense-authorization bill next week.
To supporters, the Dream Act would encourage young people to join the military and attend college, two laudable goals.

To opponents, the bill is tantamount to an amnesty program for children whose parents broke U.S. immigration laws.

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R., Ala.) believes passage of the Dream Act would entice more people to sneak into the U.S. "When you take a policy that says you are going to reward people who have entered our country illegally with a guaranteed pathway to citizenship, and with billions of dollars in financial aid or benefits they would not otherwise be entitled to, what message are we sending?" Sen. Sessions said.

Currently, students like Mr. Cho come of age in the U.S. without the right to legally work, join the military or receive federal loans for education. Most of these children had no say in their families' decision to settle illegally in the U.S. Generally, they have not been targeted for deportation, unless they have criminal records.

"I'm super stoked that it came up," said Mr. Cho, 21 years old, a senior at the University of California, Los Angeles, who came to the U.S. from South Korea when he was nine years old and has never been back.

The first version of the Dream Act was introduced in August 2001 with bipartisan support. But it has languished amid efforts to pass a comprehensive immigration overhaul. The legislation was last introduced in October 2007.

Backers of the bill are expected to mount an aggressive campaign in coming days. But any attempt to pass immigration legislation could prove difficult ahead of the elections.

Pentagon officials support the Dream Act. In its strategic plan for fiscal years 2010-2012, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness cited the Dream Act as a "smart" way to attract quality recruits to the all-volunteer force.

But Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a national group that advocates a curb on all immigration, said passage of the Dream Act would divert "scarce educational resources" to illegal immigrants.

In an interview, Rep. Steve King (R., Iowa) accused Sen. Reid of attempting to use a "must-pass" defense bill to ram through an amnesty.

Supporters of the bill, including many with close ties to the military and higher education, see it differently.

"Passage of the Dream Act would be extremely beneficial to the U.S. military and the country as a whole," said Margaret Stock, a retired West Point professor who studies immigrants in the military. She said it made "perfect" sense to attach it to the defense-authorization bill.
Louis Caldera, secretary of the Army under President Bill Clinton, said that as they struggled to meet recruiting goals, "recruiters at stations were telling me it would be extremely valuable for these patriotic people to be allowed to serve our country."

Immigrants have been eligible to enlist in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War. As of June 2009, foreign-born individuals represented 8% of the 1.4 million military personnel on active duty in the U.S. armed forces.

Many educators say passage of the Dream Act would make college affordable for young illegal immigrants, who are entitled to K-12 schooling under a 1982 Supreme Court ruling.

About 825,000 youngsters in the country illegally would likely qualify for legal status under the bill, according to a recent analysis by the independent Migration Policy Institute, a Washington think tank.

Three out of four potential Dream Act beneficiaries reside in 10 states, led by California, Texas, Florida, New York and Arizona.

The University of California's 11 undergraduate campuses enroll 181,700 students. Among them are 340 to 630 illegal immigrants, including Mr. Cho, the UCLA senior, according to the UC system.

Mark Yudof, president of the UC system, has been a vocal supporter of the Dream Act. "We are looking forward to the bill moving through the legislative process and passing," said Chris Harrington, a spokesman for the UC system.

Without the Dream Act, Mr. Cho will have no legal job prospects when he graduates, he said.

But during a recent band rehearsal ahead of a football game at the Rose Bowl, Mr. Cho was optimistic about his opportunities in the long term. "My dream is to become a U.S. senator."

**San Jose Mercury News: Editorial—DREAM Act should transcend immigration debate**

*September 16, 2010*


Talking with the honors students at National Hispanic University can break your heart.

Many graduates of the private San Jose college can go on to careers as programmers or engineers in Silicon Valley industry, where educated workers soon are expected to be in short supply.

But others with valuable skills will have to go looking for work at burger joints or janitorial services, letting their degrees and knowledge go to waste. These young people have managed to achieve academic success despite the stigma of being, in the anti-immigrant parlance they despise, "illegals" -- brought here by their parents, sometimes as infants, without documentation.
Without green cards, they have no hope of working for Intel or Adobe, or of getting a scholarship to a University of California graduate school -- let alone gaining citizenship.

This combination of individual tragedy and work force need is the reason for the Dream Act, which U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid plans to bring back for a vote as soon as next week, with the support of President Barack Obama. For the sake of our economy, if not for our sense of decency, it should become law.

The Dream Act essentially carves out an exception in immigration law so that the U.S. can benefit from young people who succeed in our public schools and have the desire, ability and academic record to go to college, or who wish to serve in the U.S. armed forces. Legislation would open up state colleges and financial aid for those who qualify and would allow these highly motivated young people to earn citizenship.

The high school dropout rate in this country terrifies business leaders, who fear that in the coming decades we will not produce enough college graduates with math and science ability to fill knowledge-based jobs. This is why the Silicon Valley Leadership Group supports the Dream Act.

But it's not just for the tech work force. What great teachers young adults with these experiences could become in disadvantaged neighborhoods, for example.

This is a difficult time to move any kind of immigration reform. The public sentiment seems to be: Send everyone home. But the kids we're talking about may not even remember their homelands. They see themselves as Americans.

We believe some path to citizenship should exist for adult undocumented immigrants who have become part of the fabric of our communities and who contribute to our economy. Deporting the estimated 11 million undocumented residents just isn't practical. But we understand the concern that allowing them to stay could provide others with an incentive to follow, if it's not combined with better border security.

The Dream Act sidesteps that debate. It's not fair to apply adult rules to young people who had no part in the decision to migrate and who have worked hard to succeed, in the tradition of America. These kids deserve a chance, and the U.S. economy needs their knowledge and ability. While we struggle to deal with kids who don't want to be in school, shouldn't we be celebrating those who work hard for an education and aspire to a professional career?

Myrna Ortiz: A sophomore at UCLA who can’t find work to pay for college due to her immigration status. “Myrna Ortiz, a sophomore at UCLA who came to the US from Mexico as a child, is one student who would benefit from [Senator Gil] Cedillo’s bill [the California DREAM Act]. She was forced to take the winter quarter off after running out of money. Her father is a mechanic, her mother a volunteer, and her undocumented status means she can’t find work easily. She has an internship with a local immigrant-rights group, but that doesn’t pay
much either. ‘We’ve been here our whole lives, and all we want to do is contribute back,’ says Ms. Ortiz.” [Christian Science Monitor, 4/3/09]

Osvaldo Vences: A student at Santa Ana College who wants to pursue a master’s degree in criminal justice. “Osvaldo Vences, a 20-year-old Santa Ana College student who followed the beat of about three drummers at the rally, said he thinks it’s unfair that he can’t achieve his educational and career goals because of his illegal status. He said he was brought to the United States when he was 2. He’s in the process of applying for residency, he said, and hopes to get his master’s degree in criminal justice but is unsure if he’ll be able to land a job once he graduates because of his undocumented status. ‘All we want to do is contribute to society and succeed in life and get an education,’ Vences said. For now, Vences is able to attend college through AB540, a California law that allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rather than the higher fee charged to out-of-state residents.” [Orange County Register, 5/21/09]

Gladys Castro: Accepted to UC Berkeley but ineligible to receive government loans due to her immigration status. “It’s been a busy summer for Gladys Castro, a Kaiser High School graduate who was accepted into UC Berkeley. But she hasn’t been filling out school registration forms or preparing to leave home for the fall semester. Castro, who cannot apply for government loans because she’s an undocumented student, has spent her days either protesting or planning protests in favor of immigration reform and federal legislation that would create a path to citizenship for high-achieving students who are in the country illegally…’It gets you really, really angry,’ she said. ‘All we’re looking for is a chance, a chance at the American dream, and becoming Americans.’ Not only is Castro - whose family fled the violence of Jalisco, Mexico, when she was 8 years old - unable to attend fall classes at Berkeley, she was shut out of impacted classes at Riverside Community College.” [San Bernardino County Sun, 8/13/10]

Ivan Rosales: A biology major at Cal State San Bernardino who received the President’s Academic Excellence Scholarship. “Among them [undocumented students] is Ivan Rosales, a 21-year-old biology major at Cal State San Bernardino. Like many undocumented students who support the Dream Act, he challenges the notion that he shouldn’t be allowed to study alongside American-born students on U.S. campuses. ‘I’ve worked for the spot that I have,’ Rosales said. ‘It’s not like it was handed to me.’ He came to the country as an infant, and graduated from Rialto High School while qualifying for the President’s Academic Excellence Scholarship at CSUSB, which is earned by the top 1 percent of graduating students in the county’s high schools. The scholarship enabled Rosales, who wants to be a doctor, to pay for his first year of college. Since then, his parents have paid for his education. ‘I’ve never taken a handout,’ he said. ‘America is fair. It doesn’t put someone above anyone else. So I think if I’m there, it’s because I deserve to be there.’” [San Bernardino County Sun, 8/13/10]

Matias Ramos: Graduated from UCLA. “For undocumented students approaching high-school graduation, time is of the essence. ‘Every year you wait, you are losing students,’ said Matias Ramos, an undocumented student who is about to graduate from the University of California at Los Angeles, at the College Board news conference. He said students start giving up in school and abandoning their dreams of a college education when they see that the barriers are not going away.” [Chronicle of Higher Education, 5/8/09]
**Jessica Lopez: Studying chemical engineering at Cal Poly Pomona College.** “‘I grew up thinking I was just like everybody else,’ said Jessica Lopez, 19, who just finished her first year at Cal Poly Pomona. ‘That is when it hit me, ‘I am undocumented.’ Lopez is trying to avoid deportation to Mexico -- a country she hasn’t seen since she was 7. Her family came to the attention of authorities after her father’s employer initiated, then withdrew, petitions to secure green cards for the family, she said. Lopez graduated near the top of her high school class in Pomona, then was accepted to UC Berkeley, UCLA and Bates College in Maine. She decided on Cal Poly Pomona because it was less expensive -- and as an illegal immigrant, she couldn’t qualify for federal aid. Lopez, who is studying to become a chemical engineer, is gathering letters of support from her professors, coaches and counselors to present at the next Immigration Court hearing. At the same time, Lopez said, she is praying that the Dream Act passes.” [Los Angeles Times, 6/28/10]

---

**Story: Alex**

With our hearts pounding, my five siblings and I moved through the darkness of the desert and into the U.S. to be reunited with our parents. Helicopters flashed their lights above, seemingly sensing our despair, as we suddenly heard dogs and footsteps moving atop the thirsty desert earth. Quickly, my older brother protectively pulled me into the darkness of the brush and told me to stay calm. What appeared to be border patrol agents passed us and we continued into a country where my parents, after six months of unwilling separation, waited for us. Sunshine Ct. served as home during my formative years in Long Beach, California. Despite this wide alley’s warm name, it coldly ridiculed those who resided within and foreshadowed the future of most residents. A dead-end street filled with poverty, gangs, crime, drugs and despair encapsulated Sunshine Ct.’s essence and that of the surrounding neighborhoods. As an undocumented immigrant family, my parents, drained by the long work hours, strove to give me and my siblings some guidance and support within this societal quicksand.

Within this context, I entered a stage of self-hatred and ignorance fueled by the realization of my undocumented immigrant status and homosexuality, which added to the barriers presented by my family’s low socio-economic status and educational attainment. It seemed unfair that as a child I felt inferior to my peers because I could not afford school supplies, had to shop in second-hand stores, and was chastised by teachers for my poor language abilities. And, among many other experiences, it seemed unjust that after-school I would have to help my father search for cans in dumpsters so we could have extra money to cover the rent for the family’s one bedroom apartment.

Despite numerous barriers and few resources, I managed to shatter many limitations with the help of my family, a local experimental high school and community organizations. My family and these community resources provided the necessary help to overcome hindrances and to create opportunities for myself, my family, and my community. A shattered economy pushed my family out of Mexico and into a foreign nation where, although many opportunities existed,
severe socio-economic pressures in combination with our immigration status forced us into the shadows of society. These helpings hands during my formative years gave me the opportunities to realize my full potential.

Because of my background and experience, the issue of immigration has been an important topic and passion of mine. I have strived to become an expert in the field. I hope to apply my personal understanding and developed knowledge of the topic to the MPA training. Through a JD/MPA, I envision myself becoming an advocate for immigrant rights and leading a prominent organization advocating for communities of color in Los Angeles and around the country and the world.

As an immigrant to this country who has faced a number of socio-economic barriers, I understand on a personal level the importance of advocacy and community empowerment. When an environment removes all sense of hope and opportunities, community organizations and activists using legal and public policy strategies to foster change are the difference between allowing another youth or family to fall victim to flawed policies and neglected communities or to grant people the tools to lift themselves, their families, and their communities out of poverty and despair. I hope to eventually be given the opportunity to fully employ my degrees, passion and experience to fulfill what I view as my destiny: Putting an end to cycles of poverty within underserved communities of all races in a country with outstanding wealth, influence and resources that has the potential to positively change not only the lives of those within its borders but also the lives of those in need around the world.

**Story: Alma**

Alma Castrejon came to the United States when she was just seven years old. She is the first person in her entire family to not only graduate from high school, but also attend and graduate from college. Although she holds two B.A. degrees from UC, Riverside, she cannot make use of her degrees because she is undocumented and cannot work legally. She is currently a candidate for the Master of Arts in Education at CSU, Long Beach and if the DREAM Act does not pass in 2010 she will add another degree to her accomplishments, but unfortunately will not be able to make use of it either. She wants to be given the opportunity to serve and give back to her community and to make use of her education in doing so. Her talents and education cannot continue to be wasted; she, like many in her situation, needs the DREAM Act now!

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Betsy**

My name is Betsy and I’m a senior at UCLA studying Political Science. I came to this country from Mexico when I was three years old. As a child I never knew what being undocumented was until I started my senior year in High School. While everyone was applying to college and financial aid, I was told that I couldn’t attend college because of my status. As the daughter of college educated parents, I was however encouraged by my parents and peers to attend college
through the AB-540 Bill. This bill has given me the ability to attend community college and now UCLA.

Currently I’m a full-time student, a community organizer, and a student activist. At UCLA, I’m a part of IDEAS, a student organization that advocates for immigrant students in their path for higher education. Through IDEAS we advocate for legislation like the DREAM Act in order for students to fulfill their college degrees. In the near future I hope to become a labor lawyer, advocate for low-wage workers and the immigrant community. In order for me to achieve this, I need the DREAM Act.

**Story: Belina**

My name is Belina and I am originally from Mexico and have been living in California for the past 20 years. As a long-time volunteer in my community, I quickly learned that if I wanted to improve the conditions of my low-income community, I needed to go to college.

During high school I was a member of the Academic Decathlon team and competed for two years gaining various recognitions with my team. I took 11 AP classes and numerous honors courses and graduated with the top 5 of my class. As I embarked on my journey to higher education my US Citizen father fell out of my life. I realized that he could have helped me but didn’t. As his only undocumented relative, he turned his back on me as his daughter and limited my opportunities.

Complex immigration laws and expensive lawyers make it even more difficult to find a resolution in my life though I am actively searching for an answer. The road has been tough with extremely limited ways to pay for my tuition and books. I have even dropped out of school several times in order to save up. Even now, I have little complaints — part of the American dream is working hard.

However, I am now 22 on the verge of graduating from UCLA with a Bachelor’s degree in the field of International Development. I have come to call Los Angeles my home and I love it—I want to contribute back as much as possible to the world where I grew up and where I have my fondest memories.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Carl**

My name is Carl. I came to the United States when I was eight years old. Given the circumstances in Mexico, my mom sought to bring my brothers and I to a better place where we would be surrounded by opportunities we could afford such as an education. Things did not go as planned including in educational matters. Two of my brothers have left school and one is attending a community college. As for me, I decided to challenge myself and applied for UCLA among other schools. My mom always saw community college as the first and most convenient
option. However, once I started receiving acceptance letters, I just did not want to go to a community college. UCLA’s acceptance letter was the last one I received. I felt as thought this was the opportunity for me to experience something unheard of in my family. My family members could only imagine what UCLA was all about. This is not to say that other schools are not as meaningful, but UCLA has certainly given me a different feel of the challenges that lay ahead. Nonetheless, having the ability to break away from my mom telling me “oh mijo just go to a community college, it’s cheaper” I feel empowered. Thus when it comes to attending UCLA there is certainly obstacles far more excruciating than I thought. Tuition is really big part of my distress, at times I can’t stop contemplating on the idea that I will not be able to afford the following quarter. Not to mention that lack of an answer as to what the future holds for me keeps me at the edge of my sleep, will I be able to work once I obtain a bachelors, a masters, or hopefully even a doctorate’s degree? Life is certainly different as an undocumented student but certainly one can live it.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Carlos L.**

**Harvard College, Class of 2009**

**Chemical and Physical Biology**

I always dreamed of knowing what lay beyond the mountains. They were my backdrop growing up in Silicon Valley, and I always longed to learn what was on the other side.

I arrived in the valley when I was four years old, after my parents told me we would board a plane for the first time and fly to America. I was delighted to undertake what was, from my perspective, simply a big adventure. In contrast to my fantasy, the reality was that my parents had decided to leave our home in Guadalajara, Mexico, and move to San Jose, California. This decision to uproot the family could not have been easy, but they decided to pursue the American Dream and try their luck in a country that promised a better life.

Our assimilation into American society was far from seamless. My parents had few financial resources, had only a grade school education, and could not speak English. Six months after our arrival, our tourist visas expired and we joined the ranks of millions of undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of this country. We left our homeland to escape economic hardship, but now the previously green valley felt more like an inescapable pit and the mountains felt like the limits of our cage. Determined to give their children a better life, my parents worked multiple labor-intensive jobs for minimum wage. They made innumerable sacrifices so their children would not have to, finding solace in the hope that the next generation would take advantage of the educational opportunities this country offers. To my parents, education was the vehicle for upward mobility, and it was through education that we would lift ourselves out of the shadows.

Aware of the sacrifices my parents made to ensure my access to a proper education, I looked to the mountains seeking the treasure we all hoped awaited me on the other side. My curiosity towards the mountains’ mysteries typified my inquisitiveness and my yearning to understand the world. Motivated by a desire to penetrate the unknown, I developed an affinity for the natural sciences. By adolescence, my thirst for knowledge led me to consider a career in science. But
Science alone was not enough for me. How could I justify spending my days contemplating abstract ideas when my family and community of immigrants were weighed down by the brutal reality of their daily lives? I sought a career as a physician so I could apply my intellectual passion for science, but also work directly with my community to lighten their burdens.

Driven by a profound appreciation for the opportunities this country had provided for my family, I began fulfilling that sense of responsibility to my community by eighth grade. I volunteered hundreds of hours at a local food bank that provided food and social services to the HIV-positive, low-income community of the valley. Meanwhile, motivation and focused effort led me to academic success in high school and eventually earned me a fully-funded spot at Harvard College. My education prepared me to serve as a counselor at a reproductive health community clinic in the valley, as a peer contraception counselor in the Harvard student health center, as a sexual health educator in Boston public schools, and as a researcher searching for a cure for future generations by investigating HIV vaccination strategies in pre-clinical studies and clinical trials. Using HIV as a lens, my experiences prepared me for a career as a physician-scientist spanning both the clinical and scientific arenas. However, despite my fervor to become a physician, during college I was painfully aware that my status as illegal alien threatened to impede my ingress into an American medical school after graduation.

Yet, my story is also one of love. In my first-year dormitory at Harvard, I met and fell in love with another aspiring physician, and she and I were married in the summer of 2008. Through my marriage I have recently become a Permanent Resident of the United States. I grew up at the intersection of two countries and cultures yet feeling as if I did not fully belong to either, so for me permanent residency represented a turning point where I was finally embraced by the only place I ever knew as home. Furthermore, a career in medicine is finally within my reach, and my wife and I will be attending Stanford Medical School beginning this year.

Unfortunately, there are millions of immigrants who are still waiting for a path to overcome their own barriers and hardships. My education has and will continue to provide me with the tools to transform the valleys of adversity I encounter into lush lands of health and opportunity, and I know that other undocumented immigrants who call this country home are just as eager to contribute to our American community if given the chance. I left the valley undocumented and with optimistic dreams, and now I return ready to embark on the next stage of my education legalized and with renewed hope: hope that I can learn to share these tools with others as a physician, and hope that those still in the valleys can be free to dream.

[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]

Story: Cinthya

My name is Cinthya.
In 2007, I became the first undocumented student admitted to Columbia University’s School of Public Health. As an undocumented student, I am ineligible for all federal aid, grants or fellowships; thus, I was forced to defer my admissions from 2007.

I immigrated to the United States from Mexico in the summer of 1999. In 2003, I graduated from Garfield High School in East Los Angeles. As a high school student, I worked hard to transition from ESL into AP courses. My hard work paid off because I was admitted to UCLA, but because of my undocumented status, I did not qualify for financial aid. However, I did not let this stop me and after applying to countless scholarships and working odd jobs, I was able to secure funds for four years of undergraduate work at UCLA.

In 2007, I graduated from UCLA with a double Bachelor’s of Arts degree in English World Literature, and Spanish Literature with a minor in Mexican studies.

Now I have been accepted to one of the best Schools of Public Health in the nation to pursue a Masters of Public Health degree in Sociomedical Sciences with a concentration on Health Promotion. Upon graduating, I plan to attend medical school and return to my community as a physician to help make health care services more accessible and culturally competent to underserved communities.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Christopher**

My name is Christopher and I am a pre-med student at UCLA. I came to the U.S. on a tourist visa when I was 12 years old. As the child of a politician who strived to protect the rights of farmers all over my home state, I was able to interact with people from all economic backgrounds.

Not only did I witness a very unfair division of wealth, but also the poor health care that a big percentage of my fellow citizens received. When I arrived here, I realized that the conditions were not much better.

With this in mind, my goal is to one day be a successful doctor with a strong background in public service and social justice that I will use to fight for a fair health care reform in the U.S. and if God permit, Mexico as well.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: David**

My name is David. I am 20 years old and have lived in California for 19 years and eleven months. My mother brought me here from Tonga as an infant to join her husband, my
father, who was a U.S. lawful permanent resident at the time. My father became ill shortly after my mother and I arrived in the United States. He died from asthma-related emphysema just before my second birthday without resolving my or my mother’s immigration status. If he had lived, my father certainly would have arranged to adjust my status before now.

My mother obtained lawful permanent resident status in 2005 based on a petition filed by my older brother on his 21st birthday. He was born in the United States. My mother’s other two children are also U.S. citizens living in California. I have two older siblings from my father’s first marriage who live in the United States, both of whom are U.S. citizens residing in California.

My mother filed an I-130 petition for immigrant visa on my behalf with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in September, 2005, when I was 17. Everything is still in process. My mother has worked extremely hard to support her children by caring for bedridden elderly people in their homes and in nursing homes. At one time having 3 separate jobs. From her example, I have learned the importance of making the most of one’s opportunities.

In June 2006, I graduated from High School and continued on to community college, where I played football and completed an Associate’s Degree in June 2008. The Athletics Department of a University offered me a full scholarship for the academic year starting this past fall ’08. I informed the University of my immigration status and sent them a copy of the Notice of Receipt of my I-130 petition before receiving the University’s go-ahead to come to campus this past summer for football training. My family paid for my ticket and i was on my way. Nevertheless, I encountered difficulty with formally enrolling at the University due to my immigration status, so I was forced to come back home.

My papers will be here soon, its just the amount of time I haveÂ before i can take the athletic scholarship. You see, you have four years to play college football, 6 years total. I played my first 2 years, then redshirted which is like an extra year of training. I’m hoping my papers will be here by the end of 2009, but by then, 1 whole football year would be left, and no school will only pay for one year of football. I’ll be out of luck. The school costs are too high and my grades are not 4.0's like a lot of peoples GPA’’s are on here, so getting into schools might be a problem, although i have never tried to apply anywhere. I have a solid 3.0, but I have always relied on my athletic ability to get me through life.

Giving up this dream because of a stupid reason such as being undocumented would not only kill me but my family as well. I know other younger athletes who are like me, and it would be great that even if I could not go to college, that the opportunity would be given to them instead. Thanks for reading and listening to me.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Edward O.**

Harvard College, Class of 2010
Molecular and Cellular Biology
My parents met in the local pharmacy of a small town in El Salvador. Four years later, I was born. At the time, my older brother was a toddler. It was also the same time that my father began his journey to the north, out of necessity, because he wanted a better life for our family. I do not remember seeing my dad more than a handful of times as I was growing up. The cardboard silhouette of father and son I made in school for Fathers’ Day always went undelivered. Despite this, there was always food on our table, payments for school, and toys on Christmas.

When I was five, my dad began making plans to bring us to the United States so that he could be reunited with his wife and see his children grow. We made the trip, and lived in a small apartment just outside of Los Angeles. My brother and I quickly enrolled in school and began learning English. I made this apartment my home. I continued my life protected from the violence and dangers of the ghetto surrounding me. I got deeply involved in school activities, sports, books, and I excelled in my classes. Immigration discussions often reached me, but I was not directly affected.

It was not until my senior year of high school that I began to feel the effects of my status as an illegal immigrant. It was not until I turned 18 and everyone around me discussed the excitement of voting, that I truly knew in my mind that I was forbidden from it. This was the same year my father taught me how to drive. Although it made me uncomfortable, I would have to drive without a driver’s license. This was the same year I learned my life did not exist in the government’s records.

That year, everything I did – from applying to college, to securing financial aid – my status as an illegal immigrant began to cast a shadow over me. On scholarships I intended to apply for, the term “US citizen or legal resident” left a bitter taste in my mouth. This was difficult for me, but I had not lost hope. What kept my fire and faith burning was the knowledge of an undocumented classmate who had graduated the year before me and had somehow been awarded a full scholarship by a prestigious university.

One morning, as my father drove me to school, I told him about this. I knew he had been just as worried about paying for college as I was. There, in his old and exhausted work van, full of painting equipment, with paint stains on the walls that matched those on his jeans and torn shoes, he looked at me and said “sure mijo, go for it, you know mama and I support you in whatever you want to do”. I could recognize the tone of hopelessness in his voice, the tone of disbelief and fear of disappointment for yet another unfulfilled promise of hope.

I had high hopes for myself and continued to tell my dad about these opportunities despite the hopelessness I sensed from him. The more we talked about it, the more his fear of disappointment turned into skepticism bordering on hope. When I was accepted into several prestigious colleges with generous offers of financial aid, his skepticism disappeared. Hope in a dream that seemed too distant to reach actually became a reality for me. But the struggle continues. And this is exactly what the Dream Act is about. It is about spreading opportunity to the many undocumented youth in this country, so that they can fulfill their potential.
Although this issue affects me very personally, I know that I experience only a fraction of the injustice that the undocumented youth in this country are exposed to. There are cases much worse than mine. Many students are too discouraged to even apply to college for fear that their immigration status will not allow them to attend. Some students apply to college but cannot matriculate upon acceptance since they cannot afford the financial burden. Many scholarships, internships and other opportunities are beyond the grasp of outstanding undocumented students, for reasons unrelated to merit. This sad reality is a part of our life in the United States today; these students cannot fulfill their potential, even though they never had a say in their circumstances. Our struggle continues through the fight to pass the Dream Act.

**Story: Ernesto**

Apparently, I was born just outside of Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. My parents and I came over here when I was little more than three weeks old. Growing up they’d told me the story of their struggle as they’d crossed the border. They spoke of the helicopters, the border patrol, and the dogs that chased them through the desert. I was never able to place it in perspective until I’d started my formal education.

I remember my dad arguing with the local elementary school right before I started first grade. Although I scored near perfect on my placement exams, I remember the principal of the school saying she would be unable to accommodate me because of my “status.” She said that as long as there were others in need, my education would be placed on hold until someone did something about it. The people in that particular California town didn’t seem to understand where we were coming from, as they’d never been in a position to fight for their true beliefs or watch their children be neglected from an education that EVERY HUMAN IS ENTITLED TO.

This “hate” is some what indicative of the fight yet to come.

I saw levels and integrations of disgust that people shunned on me when they noticed I was “undocumented”. My instinct gave real meaning and texture to the fact that people thought they were better than me. And all at the same time the only thing I was searching for was an education and meaning. Life continued though, and I went on to be a straight-A student throughout middle school and high school.

I eventually took a liking to science and chemistry, and decided that after high school I’d want to become a paramedic. I eventually went on to the local community college, where I was accepted and granted a full scholarship because of my high school grades. My instructors continually said I was a bright young man. They wanted to see me go on to become something more, like a Registered Nurse or Physicians Assistant. My heart, however, belonged to emergency medicine.

I attended class religiously and had perfect attendance throughout my schooling. For six months, I trained to become and EMT-Basic. I graduated at the top of my class. For another year after that, I trained day after day, memorizing medications, their contraindications, and their medical
applications, all to become a Paramedic. Again, I graduated at the top of my class. The day I received my certificate of completion is one of the happiest memories I have.

A week later, I went to register with the state. I presented my certifications to the administrative clerk. The next thing she asked me will forever be etched into my memory.

“Do you have some proof of citizenship, like a birth certificate or American passport? You’ll need them to become registered and employed.”

My heart sank.

I held back my tears as I simply said “Oh, I forgot. Let me run home and get them.”

I left the office and never returned. I put in over a year of my life to my passion, only to be turned down. Now I’m only a few years away from thirty, and I work as a stock boy at Food City. I need to go somewhere with my life. This needs to change. The DREAM Act can change it.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Isaac**

I am a son of a boat person, of a refugee, of a Vietnamese American Canadian. I have survived as an undocumented human being for 21 years. I use the term survive to best describe my situation because I don’t believe that being undocumented is really living at all. To live implies having freedoms to choose our paths, making choices that add to the quality of life and breathing a sigh of relief, not that of worrying.

Being undocumented is like having a fatal illness. You never asked for it, nor do you really know what to do about it. Everyone around you keeps telling you that things are going to be ok and that you have to continue living life as if this illness doesn’t exist. However, how can you truly live life knowing that at any given time, everything could be taken away? This illness does not have any physical side affects, only that of your mind. Each day as the illness grows; it creates a sense of dysphoria that can only be described as an unpleasant or uncomfortable mood, such as sadness, depressed mood, anxiety, irritability, or restlessness. Etymologically, it is the opposite of euphoria.

It would be easy for me to lie down and allow this illness to overtake me, but I have come too far and seen too much to tolerate such indolence of myself. I am a survivor much like my refugee parents that have continued to prevail after they lost their homes. I believe that one day we will live in a world free from such sickness and that the value of lives will hold above that of rhetoric and politics. I have no ill will towards any one person or any entity. My energy is better spent attempting to live life in the manner it was intended, that is without borders or documents.

[Source: DREAMActivist]
Story: Ivan

Ivan came to the United States when he was just a year old. When he graduated from high school he was in the top 1% of San Bernardino County. He obtained the Presidential Scholarship at California State University of San Bernardino, where he is now a fourth year biology major, with hopes of becoming a doctor and cancer researcher. His brother is currently serving in the military and has been in the National Guard and the Air Force. He is a role model for Ivan, teaching him the values of military service. From his brother Ivan has come to realize the great things that can be achieved in the military. His brother in law is also in the military, and while telling him of his stories from a recent tour in Afghanistan he couldn’t help but think of how critical the medical teams were. The idea of serving his country and being able to provide aid to countries in need has inspired him to work even harder for his DREAM of one day becoming a doctor serving in the military.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

Story: Jamie

I was brought here like many other undocumented students at a young age. My sister and I lived in East LA for a short time until we moved to a better part of Los Angeles. Unlike some others, I did know about my legal status from a very young age. Because of this situation, I was constantly living in fear of being exposed and was very shy as a result of it. I can truly say that living in the shadows of society has an effect psychologically. It feels like I am always hiding something from people that I wish I didn't have to. Despite these challenges I still have the ambition to prove to myself and others that we Dreamers can still get ahead in life.

I have noticed throughout this time that not only am I in the same situation as many others but I also have built the same character as them. We share the same ambitions to prove wrong to those that doubt us, to be something more than a stereotype we have been portrayed in the media. I learned to stop feeling sorry for myself and pick myself up from this mental prison we have all been placed in. Ironically in many ways it has made me stronger to deal with challenges in life. My hope is that it doesn't beat me to the ground.

The DREAM Act is currently the only hope we all have. Thanks to Senators like Richard Durbin (IL), we have a voice. Although I have a college degree and a mind that rivals others, it is standing idle. I can't get a job; I can't get an ID or travel outside the country. It's the things that are taken for granted that affect my life the most. I am tired of seeing my "legal" friends move on in life to better jobs, new experiences, and better opportunities while I watch them go. In the past years the DREAM Act has failed several times and each time our hope has been brought down.

[Source: Change.org]

Story: Jessica
I am a 17-year-old undocumented student living in Southern California. I came to America with my family 5 years ago, when I was only 12 years old. When I first arrived in LAX, I did not realize what being an undocumented student meant. Initially, I was excited, thinking that I could now live out my dreams in this land of opportunity. However, being an undocumented student, I was proven wrong.

For the past five years, I have worked hard to become a part of America. Although I started in the lowest English learners’ class, I now speak without a single accent. I am currently an International Baccalaureate diploma candidate taking six IB courses this year. Although my status has limited me from getting involved in certain activities, I am also involved in various extracurricular activities, including the community service club on campus, in which I serve as president. Throughout my high school career, I have been involved in many other academic and interest clubs not just as a member, but as an officer for almost all the clubs I have joined. Last year, I also served as chairperson of the School Site Council at my school, working with administrators, faculty members, parents, and other students. Last summer, I was selected for an all-expense-paid trip to visit ivy league colleges. I am not a foreigner who does not know how to speak English or cannot adjust to American culture. I am American.

Not being able to drive or work. These are relatively minor problems, compared to the one I am about to talk about right now. As high school seniors, my school friends have applied to colleges and are waiting for the admissions decisions that they deserve to get, regardless of whether they get in. I also have applied to colleges, but I know my college applications will be at a serious disadvantage simply because I am an undocumented student in need of financial aid. Most colleges are reluctant to support undocumented students with their funds and so is the government, even though my parents do file taxes. I have fair academic records, strong extracurricular activities, and a unique internship experience that could potentially get me to a prestigious college if I were like any other students with American citizenship. But my chances remain low because I am an undocumented student. Even if I luckily get a college degree, I would not be able to work because again, I am an undocumented student. I don’t hope for anything out of the question. I just want to go to the college I deserve to go and get the kind of education I deserve to get. To undocumented students, America is yet to be the land of opportunity.

I hope to major in economics and/or engineering and aspire to become a global business leader who could help people in developing countries, as well as those in the U.S. who are less fortunate, through business and technology. But this dream cannot be actualized unless my status can be legalized. There are so many students in situations like mine. There are so many students full of potential that are willing to serve America. Only DREAM Act will do justice to undocumented students.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Jorge**
Jorge, now 26, immigrated to this country at the age of 10 fleeing domestic violence in search of a better life. He earned his bachelor’s degree in English but legal status he has been unable to put his degree to good use. As both an immigrant youth, and a queer Latino, he also represents those youth who demand the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, at the intersection of both movements. He is now 26 years old, and after 16 years of living in this country, with no solutions having been offered the DREAM Act remains his best chance for a future.

Jorge was one five undocumented youth featured in the widely seen documentary “Papers: The Movie”.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Lily**

Back home my Dad was a pilot. My mom was a stay-at-home mother and was treated like a queen. I have a brother who is 14 months older than me. I always knew he was different. When playing hide and seek he could never find anyone, so I remember being loud on purpose so that he would find me. It was obvious he had learning problems, and one day we found out his teachers were beating him in school.

My parents had decided to come to California in order for my brother to have something to do through out his days, because it was obvious he could no longer attend school back home. My parents told my brother and I that we were going on vacation (which we always did.) I was 8 at the time and my brother was 9.

We got on a plane and came to California and we were enrolled in school immediately. I knew we weren't going back anytime soon. Life was hard. My parents hired an attorney to help us get our green cards. Little did we know that this guy was fake and not even an attorney. Things just took a turn for the worse from there.

My dad who was a pilot was now a truck driver. My mom started doing hair and has been ever since. Her legs are covered in veins, and she goes to work from 8 am sometimes until 11 pm everyday. My Dad doesn't have a job anymore and is depressed. He is a brilliant man who went to school in Oxford, became a pilot and for the past 4 years he has been sitting on the couch. I cry for him all the time.

I am now 24. I do not have an I.D., I do not have a driver's license. I cannot work. I think about killing myself everyday. They only thing that stops me is my brother. How could I leave him? He has no one. I go to bed crying. I wake up crying. I feel as though I was robbed. My life was stolen from me. I feel like I could have been at a higher place in my life at age 24. it drives me crazy thinking about it. I still cannot believe our lives ended up this way. It wasn't suppose to happen this way. I feel like a loser and feel that my entire life was a mistake.

We lost everything because my parents had a disabled child. All we wanted was to help a member of our family.
Story: Marcos

I was brought here somewhere around the age of seven, and as many like me, had a lot of difficulty learning English. During second grade, my teacher did not speak Spanish and most of the times I would simply stare blankly at her and the chalkboard. My most vivid memory regarding this is an African American girl, who would help me with school work and attempted to explain the teacher's lecture to me. Sometimes she would get frustrated and throw her hands in the air and do my work. It's very comical now and deeply wish I could give her my gratitude for her patience.

During elementary school, I remember knowing that I was undocumented and so were other classmates. It was something we were aware of and sometimes talked about it, but it was very personal. At the age of eleven my parents divorced and I moved to Mexico with my mother. The transition was horrible, I went from being an A student to almost failing all of my classes. My father would call and would yell at me and tell me I did not love him, making me feel guilty over the whole thing. After a while, I adapted and had extremely good grades again and improved my Spanish and math skills. My mother married again, but her husband was a drunk and attempted to hit me more than once, so I went to live with my grandfather at the age of 13. She left him only to get back together with him and move to Texas. I enrolled in a decent preparatoria (High School), but due to my irresponsibility I got kicked out for bad grades and was stuck doing nothing at home. One night while falling asleep, I thought about my future and realized that it was not heading in a positive way. I wanted a good life, one where I could be happy and at peace. So I called my father and told him I wanted to move to California with him and find a job, save money and build a home for myself in Mexico to return to.

Upon arrival, I found the woman who caused my parents' divorce married to my dad. It was horrible living with the person I most hated. So from there I went into the deepest and most horrible depression that can be imagined. To explain it in words is practically impossible. It is like being engulfed and submerged into a different reality, where a disease overtakes the body and consumes all energy, dreams, motivation, self-esteem and even the physical body. The transition to learning English again was horrible and I did not do so well in school. Somehow my grades improved and had the opportunity to attend Santa Ana College. I graduated from California State University, Fullerton and majored in History. By then, not having any control of my life, fighting constantly with my father and mother and feeling completely empty and alone, I had attempted to commit suicide three times. First by slitting my wrist (very naïve), second with the same method but this time I did a lot of research on how to reach my artery and finally by attempting to poison myself with carbon monoxide. On all three occasions I either fell asleep or passed out during my attempt only to wake up the next morning knowing that I'm alive and must continue with my life. Sadly, this is something I have to live with, not only with the scars, but the psychological impact it has had on me. My way of thinking and perceiving the world is very different than most people's.
I did not attend my graduation for my B.A. since it had no meaning to me. What use is a Bachelor's degree to an illegal immigrant? My family made fun of me, saying that I killed myself over nothing and now was an educated illegal. Of course, they did not say it directly, but as is accustomed in my culture, you hear it from someone else. That most certainly had an impact, since I had very little support and had spent so many years working forty hours or more a week while juggling 12 units or more of school.

After graduation I applied for a master's degree at California Polytechnic State University, Pomona, where I'm finishing my first year. This whole time I have gone to school and worked full time in order to pay for my tuition and most of the times I don't have much spare money or time. Like many, I have not enjoyed many social activities and feel like I lost my teenage years and my 20s when I arrived at the age of fifteen. I have somehow come to terms with it though. This is simply a small sacrifice not only so I can have a better life, but for my family as well. I want to be able to buy my future children the toys they want for Christmas and take my wife out to dinner on our anniversaries. I want to give them a house and a good environment. I also want to be able to provide financially for my parents when they can no longer work and aid my extended family in whatever way I can. Just as important, I want to be able to help my culture and my community to improve the situation of Latinos in this country. My youth in exchange for my future and the well being of my family. Not a bad trade off, just is a very painful one.

Over the years not having an outlet for my frustrations, pain and anger led me to read a lot of poetry and eventually attempt it myself. The following is just one that summarizes quite a bit of my feelings.

Mother Mother

The years have passed
under rain and sun,
with old and tattered rags
and stale dinner scraps,
yet I still wait at your door.

Upon your window sill
a sparrow solemnly speaks:
"Welcome to the Buddhist sanctuary
from the cyclical suffering.

These, my friend, are the twigs
of the nest
for the poor and the downtrodden.
Here your dreams are alive-
they are real."

But my tongue rolls like
a broken locomotive
and my skin reminds you of
an obscene vagrant.
It hurts your eyes, you say.
I am an outcast into a leper colony,
but look at the scars,
I am your suicidal poet,
The civil rights activist,
I am your revolutionary warrior.

Mother, Mother,
I am the poor,
I am the downtrodden,
Why then
Wont you open the door?

[Source: Change.org]

Story: Myagmarsuren Ireedui

My name is Myagmarsuren Ireedui and I am a Math-Econ student at UCLA. I was born in Mongolia and came to the United States, in pursuit of a better education and better future, on October of 2001. I am 19 years old now and I have been dealing with the trouble of paying for my education because I am not allowed to apply for scholarships from the government due to my status as an undocumented student. There are many people from Asia that are undocumented but they are not well represented in the statistics, so I took the liberty of writing my story in hopes of providing more diversity.

I came to the United States when I was 11 years old on a tourist visa and at the time I was too young to understand the magnitude of trouble I would face if my visa was expired. I was immediately enrolled in Bancroft Middle School after my arrival. I did not speak a word of English but because I was the only Mongolian-speaking student at my school I needed to learn the language quickly. I was able to accomplish this and at the end of 8th grade I was one of two students at my school to graduate with straight A’s. I was also awarded the most-improved ESL student at my graduation.

After middle school I attended Fairfax Senior High until my senior year and there I was able to stay on the principal’s honor roll for the whole time that I was there. I had to transfer to Nathaniel Narbonne High School and I graduated from there on July of 2006.

I was not able to pay for the tuition to attend university so I did not bother to even apply and from high school I enrolled and attended Los Angeles Harbor College for two years. During this time I worked and with help from my family I made enough money to pay the tuition for university so I applied and was accepted into UCLA. I am currently a junior at UCLA.

I am not a special student or a person for being able to accomplish this much and come this far in life but I am one of many to do so. There are so many things AB540 students have to deal with
and still try to succeed in school. The constant worrying and the chance that if anything goes wrong we could lose everything we have worked so hard for is a reality that is too harsh to face. The fact that we can not drive legally because we are not allowed to apply for a license, the fact that we can not apply for government scholarships, the fact that if someone reports that we are undocumented we could get in serious trouble, the fact that even if we succeed in graduating college we are still not able to legally work in the United States and use our education to better ourselves and to better the country we grew up in and love, are just some of the hardships that plague my mind day after day.

DREAM Act is an opportunity for students like me. This is a chance for us to show what we are all about and what we can be. The dream of becoming a somebody in the United States and be proud that all of that we have gone through was not for nothing. DREAM Act is not just a government decision for us, it is our entire lives that are in the hands of politicians. I would love for the DREAM Act to pass so I would have the privilege of seeing my family back in Mongolia and still be able to come back to the United States and continue to pursue my happiness and life. My story is not special but it is one of many stories of AB540 students.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Noemi**

Noemi, 27, came to this country when she was just five years old. She grew up like any other child without a worry, until she learned in high school that she was undocumented. Her dreams of becoming a teacher were deferred and her degree from California State University of Fullerton began to feel useless without being able to have a clear path ahead. She has tried to wait but can wait no longer. It has been four years since she graduated from CSUF. Noemi recognizes that now she has nothing to lose. She does not want any more students to feel or go through the struggles she has had to go through. She is ready to work, ready to serve, and is urging Senator McCain to let serve her community, her home.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Ruth L.**

Ruth came to the United States in 1992, graduated from high school and is currently a student at UCLA. If the DREAM Act were to pass, Ruth is interested in pursuing a career as a U.S. Army officer.

By her sophomore year in high school, Ruth was the Battalion Commander in her school with a place in the All City Staff. By the time she went into her senior year she was already holding the rank of Cadet Colonel (the highest rank in the district) – becoming the first Hispanic/Latina Female to hold the rank and position of All City Colonel. Ruth says, “If I would have been given the chance I would have joined the military out of high school and/or applied to attend West Point.”
Story: Sandra

I moved to Los Angeles from Peru when I was in 2nd grade. I grew up loving literature and struggling with math. I also grew up playing the flute and clarinet, making it to the varsity tennis team, and graduating at the top 1% of my high school. At that point I had the choice of attending any university in California, I also had to deal with the implications of being an unauthorized/undocumented American. I optimized cost and quality and decided to attend UCLA. I lived like a hobo and worked several low-wage under-the-table jobs because as a DREAM Act student I am ineligible to apply for public university scholarships or student loans. I now have a bachelors in Applied Math, and I’m working on my masters in Education. My goal is to revolutionize the math teaching profession.

Story: Yoshinori

I was born in Thailand, and at the age of six my family decided to leave everything behind and come to the United States. This was seventeen years ago.

We lived quite comfortably back in my home country. My father had an MBA and worked as some kind of middle manager at a bank. My mother had an undergrad in education and taught at a university. We owned our own house in Bangkok, which today is being rented to some strangers. I would say that we were in the upper middle class, but for some reason that wasn’t enough for my family. They wanted more for my brother and I. They wanted us to receive a quality education and grow up in the greatest country on earth. They were pursuing their American Dream.

So in the winter of 1993, my family made the decision to immigrate to the United States. We came by way of Tourist Visas.

Thanks to the help of some people in the Thai community, we were able to rent the basement of a Chinese family’s house in San Francisco. This basement had one bedroom, one living room, and one bathroom. A significant downgrade from our house back home, but it was nice. Since my parents spoke very little English and had no documents, they were forced into finding low wage jobs that paid under the table. My dad went from managing a bank to bussing tables, a career I would soon follow in. And my mother worked as a baby sitter.

I soon enrolled in elementary school and began my education like any normal kid. I remember enjoying my school very much. The teachers in America were so kind and welcoming, as opposed to in Thailand where they were allowed to hit their students. I learned the language and made friends quickly. Looking back, this may have been one of the happiest times of my life. San Francisco was a great city to grow up in because of its public transportation system. I had all
sorts of adventures as a little kid taking the bus and Muni trains everywhere. I always knew that I was in the country without status, even at that young age, but it did not affect me in any way.

It wasn’t until in High School (now living in Los Angeles) where I began to feel the effects of my citizenship issue. At this time, most of my friends started driving and working part time jobs. I couldn’t do either and missed out heavily on this experience. My girlfriend would ask me all the time when I was going to get my license, and I never had to courage to tell her why I couldn’t. It would have been nice to be able to take her out on a date.

It got worse when it was time to apply for college. Scholarships, financial aid, and student loans were not available to me. In most states, undocumented students are required to pay the “out of state” tuition rate which is often times double the “in state” fee. I can’t imagine how many doors this shuts for the hundreds of thousands that were in my situation. Luckily I live in California and the AB-540 bill allows anyone who graduated from a California high school to pay “in state” tuition.

I was a pretty good student with a 4.14 GPA in high school. My dream was to attend UC Berkeley and study Computer Science. Although I was accepted, it was just not financially viable for me to attend, even with the “discounted” tuition rate. So instead I settled for community college, with the hopes that in two years things may be different.

Two years passed and nothing changed. I was again accepted to Berkeley as a transfer student, but I still couldn’t afford it. I settled for Cal State University Los Angeles, which was about half the cost of a UC, and close to home. With the help of my parents, I was able pay my way though. And last month I finally graduated with a degree in Business Information Systems. Of course, the degree is almost of no use as I do not have work authorization. I, along with my parents who are approaching old age, continue to work for pennies under the table, hoping for a change.

In comparison: my friends from high school attended the best schools they could get in, and received an absurd amount of financial aid through scholarship, loans, and grants. Some of them didn’t pay a dime for their entire college education. And now most of them are either in graduate school or earning between $40,000 and $80,000 per year working. America is certainly great.

You wouldn’t be able to distinguish me from any ordinary American, but I’ve been living as a ghost in limbo almost my entire life. I am twenty three years old and I don’t have a driver’s license, identification, work permit, credit card, health insurance, etc. At any point, someone could just catch me and deport me back to the country and culture I have long forgotten. Every little step I take in life I have to run through a mental checklist to determine the appropriate path, which often times leads to avoidance. Actions such as reporting a crime, opening a bank account, visiting a doctor, or anything involving identification could have severe consequences for me.

So I decided to share my story just to give insight into a unique situation that a small group of “Americans” are living in. In reality I am more fortunate than most people living in the world, so I try to appreciate what I do have and continue to pursue my goals despite this roadblock.

[Source: DREAMActivist]
Story: Zeenat

My name is Zeenat and I am currently a fourth year Undergraduate at UCLA. I hope to complete a BA in Sociology and Spanish Minor by the end of this year. Arriving in the US from Karachi, Pakistan when I was six months old and the eldest of four children, my dream is to attend Law School in the near future.

In 2004, my family felt the bittersweet wrath of post 9-11 discrimination. My father was interrogated by the Department of Homeland Security for ten hours which in turn resulted in three court hearings. He was granted his permanent residency a year later as a court order. After living in Los Angeles for over 21 years, my mother and I have yet to gain residency, much less citizenship.

Currently an intern at the Legal Aid Foundation’s Self-Help Center, my plan is to create innovative ways to further incorporate pluralism into American society. In addition to striving alongside my undocumented peers in the United States to reform immigration laws to accommodate talented, educated youth, my scope of reform has a twist: I wish to increase awareness in the public eye to the point where other South Asians can speak about immigration comfortably in any given setting. As undocumented students, we are the under-the-table-working-tax-paying-cum-laude pioneers of immigration reform.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

Letter: Lizbeth Mateo

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Lizbeth Mateo and I am undocumented. On May 17th, on the 56th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, I, along with Mohammad Abdollahi, Yahaira Carrillo and two others, became the first undocumented students to risk deportation by staging a sit-in inside Senator McCain’s office in Tucson, Arizona, to demand the immediate passage of the DREAM Act. As a result of that sit-in we were arrested, turned over to ICE, and we now face deportation.

I came to this country when I was fourteen-years-old from Oaxaca, Mexico. It was the late nineties and Mexico was, and is still, facing one of the worst socio-economic and political periods in recent history. For my parents - a taxi driver and a stay-at-home-mom that were struggling to make ends meet- it was clear that they would have to choose between seeing their children starve and get sick, or risk it all, leave everything behind and relocate the family to Southern California with hopes of a better future. In 1998 we moved to Los Angeles and have lived here, since.
Their choice and sacrifice paid-off. I didn't only become the first one in my family to graduate from high school, but a couple of years ago I became the first one in my family to graduate from college. I graduated from California State University, Northridge and I am currently in the process of applying to law school. My dream is to become an attorney and defend the most vulnerable in the courts of law.

Life as an undocumented student has not been easy, it's been filled with tough choices and a lot of uncertainty. At one point I felt like the only way to fulfill my dream of higher education was to leave my family behind and go back to Mexico. But California had become my home and so I chose to stay despite the uncertain future ahead. Against all odds I enrolled in college, and it was there that I first learned about the DREAM Act. From the moment I heard about this piece of legislation I decided to work hard and advocate for its passage. It's now been seven years since that day and the DREAM Act has yet to become a reality.

Despite overwhelming support, Congress has been unwilling to pass the DREAM Act. It is because of that inaction that earlier this year I had to decide whether committing civil disobedience would be worth the risk of being forcibly separated from my family, and deported to a place I no longer consider home. I made a choice, forced in part by the lack of courage from our leaders in Congress and inspired by your call to change, the "change [that] will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time." Just as I had chosen to work on your campaign inspired by what you said, that "we are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek," I also chose to face my fears, to risk it all, to seek that change, and sit-in so that the DREAM Act could stand alone.

Some say that destiny is not a matter of chances but one of choices. My life and that of my fellow Dreamers has been filled with tough choices, some made by us and some made by others on our behalf. Two months after five of us chose to risk it all for our futures, because we knew that without the DREAM Act we had no future, twenty-one others chose to risk it all for a dream that belongs to us as much as it belongs to our families, our communities, and our home - the United States of America.

I firmly believe that we have made the right choice - to stand up for what we believe in and to try to fulfill the promise of the great American Dream that brought us here in the first place. I firmly believe that we, the undocumented youth, are standing on the right side of history. Now I ask that you stand with us by making the right choice. Help us pass the DREAM Act immediately. Help us free our DREAMs, which have for too long been held hostage to political rhetoric and insensitive choices by a few that have yet to recognize the potential that we have as young, educated people.

Mr. President, staying strong and facing my challenges with courage and dignity while I wait patiently is no longer an option, it's no longer a choice I can make because I played the last card I had, and my time is running out. I put my life on the line in order to have a chance at a future out of the shadows. Now the DREAM Act is the only chance I have to stay home. Please help us pass the DREAM Act so that no more youth have to risk it all by putting their lives on the line.
Sincerely,
Lizbeth Mateo

Letter: David Cho

Dear Mr. President,

My name is David Cho and I’m undocumented.

I will be a senior studying International Economics and Korean at UCLA this upcoming Fall. While most of my friends will enter the workplace after graduation, I will not be able to even put my name down on a job application because of my status. I’m a hardworking student with a 3.6 GPA and I am the first Korean and actually the first undocumented student to ever become the conductor, the drum major of the UCLA Marching Band in UCLA history.

My parents brought me to this country when I was only nine years old. I went to school not knowing a single word of English, and I often became my classmates’ object of ridicule – many bullies perpetually and ignorantly harassed me. My reaction to this harassment was to study harder, for I was determined to overcome my obstacles and excel in everything that I did. I studied hard and graduated from my high school with a 3.9 GPA.

It was not until my freshman year of college when I found out about my immigration status. I asked my parents for my social security number when filling out my application for UCLA. There was a long pause. That day, I found out that, after eight years of going through the process, our family visa had expired because our sponsor had mismanaged our paperwork.

Unable to receive any state or federal financial aid due to my status, I work 20 hours a week tutoring high school students while maintaining a high GPA and leading the UCLA Marching Band as their Drum Major.

Mr. President, I feel like I’m living inside an invisible prison cell; these invisible bars block me from doing things, while my U.S. citizen friends can glide right through. I want to serve in the Air Force after graduation. I want to attend Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and I ultimately dream of becoming a U.S. Senator because I want to serve and change this country for the better. This is the American dream I want to achieve, but I am unable to fulfill it because of my status.

I have come out publicly on CNN and on C-SPAN. I’m taking a huge risk in doing so (because I could be deported) but I believe it is a greater risk to be silent in the face of oppression and injustice. This country is throwing away talents every minute, every second. You and I clearly know that our immigration system is broken, but the DREAM Act can bring thousands of students out of the shadows and allow them the opportunity to work for the country that they truly love, right now. It is more critical now, than ever.
I know you have shown your support for the DREAM Act, but I sincerely ask that you take some real action to make sure Congress passes it this year.

Sincerely,

David Cho

Letter: Yahaira Carrillo

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Yahaira Carrillo and I'm undocumented. As I write this, over 20 undocumented youth are risking arrest and deportation to demand that Congress take action for the DREAM Act. Just over two months ago, I, along with two others, became one of the first undocumented immigrants in U.S. history to do the same. Like Mohammad Abdollahi, who wrote you a letter on Monday, I too am queer. I risk being deported to a machista country, Mexico, where killings related to homophobia are rising.

I was born in 1985 to a barely-turned 16 year-old who had been kicked out of her house while she was pregnant for being a disgrace to the family. I lived with my mother in an abandoned house in Guerrero, Mexico. She struggled to find work, but was either harassed or asked for sexual favors. She said no. She was 17 in 1986 when the 8.1 magnitude earthquake hit Mexico. She decided to take me to the U.S., but we didn't stay that long. At my grandmother's request, we returned to Mexico. The hits kept coming: my mother ended an abusive relationship with a military man and feared for her life.

Then, my father called- after abandoning my mother while she was pregnant and being MIA for most of my early years, decided he wanted us to join him in California. My options have always been limited. I was 8 years old when I came to the U.S. When I was 14, my 18-year-old boyfriend wanted to marry me. I said no. When I graduated from the top of my high school class, I thought I couldn't go anywhere. My parents were migrant farm workers- college wasn't likely. But years later, I found a private college in Kansas that would accept me. I worked myself to the bone, and obtained an Associate's Degree. Today, I am working towards my Bachelor's degree. According to my calculations, it will take me eight years.

I've had people tell me that it's not a big deal, that I should keep on waiting for the DREAM Act to pass. My life has been on pause, rewind or replay for years. Waiting is not an option. That is why undocumented youth like myself are risking everything, right now, to pass the DREAM Act, this year. If we're putting our lives on the line for this, Mr. President, the least you can do is call members of Congress and ask them to do the same.

It started with 3 undocumented youth sitting in John McCain's office, and it has escalated to 20. How many more will it take before Congress passes the DREAM Act?
Sincerely,

Yahaira Carrillo
The list is long, but the time is short.

The lame-duck Congress, which began work Monday, has a broad menu of business that could come up - but not nearly the time to take on all of the issues before the winter break.

Some might say that's a good thing, but that makes light of the importance of some of these matters.

The top tier of business ought to be approving a continuing resolution so that government doesn't run out of money, followed by taking on the Bush tax cuts. We think the tax cuts should be extended for at least a year to allow the weakened economy to better stabilize.

Following in importance is taking on the alternative minimum tax fix, a perpetual issue, and the Medicare reimbursement adjustment.

With Democrats indicating a willingness to refine the health care bill to address cost containment, we believe a long-term fix to the Medicare reimbursement problem is better addressed in that context.

Allowing physicians to take a 23 percent reduction in payments beginning Dec. 1 would cause chaos in the Medicare system. But the cost of the adjustment, about $1 billion a month, is unsustainable on a long-term basis, just as health care inflation is in general. It has to be part of the broader fixes to the health care bill.

This lame-duck session, in which Democrats hold majorities in the House and the Senate, may be the last time in the foreseeable future that a repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy is possible.

The Pentagon is set to deliver a review to the administration on Dec. 1 that will include results of a survey, which is said to show that most of those in the military have no problem serving alongside openly gay members. A repeal of this policy is long overdue.

Other pieces of legislation on the horizon include a long-stalled food safety bill, which should be approved. Also a possibility is the DREAM Act, which would grant legal status to children of illegal immigrants if they are enrolled in college.
The DREAM Act has previously had bipartisan support, and we hope it still does. This bill makes sense, allowing a future for children who want to make something of themselves by going to college.

Condemning these young people to a life of limbo while Congress dawdles on immigration reform would be a cruel decision.

Oh, and we shouldn't forget about the circus over the ethics scandal involving Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., which should have been settled long ago. Rangel faces 13 counts of violating House rules, including accusations he failed to report a half-million dollars in assets on disclosure forms and improper fundraising.

Democratic leaders should have convinced Rangel to accept responsibility and a punishment beyond his surrendering the chairmanship of the House Ways and Means Committee. Now, the proceedings are taking precious time in the waning days of the 111th Congress.

With an energized Republican majority waiting in the wings to take the House, and a divided Democratic majority trying to chart the best way forward, prospects seem dim for getting all this work done. However, we hope they put their heads down and defy such predictions.

**Aurora Sentinel: Editorial - Colin Powell is the right's voice of reason on immigration**

September 19, 2010

[http://www.aurorasentinel.com/articles/2010/09/19/opinion/editorials/doc4c96950f9b0ff302560067.txt](http://www.aurorasentinel.com/articles/2010/09/19/opinion/editorials/doc4c96950f9b0ff302560067.txt)

Sometimes it takes restating the obvious to break people free of their rabid misconceptions.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell did just that this weekend on a Sunday morning news show by imploring his fellow Republicans to return to common sense about immigration reform and find a way to bring millions of hard-working illegal immigrants into legal status, because they are an integral and vital part of the U.S. economy.

“They’re all over my house, doing things whenever I call for repairs, and I’m sure you’ve seen them at your house,” Powell said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “We’ve got to find a way to bring these people out of the darkness and give them some kind of status.”

He said the Republican Party should not adopt an anti-immigration philosophy and should find a compromise position on ways to bring millions of illegal immigrants into the fold through programs such as the DREAM Act.
Powell is right. Political gridlock on this and other issues does nothing to make America a better place for those who live here legally or illegally.

In a perfect or even a better world, more than 12 million illegal immigrants would have waited their turn to move to the United States, and the government would have offered a better, more expedient immigration system.

But what the United States and especially Congress can no longer ignore is that many, if not most of these people, are firmly entrenched in our societal and economic community, and even if the government were to find a way to round them up and deport them, the effect on the country’s already unstable economy would likely be catastrophic. That’s for two reasons: First, these immigrants do millions of jobs that Americans will not do. Whether it’s because jobs such as roofing, mowing lawns, cleaning motel rooms, dressing carcasses or laying bricks are too hard of work or don’t pay enough, the jobs, even when unemployment is so high, go wanting.

Second, filling those positions with immigrants willing to work for lower wages keeps the rate for many services low. Millions of businesses across the country would struggle or fail if their cheap labor pool were to wither.

There are many emotional aspects of the illegal immigration debate, but the pragmatic issues must take precedent here. Congress must take on the issue with an imminent solution — not roadblocks — in mind.

**Aurora Sentinel: Editorial - Everyone benefits when this DREAM comes true**

September 14, 2010


All everyone can do these days is just dream when it comes to hoping that Washington takes some action on immigration reform anytime soon.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said this week that he’ll likely try to attach the forlorn DREAM Act to a military bill in hopes of getting something done on the immigration front.

It’s Reid who’s dreaming now.

The DREAM Act is the common-sense part of immigration reform that conservatives and liberals alike in Washington, and even here under the Colorado Capitol, agree should become law.
Despite that, emotional, bigoted and illogical opposition to the notion — which seeks to allow illegal immigrants who are U.S. high school graduates to find a way to go to college, or join the military — has died numerous deaths in Congress and locally. The measure would have created a practical path to citizenship through a college degree.

What a shame the country’s growing anti-immigrant neurosis will punish children who want to educate themselves and are just as qualified to pay state-resident tuition rates as is the most legal and distasteful xenophobe in Colorado or anywhere else.

Last year, the Colorado Senate narrowly killed a measure that would have allowed local illegal immigrant students to pay in-state tuition rates at Colorado colleges.

These children had no say in their citizenship status. Many of them grow up in local public schools, graduate and have the opportunity to make huge strides in their own lives, the lives of their family members and their communities — if they go to college. Colorado residents pay rates half or even less of what nonresidents pay to go to college in Colorado.

Critics of allowing them to pay in-state tuition rates say it would have rewarded and encouraged illegal immigration, and it’s unfair because legal immigrants don’t get the in-state discount.

Those are sham arguments. Nobody comes to Colorado or any of the other nine states that have similar laws already on the books so they can get discount college rates, where they can in states like Texas. People sneak into the country because they can get jobs. But many sneak in with small children, who should be shown mercy and compassion by a country of people who are quick to ask for it for themselves.

They deserve the resident rate under some kind of a DREAM Act measure because it requires they attend local high schools for years, graduate and attempt to rectify their immigration status. The kind of people who can commit to this are exactly the kind of people we want and need as citizens of this country. They and their families have paid sales taxes, property taxes and (in most cases) income taxes, just like every other resident in the state that gets discounted tuition.

Sadly, the spectre of hate for illegal immigrants continues to doom these measures.

Lawmakers need to stop dreaming and do more to bring this pragmatic measure to fruition in Colorado and across the country.

**Boulder Daily Camera: Lafayette Cesar Chavez march expands, will start from Boulder**
**March 31, 2010**

Ana is getting ready to graduate from a Denver university with a 3.9 GPA and a degree in accounting, but it's not the slow economy that has her worried about job prospects.

The 21-year-old immigrant, who asked that her last name not be used, is undocumented. She
came here from Mexico with her parents, who live in Louisville, when she was 12. She studied hard, learned English and graduated from Lafayette's Centaurus High School in 2006.

With the help of private donors, plus pay from a full-time restaurant job, she covered the high cost of college. But without legal residency, her dream of becoming an accountant is on hold.

"I worked so hard for my degree, to be somebody," she said. "There are so many things I want to do. But I have no options."

Ana plans to tell her story Friday as part of an inaugural eight-mile march from Boulder to Lafayette in honor of civil rights leader Cesar Chavez. Organizers -- Centaurus High School and University of Colorado students -- want to generate support for the Dream Act.

The proposed act would provide a path to permanent legal status for illegal immigrant students who graduate from high school in good standing and agree to serve in the military or attend college for at least two years.

Centaurus High students developed the idea for the eight-mile march -- symbolizing Cesar Chavez's 340-mile march from Delano, Calif., to Sacramento in 1966 -- while working on a project as part of CU's Public Achievement program.

"The students want to get the community behind the Dream Act," said Denise Cherrington, a CU student and Public Achievement coach. "It would completely open the doors for many of these students."

Friday's march is an expanded version of a smaller march held in Lafayette in past years. It's part of a six-week slate of activities, including a community fast and movie discussions, for Lafayette's annual Cesar Chavez celebration.

Friday's events include Aztec dancers, a performance by a CU slam poet, a speech by U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder, and a "call to action" to support the Dream Act.

Elaina Verveer, who's helping organize the march, said the events are student-run and will encourage ongoing community participation.

"This is really about young people maintaining Cesar Chavez's legacy," she said.

**Denver Post: Tuition hurdle tires out illegal immigrant kids and counselors**

**October 28, 2007**

As lawmakers toil to keep in place laws that ban illegal immigrants from receiving in-state tuition in Colorado, high school guidance counselors say they are working harder than ever to find options for their top-flight - yet undocumented - students.
Their efforts, many of which are conducted on personal time, include researching colleges in more hospitable states, raising private money and making incessant phone calls to private donors to find money for students to go to college.

"We scramble. We scramble every day," said James Durgin, a guidance counselor at South High School in Denver. "We call private agencies, we refer them to other states that have softer rules."

One of Durgin's students, Nestor, has a 3.5 grade-point average and has been pushed to go to college by his parents since he was young.

He helps his dad install and remove tables and chairs people rent for parties. His mother works at a candy store.

"She says she wants me to have a better education and not to work so hard just to get by," said Nestor, whose last name is not being published because of his status. "They've shown me what life is without an education. That is why I want to go."

Colorado, Georgia and Arizona are the only three states that explicitly ban in-state tuition for undocumented students. In Colorado, which enacted the ban in 2006 as part of a larger measure - House Bill 1023 - that tuition difference can run as much as $15,000 a year.

At Colorado State University, in-state residents pay roughly $6,000 with fees a year; out-of-state students pay close to $20,000.

Another 10 states, including Texas, New Mexico, California and Utah, allow in-state tuition to any student who graduates from a state high school - regardless of status.

Feds' college bill dies

The DREAM Act, which failed by eight votes in the Senate last week, would have immediately created a path for roughly 360,000 students nationally to become eligible to become legal. These students would have had to go to college or join the military to become eligible.

It also would have allowed states to set their own in-state tuition policies for undocumented students.

But even if the act had passed, Colorado's law would have disallowed in-state tuition for these students, said Carlos Valverde, a senior policy analyst at the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"But I think it would encourage the legislature, because it (the DREAM Act) removes all disadvantages," he said.

State Sen. Andy McElhany, R-Colorado Springs, said he has an "equity problem" with cutting a break for illegal immigrant students in Colorado, and not for someone living legally in, say, Kansas.
He also contends the matter is tough for students who have lived in the United States for most of their lives.

"I don't know if we can make it all that clear-cut for high school counselors," he said. "But we can't pick and choose who gets tuition breaks."

Many guidance counselors say the work on behalf of their immigrant students feels isolating and, at times, futile.

One counselor at a Fort Collins high school helped find some undocumented students "reciprocal" scholarships to the University of New Mexico.

These scholarships allow about 20 Colorado students a year to attend the school for in-state tuition, and because UNM doesn't take residency into account for entrance, the Colorado students qualified.

But when news of the counselor's efforts were published in local media, the school district and UNM were hit with sharp criticism that they were helping illegal immigrants, said Terry Babbitt, vice president of enrollment management.

The counselor, Isabel Thacker, who was deeply troubled by the criticism, has launched a private fundraising effort.

New Mexico and Colorado probed the "reciprocal" program and deemed it legal.

"We're bound by law to admit those students regardless of their immigration status," Babbitt said. "We follow state policy and state law. … Our citizens support undocumented students for New Mexico … but there is a very mixed sentiment about the issue. Many people are supportive, and many are not."

At South High, Durgin, who has looked to California for private help and asks his students to apply to lists of private scholarships, said he sees undocumented students lose hope when they realize getting in-state tuition is so difficult.

In 2000, only 40 percent of illegal immigrant males who came to the U.S. before they were 16 finished high school.

"We tell our students all along, 'Work hard, college is coming, it's what you have to do to get ahead,'" Durgin said. "Then they realize, 'Uh oh, I may be screwed after all.' We do start losing some students, and it's really sad. … They may limp to the finish line, but they've lost that oomph because everything afterwards is so out of reach."

Vic Davolt is on the other side of the issue as director of admissions at private Regis College.

Two years ago, he started helping students find private money to go to college after receiving a
call from a Denver high school counselor with a story of a kid who had few options.

The private college costs $26,000 a year. The school gives academic and merit scholarships, but they usually cover only about half of that. "I was thinking, 'That's great, but where is the rest of the money going to come from?'" Davolt said.

He helped a couple of students see an immigration lawyer. "I was pie in the sky," he said. "I was thinking, 'This is America, there are always exceptions. We're Regis University, surely we can find an exception to the rule.' … I quickly found out there aren't any exceptions."

Fewer than 12 undocumented students attend his school.

Some call break unfair

Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., said he opposes in-state tuition for illegal immigrants because it gives them an advantage over legal citizens in other states.

"Granting benefits to unauthorized alien students rewards lawbreakers, undermines our immigration system, and will only encourage more illegal immigration," Allard said through his spokesman.

Because the matter is so polarized and has "an aura of amnesty," it probably will not see the light of Congress again until after 2008, said Jeanne Batalova, policy analyst for the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan group in Washington.

"It has become a real hot potato," she said.

Regis student Maria has already felt the heat.

When the extrovert was immersed in National Honor Society, AP calculus and the soccer team at her suburban high school, the thought of college made her sick to her stomach.

Despite her soaring grades, extracurricular activities and a dogged counselor calling all over on her behalf, the news on college was always bad.

Because Maria's parents brought her here illegally when she was 10, college in Colorado was nearly inaccessible.

At Regis, where she is a freshman studying math and computer science on substantial private scholarships, she looks ahead only a few months at a time. Talk of her future makes her cry.

After she graduates, she won't be able to get a professional license or a job without a visa or a Social Security number.

"I understand we don't have a right to be here," she said. "But it's not our fault. This wasn't my choice."
The agents came for Laylaa Ramos' mother on Valentine's Day. It was early. Still dark outside, as Laylaa's stepfather remembers it. He'd fallen asleep on the couch the night before and the knock jolted him awake.

The agents identified themselves as immigration officers. They asked him his name.

Kevin, he said, Kevin Ferrell.

Who else lives in the house? they asked.

My wife, he said, Guadalupe.

They showed him some paperwork, a deportation order. Will you please get her?

Ferrell tells me later he is sure they had the wrong house. He and Guadalupe had been married almost two years. He knew she was born in Guatemala and that she and her then-husband entered the U.S. illegally in 1993 with Laylaa, who was not yet 3 years old. He knew they had asked for political asylum and the request had been languishing somewhere in the bureaucracy for years.

She has permission to work, he wanted to plead; she works in a bakery; she pays taxes.

But Guadalupe didn't want a scene. Laylaa, scared, watched her leave from the top of the stairwell.

Laylaa told no one outside the family what had happened. She went to school that day, worked the blood drive, tinkered with the prom choreography.

Then she went home, a 17-year-old honor roll student, who had not yet realized that for her, as well, a clock had started ticking.

The federal government generally doesn't sanction minors who entered this country illegally the same way it does adults. But, as soon as the kids hit 18, the distinction disappears and a count begins. After 180 days of unlawful presence here, the punishment, should they leave the country and try to come back legally, is a three-year wait. At one year of unlawful presence, the three-year ban on legal re-entry grows to 10 years. This punishment is one answer to all of you who ask me why "those illegals don't just go back and do it the right way?"

I've met many undocumented high school students brought here as children. Even if they were aware of the deadline looming before them, I doubt many would return to a country they have never considered home, especially if the rest of the family is living here.

Still, about 65,000 undocumented students are expected to graduate this year. Tens of thousands
of kids will turn 18. I am surprised we are not deafened by the tick-tock of so many clocks.

The law became clear to Laylaa after her mother was detained. Guadalupe was held for one month and released on bond. What began with an official immigration notice sent to an old address ended with Guadalupe's return to Guatemala in August with her and Ferrell's baby boy. It is probably easier, at this point, various attorneys have told them, for Guadalupe to gain her citizenship through Ferrell, an American citizen. As for Laylaa, they advised, she will be 18 soon. She should go back, too.

Laylaa was angry at first. The same kind of mad she gets when people stumble through the national anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance, "when I know all the words and I'm not even considered from here."

She tells me this on Friday, after we are introduced by two young teachers awed by Laylaa's fortitude and upset that she is caught in a situation not of her own making.

"I understand it's the law," Laylaa says, and starts to cry. "I know there are people here illegally and some do bad things; they don't pay their taxes, they give us a bad rep. But there's people like me and my family."

I'm thinking if there's ever a case for the DREAM Act, this is it. It could have been written for her, an illegal immigrant brought here as a child, an overachiever with a 3.8 grade-point average. The act, introduced again in Congress, would give her residency if she graduated and went to college or served in the military for two years.

But, Laylaa is conscious now of the clock and she wants this all to be over. After the school year starts, she tells her teachers and friends at Legacy High School in Broomfield that she is leaving in the hopes of returning to this country as a legal resident. The news stuns them because they had no idea she was not one already because she is as American as they are.

Laylaa turns 18 today. I expect she will have landed in Guatemala by the time most of you read this. At school Friday, her classmates threw her a party. She cried a lot. She cried more when her best friend, Angelica Lombardi, tracked her down in the conference room where we were speaking and promptly burst into tears.

"This is the worst week of my life. I can't believe this," Angelica said, sobbing. "I'm so confused about why this would happen to her of all people and there is nothing I can do."

Laylaa, being Laylaa, is determined to look at the bright side. She will see her mother and her little brother again. She will meet her great-grandmother for the first time. She will be able to practice her Spanish. Everything will work out, she tells me.

She says she hopes her stepfather's sponsorship of her and her mother's residency moves quickly. She knows that having someone to sponsor her makes her luckier than most students in her situation.
I asked her what she was carrying with her on the plane. Some unopened cards from her friends in government class, she said, a journal from her teachers and a tourist guide to Central America.

**Rocky Mountain News: Fighting for a DREAM**

*August 17, 2007*

With an accounting degree from a community college under her belt, Chau Nguyen looked forward to starting her career and some day becoming an American citizen.

Then Nguyen walked into an Army recruiting station in Boston, where she and her family had settled after moving to the United States in 2003.

"I saw pictures on the wall of helicopters and tanks. That was so exciting to me," said the 27-year-old native of Vietnam.

What most attracted Nguyen to the armed forces were the benefits, she said. Chief among them: a fast track to citizenship.

She is now a supply specialist at Fort Carson and just months away from becoming a U.S. citizen.

Normally, it takes at least five years of residency to gain U.S. citizenship. But since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the option has been offered to all legal immigrants who have enlisted in the military to become citizens in just six months.

That option, which is made available in a "time of war," has led to an increase in the number of immigrants enlisting in the military.

"Because of President Bush's executive order, which allowed all active duty immigrants serving as of Sept. 11 to apply for citizenship without waiting the usual five years, it has given many people waiting to become citizens another avenue," said Maria Elena Garcia-Upson, regional spokeswoman for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Nationally, nearly 35,000 immigrant soldiers have been naturalized since the start of the Iraq war in March 2003, representing 2.5 percent of the total armed forces. In Colorado, more than 430 immigrant enlistees have applied for citizenship.

The military does not enlist illegal immigrants. But a proposal to grant instant legal status and eventually full citizenship to undocumented enlistees who arrived in the United States before age 16 has received support from Pentagon officials.

The DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) is among the series of proposals contained in the failed immigration compromise bill. But some believe the proposal still stands a chance. Supporters say it would help boost recruitment during a time when forces are stretched thin in Iraq and Afghanistan.
Sen. Ken Salazar, D-Colo., has been one of the most vocal supporters of the act.

Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., a chief sponsor of the bipartisan proposal, said his staff has "worked closely" with the Defense Department on the legislation.

"Largely due to the war in Iraq, the Army is struggling to meet its recruitment goals," Durbin said through an aide. "Under the DREAM Act, tens of thousands of well-qualified potential recruits would become eligible for military service for the first time. They are eager to serve in the armed forces during a time of war."

Eddie Lira, a senior at Denver's Montbello High School, is among them.

The 17-year-old native of Mexico was brought to the United States when he was just 4 years old by his parents, who crossed the border illegally. Because of his family's illegal status, he is unable to attend college at in-state tuition rates or to join the armed forces.

An estimated 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools each year, according to the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.

Lira, who is a second-year member of his school's junior ROTC program, said if the DREAM Act passes he would sign up for the Coast Guard. He would also like to attend college and become an attorney some day.

"I have all kinds of plans and dreams. Joining the military would provide an open window for citizenship and to go on to college," said Lira. "I want to commit myself to something that would be positive in my life."

Nguyen said she looks forward to simply being "a good citizen."

For now, she plans to re-enlist and make the army her career.

She said her commitment to this country has been reinforced through her experience as a soldier, which included a tour of duty in Iraq in April 2006.

"It was a good experience. I learned a lot about their culture and their life, how they live and what they think. It made me think how the war in Iraq is like the Vietnam War. I talked to them about my family. How my father fought with the Americans for freedom," she said.

"I told them Americans are not taking anything away from your country. They're trying to give you the chance for freedom."

**Rocky Mountain News: Editorial--Kids without a country; DREAM Act would help legalize their status**  
March 11, 2007
Comprehensive immigration reform remains an elusive goal for Congress. Still, the stalemate in Washington should not preclude lawmakers from embracing worthwhile, incremental policy changes.

On Wednesday, a group of local students and community activists rallied at North Presbyterian Church in Denver to support one such advance - the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (or DREAM) Act.

The DREAM Act has been around in some form since 2001, and it would remove hundreds of thousands of youngsters from a baffling state of legal limbo. There's no excuse to delay its passage further.

As now written, the bill would allow some foreign-born children of illegal immigrants to remain in the United States without fear of deportation. To do so, they would have to satisfy several conditions: They were younger than 16 when they first entered the country; they have been here without interruption for at least five years; and they have not broken other laws. Nor is that all.

Before applying for permanent residency, they'd have to graduate from high school and complete at least two years of college or two years of military service.

Finally, the bill would let states decide whether the young adults covered by the law would qualify for in-state tuition at public colleges and universities.

The DREAM Act would both affirm a basic principle of fairness - minor children should not suffer for the sins of their parents - and give states more leeway to decide what public benefits their own taxpayers provide to residents.

Supporters of the bill say each year some 65,000 teenagers enter this no-man's-land. Those who graduate from high school cannot legally get a job. They're not eligible for in-state college tuition or student aid, and we doubt their families usually have the wherewithal to afford out-of-state tuition or the cost of a private education.

To abide by the law, these young people are expected to leave their families and return to their native countries - even though they may have lived in the United States for most of their lives and English may be the only language they know.

Under normal circumstances, the minor children of illegal immigrants are not targets for deportation, unless they or their parents have gotten in trouble with the law for other reasons.

We see no reason to leave these young people in jeopardy after they become adults, and we hope the DREAM Act quickly makes its way to President Bush for his signature.

**Denver Post: Immigrant kids chase dream; Congress weighs helping students into college, military**

March 8, 2007
Without the chance to go to college, David Mendez fears he will never become an officer in the military. Leticia Mendoza worries that she won't become an engineer.

The students and nearly 50 others, all members of Jovenes Unidos, gathered Wednesday to support the Dream Act, which is pending in Congress.

The act, if passed, would allow illegal-immigrant students who meet certain requirements to acquire provisional legal status to attend college or serve in the military. It would also encourage states to offer these students in-state tuition.

In Colorado, state law bars illegal immigrants from getting in-state tuition.

"Without this opportunity we will not be able to reach our dreams," said Mendoza, a freshman at North High School.

The students and supporters gathered in the north Denver headquarters of Padres and Jovenes Unidos. The parent group works on educational issues. Representatives of the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, Rights for All People, Peace Jam, the Muslim American Society and the American Friends Service Committee also were there.

"They are the future of this country," said Ricardo Martinez of Padres Unidos. "These students are part of U.S. society and they are not going to leave; they want to contribute."

Next week, a coalition of immigrant-rights representatives, including two from Padres and Jovenes Unidos, will travel to Washington to lobby Congress. Students had planned to go but are staying behind to take state exams, they said.

Each year 65,000 students nationwide - including about 12,000 in Colorado - graduate from high school but cannot go to college because they are illegal immigrants, Gonzales said.

Montbello High School principal Antwan Wilson, who was at the gathering, said he tries to encourage the students.

"I do support them," he said. "We have students who are undocumented in schools throughout the country and we are held accountable for them through No Child Left Behind. Being accountable means also providing a future for them."

Mendez, a three-year Junior ROTC student at Lincoln High School, has his sights set on the Air Force Academy or Colorado College if the act passes.

"It's not just for everyone, it's for the ones who try," he said. "It's not free, it's not a give-me, you have to work for it."
Story: Hans

My name is Hans, I am twenty years old and I live in Denver, Colorado. I am originally from Jakarta, Indonesia. I am an undocumented student.

I've always seen my life in a fantasy or story form. Ever since I was little I've always enacted my daydreams everyday for hours on end. I'd run around pretending I was ninja turtle, or he-man, even sailor moon. I must admit even now, at twenty years old I still do it. Although I knew in my mind, I had to wake up some time.

The events leading up to my family's immigration was a bleak time in Indonesian history. It was the time of great economic and political unrest, when Soeharto, the country's dictator of thirty two years, abdicated because of massive corruption charges, sending the country into chaos. Riots and looting were common place. In addition to that, the country was in an economic crisis of a lifetime, spiking greatly the prices of daily needs, while leaving many people jobless, like my parents.

Though as a child, it seemed like a fantastic time. The broken storefront windows, the demonstrations and the burning car tires created a brand new playground in my overactive mind. Little did I know, that student demonstrators were gunned down by the army and minorities were being persecuted and people were suffering greatly. When my dad had to leave first for the states to prepare 'the way' for the rest of us, he promised us a trip to Disneyland and a better life here in United States of America. Little did I know, he had to work long hours in bone breaking jobs as a day laborer.

When our family arrived here in Denver, my little sister was four, my little brother was seven, I was eleven and my big sister was thirteen. We came here with tourists visas, but quickly after arriving we applied for asylum status. We applied on the basis of religious persecution, we're a Christian family in a Muslim majority and during the time there was a lot of cases of church looting and anti-Christian violence. We thought we had a good case for us, but in turned that it was not enough. We've never had 'direct experience with violence or persecution' nor did we have 'imminent life-threatening danger upon returning.' After several years of waiting and trying to appeal the case, it failed and we lost our temporary status.

While that struggle was happening, I was in high school and I was trying to do the best I can. Every time I saw my parents’ faces of disappointment, I was pretty disheartened. I mean, they've worked so hard for us and they tried their best to live here 'legally.' I thought we were treated unfairly by the immigration system. I grew more and more disillusioned with everything around me.

But luckily, it was around the same time when I got involved with community organizing, and I realized that other members of the community, regardless of documents, suffer from the same systemic injustice. I learned about the world as it is now and the world as i want it to be or as it is ought to be. I found that as members of the community we all possess the political power to stand against injustice and for the betterment of our communities and our lives. This was a novel idea for me, as an undocumented youth who's not able to vote. This brought me back not only
the power to dream and imagine, but also the power to take pride in my community and in my country. It gave me great strength knowing that people are with me in my struggles and knowing that the struggles of all marginalized people in the U.S. are my struggles as well.

I've now been in college for two years, but because of high tuition cost I can only take two classes at the time. I also have to work to support myself and to pay tuition. I'm learning not to take anything for granted and to keep on fighting for the rights of youth like me and every poor and oppressed minorities in my country, the United States. More than ever, am I waking up to the possibilities of change and I'm more optimistic than ever about the DREAM Act passing.

[Source: Change.org]

**Letter: Chih Tsung Kao**

Dear President Obama,

My name is Chih Tsung Kao. I am 24 years old and am now currently living in Taipei, Taiwan awaiting military service. This is not what I had planned for my life as I entered high school, but it was drastically altered when I found out that I was undocumented at 17.

I arrived in the US on a visitor's visa when I was about 4 years old. My mother had obtained a student visa for me shortly afterwards and moved me to Boulder, Co to live with my grandparents. By the age of 13 my grandparents decided they wanted to retire and move to California. Being raised in Boulder, the only city I've ever known, I decided I wanted to stay and found a friend's parents who would take me in.

I've learned a lot about what it is to be American and to grow up being American from this family. They have been more family to me than my own biological family. I had not lived with my biological parents since I was brought to the US. When I found out about my expired student visa status in high school, I was both ashamed and embarrassed that I couldn't call myself an American. I had felt every bit American as my peers in school, but was not allowed to call myself one due to my lack of papers. My grandparents aren't to blame. They are older and don't know how the system works.

Actually, I'm not too sure a lot of the American citizens know how the system works, how intricate, and how complicated it is to become a citizen and have the freedom that is granted them for just being who they are. My life had two faces then, an American kid doing what kids do, and a depressed individual, feeling alone and unwanted by the country he felt was home. I had never let any of my friends know of my situation until a month before I left for Taiwan.

I graduated from The Colorado School of Mines with a Civil Engineering degree in the spring of '09, and have since decided that I can no longer wait for my life to take a turn for the better by becoming a citizen. I wanted more than anything to be a productive member of society, paying back my debt to society as a working member of the engineering sector. I don't know if I will ever get a chance to fulfill that now.
Currently, I am living in Taipei, and awaiting mandatory military service for all male Taiwanese citizens. Though I know I must fulfill my duties, I feel that this is yet another year of my life delayed, both personally and professionally. I am currently looking for ways back into the United States, but I fear the ten-year bar for overstaying my "welcome" in the US. Due to this bar, I have also considered immigrating to Canada to start a new life in a country as close to the US as possible. Though it may be too late for me, there are still tens of thousands of students and young adults that can benefit greatly from the passing of the DREAM Act. They, if anything like me, simply wish to be contributing, upstanding citizens of the country they know as "home".

Sincerely,

Chih Tsung Kao
Twins Carolina and Camila Bortolleto came to Danbury from Brazil when they were 9 years old. They excelled in high school and graduated with honors from Western Connecticut State University.

But the 22-year-olds are undocumented immigrants, which means they can't get drivers licenses or jobs to use the skills they worked hard to gain.

Now they're part of movement of Connecticut students working for the beleaguered federal Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act, which would offer a six-year-long conditional path to citizenship and in-state tuition prices for undocumented students.

On Saturday, the twins will be part of the all-day Connecticut DREAM Summit at Dwight Hall at Yale University. On Wednesday at 4:30 p.m., they'll help with a program that shines a light on undocumented students atn Western Connecticut State University's midtown student center theater.

Of the more than 3 million students who graduate from U.S. high schools every year, about 65,000 are illegal immigrants who came to the country as children.

"Money has already been invested in these kids. They don't want to go back to the countries that most don't even remember," Carolina said. "They want to stay here and contribute back to the country that gave them so much, but they are not allowed to.

"The DREAM Act is a return on investment. The DREAM Act makes economic sense."

The Connecticut group wants to get the university presidents in the state to send letters of support for the national bill.

Yale University president Richard Levin has announced his support for the bill that U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., promised during the election to propose again in the coming lame duck session of Congress.

The students also are working to get letters to the state General Assembly in favor of in-state college tuition.
"Many other states have youth-led organizations and that's what's been missing in Connecticut, a youth-led group," Camila said. "I didn't expect people not directly affected by the issue to care so much."

State Sen. Martin Looney, D-New Haven, plans to speak at the summit that will include training for how to build support for the laws.

WestConn Vice President Walter Bernstein said this group of students is an untapped resource that would benefit the state.

"It's through no fault of their own that they don't have citizenship. It would be a wonderful thing if these students could be empowered in this way," Bernstein said.

Public universities would benefit from these students, but the schools must follow the law until it is changed, he said. "There is a huge group of students who can't afford to come here without in-state tuition."

Twenty-two-year old New Milford High School graduate Lorella Praeli also is helping to organize the Connecticut DREAM Summit. She came from Peru 11 years ago for medical care and is a senior at Quinnipiac University and interns at the Yale Law Center -- and undocumented.

Praeli became involved in the movement when she researched the effects of U.S. immigration law on an undocumented youth's ability to get an education.

"The working title of my paper is 'Stepping out of the Shadows,'" Praeli said. "This is an invisible population that can't vote but are moving from powerlessness to hope," because of the potential of the DREAM Act and in-state tuition.

"We are looking for undocumented students and their allies and supporters who want to participate. It's hard when you try to access a population that is scared," she said.

Even if the legislation takes time, this effort will transform and empower the young people who will benefit from it, Praeli said. "If you give them hope, it changes the course of their lives."
Anabella drinks iced caramel lattes. She watches "Grey's Anatomy" and "The Tyra Banks Show."

Like many other 20-year-olds, she listens to popular music and shops for trendy designer knock-offs.

She's an average American girl, she says. Except she's not.

When she was 7 years old, her mother smuggled her, along with an older brother and a younger sister, across the border from Mexico and eventually to Elsmere.

Now, more than a decade later, Anabella has graduated from McKean High School and enrolled at Delaware Technical & Community College to study nursing. She'd rather go to the University of Delaware and become a doctor, but it's too expensive, and too risky, she said.

Sometimes she wonders what the point is. After all, as one of the country's 12 million undocumented immigrants, she won't be able to work as a nurse when she graduates.

She tries not to think about that possibility, and instead clings to a piece of federal legislation that has been percolating for five years: the DREAM Act.

"The fact I don't have papers isn't going to stop me from going to school or make me give up," said Anabella, who asked that her last name not be used for this story because of her legal status.

"But you're always wondering, worrying. There are so many deserving students, so we're constantly thinking about the DREAM Act. It's no guarantee, but at least it's something."

Estimates, including from the Congressional Budget Office, anticipate anywhere from 60,000 to 500,000 students nationwide would benefit from the DREAM Act.

But the Washington-based Center for Immigration Studies, which favors immigration limits, pegs that number at 2.1 million people who would be eligible.

Critics contend the bill is just amnesty in sheep's clothing.
"Since the defeat of the big Bush-Kennedy amnesty bill in June, their strategy has been to break it up in bite-size pieces," said Ira Mehlman, spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which favors immigration limits. "The American public gagged on the whole enchilada, but they think if they cut it up, maybe we'll swallow it."

Once students obtain their green cards, it will mean de facto amnesty for their parents and siblings, Mehlman said, and five or 10 years down the line, what's to keep more immigrants from coming illegally in the hopes that another such amnesty will be offered?

Supporters scoff at such fears, arguing that family members would have to wait a decade or more before being allowed to enter the country legally.

And the current bill answers previous criticisms by not providing in-state tuition for undocumented students. Currently, 10 states allow undocumented college students to pay in-state rates.

Robert Birgeneau, chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, said it doesn't make sense -- morally or economically -- to deny a chance at citizenship to talented students who know no other country.

"We've invested in these students for more than a decade, from kindergarten through high school," he said. "They've worked hard, and then they find the American dream is not readily available to them. Our country needs these people. These are the kind of people who have made America great and will continue to make America great."

Junior, an undocumented student who graduated from A.I. du Pont High School, dropped out of Delaware Tech after a year because the out-of-state tuition was too expensive.

"It's frustrating because you think of all the things you want to do in your future, but then you can't," he said. And it's especially saddening that he can't finish college, he said, when he thinks of everything his older siblings gave up -- they worked to support the family so he and his younger siblings could go to school.

At the University of Delaware, about a dozen undocumented students enroll each year, Admissions Director Louis Hirsh said. Most receive some sort of private financial help because they aren't eligible for federal or state monies, he said.

"Most in this situation were brought here as young children, went to American schools, and lived in Delaware most of their lives," Hirsh said. "It certainly makes sense to provide them opportunities to enrich themselves with a college education."

Opponents of illegal immigration contend that, by allowing undocumented students into college, spaces are taken away from native-born students who never broke the law.

"State universities have a finite number of seats available," Mehlman said. "And given the costs
of college, it's one of the biggest concerns of middle-class families."

Roberto Gonzales, author of the new Immigration Policy Center report "Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students," said his research found the number of undocumented college students is a fraction of the entire student population, so displacement is not a problem.

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., who introduced the DREAM Act in the Senate, said that with so many universities, he can't believe any native-born students would be squeezed out. Durbin said he was just a few votes shy of the 60 needed to move the DREAM Act to the floor for a full Senate debate and vote. Delaware Sens. Joe Biden and Tom Carper supported a comprehensive immigration reform measure earlier this year that included DREAM Act provisions.

Anabella and Junior said they've heard the argument that students shouldn't be rewarded for breaking the law, or that they should just go back to their native countries.

But it's not that simple, they said.

Anabella doesn't remember Mexico, and all Junior remembers is how different it was from the United States.

"It's not like I was given the choice to come here," Junior said. "This is my country now. I grew up here. If I went back to Mexico, I would be lost."

Given the massive collapse of comprehensive immigration reform earlier this year and the heated debate polarizing much of the country, now might not be the best time to push the DREAM Act forward, Durbin said.

But he had a special obligation to try, he said.

"Their whole life hangs in the balance as to what's going to happen," he said. "What a terrible waste it would be to walk away from these kids."

Anabella said the DREAM Act is her own dream.

"I'm deserving," she said. "I've gotten my education here, and I've done good things here. I want to be able to stay here and work for my country."
They arrived in their mother's arms, or perhaps they were old enough to go to school but always too young to have a say in their family's plans. Now, years later, they are poised to go to college or enter the military and become productive Americans.

Except they can't because their parents years ago overstay their visas or entered the United States illegally.

In the charged political environment that is Washington today these young people's futures -- and our nation's economic potential -- are being held hostage to political posturing of the worst kind.

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, known as the Dream Act, has had bipartisan support in Congress since it was first introduced in 2001. It has had majority support, in fact, but the Senate's 60-vote cloture rule on filibusters has stopped common sense on immigration reform.

That can change today.

The Dream Act would apply only to young adults who arrived as minors before age 16, have been in the United States for at least five years and are on track to go to college and get, at minimum, a two-year degree, or serve in the U.S. military with an honorable discharge. Their reward would be a green card with the potential for U.S. citizenship years later.

They didn't decide to come to this country as children, but over the years these young people have been immersed in all things American. Some can't even speak their parents' language, know little about their homeland's history and consider themselves American. Some didn't even learn that they were here without papers until they applied for college and were told by their parents they had no papers.

Republicans who once supported the Dream Act say the nation needs to protect its borders first before immigration reform legislation can be considered. But it shouldn't be an either/or. Both issues can be tackled.

There are as many as 2.5 million young people who might qualify for legal status if the Dream Act passes. In all likelihood, the legislation would benefit closer to one million immigrants because not all are planning on college or the military.
That's even more reason to back the Dream Act. It is narrowly tailored to benefit the brightest, most patriotic of immigrants. They would have to work -- either in school or in the military -- to earn legal status. Isn't that precisely what key GOP senators have been saying should happen?

Florida Sen. George LeMieux, whose appointment to the Senate ends after the lame-duck session, has an opportunity to lead on this issue. He's concerned that the maximum age to qualify for the Dream Act -- 35 -- is too broad. Perhaps that's a point of compromise.

So is border protection, and Democrats, led by Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, have to be willing to do more on that front in exchange for the Dream Act.

GOP senators complained before the Nov. 2 election that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who won a tough race in Nevada thanks to Latino voters' support, played politics with the Dream Act when it was included in a Defense Department authorization bill. Now the bill stands alone - - and still maintains popular support across party lines.

History is on these immigrant children's side. As Bishop Thomas Wenski noted Tuesday during a press conference at St. Thomas University's Miami campus, the young people who would qualify for the Dream Act are no different than the Cuban children who arrived in the 1960s thanks to the church's Pedro Pan program. What kind of brain power would this country enjoy by allowing kids who already have been educated in South Florida schools to serve their country or go on to college?

For the sake of America's economy and security, Congress should do right by these young people.

**Associated Press: Students, activists urge LeMieux to back Dream Act**

November 23, 2010


Student activists and Cuban exiles are calling on U.S. Sen. George LeMieux to vote in favor of the DREAM ACT if it comes to the floor in the remaining days of the lame duck Congress.

Immigration rights advocates are planning a demonstration outside LeMieux's office Wednesday in Miami. Reinaldo Valdez, secretary of Miami's Community Relations Board and exile leader Justo Regalado join students who could benefit under the Dream Act. The bill would allow qualified youth and young adults in the country illegally to earn citizenship if they graduate from college or join the military.

The Dream Act has been proposed unsuccessfully every year since 2002. LeMieux is thought to be one of a few Republican senators who would support it.
Nineteen-year-old José Salcedo took a stand Wednesday that may turn out to be a milestone in his life and in the struggle for legalization by undocumented immigrants.

A keynote speaker at a student rally at Miami Dade College's InterAmerican campus in Little Havana, Salcedo surprised many of his listeners when he revealed he was undocumented.

The Colombia-born Salcedo is no ordinary student. He is Student Government Association president at the InterAmerican campus, student representative on the Board of Trustees for Miami Dade College and a member of the school's Honors College, one of 550 elite students.

Salcedo's disclosure came as some students here and across the country mobilized one day after President Obama promised to push for a DREAM Act vote in the lame-duck Congress.

STALLED

The landmark legislation, stalled in Congress for years, would give green cards to foreign students brought to the country illegally by their parents when they were babies, toddlers or teenagers. Salcedo said his mother brought him here when he was 9 to escape threats and extortion by paramilitary forces.

It is one piece of the comprehensive immigration reform package that many lawmakers now believe is nearly impossible to pass given the Nov. 2 election that gave Republicans control of the House of Representatives and increased their numbers in the Senate as of January.

Salcedo, an international law student, said he decided to reveal his lack of immigration status because he wanted to make a point about how crucial the legislation is to the future of hundreds of thousands of undocumented students like him.

“For 10 years I've been scared to come out of the shadows,” Salcedo told the rally.

“This is the first time I speak in public telling a crowd that I'm undocumented.”

A recent study by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in Washington estimated that slightly more than 2.1 million undocumented youths could be eligible to apply for legal status under the DREAM Act if it passes.

But the study also said that far fewer, perhaps no more than 825,000, would be able to meet the bill's education or military service requirements.

Opponents of the legalization are gearing up to prevent the DREAM Act from becoming law.
In Washington, NumbersUSA and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) warned supporters a vote on the DREAM Act was coming.

NumbersUSA is telling supporters to call their lawmakers and urge them to vote against the DREAM Act if the bill comes up during the lame-duck session.

FAIR issued a statement calling the DREAM Act the “illegal alien student amnesty bill.”

To Salcedo and other undocumented students the DREAM Act is the only path they have to advance their careers in the United States.

Without the DREAM Act, Salcedo can't go very far after he graduates since he can't get a work permit or a green card.

**BIG DREAMS**

But if the DREAM Act passes, Salcedo has big dreams. He wants to become a citizen, join the military and become a politician.

“I would love to join the military and once I come back I would like to run for public office -- mayor of the city of Miami,” Salcedo said. “Start off small and pull my way up.”

The last time the DREAM Act came up for a vote was in September when the legislation surfaced as an amendment to a Defense Authorization bill.

The amendment failed on a procedural vote, but the possibility of reviving the legislation cropped up again Tuesday when President Obama received several Hispanic lawmakers and expressed interest in pushing the bill during the lame-duck session.

**USA Today: Alien Minors Act Could Boost U.S. Military Ranks**

By Alan Gomez  
September 23, 2010  

Immigration advocates have long pushed for the DREAM Act as a way to give children who were brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents a chance to become legal residents and have access to higher education.

The less publicized part of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act is that the Pentagon is pushing for it as a means to staff the armed forces.

Prospects dimmed Tuesday when Senate Republicans prevented a vote on a defense spending bill, because the DREAM Act was attached as an amendment. Senate Democrats vowed to reintroduce it.
When the Department of Defense published its three-year strategic plan, it listed the DREAM Act as a way it could replenish its ranks.

"If we needed to expand the pool of eligible youth, the (DREAM) initiative would be one of several ways to do it," spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said in an e-mail.

Retired Army lieutenant colonel Margaret Stock says a "crisis in military manpower" is looming as the population ages and the economy improves. She says the military struggled to recruit enough people when the economy was booming just a few years ago because people had more employment options.

"DREAM would give us the ability to tap into a huge number of people who grew up in the United States, were educated here, they talk like Americans, they look like Americans and their loyalty lies with America," says Stock, a former West Point professor who teaches political science at the University of Alaska-Anchorage.

The act would allow illegal immigrants who met several requirements — 35 or younger, came to the U.S. before turning 16, have lived here at least five years, no criminal record and have earned a high school diploma — to become conditional residents for up to six years. They would be eligible to become permanent residents if they completed two years of college or two years in the military.

The Migration Policy Institute, a non-partisan research group that supports an overhaul of immigration law, estimates that more than 725,000 people would be eligible immediately for conditional residency. An additional 1.4 million would meet all the requirements except the high school diploma.

The military part of the act worries Jorge Mariscal, director of Latino studies at the University of California-San Diego.

He says many illegal immigrant families are too poor to pay for college.

"Our concern is that people are just going to get trapped for economic reasons into the military," says Mariscal, who otherwise supports the DREAM Act.

Roy Beck, executive director of NumbersUSA, which advocates lower levels of legal and illegal immigration, opposes the DREAM Act because it does not address the larger problems of illegal immigration.

Felipe Matos would be glad to join the military under the DREAM Act.

Born to a single mother in the slums of Brazil, he came to live with relatives in the U.S. at 14. He graduated from high school, got an associate's degree at Miami Dade College and hopes to get a four-year degree and become a high school teacher. He says he wants to repay the country that gave him the opportunity to succeed.
"I have friends who would have loved to join the military," says Matos, 24. "I feel that all of us are just trying to serve and contribute to the only country we know and love."

**Bradenton Herald: Local crowd ‘dreams’ of changes to immigration**

February 21, 2010

Vanessa Robledo graduated in the top 4 percent of her high school class in 2005 and has lived in Florida for more than 10 years.

Like many of her friends, she dreamt of going to college. She wants to be a nurse, to help people.

It is a dream that will be harder for Vanessa to achieve than most, because while her classmates pay about $1,000 a semester, she must pay out-of-state tuition, about the same amount, for a single class.

Vanessa isn’t alone. There are approximately 300,000 immigrant children with no legal status in the United States and no way for them to become documented residents.

Vanessa was one of several speakers at Saturday’s rally for immigration reform at Our Lady of The Angels Catholic Community church.

Vanessa calls herself a dreamer and she means that in more ways than one. The word is a reference to the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (the DREAM Act) introduced in the U.S. Senate in March 2009.

The bill would allow students like Vanessa the opportunity for conditional permanent residency if they obtain a bachelor’s degree or higher, or serve in the U.S. military.

Vanessa, who can only afford to go to college part-time, spoke quietly of patience and hope.

“I have dreams,” she said, “and even if I’m going slow as a turtle to reach them — I’ll get there.”

Jim Delgado, former president of the Latin Chamber of Commerce, spoke on the need for change.

“Enough of us being in the service industry; being in the fields; in construction; enough of us being maids. We need to educate our children. Own our own businesses,” he said.

Delgado spoke about a 16-year-old Honduran boy, oblivious to the fact that he was an illegal immigrant.

“He grew up playing PlayStation and doing well in school,” Delgado said. The boy was deported to Honduras, a country foreign to him. “Thank God he had family there.”
All of this was put forth Saturday in English and in Spanish, amid the sounds of traffic and a water fountain, birds and babies, ebbing and flowing between bursts of prayer and song.

The Rev. James Golden took his place in front of the crowd, with a translator, near the end of the ceremony.

“I was born into a segregated society,” he said, “and spent the early years of my education at segregated schools. Immigration laws can be another terrible way to divide and segregate.”

After the ceremony, in a quieter moment, he continued: “I’m glad that I was able to be here and be supportive. I look forward to becoming more aware of the status of the DREAM Act how it will help. At this point I can’t see any way it hurts.”

Tallahassee Democrat: Editorial—Dare to DREAM
February 9, 2010

Camila Hornung was a student on the dean's list at Florida State University when her dream of completing her education was interrupted by her family's deportation to their native Peru in 2008. Her family's legal documentation expired in 2003, and after their motion for political asylum was denied, and Ms. Hornung's dream of higher education in the United States was deferred - permanently.

Ms. Hornung is one of some 65,000 children of undocumented immigrants who, through no fault of their own, are denied access to higher education - and the potential to become productive permanent citizens - under current immigration law.

Today, students from FSU will join four south Florida community college students as they march toward the Capitol - one segment of the Trail of DREAMS march from the Freedom Tower in Miami to Washington, D.C. Their goal is passage in Congress of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, which ultimately would allow the children of undocumented immigrants to obtain U.S. citizenship through completion of a post-secondary degree or service in our nation's armed forces.

"A lot of people don't have the opportunity to hear these stories," said Jose Manuel Godinez Samperio, a second-year law student at FSU who has been active in immigration rights advocacy since 2005, when he was a student at New College in Sarasota.

"They've never heard another student say, 'Yes, I am an immigrant, and I can't walk around freely because I risk getting deported.'"

The DREAM Act of 2009 could abate that risk.

Under the current form of the act, the child of an undocumented immigrant must be between the ages of 12 and 35 at the time of the act's passage to qualify. He or she must have arrived in the United States before age 16, have lived here for five consecutive years, be of good moral
character and obtain a high-school diploma or GED. Upon completion of his or her secondary education, the student can pursue U.S. citizenship through a series of steps: temporary residency, allowing them six years to complete at least an associate's degree or two years of service in the U.S. armed forces; making application for permanent residency, and ultimately, applying for full citizenship.

The process is more than political hot-button legislation. For the four student walkers and the students they represent "in the shadows," it is rife with the constant fear of being deported because they were brought to this country by family members who sought a better life for their children.

"It is not something that only affects us, it affects every community... It's also Haitians, Asian-Americans," said Jecid Acosta, a sophomore at FSU. Drawing on Ms. Hornung's story, Mr. Acosta pointed out that American taxpayers lose by leaving the children of undocumented immigrants to languish after they've completed high school.

"We're losing possible professionals: teachers, lawyers, biologists. It affects our production as a community and as a country," he said.

Mr. Acota's observations are seconded by political heavyweights including Sens. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Richard Lugar, R-Ind., who were among those to introduce the latest version of the bill. The DREAM Act, which has been considered in various forms since 2001, has drawn bipartisan support in Congress, yet discourse over how the United States should address this and other pieces of immigration reform have derailed its passage over the years. It's passage faces another setback with the loss of Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and the retirement of former Florida Republican Senator Mel Martinez.

This year, four honors students - walking, talking, wise reminders of the American dream - are poised to remind our leaders to consider immigration reform piece by delicate piece. The DREAM Act is one piece that has the potential to maximize brainpower that taxpayers have already paid for through the support of public education. It's time to consider cashing in.

Sun-Sentinel: Sharing a DREAM; Students push for the DREAM Act as a path to get degrees, citizenship
September 8, 2009

Like most college students, María Alejandra Madriñán dreams about her future.

She wants to graduate from college and become a lawyer. But first she must overcome her own legal challenge: living in the United States as an undocumented immigrant.

Madriñán is pinning her hopes on the Dream Act, a bipartisan bill that would give youngsters like her a chance at earning a college degree and a legal path toward citizenship.

Several versions of the Dream Act have failed to pass Congress, but a network of college
students and grassroots organizations has taken up the cause of undocumented youngsters. They are promoting the Dream Act and other student-immigrant issues on social networks like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Some of these young activists are like Madriñán, who arrived from Colombia with her parents at age 7, on a tourist visa. The family applied for political asylum but the request was recently denied. Meanwhile, Madriñán graduated from high school and enrolled in Broward College, where her undocumented status prevents her from receiving financial aid.

"In our county there are many students who are afraid to talk about this subject," said Madriñán, 20, who lives in Fort Lauderdale. "But I am tired of being afraid."

Instead, she got active in SWER (Students Working for Equal Rights), a Miami-based group created in 2007 to promote passage of the Dream Act. Madriñán and several Broward College classmates have organized SWER's first Broward chapter.

"What's important is that we're organized and we're working toward making the Dream Act a reality," she said.

The bill would give temporary legal status to undocumented immigrants headed for college or the military, qualifying them for federal student loans and in-state tuition rates. Upon graduating or serving two years, students could apply for permanent residency.

The proposal faces opposition from those who are against granting illegal immigrants any benefits. Others argue the state has already invested in these youngsters by educating them in public schools.

"These children don't have to go anywhere, this is their home," said Barbara Cohen Pippin, a Broward College administrator. "But what's happening is that we're letting talented people go."

Activists estimate about 5,000 undocumented students graduate from Florida high schools each year, but only 5 percent go on to college. Nationwide, an estimated 65,000 high school graduates would benefit from the Dream Act.

One of them is Laura Pérez, 24, from Miramar. She entered the United States legally and is in the process of applying for U.S. residency. While she waits, she attends Broward College and pays the out-of-state rate, $306.70 a credit compared with $87.95 for in-state students. She has had to drop out of college to save money for her tuition.

She too has become active in SWER.

"I have faith in this group," said Pérez, who is studying to become a biologist. "I believe that you must speak up if you want to be heard."

**Miami Herald: Editorial—Pass DREAM Act**

*June 26, 2009*
As the Obama administration and Congress look toward reforming immigration law to deal with the estimated 12 million people living in the United States without proper documentation, there's one fix that warrants immediate attention: the DREAM Act.

This proposed law, which has failed in Congress year after year, would give high-achieving children of undocumented immigrants the opportunity to stay in this country and go on to military service or college, paying in-state tuition and able to qualify for scholarships and other financial aid. It would provide a path to legal residency for young people who had no say where they should be raised.

Many of them don't speak their native language well or write it correctly, yet U.S. immigration policy now requires that they be deported. Some of these students arrived so young that they do not know they are undocumented until they apply for college and are asked to submit verification of their immigration status.

On Tuesday, about 500 such students from across the nation went to Washington to take part in a symbolic graduation ceremony to urge Congress to support the DREAM Act. A rally the same day at Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus stressed the importance of tapping into the creativity of America's next generation. Faith leaders, business organizations, labor unions and civil- and immigrant-rights groups have come together to push for this sensible change in the law.

The case of Juan and Alex Gomez, students in South Florida whose Colombian parents were deported a couple years ago, stands out as an example of why the DREAM Act is needed. Juan is now studying at Georgetown on scholarship and Alex is studying and working in South Florida, thanks to a special temporary law that Congress passed to keep them in the country.

There are an estimated 65,000 such high-achieving students each year who hit a wall once they graduate from high school and find they can't go to college unless they are admitted as "foreign" students, paying exorbitantly high tuition. About 5,000 are in Florida. One of those students is Walter Lara, whose family moved to Miami from Argentina when he was 3 years old. He graduated from MDC Honors College with a computer animation degree in 2007. Now he's to be deported July 6.

Camilo Yepes: Studies biology at Palm Beach State College and hopes to be a veterinarian. "The full name of the proposed legislation is the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act. Among its supporters is Camilo Yepes of West Palm Beach. ‘I’ve been here since I was 2,’ said Yepes, 21, originally of Colombia. ‘I grew up just like other kids around me. I graduated high school from South Tech Academy in Boynton Beach. But then,
all of a sudden, you don’t have the same future your friends have.’… Yepes, who studies biology at PBSC [Palm Beach State College] and wants to be a veterinarian, graduated from high school in 2006. But he is in just his second year of higher education because high tuition rates have slowed his studies. He said young people who would benefit from the Dream Act ‘aren’t asking for financial aid. They are just asking for what other kids who live here get. All they want is a chance.’” [Palm Beach Post, 8/8/10]

**Manuel Guerra:** Finished an adult education program and hopes to enter a Catholic seminary. “Manuel Guerra, 26, of Indiantown said he definitely would be one of those. Guerra said he came to the U.S. from Guanajuato, Mexico, in 2000. ‘I had a sister here and she told me she knew of a school where I could go and study and learn English,’ he said. He enrolled first in South Fork High School and then Martin County’s adult education program, but almost quit. ‘They told me even if I finished high school, I wouldn’t be able to go to college,’ he recalled. ‘So what was the use?’ But he said his teachers and other mentors pushed him and he finally graduated from the adult education program in 2006. ‘I come from a large family and I’m the first to ever graduate from high school,’ he said. But he has not been able to study since and instead works blue-collar jobs. If the Dream Act passes, he hopes to study for a particular white-collar job: He will enter a Catholic seminary and become a priest. He said he applied years ago and the Diocese of Palm Beach was interested. ‘But then they told me they had to follow the same protocols as anyone else,’ Guerra said. ‘I couldn’t do it because I didn’t have my papers.’” [Palm Beach Post, 8/8/10]

**Luis [last name not provided]:** “I’m much more American than I am Peruvian. I don’t even speak Spanish well. I am basically an undocumented American.” “Luis, 24, originally from Peru, came to the U.S. when he was 3, graduated from John I. Leonard High School in Greenacres in 2005 and has been studying at PBSC part time since 2006. ‘I’m much more American than I am Peruvian,’ he said. ‘I don’t even speak Spanish well. I am basically an ‘undocumented American.’ ‘If I finish college, I can get a job where I’ll be paying a lot more taxes to the government and it will help the economy. This would work for everybody.’” [Palm Beach Post, 8/8/10]

**Erika Grispino:** Came to the U.S. to escape political persecution in Argentina. “When Argentina native Erika Grispino tells people she’s an ‘American,’ she has to add an asterisk at the end of her sentence because of her immigration status. ‘It feels like I don’t belong here and I don’t belong (in Argentina) anymore. I feel insecurity,’ the 21-year-old said… Grispino has lived in Collier County legally for seven years but is not eligible for permanent residency or citizenship under current immigration laws. When she was 14, her mother brought her to the United States from Argentina to escape political persecution. ‘I had no one else to live with so I had to follow my mom,’ she said. They overstayed their travel visas and worked with lawyers to apply for asylum but missed an important deadline and could no longer qualify. An immigration judge later granted them a ‘withholding of removal.’… Because she’s not a citizen, she is ineligible for in-state tuition rates, and without a Social Security number she doesn’t qualify for any financial aid. She works full time to pay for her current college classes, taking just two at a time because that’s all she can afford… Despite this, she plans to graduate in May with honors from Edison State College with a degree in paralegal studies. After that, she hopes to earn a
bachelor’s degree in psychology from Florida Gulf Coast University.” [Naples Daily News, 7/30/10]

---

**Story: Belle**

My name is Belle, and I live in Florida. I first came to the United States from Brazil at the age fourteen, in 2004. I was brought here unwillingly by my mother, whom I always had issues with and who always beat me and abused me as a kid. My sister (nine years older than me) was already living here for the previous five years, and after an almost-successful attempted suicide on my part when I was 13, she convinced my mother to let me come and stay with her.

Of course as a fourteen year old I knew nothing of documents or legal status or anything of the sort, so I was brought here and here I stayed, without even realizing my given time in the country had expired and I was then considered an undocumented student. Since I moved away from my mother's house, I have considerably improved, and the suicidal thoughts rarely ever came back.

Now, five years have passed and they are gone. I realized that the abuse I went through as a child messed with my emotions and kept me from reaching my full potential as a person, and coming to the United States has helped me slowly free myself and become my own person, like I would not have been able to do if I had stayed in Brazil.

After living my entire teenage years in this country, I know no other home, and there's no way I can NOT consider myself an American. I have adapted to the culture and have successfully learned the language and sometimes can speak it even better than natives.

I have always been an intelligent and successful student, school was never hard for me, and I recently graduated High School with honors. My DREAM has always been to be able to go to college and major in psychology, so I can help kids who are what I once was and give them something I never had the opportunity to have, which is the support and the knowledge they are not alone in the world, and yes, there is a chance, and yes, their lives can be better, and that suicide is not the last resort.

On the side, I'm completely infatuated with acting and learning more about human emotion and the intricate parts of our brains. I also hope to take more Acting classes on the side when I go to college and become a performer.

Unfortunately I have not been able to pursue those dreams as of yet, thanks to my legal status in the country, I am unable to drive, to work, or to enroll in college like I've always dreamed of.

One of my biggest fears is growing up to be a nobody. I've always been a persistent, hard worker, and I've never given up on something I've wanted before, so although it's been very hard on me, especially since I graduated High School, I refused to go back to my country of origin, where I know there will be little opportunity for me to grow and become someone successful.
For the longest time I thought I was alone in my situation - I knew there were others like me, out there somewhere, but I never heard of them, or knew of anyone who was in the same situation as me. It is always harder to go through something when you find yourself alone, and many times I've cried and felt desperation, and almost lost hope. Ever since I found out about my legal status, I've been looking and searching for ways to make it right, but after years of searching, it was all in vain, for it turned out there was no way for me to become legalized in the country, other than marrying someone - which I strongly disagreed to do, because if I'm gonna do something, I'll do it right, and not through a lie. I had almost completely lost hope, until just recently I heard that the DREAM Act had actually been re-introduced into the Congress, and that gave me all the hope I needed. The Act will change not only my life, but thousands of undocumented students' lives, drastically. It is the opportunity we've all been looking for, the opportunity we all deserve. We the students have suffered enough because of this country's broken Immigration System, and I have high hopes this is all about to change.

It is a sad thing to hear that we've been shunned and looked down on for so long, because of our legal status. Most of us have lived here for so long, we know no other home, we can call ourselves more American than anything else, yet we are constantly told we don't belong here. We've been here all along, but it's like we don't even exist.

I hope with all my might that I'm able to do all I can, and a little more, to help America realize what it must do at this point. This is the Land of the Free, the Land of the Just! It will be a sad day in the history of this country, the day they kick out several of their own children. For we are the children of America as well!

Pass the DREAM Act!

[Source: Change.org]

**Story: Dan**

My name is Dan, I’m 20 years old and I currently live in Florida. I was born in Colombia and came to the U.S. on a tourist visa at the age of 11. At the time I thought I was just taking a vacation and visiting my relatives that had been living here, legally, for many years. My intention was to try and think about something other than the great tragedy I had suffered just 2 weeks before. It turns that going back was not an option because there would be nobody there waiting for me. My father died 2 weeks before I came here and my mother had died 3 years prior to that when I was 8. The only family I had left was my sister who is 5 years older than me. I needed someone to look after me, and that someone was a permanent resident living here for many years. She was my aunt but she has now become a like a mother to me.Â Because of technicalities I wasn’t able to adjust my status and I am the only member of my family without legal status.

I am a part-time college student majoring in Finance and I have a 4.0 GPA. I wish I could go to school full time but because Florida charges me as an Out-of-State student, I have to pay close to
$1000 per class at a community college. Therefore one or two classes is all I can afford. I’ve had to turn down scholarships and job offers due to my status. I often find myself lying to my closest friends every time they ask me about my life. Why don’t I have a job, car, or even a license. How come you’re not going to school full time? It’s frustrating not being able to just let it all out but I’m afraid they won’t understand since they never had to go through what I’m going right now.

I am not asking for a handout. All I want is the opportunity to earn the things that I want, make my dreams come true and to be able to give back to my community and this country which I consider my own.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Liliana**

My story is no different from that of many other Dreamer students out there in search of a better future for them and their families.

My name is Liliana and I am 29 years old. I came to this country from Mexico in 1996 when I was only 14 years old. Without speaking a word of English my parents enrolled me in a public school in Los Angeles where I started taking ESL courses as well as remedial classes, the remedial courses were not because of my academic level but because I wasn’t fluent in English. By 10th grade I was already out of ESL and enrolled in English Honors, by 11th and 12th I was taking AP courses in many subjects including English Literature and was entered into the “Gifted Student” program at school. I got involved in sports, clubs, community service and graduated in 2000 with honors as well as many other special awards including one for special achievement in the English category because according to my school (Birmingham High School, Van Nuys, CA) no other recent immigrant student in the history of the school had ever been able to break so many barriers and had moved forward so fast academically. During my teenage years, I was involved with a local church with which I served food to the homeless, I preached on the streets of Hollywood and Santa Monica Blvd in Los Angeles to AIDS patients and drug addicts, visited homes for the elderly etc… By the time I was done with school I realized that despite the fact that I had “broken down” many barriers during high school, life outside of school would be more difficult as I didn’t have a “legal status” that would allow me to attend college and obtain my degree in Journalism as I had always dreamed…

Almost as a miracle, a professor at my school learned about my situation and “somehow” helped me enroll at Cal State University Northridge. Because I was not “legal” I wasn’t able to get grants or scholarships and my parents could not afford to pay for my tuition but I was very driven so I started working a night shift in order to pay for my college and I would go to school
in the morning. By this time I was 18 years old and my dad started a process of labor certification through his work but due to a very broken immigration system, the process took many years and at the end of 6 long years he still was not approved.

Eventually I moved to Miami where I transferred to Florida International University. Eventually I got an executive position at a European company that started sponsoring my own labor certification, this was in 2005, again our very broken immigration system came into play as today I still haven’t been granted my green card because there are not enough visas available! Today, my economic situation has improved due to very hard work but despite the many thousands of dollars that I have paid to the USCIS as well as lawyers my case is still pending and I have been victim of visa retrogressions more than once which means I could still wait another 5 or 6 years before I can get my green card. In the meantime I have managed to keep my job and have kept growing in my company to the point where I was offer to relocate to Switzerland, but funny enough, my dream is to stay in this country that I love so much and that I consider my own too!

My dream is to get my green card so I can go back to school and finish the five classes that I have left in order to obtain my degree in Journalism and eventually get my Masters. I want to continue contributing to the growth and economy of this country through my hard work as well as through different types of social service (homeless, elderly, orphanages, local churches, hospitals, food drives etc.) just like I have done since I moved to this country 14 years ago.

Today, after so many years of waiting all I can do is wonder if my dream will ever come true.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

Letter: Gaby Pacheco

Dear Mr. President,

I am a member of the first graduating class of Felix Varela Senior High which is located in Miami, Florida. I had attended school with my native-born friends. Like them, I participated in activities, field trips, dances, and felt the pain of losing a classmate.

It was around 10th grade that I realized my future after high school would not be the same as those of my peers even though I worked just as hard to obtain excellent grades. I understood that I was different. For over ten years I had been in hiding. For days I thought about coming out of the closet. I wanted to tell the whole world who I really was. I thought, "How would this affect the relationships with my friends?" "How would I be judged?" "How will my parents be
affected?" I thought about it day and night, hoping that someone would help and wondering about the others, like me, out there.

It took a lot of courage, but one day in 10th grade I told everyone: I was an undocumented immigrant.

My teachers couldn't believe it. Some tried to help me, while others mocked me. I still remember one of my teachers yelling across the room, "Hey Pocahontas, why don't you get married?" Sadly, that is the only pathway to citizenship that ever seemed to be available, even after consultations with prestigious immigration lawyers.

Coming into the light had its benefits. Once I was out, I was able to explain my situation to college admissions personnel. In fact, there were several other undocumented students at my school who came to me and shared their secret. One made me promise to help him if I found a way to go to college. One day, I met a Miami Dade College recruiter who helped me enter college. Since then, I've earned three college degrees from MDC, and have represented my alma mater at both local and state levels as the Student Government Association president.

Still, coming out of the closet had its consequences. On July 26, 2006 there was a raid conducted at 6 a.m. in my home, and my parents and sister were detained. Fortunately, I acted quickly and was able to avoid detention. At first, I thought it was a mistake--a coincidence that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had come to my house. It wasn't. My family had to suffer consequences of my decision come out and become a human rights and student advocate. ICE hit me where it hurt the most.

Even though my family is still at risk of being deported, I have worked with organizations that fight for immigrant rights and have kept my family close to me. I know I can count on my friends at the Florida Immigrant Coalition, Students Working for Equal Rights, and Miami Dade College to be the support I need in moments of weakness. Still, Mr. President, you recently told La Opinión "I am a strong ally, like none other has been in the Oval office." If that's true then why are immigrant youth like Saad Nabeel still being deported, and why are our families and communities still being torn apart? Why do so many of us have to live in fear?

What is fear and how do we conquer it? Earlier this year, myself and three other immigrant youth decided to try and conquer our fears by walking 1,500 miles from Miami to Washington, D.C. in support of the DREAM Act. On this walk, the Trail of DREAMs, we conquered many fears. We have heard too many cases of people being detained for no apparent reason. Police are interrogating people and asking questions about immigration status because they have entered into 287(g) agreements with ICE, and are now acting as ICE agents. Once, we were stopped by the police--something that, in many cities, means potential deportation. Without hesitation, we calmly spoke to the police officer, told him what we were doing, and proudly handed him information about the walk. How did I do it without getting deported? Well, in part, because we are not alone. We are together in this struggle. We walk often with shirts that say "UNDOCUMENTED," and we do it proudly--because we are sending an important message: "We are humans too, and we cannot be ignored and exploited anymore."
When we finally arrived in Washington D.C. after months of walking, we tried to meet with you, President Obama, but you refused to do so because we were undocumented. What kind of "strong ally" is this? It is time that you stepped up for us Mr. President and worked to pass the DREAM Act. It is too late to pass comprehensive immigration reform, this year, but we still have a chance at passing the DREAM Act before the November elections. The DREAM Act is one step towards just and humane immigration reform. One we pass it that will empower hundreds of thousands of immigrant youth to start working to better the lives of their family members. That's why it's time that you stepped up to help us make the DREAM Act happen, now. Tomorrow, you're giving a back to school speech. Why not mention the DREAM Act as an integral component of having a more educated workforce that will contribute to our economy? Or, better yet, mention the tens of thousands of immigrant youth who will not be able to attend college this semester because Congress has failed to pass the DREAM Act.

You made calls to several Republican Senators for comprehensive immigration reform, why not do the same for the DREAM Act? Here in Florida, after months of phone calls, letters, and faxes immigrant youth leaders finally met with Sen. George Lemieux (R-FL) who signaled an openness towards moving forward on the DREAM Act. Why not let him know you're serious about moving the DREAM Act forward this year? Even better, why not call the Democratic Senators who voted against cloture for the DREAM Act in 2007--like Mark Pryor (D-AR), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Max Baucus (D-MT), Jon Tester (D-MT), Kent Conrad (D-ND), and Byron Dorgan (D-ND)--and ask them to vote in favor of it, this year?

This is the only country we know as our home, Mr. President, and we're not leaving. We are Americans in every sense except for the piece of paper that recognizes us as such. For justice, for human rights, for the economy, for America, please, Mr. President, help us pass the DREAM Act.

Sincerely,
Gaby Pacheco

Letter: Carlos Roa Jr.

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Carlos and I'm a 23 year old undocumented immigrant from Caracas, Venezuela. I want to legalize my immigration status in this country through the passage of DREAM Act this year. For too long have I lived in the U.S. without papers. It has been over 20 years, now. I want to legalize my immigration status in order to fulfill my dreams of becoming a young professional in architecture.

There are obstacles in my daily life that make it extraordinarily difficult to pursue a career in architecture. Fortunately, because of my determination to continue my studies after graduating high school in 2005, I'm currently a student in Miami Dade College. It has not been without great difficulty. For many years it felt as if all the potential I developed in high school was for nothing.
I am the perfect example of other students in similar situations whose voices have been silenced by the fact that we are not truly accounted for. We are afraid of speaking up because doing so might affect our immigration status in this country and possibly even lead to deportation. I myself felt this way for several years, but after dealing with my status for so long, I now consider it a duty to speak up for myself and for other youth in my shoes.

I remember that dark and cold feeling of shame, fear and hopelessness.

After the death of my mother--the person I was closest to in my life--I'd constantly ask myself what is to come of me? Where is my life going? If it wasn't for her strength and desire to see me succeed, I would not have devoted myself to this cause in her memory. If it wasn't for her love--her incredible affection transcending my existence--I would not have been able to conquer the fear of being undocumented. My love of humanity has manifested itself through the fight for immigrant rights.

That's why I was one of four undocumented youth that participated on a 1500 mile walk from Miami, FL to Washington D.C. known as the Trail of Dreams.

I encourage you to present this letter U.S. Congress, Mr. President, so that the voice of one undocumented immigrant echoes the voice of millions. I hope that the Congressional Hispanic Caucus can have the vision to push for the DREAM Act this year. It would be be a dream for so many families, fathers and mothers just like mine, to see their children on the path towards legalization and professional degrees.

I consider it a colossal loss for society that young Americans, such as myself, find it extremely difficult to continue our studies after high school graduation. We are unable to work legally, unable to join the Armed Forces, unable to legally obtain a driving license, and unable to apply or receive most scholarships. Economically supporting our families under these circumstances is impossible.

Our legalization would greatly contribute to our communities and make this country a better place. As young professionals we would open businesses, create jobs, pay taxes, and play a much stronger role rehabilitating the economy, just like any other hardworking U.S. citizen.

Please give us the opportunity to contribute to the only country we know as our home, Mr. President. Please step up and help us pass the DREAM Act, this year.

Sincerely,

Carlos Roa, Jr.
A Kennesaw State University student whose arrest and near deportation prompted a statewide debate about illegal immigration may be headed back to jail, if only for a few hours.

A Cobb County jury on Thursday found Jessica Colotl, 22, guilty on a charge of driving with no license. A conviction on the misdemeanor charge requires a mandatory minimum sentence of 48 hours in jail, with credit for time served. Colotl has already spent 45.5 hours in the Cobb County clink as a result of her March 30 arrest, so she would have to serve a minimum of 2 and a half hours. The maximum penalty under the law is 12 months in jail.

"I don't agree with the verdict, but I have to go along with what they reached," Colotl said after the trial ended.

Cobb County State Court Judge Kathryn Tanksley deferred sentencing on the case until 11 a.m. Monday; however, an appeal that defense attorneys plan to file would delay sentencing until the state Supreme Court has a chance to review the verdict.

Colotl was exonerated of the charge that put her on the radar of campus police -- a misdemeanor charge of impeding the flow of traffic by idling in a parking lot as she waited for a space to open up.

Jerome Lee, Colotl's attorney, said his client should have been found not guilty of driving without a license because she recently obtained a learner's permit. State law says that a person facing a charge of driving with no license shall be found not guilty if they show up to court with a driver's license in hand.

Cobb County Assistant Solicitor Rachel Bearman successfully argued that a learner's permit does not suffice as a driver's license under the law. She questioned whether the permit was valid, telling the judge "they have to lay a foundation for that, and the only person who could say that is the Department of Driver Services."

Colotl's learning permit will be suspended for six months as a result of the conviction, her lawyers said.

Kennesaw State University Police Sgt. Kevin Kimsey testified that after he stopped Colotl, she fished around in her vehicle's center console and glove box as if looking for a license. She was "adamant" that she had a Mexican driver's license, but told the officer she might have left it in another purse, Kimsey said. He gave her until the following day at noon to show up at the police station with the license.
Colotl showed up at 11:55 a.m., saying she still couldn't find it. Her attorneys later conceded that she never had one.

Colotl was jailed and then handed over to the custody of federal immigration officers as part of a local-federal partnership called 287(g), which allows Cobb County deputies to check the immigration status of inmates. But after 37 days of being held in several immigration detention centers, Colotl was granted a yearlong deportation deferment to finish her studies.

Colotl said she is on track to graduate next spring with a bachelor's degree in political science and a minor in French.

"Everything is still up in the air, but something positive will happen and I will get to stay here," Colotl said.

Colotl, a native of Mexico whose parents brought her into the country as a child, considers herself and others like her to be "Americans without papers."

Hank McCue, a curious Cobb County resident who attended the trial, said Colotl should have to followed the rules to emigrate legally like his own parents did in 1929.

"The real question is, what are we doing here?" McCue said. "We are paying jurors and we have a judge sitting here and we are spending all this time. She is an illegal immigrant."

**Mundo Hispanico: Todavía se puede soñar**
By Linda Carolina Pérez
September 28, 2010

El DREAM Act, que legalizaría a millones de estudiantes indocumentados, tiene muchas posibilidades de convertirse en ley, pero no este año.

Así lo considera el analista político Darrell M. West, vicepresidente y director de Estudios de Gobierno del Brookings Institute, una organización dedicada a hacer investigaciones independientes.

“El DREAM Act es una medida popular, que tiene que ver con los jóvenes y el futuro y está arraigada en el sueño americano”, aseguró West.

Este año, sin embargo, cualquier intento por debatir el proyecto de ley que convertiría en residentes temporales a jóvenes que se hayan graduado de una secundaria estadounidense y tengan intenciones de ir a la universidad o enlistarse en el Ejército posiblemente será bloqueado.
“Estamos en un ambiente político muy polarizado y los republicanos no van a permitir que los demócratas tengan alguna victoria legislativa que los haga ver bien en las elecciones (generales de noviembre)”, dijo West.

“Pero después de las elecciones, cuando ambos partidos estén más balanceados, el DREAM Act tiene más posibilidades”, agregó el investigador.

Entretanto, en los estados se seguirán presentando propuestas con miras a negar el acceso a la universidad a los indocumentados, de acuerdo con West.

“Es el problema que trae la falta de acción a nivel federal. Los estados están empezando a tomar sus propias decisiones”, manifestó.

Es el caso de Georgia, en donde un comité recomendó negarle a los indocumentados el acceso a las universidades que por problemas de sobrecupo tengan que rechazar a solicitantes con buen desempeño académico que se encuentran legalmente en el país.

La sugerencia forma parte de las recomendaciones que hará el comité nombrado por la Junta de Regentes, entidad que regula la educación superior en Georgia, para tratar el tema de los indocumentados en el sistema de universidades públicas del estado.

Las universidades que se verían afectadas por esta recomendación son University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, Medical College of Georgia y Georgia College & State University.

Para West, este es un claro ejemplo de una decisión con poca visión de futuro.

“No tiene sentido hacer más difícil a un joven indocumentado la posibilidad de obtener las habilidades que necesita para ser útil a la sociedad”, indicó el experto.

“La productividad del país podría bajar a largo plazo si se evita que millones de personas que pueden contribuir a la economía tengan acceso a la universidad”, agregó.

Opinan los estudiantes

Mientras que académicos y activistas ven con preocupación las medidas que se podrían tomar en Georgia, algunos estudiantes apenas se enteran de que si no tienen papeles el sueño de ir a la universidad puede verse truncado.

Así le sucedió a Paola Flores, una estudiante de middle school. Hasta hace poco, Flores no sabía que por ser indocumentada tendría que pagar matrícula para extranjeros si deseaba estudiar en una universidad pública de Georgia.

Esta colegiatura es casi tres veces más costosa que la que pagan los estudiantes locales.
Como Flores, son muchos los estudiantes que no saben las limitaciones que tienen para ingresar a la universidad, según Danny García, un estudiante de biología de Kennessaw State University quien sirvió como voluntario del evento ‘La Universidad es Posible’ del Hispanic Scholarship Fund, que se llevó a cabo el 25 de septiembre.

“Algunos no saben que la situación en la que están (indocumentados) les va a prevenir de entrar a la universidad”, indicó García.

“Cuando se dan cuenta pierden un poco la motivación, pero yo les dijo que yo conozco muchachos que no tienen papeles y logran entrar a la universidad. Trato de mantenerlo con la esperanza”, dijo García, de 22 años.

Al evento asistieron 880 padres y estudiantes, de acuerdo con el Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

A los asistentes les hablaron de cómo preparar la solicitud de admisión a la universidad o cómo conseguir ayuda financiera, entre otros temas.

Para García, eventos como este son importante para los jóvenes hispanos, sin importar si tienen o no documentos.

“Yo soy voluntario aquí porque a mí me hubiera gustado tener a una persona que me guiara en todo este proceso”, dijo el nicaragüense.

“Cuando yo llegué aquí (a los 12 años) mis padres no sabían nada de cómo funcionaba el sistema educativo y a mí la ayuda nunca me llegó”, agregó el estudiante.

En cuanto a la propuesta de prohibir el acceso de los indocumentados a algunas universidades, García se mostró decepcionado.

“Me duele mucho que les quiten la oportunidad a los indocumentados”, indicó. “Yo conozco muchos que trabajan duro para graduarse y al final lo logran, pero es muy difícil”, agregó.

La Junta de Regentes decidirá en octubre si adopta o no las recomendaciones del comité. Si se aprueban, los cambios entrarían en vigor en el semestre de otoño de 2011.

**Atlanta Journal-Constitution: A Dream come true**
September 27, 2010

The best way to judge a country is to examine how it treats its children, even those whose parents arrive on the nation’s shores by boat or border crossing. Our country is diminished by immigration policies that deny educational opportunities to children to punish their parents. Every educated American is a boon to our nation’s economy, health and future.
My own grandparents were immigrants from Italy who eked out a living. Yet, all their grandchildren are college-educated, taxpaying citizens. And that advancement is owed to one thing: higher education.

Yet, Georgia is considering barring illegal immigrants from attending Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia and any other public college that doesn’t have space to admit all qualified applicants.

On a national level, the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, which broadens access to higher education for immigrant children and puts them on a path to citizenship, is in limbo.

While the Supreme Court ruled in 1982 that illegal immigrants are entitled to a public school education, nothing in the ruling addresses their college status. Now, states retain the power to determine whether or not to admit illegal aliens into college and what to charge them. (Georgia law requires illegal immigrants to pay out-of-state tuition.)

The DREAM Act grants conditional status for six years to students who arrived in this country before age 16, lived here at least five consecutive years, graduated from high school and are of good character.

During that six years, the student would have to graduate from a two-year community college or complete at least two years of a four-year degree, or serve in the U.S. military to qualify to apply for permanent resident status.

“It represents a path out of poverty and a path to success. It is an investment our country should make for all children,” said Marielena Hincapié, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center, during a conference call on the DREAM Act last week.

“I believe it is not only the right thing to do for these students, it is also the right thing to do for our country,” said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who also participated in the conference call.

“In this economy, we need everyone trained and prepared. These children were brought here by their parents, often as infants without making any choice of their own,” said Duncan.

The DREAM Act passed twice out of the Senate Judiciary Committee and cleared the full Senate in 2006 with the support of 11 Republicans, all of whom remain in office, said Duncan, pledging his backing and that of President Barack Obama to its passage.

Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University, said he has met hundreds of undocumented students in his state and has come to admire their drive and their abilities. While America is hiring talent from abroad, it’s denying an education to promising students within its own borders, he said.
“You want to tap into that talent. My own view of the fairness doctrine is that high achievement, particularly by children, ought to be recognized, regardless of the national political immigration debate,” he said.

Crow said DREAM Act passage by Congress “would send a tremendous signal that individuals with talent who have worked their way into successful pathways are now pulled out of the bigger immigration debate and their lives can move forward while immigration issues are resolved over the longer term.”

John J. DeGioia, president of Georgetown University, echoed his Arizona colleague: “These are young people who aren’t here by their own choice. They have played by our rules. They have succeeded by our rules. For everything we stand for as a people, they should be able to continue their development in this country.”

One of the students caught in this political tussle is Miriam Torres, a 20-year-old honor student from Roswell, who dreams of attending Tech to study biomedical engineering. But because she came here with her parents illegally from Mexico as a child, Torres is not eligible for most grants, loans or scholarships. So, she can’t afford Tech’s tuition and may return to Mexico to fulfill her college dreams.

In the meantime, American companies are recruiting biomedical engineers abroad. State Sen. Don Balfour, R-Snellville, says that, while sympathetic to Torres, “… she can’t legally get a job here. We are going to educate her for what reason?”

For starters, so we don’t have to import our engineers from India and China. And because Americans don’t punish children for the mistakes of their parents.

**Story: Diana**

I am about to turn 27, I have lived here for 18 years, but time is running out quick for me. Though I have not had the privilege of finishing college because of my immigration status, I have pushed forward and tried to learn as much as I could and can from the people around me who were and are willing to teach me, and I continue to try to contribute to the society and community around me.

For a long time I was afraid of doing many things for fear of being deported, but I have finally taken this to heart "a life lived in fear is a life unlived". I refuse to give in and cheat the system by marrying in order to obtain legal status, but I also refuse to continue to hold myself back and so God willing I will soon fulfill my dream of opening my own business. This is the best way I can think of to honor and contribute to this wonderful country that I consider my own, because regardless of what a piece of paper says, I have always believed that it is what you feel that matters most. I hold no grudges, for I have had opportunities here that I would have never had in my birth country.
My only and dearest wish is that I am allowed to continue to show even more how truly thankful I am for those opportunities. To anyone who may read this and who find themselves in the same situation: Don't let fear stop you, life must go on always, even in the face of incredible injustice. The best way to show that you deserve to be an "official" U.S. Citizen (because in our hearts, or at least in mine, I have always been), is to live your life as best you can, take every opportunity that comes your way to fulfill your dreams, and don't let fear stop you and hold yourself back from giving the best you have to offer.

I have wasted many years, but not one more day, not one more minute will I give to fear. Even if the worst happens, I will always continue to strive to better myself, to learn as much as I can about as much as I can, and in this country or in another I will always do my best to contribute and make the city, town or country where I live the best that it can be.

Also, no matter where I end up, I will always be thankful to this country because this is where I learned that with hard work, dedication and steadfastness, you really can achieve anything you want. It is because I have lived here that I now know that if I can achieve one of my most challenging dreams without having a college diploma and facing all these legal barriers, the limits of what I could accomplish with the former and not the latter do not exist.

[Source: Change.org]
Illinois

Chicago Sun-Times: Editorial: Give kids here illegally chance to go to college
September 16, 2010

In 2007, the Chicago Sun-Times highlighted a small high school in Little Village with a remarkable track record for a Chicago public school: All 32 of Spry High School's seniors graduated, each with at least one college acceptance letter in hand.

If only the story ended happily there.

The prospects for a third of those graduates -- 11 illegal immigrants brought to this country by their parents when they were young -- were dim.

"I want to be the first one to open doors for my family," Ofelia Gonzalez, the top student in the largely low-income class, said at the time. But "a Social Security number determines whether we can go to college."

As undocumented immigrants, Gonzalez and her classmates -- some of whom didn't know their immigration status until they applied to college -- were cut off from college financial aid and shut out of any job with a future. "We have so many opportunities, but we can't take them," Gonzalez said.

Thousands of students like Gonzalez do everything right. They stay in school, get good grades and share a keen desire to make it in the world. Instead, they often are relegated to a life in the shadows -- robbing the United States of their talents and their tax dollars.

For 10 years, U.S. Sen Dick Durbin has been pushing a narrowly tailored immigration bill to support these deserving immigrants, offering a shot at citizenship for a thin band of promising and determined young adults who are being penalized now for choices made by their parents when they were small.

Durbin's DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors), to be offered as an amendment to the defense authorization bill, is expected to face a vote early next week. We urge Durbin's Senate colleagues to stand with him.

Immigration reform is among the thorniest of issues. But if there's a room to find agreement, this is it. Forty senators agreed to co-sponsor this bill, and when it last came up for a vote in 2007, 11 Republicans said yes.

The DREAM Act is no giveaway, nor it is an amnesty program disguised in sheep's clothes.

Students must have come to the U.S before they were 16, lived continuously here for five years
and have graduated from high school.

If a student completes at least two years of college or serves two years in the military -- boosting the quality of a military increasingly reliant on high school dropouts -- then, and only then, would a student be eligible for permanent residency.

Students who jump those hurdles are American in all ways except one.

They have talent, motivation and a desire to give back to a country that raised them. Let's open our doors to them and reap the rewards.

Carlos and Rafael Robles: Both were former captains of their high school varsity tennis team. “Early one morning in March, two Chicago-area brothers were dozing on an Amtrak train when it stopped in Buffalo, N.Y. A pair of uniformed Border Patrol agents made their way through the car, asking passengers if they were U.S. citizens. No, the vacationing siblings answered honestly, with flat, Midwestern inflections: We’re citizens of Mexico. And so it was that college students Carlos Robles, 20, and his brother Rafael, 19 -- both former captains of their high school varsity tennis team -- found themselves in jail, facing deportation. Their secret was out: Despite their upbringing in middle America, their academic success and their network of native-born friends, they had no permission to be in the United States. Their parents had brought them here illegally as children.” [Los Angeles Times, 6/28/10]

---

Story: Blanka

October 24, 2007. That was the last time I cried. My fellow undocumented students and I know all to well what that day brought us. For some it brought fear, hopelessness and disappointment. For others it brought anger and resentment. But for many more, including myself, it was just another obstacle in our already difficult lives. We knew that someday we will receive the justice we have been seeking all our lives; we just have to wait a little longer.

That day in October, the DREAM Act fell eight votes shy of cloture. With those eight votes the legislation would have given qualified undocumented individuals a chance for their lives to be debated before the Senate. However, it was not so; we were back at square one. My name is Blanka and this is my [un]documented story.

Summer 1990. The time I first came to the United States. I was just five years old. My stay was only supposed to be for a month, however, the tension in the Balkan region where I lived, had grown worse and a war broke out in then Yugoslavia. My birth country, Croatia, was trying to gain independence from Yugoslavia and succeeded in 1991. I was not allowed to go back during this time, so I ended up starting school in the U.S. The following year I was given the green
light to return back to Croatia and even though it was now independent, there was still fighting going on.

Life there was extremely different from the two years I experienced here in the U.S. In Croatia we didn't have water, electricity, heat, clothes were hand-me-downs and food was there, but not enough. America was filled with those luxuries and I longed for the day that I would either come back, or that Croatia would miraculously change into the U.S. The latter, I learned, was almost, if not entirely, impossible.

Since fighting continued throughout the Balkan region, my family and I would go to bed listening to planes fly over our house fearing they were carrying bombs. We would hear gun shots in the distance while we prayed for my father's safe return home from the war.

As time went by life became better, the fighting ceased, but the quality of life was no where near the one I experienced while in the U.S. In 1995 I was given another opportunity to come back to America. My parents jumped at this opportunity and sent me away to live with my relatives once again. This time, however, I was not accompanied by anyone; no parents, siblings or relatives to hold my hand as I flew over the enormous Atlantic Ocean. I was 10 years old at the time and had no idea I was a few months away from becoming an undocumented immigrant.

1999-2003. My tourist visa expired 6 months after I came here. I did not know of this until I went to obtain my driver's license. My aunt told me that I was undocumented and thus could not do one of the most, if not the most important things, a normal 16 year old looked forward to. It turns out my aunt had consulted a lawyer who told her that I could not adjust my status until I turned 18. A year before my 18th birthday, my aunt went to another lawyer and this one told her that the previous lawyer lied to her and that I had no way of adjusting my status unless I left the country. We decided it was not the best thing for me to do because there was a very small possibility I would be given another visa to come back here since I had overstayed my previous one.

Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I became extremely involved during my high school career. I was in the church choir and ministries; I was in many school clubs and organizations including the National Honor Society; I played the piano and was active in four different sports. With all those activities I still managed to graduate with a 3.75 GPA.

At the end of high school came time to apply for colleges. I thought that because of my status I would not be able to go, but to my surprise I was accepted to three universities. Even though I finally chose to go one of the universities, I was hesitant to leave home and be "on my own" for the first time since I left Croatia, especially being undocumented.

2003-2007. My work ethic in college resembled that of high school. I was involved in school organizations, volunteered countless hours and was even an officer of a service fraternity. I did well on tests and passed all my classes. But more important than anything was that I finally opened up to a few close friends about my situation. It was such a relief to finally "come out" to people one can trust. They finally understood why I gave them excuses of not driving, going out
with them, studying abroad and traveling. However, they could never understand what it really felt like because they already had those luxuries and have never lived without them.

In May 2007, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance and Cum Laude honors. My mother, who had visited only twice after I moved here, had come to see me graduate. It was a proud moment for everyone, but now what? While all my friends received amazing job offers, I was stuck with a degree I couldn't use. I felt like all the hard work and money invested was a waste, but I quickly changed my mentality and decided to enroll in a certificate program in statistics, since I expressed an interest in it during my undergraduate years.

2007-Present. I completed my Certificate in Statistics and enjoyed it so much I decided to pursue it further; thus I applied to graduate school. I was accepted and am currently enrolled in a Masters program in Applied Statistics with a 4.0 GPA. I also found an unpaid internship as a business assistant, which allows me to expand my knowledge even further.

My story is not that different from many other 24 year olds. The only difference is that I accomplished all those things without that important piece of paper. My fellow peers and I have been living here most of our lives. We are American in every sense of the word. We have accomplished great things even with the difficult obstacles we face everyday. Imagine what we could do if granted legal residency. We could become doctors, nurses, engineers, scientists, teachers, etc. Many of us have the degrees, but do not have a way of using them. And many want to serve this country but are not able to join the military.

The DREAM Act will allow for us to become contributing members of American society. We already contribute through our volunteering and work, but we could do so even more with the passage of the DREAM Act.

Please support our cause and let October 24, 2007 be the last time we DREAMers are faced with disappointment.

[Source: Change.org]

---

**Letter: Salvador Maldonado**  
**Harvard College, Class of 2009**  
**History and French**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to explain the circumstances surrounding my application for a US Visa. I hope this letter will enlighten and answer any questions that might arise after reviewing the application.

First, I would like to establish that I am currently employed at Google, Inc. in the Mexico City Office, located at Avenida Paseo de la Reforma #115 Piso 22, Col. Lomas de Chapultepec, as an
Account Strategist for the US Hispanics Direct Sales Operations Team. In order to successfully execute my job responsibilities, I need a US visa to attend required trainings, business meetings, and sales conferences in the United States.

After reading this letter, I hope that you will comprehend my life trajectory and how I have arrived to where I am today. I also hope to not be penalized or held accountable for my parent’s choices when I was a child since I had no control of my life at that point. One of the main reasons why I am in Mexico is because I want to do things right and this is the only place where I can do it.

I was born in Jalisco, Mexico to a family of cattle traders and ranchers. I had a happy childhood with all the amenities and facilities that a child needed. One day, at the age of nine, I woke up to realize that my father was no longer staying at our house. My mother explained that he had gone away to work “al norte” and that he would be back in a year. As a child I did not realize what that meant, my father would call the house regularly and everything appeared fine. A year passed and my father did not come back, as days went by my mother became worried and I knew something life-changing was about to occur. One day, when I arrived home from school, at the end of the school year, my mother announced that we would be leaving to the US to meet with my father. I did not want to leave, but I had no choice. I was 10 years old, I knew it was going to be difficult to move to a completely different country where I had no “amigos” or “familia” and did not speak a word of “Ingles”.

On a sunny morning in mid August we left our beloved town. We traveled all day and night and the next morning when I woke up I found myself in the US. We reunited with my father, my mother seemed much happier. I felt better although I missed “mis abuelitos, tios, primos and amigos” from back in Mexico. My father told me to stop crying and instead to “hecharle ganas”. We had come to the US to work hard for a better life that we could not have in Mexico.

Following my father’s advice and seeing that I had no other choice, I learned English in a little over a year. Immediately, my parents enrolled me in a bilingual program in a Chicago Public School and I started attending school and forming a new life. I started 5th grade in Chicago and worked very hard every day, little did I know what awaited me. In elementary school, I performed very well academically and I was accepted to one of the best high schools in Chicago.

I really enjoyed going to school and learning new material, so I continued this throughout high school. When the time came to apply for college, I did my research and applied to 15 colleges, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, among others. My counselors and teachers encouraged me to do so since they agreed I had an opportunity of gaining acceptance. I ranked 2 in a class of 1100 students. On a rainy day at the end of April, I received a fat, bulky envelope in the mail; I had been accepted to Harvard!

This moment was perhaps the happiest moment in my life. Getting into a good college was one of my goals, but I had never imagined I would get into Harvard. Harvard offered me a full scholarship and I could not let this opportunity pass. It was either attending Harvard or attending a community college, where I would have to work to pay for tuition, since I could not attend a state college due to my immigration status in the US. I chose to attend Harvard. Leaving my parents for a second time to go away for college was difficult but I knew I had to do it if I wanted to be “alguien en la vida”. While in college, I majored in History and French. These four years at
Harvard were the best four years; my eyes opened to the world and this is where I made lifelong friendships. Once senior year arrived, classmates began to think about the next step in their lives, I knew I wanted to get a job, but I realized that I could not pursue this since I did not have a social security number. While my friends attended consulting and investment banking interviews, I researched and spoke to different people about what I could with my illegal status in the US. The answers were not hopeful, so after graduation I returned home to Chicago to plan my next move.

Seeing that I could not work in the US legally, I researched opportunities in Mexico and a few months later I found a position that fit my background and experience at Google Mexico City. I immediately applied and after three months I received a call from my recruiter offering me a position in the Mexico City Office. This was a bittersweet moment since I realized I was going to once again have to move and leave friends and people who I considered family behind. After almost 13 years of being in the US, coming to Mexico was going to be a huge change but I had to do it if I wanted to do things right and “ser alguien en la vida”.

I am very grateful for all that the US gave me, but I realized that if I ever wanted to return, I had to leave. Now that I have the opportunity to return to the US for my job, I am only missing the visa. And I really hope I can obtain it for work related purposes.

In any regard, I really appreciate the time taken to read this letter. I hope that one day I will be able to return to the land that gave me so much, yet hindered me from giving back to it.

[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]

**Letter: Tania Unzueta**

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Tania Unzueta and I'm undocumented.

I have lived in Chicago since I was 10 years old. I came with my mother to join my father, who had found a stable job and a promise to legalize his status. Eventually our tourist visas ran out, and my family became undocumented.

For years we lived in a small basement, then a small apartment. When we moved here, my dad had been offered a job with the promise of regularizing his status through employer sponsorship, 245-i. Our family was going through that process when the workers began to organize a union, and asked for the support of my dad. He gave it to them, which resulted in his dismissal from his position, and an end to the sponsorship.

I too have tried and failed to regularize my immigration status. When I graduated from high school I went to Mexico to try to apply for an international student visa, so that I could attend the colleges to which I had been accepted. Even though I was the captain of my swim team and an honors student, my visa was not accepted. Eventually I was able to get a humanitarian visa to come back to Chicago. I pinned a lot of hopes for my future on the 2003 DREAM Act. It failed. I
hoped again in 2007- to the same result. Ever since then I have only tried to do the best I can with my life, trying to have a balance between being happy, giving back to my community, and working for the passage of the DREAM Act.

I was there with the DREAM Act 5 in John McCain's office when three undocumented youth made history as the first undocumented immigrants commit civil disobedience and get detained with the aim of changing U.S. immigration law. I was also one of the DREAM Act 21 to get arrested, for the second time in U.S. history, on Capitol Hill in a mostly successful effort to get Congress shift towards taking up the DREAM Act this year (any and all help offsetting the costs of attending our court date is appreciated, by the way). How many more youth will have to detain themselves before Congress passes the DREAM Act? How many more lives have to be put on hold or lost to the shadows before our leaders act?

The time to pass the DREAM Act is now. Please join us.

Sincerely,
Tania Unzueta
Indiana

Story: Jamie

My name is Jaime, I am, like most others, an undocumented student.

I was brought to the United States ten years ago at the age of eight. I had to cross through all of central America, a trip that took the best part of a year, in order to get to the United States. I stayed for six months in Guatemala City, in the poorest part of town, with my mother and my sister. We waited so long until we could move across to Mexico, once in Mexico we lived in Mexico City for one month, and then in Laredo, Mexico for another month.

Once we arrived in the United States, I was enrolled in Chief Joseph Elementary in Meridian, Idaho. Here I remained in third grade for only a couple weeks until they decided to skip me to fourth grade for being advanced in mathematics, even though I had no knowledge of the English language. In order to help me with my language skills, I was enrolled in the English as a Second Language Program. I continued to be part of the program until I was in the seventh grade, when I was able to test out of it due to my advanced English skills. In high school I was enrolled in as many honors and AP classes as I could and with Spanish and English already part of my language sets, I set out to study French. I was part of the Link Crew in Eagle High School, in Eagle, Idaho. I was in the Junior Varsity Tennis Team, and in the honors orchestra.

I graduated with a 3.45 cumulative GPA, and right now I am a student at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. My grades have allowed me to become a Christ College Scholar, Christ College is the honors college in Valparaiso, and I am also an Engineering Student. I have received scholarships from Seattle University (Bellarmine Scholarship), from Valparaiso University (Presidential Scholarship and VU Gift Award), and from the College of Idaho (a $40,000 scholarship). I have never had anything put on my record and I have never done anything illegal. I have only studied and stayed at par with people who have been my peers for the better part of ten years. All I ask is that I am given the chance to be free. That I can enjoy the same freedoms as everyone else.

[Source: DREAMActivist]
Leslie, a history major at the University of California at Los Angeles and an aspiring marathon runner with three part-time jobs and plans for grad school, keeps a neatly folded dark blue T-shirt in her closet among her jeans and her U.C.L.A. Bruins sweatshirt. Like an intimate detail, she reveals it cautiously, wearing it to campus events but not on the streets of Orange County; to a rally with a group of friends, but not alone on a crosstown bus. A senior at U.C.L.A. and the only child of a single working mother, Leslie is brave but not reckless: in the wrong place under the wrong circumstances, the T-shirt’s two words across the chest — “I’m Undocumented” — are provocative enough to upend her life.

For most of her 22 years, Leslie — whose only memory of coming to the United States with her mother when she was 6 is of the bright lights along the L.A. freeway — kept her immigration status secret from even close friends. She knew that certain life experiences and rites of passage were out of her reach: visiting her grandparents in Mexico; voting; getting a driver’s license. Even though she was an advanced-placement student, she feared college also might not be possible. During her senior year of high school, when she confided her immigration status to a guidance counselor — the first adult outside her family she told — the counselor admonished Leslie that not only was she ineligible for college, but had she known Leslie was illegal she never would have placed her in AP classes.

I met Leslie, who asked that I use only her first name, in August at her mother’s house in Pasadena. It was a rare summer day off from her jobs cleaning an apartment building, waitressing, helping her mother with her six-days-a-week housekeeping jobs along Pasadena’s “Millionaire’s Row.” Leslie greeted me at the front door, dressed in a pressed denim shirt cinched at the waist with a wide belt, shorts and strappy sandals. She showed me around the small two-bedroom house, a step up from the one-bedroom converted garage she and her mother lived in previously. The secondhand TV in the living room, along with Leslie’s bed and desk, were all gifts from families whose houses her mother cleans, as was the Chanel blush on her desk. “I would never buy Chanel for myself,” Leslie said, laughing at the extravagance.

Initially shy and sometimes self-deprecating, Leslie is also warm, charmingly frank and girlish, with cheeks that easily flush and bangs that she brushes from her forehead as she talks. She is also, by necessity and by experience, resourceful and intrepid.
Later in her senior year of high school, Leslie learned that, in fact, she could go to college and that California law AB 540 allows undocumented California students to pay in-state rather than out-of-state tuition; California is one of 11 states with such a law. (Earlier this month, Georgia banned undocumented immigrants from its most selective public colleges.)

In Leslie’s case it cuts an unthinkable $33,000 a year down to a daunting but within-the-realm-of-possibility tuition of roughly $10,000. But because she is undocumented, she is not eligible for the myriad federal and state aid programs that make college feasible for many working- and middle-class families. No Pell grants, no work-study programs.

Leslie’s “Undocumented” T-shirt, along with the rallies she attends and the lobbying she has done in Washington and Sacramento, is part of an effort to change her and other undocumented students’ lives through what’s known as the Dream Act. The federal bill, a version of which was introduced in Congress in 2001, would create a pathway to legal residency for immigrants who arrived in this country as children, have been in the United States for at least five years and have graduated from a U.S. high school or obtained a G.E.D. To gain status, they would have to finish two years of college or military service. Supporters argue that the legislation benefits ambitious, academically successful students who will go on to professional careers. Without the Dream Act, many of those same young people will be stuck, much like their parents, in the underground economy.

Some 825,000 immigrants are likely to become legal residents if the Dream Act passes, according to the Migration Policy Institute, a research group. But Steven A. Camarota, research director at the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors strict enforcement of immigration laws and opposes the Dream Act, argues that the legislation would create another avenue for immigration fraud and added incentive for immigrants to come to the United States. He noted that it rewards illegal behavior and takes college spots and financial aid from students who are legal residents.

Nonetheless, the Dream Act has some bipartisan support, and in this political climate, it’s one of the only immigration bills with any shot of passing. Last month, Senator Richard J. Durbin, the Illinois Democrat and chief sponsor of the bill, planned to attach the Dream Act as an amendment to the defense authorization bill, which included the controversial repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” The package stalled when supporters were unable to muster the 60 votes needed to overcome a Republican filibuster. Among Dream Act opponents is Senator John McCain, who co-sponsored a version of the Dream Act in 2007. This year, during which he faced a tough-on-immigration candidate in the primaries, he said he would not support the Dream Act without tighter border controls. Meanwhile, Durbin plans to push it as a stand-alone bill, either in the coming lame-duck session or next year.
In the midst of the political wrangling, the Dream Act advocates — most of them in their early to mid-20s — have become the most outspoken and daring wing of the immigration movement. Borrowing tactics from the civil rights and gay rights movements, in the last year they have orchestrated dozens of demonstrations, hunger strikes, “coming out” events — publicly revealing their undocumented status — and sit-ins in federal offices, risking both arrest and deportation.

Several of these events — like much of the movement — have been largely powered by women, according to many advocates. At recent sit-ins, two-thirds of those arrested were women, including founders and leaders of their local Dream organizations. Women have also stuck with the movement long after many men have dropped out or burned out. Lizbeth Mateo, co-founder of Dream Team Los Angeles, said she and other leaders tried to get more undocumented men to participate in a sit-in in McCain’s Arizona office this year. “We wanted to balance it out,” she said. But with one exception, the men said they were not ready.

Many of these women are daughters of nannies, housekeepers, landscapers — a generation of immigrants who tended to keep a low profile. In contrast, their daughters have been schooled in a more vocal American culture. “We did what we were supposed to do,” Fabiola, an undocumented activist and a recent U.C.L.A. graduate who came to the United States from Mexico as a toddler, told me. “We are the cream of the crop. But because of something we had no choice in, our entire lives are on hold.” Living in the shadows, she said, is no longer acceptable.

The apartment where Leslie and four other students live during the school year is a 10-minute walk from campus and is well known among U.C.L.A.’s undocumented population. It’s called the Cabin because of its knotty-pine walls, which make the rooms feel both dark and rustic. The students pay $250 each for the 700-square-foot apartment. In many ways it is typical college housing: an Indian tapestry covers one wall, and flimsy curtains hang on some windows. On the kitchen countertop, cereal, Coffee-Mate and Cheetos Puffs share space with the staple of the college diet, ramen noodles. Up a set of stairs is the sleeping loft, with one small desk and five beds, leaving just enough remaining room to negotiate getting to and from the apartment’s one bathroom.

Before moving in, Leslie, like most of her Cabin roommates, commuted to save money on housing. She caught a 7 a.m. bus, the first of two that would take her two hours to U.C.L.A. from East Los Angeles. At night, she returned home again, sometimes with her friend Ilse. The bus, crowded with nannies and housekeepers traveling home from L.A.’s wealthy Westside, drove along Sunset Boulevard, passing Bel Air and Beverly Hills and the 20-foot hedges and equally tall gates guarding mansions, making the “Private Entry” signs seem redundant. For Ilse, whose
family is also from Mexico, it was a metaphor for her struggles to pay for school and to be part of the college experience. “It was like everything was telling us to keep out,” she said.

When two spots at the Cabin opened 18 months ago, “it was like coming home,” Ilse said. Leslie felt like a “normal” college student for the first time, walking to campus just before class, staying in the library as late as she needed.

Among their Cabin roommates last year were Fabiola, who graduated a few months ago in international development studies. Self-possessed and pretty, Fabiola has a maternal quality that draws friends to confide their worries. Both she and another roommate, Andrea, are the Cabin elders, having clocked more than three years in the apartment. (This summer, a new roommate, Lizeth, moved in to take Fabiola’s place.) A biology major originally from Mexico, Andrea is a self-described “music geek” who played in her high school’s drum line and ran a radio show at U.C.L.A.

More than anyone in the Cabin, Andrea knows what it is like to need a bed. Before moving in, she spent many nights floating around the campus to avoid commuting home. She showered in a U.C.L.A. gym; kept a blanket and a change of clothes in her locker. She slept on couches in the library; on the floor of a friend’s apartment; on a wide windowsill in a student activities office. She now leaves clean blankets on the Cabin couches during exams so commuters have a place to crash.

“Some people bond over music,” Ilse told me one morning. “We bond over this. You realize how many people have gone through what you’ve gone through.” In the Cabin, no one asks you why you don’t have a driver’s license or why you have to take a semester off to earn tuition money.

Each Cabin roommate has also played a leadership role in a U.C.L.A. group that is instrumental in the Dream movement. When it started in 2003, Ideas — an acronym for Improving Dreams, Equality, Access and Success — was a support group for a handful of undocumented students sharing tips on finding free meals and places to sleep. Now Ideas — Fabiola was an early chairwoman, and Leslie is in charge of fund-raising for scholarships — has a Web site, organizes Dream Act rallies and, through an annual conference that Andrea started, trains hundreds of U.C.L.A. and other students on grass-roots organizing, lobbying and working with the news media to promote the Dream Act.

Undocumented students often describe their early lives as molded by fear. They had nightmares about immigration agents showing up at the front door. They watched parents or older siblings be deported. So when a group of activists decided for the first time this year to purposefully risk arrest and deportation for the Dream Act, it was a bold move — some called it impetuous — and one that played directly into some students’ deepest anxieties.
“You don’t wake up one day and say, ‘This is a good day to get arrested,’ ” said Yahaira Carrillo, who is 25 and founded the Kansas/Missouri Dream Alliance and has traveled all over the country speaking, lobbying and organizing for the legislation. When I called her several weeks ago, Carrillo, who hoped to join the U.S. Marines but can’t without legal status, was in Kansas cleaning someone’s house, trying to raise money to finish college.

Last winter Carrillo and other Dream leaders talked about ways to ignite the movement. Many activists, some of whom had worked on the Dream Act for more than a half-dozen years, were increasingly frustrated. They had vigorously campaigned for Obama and counted on him to usher in the legislation early in his presidency. Now, more than a year later, they felt the urgency to push their message harder, to move the Dream Act forward.

Dream leaders talked about Martin Luther King and sit-ins at lunch counters. They consulted with immigration attorneys about the risks of being arrested and deported: there were no guarantees. “When you’ve been doing everything else you think you can do, it’s the final step,” Carrillo said. If deported, she would return to Mexico, a country she left when she was 7.

In May, Carrillo traveled to Tucson with three other Dream leaders: Lizbeth Mateo, the co-founder of Dream Team L.A.; Tania Unzueta, a Chicago advocate who helped jump-start the national “coming out” campaign; and Mohammad Abdollahi, a co-founder of DreamActivists.org, a resource for undocumented students. In Tucson, Raul Alcaraz, an activist who is a legal resident, joined the group, which became known as the Dream Act 5.

Around 11:30 on the morning of May 17, the 56th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, while dozens of Dream Act supporters rallied outside, the five activists walked into John McCain’s office, dressed in matching royal blue graduation gowns and caps. (McCain was in Washington.) They sat down in the reception area under an American flag, and for more than six hours they refused to leave, calling for McCain to support the Dream Act and the bill’s passage.

Around 6 p.m., Tucson police officers arrested everyone in the group except Unzueta, who had agreed to serve as the group’s spokeswoman. The activists spent that night at the Pima County jail, before Carrillo, Mateo and Abdollahi were transferred to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement processing facility. Carrillo’s heart sank when she and Mateo were led into a windowless, concrete room with cement benches and a heavy metal door that shut behind them. Over the next several hours, Carrillo said, immigration officials repeatedly told her and Mateo that they would be sent to an immigration detention center, a fate undocumented immigrants assiduously try to avoid.
Then, after eight hours and with no explanation, Carrillo told me, they were released. Immigration and Customs Enforcement gave them orders to report to immigration agents every 30 days and to return for a hearing, the date of which has still not been set. While the Obama administration is deporting a record number of immigrants convicted of crimes, the Department of Homeland Security has so far spared undocumented youth who have been arrested during Dream Act protests. Still, the case against Carrillo, Mateo and Abdollahi has not been dismissed.

Yet the Dream Act did succeed in at least some of its goals. While McCain has not changed his position, the sit-in received national and international media attention. Other youth activists, emboldened by the Arizona group, have orchestrated sit-ins and hunger strikes around the country, including in North Carolina, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington.

As for Carrillo, she confronted a fear that pervades undocumented immigrants’ lives. “It’s always, ‘You shouldn’t go here; you shouldn’t go there.’ I can be deported any time a cop stops me for something,” she said. “If it happened to me for a sit-in, at least I would have had some say in my life.”

Next June, among the thousands of graduates in U.C.L.A.’s class of 2011, around 30 will be undocumented students, including Leslie, Ilse and Andrea. During the commencement ceremony, the women will move their cap tassels from right to left. They will listen to commencement speeches with phrases like “moving forward” and “a new future.” They will know that many of the words do not apply to them. “It feels like a slam,” Ilse said. “It’s not closure for me. It doesn’t promote me.”

Like Ilse, Leslie will probably move home after her final quarter, losing the protection a university offers, where it is safe to take risks — to say, “I’m undocumented.” Leslie expects to work full time cleaning houses and waitressing. She says she hopes to earn a private scholarship for grad school, which would buy time for the Dream Act to pass, after which she could be employed legally. She’d like to be a social worker or a counselor or a lawyer for a nonprofit. For now, she knows the reality: many undocumented U.C.L.A. graduates are short-order cooks, waitresses, baby-sitters, doing jobs for which they do not need a high-school diploma.

Still, Leslie says she doesn’t feel completely powerless. On the morning of the Senate Dream Act vote in late September, she was getting ready to head downtown to hoist Dream Act banners above the 101 Freeway with other activists. Before leaving her house that morning, she sent me an e-mail: “I just wanted to let you know I’m wearing my ‘I’m Undocumented’ shirt right now,” she wrote. “As I was putting it on, I remembered telling you about my fears when it comes to wearing this shirt, but I didn’t feel like that today. I feel like I am finally taking control of my identity.”
It wasn’t so long ago that Yahaira Carrillo wished for invisibility.

Stopping at a gas station in the middle of nowhere, say, for Pepsi and chips, she would get in and out as quickly and quietly as possible. If a law officer had stopped, too, for a cup of coffee, Carrillo would tense up, fearful somehow her secret would be discovered.

She’s undocumented. No papers, no legal status.

Now the 25-year-old Kansas City woman has shed her anonymity. When Tucson, Ariz., police came to arrest her in mid-May, she showed no fear.

She and others wanted attention for their sit-in, wearing symbolic graduation caps and gowns, inside the office of Sen. John McCain.

The cause of Carrillo and others like her at Kansas City area colleges is proposed federal legislation known as the DREAM Act — Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors.

It would allow undocumented students to legally stay and study in the U.S. temporarily and eventually, if they met mandated conditions, obtain permanent status.

At a time when illegal immigration is a highly charged issue, driving many foreigners without papers into hiding or back to their home nations, these students shrug at the risk of jail and deportation back to countries they may never even have known.

Their purpose is to pave the way to a better life for others brought here as babies or children knowing no other life than an American one.

“I’m an American, that’s what I think,” Carrillo said. “I just don’t have the citizenship or status to prove it, you know.”

Many disagree. They argue that parents broke the law when they illegally crossed the border into the U.S. with their children and neither deserves preferential treatment.

The DREAM Act is just a piece of the larger effort to grant a huge undocumented population amnesty, they said, which will just encourage more people to cross illegally.

“The DREAM Act is saying, ‘Don’t break our law and come here illegally. But if you do, there’s a green card for your kids,’” said Ira Mehlman at the Federation of American Immigration Reform, which opposes the bill.

“No question these kids are in a difficult situation, many of them,” Mehlman said. “This is a
situation of their parents’ creation, but if people break the law, they have to understand there are likely going to be consequences for their kids.”

Carrillo, who spent the night on a hard plastic bench in a Tucson jail, faces the possibility of deportation after her civil disobedience arrest. Last month she had her second meeting with immigration officials.

“I was told all the time: ‘Don’t risk this, don’t risk that, because there’s so much on the line,’ ” she said. “Sometimes you have to make your own stand.”

•••


They are today’s “dreamers,” local names and faces from a mix of nationalities, immersed in what many regard as the human rights movement of their generation.

Proud to reveal their names and status in the face of those who wish them expelled from the United States, they said they hoped to change the image most people had of an illegal immigrant, and, if they could, to mute the ugly rhetoric they heard.

They march and protest with signs declaring “Stop Lying About Immigrants” and “Undocumented and Unafraid.”

“I see them out in front in the human and civil rights tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.,” said Rick Behrens, co-pastor of Grandview Park Presbyterian Church in Kansas City, Kan. “They are taking action not only for themselves, but they realize how many thousands in Kansas City are coming up just like them.”

According to the College Board, which promotes increased college access, 2 million children in the United States are undocumented. At least 65,000 graduate annually from high schools. Because many come from low-income families and are barred from government aid, only 5 to 10 percent pursue a college degree.

What the dreamers want is a chance at a college education — then a legal job and a profession. Raised on Sesame Street and MTV, they often grew up without a clue of why their parents worried about “papers,” which they don’t have.

Most don’t care to discuss their parents’ status. This is their generation’s fight.

“They crossed the border because they wanted to give me a better life,” said Martinez. “It is what any parent would do for their child.”

A 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling guaranteed a public education through high school for all children, including those of undocumented people. Denying early education would punish children for the actions of their parents.
But it said nothing about an education after high school.

“There is this whole generation of folks that have grown up here facing a brick wall,” said Jessica Piedra, an attorney on the board of the Missouri Immigrant Refugee Advocates.

“There is no path for these kids. They are stuck.”

When legislators first proposed the bipartisan DREAM Act in 2001, opponents came out in full force. Nine years later, opposition remains strong.

“We’re not treating all immigrants equally,” said Missouri Rep. Jerry Nolte, a Republican from Gladstone. “We are giving preferential treatment to those who came illegally.”

... 

Years ago, undocumented young people flocked to forums on the website DREAM Act Portal, where they learned they were not alone. They read about struggles like theirs and found answers, such as which states would let them enroll in college.

“A lot of people who navigated and spearheaded this movement met online,” said Juan Escalante, a college student in Florida who now helps run www.thedreamiscoming.com. “We can’t travel, don’t have money. We used the Internet.”

But many students moved from behind their computers in 2007 when the DREAM Act fell eight votes short in the Senate.

“We all came to realization we needed to bring this to a higher level,” Escalante said.

On March 10, 100,000 supporters of the DREAM Act marched through Chicago for a national “coming out of the shadows rally.” The march showed the spectrum of the movement. Students from Iran, Central America and Asia stood alongside American-born youths who had embraced the cause.

Erin Fleming’s red hair and freckles stood out in the midst of the Chicago crowd. The University of Kansas law student got involved in immigration issues two years ago.

“One lady looked at me at a rally and said, ‘You are not even Mexican,’ ” said Fleming, 22, a descendant of Irish immigrants. “Immigrants come from all types of countries — Africa, Asia and Europe. I love America. That is why I fight to maintain her image as the land of opportunity.”

She admits it’s easier when you don’t face deportation.

For those who do, the movement has become a calling.
Ricardo Quiñones came to the DREAM movement through Carrillo. He’s 20 and a junior psychology major at KU.

Two months after Carrillo and four others sat in protest at McCain’s office, Quiñones was with nearly two dozen students at a similar protest in the atrium of the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington.

It wasn’t the first time he found himself pleading for what to him is a freedom.

Five years ago, he stood before his parents in their Belton home crying and not understanding why they wouldn’t let him get his driver’s license.

“I promise to always be a careful driver,” he pledged. “I have kept my promise. I’ve been a good son. I am a good student. I work hard and I have good grades and I don’t get into trouble.”

What Quiñones learned that day flipped his young world upside down.

“They said, ‘We love you for being a good son, but we can’t help you. You are undocumented.’”

Quiñones’s parents brought him here when he was 6 months old. He had stopped eating, and doctors in Mexico could not determine why.

“They told my parents I would not live long.”

U.S. doctors discovered his lactose intolerance in a week.

Now he’s the only one in his family without legal status. His siblings are U.S.-born. His parents petitioned and received legal residence.

Without citizenship, he said, he’ll never be able to legally use the degree for which his parents are working hard to fund.

“That’s why I put the DREAM Act first in my life,” Quiñones said. “I don’t know what my tomorrow will be.”

Quiñones wants to be a psychologist, Martinez an environmental scientist, Carrillo a teacher or social worker.

And Myrna Orozco has dreams of being a lawyer.

Just look at these kids, said Behrens of Grandview Park Presbyterian. Look at the effect they
could have on America.

Many graduate in the top of their class.

“People don’t realize the incredible potential and what we’re wasting by not taking advantage of what they have to contribute to our society,” said Behrens.

Jessica Piedra, a local civil rights attorney, agreed.

“We’ve already paid to educate them here,” Piedra said, referring to elementary and high school. “So they might as well stay here and contribute here. It doesn’t make sense to use our deportation dollars to deport valedictorians.”

Through middle school, Orozco aced every class and got involved in a host of school activities.

“I don’t want to say I was a teacher’s pet, but I was.”

She had planned her life out: Work hard through high school, get scholarships to a top university, then law school.

Looking back, the 20-year-old Donnelly College political science major said becoming a high school dropout was the furthest thing from her mind.

But that is exactly what happened.

Freshman year at her Raytown high school, she began researching college admission.

“That’s when I found out that at the schools I wanted to attend — Washington University, University of Michigan, the University of Missouri — I needed a government I.D. to enroll,” Orozco said.

She also learned the undocumented get no state or federal student aid.

That’s when she thought to herself: “Why am I doing this?”

Her grades dropped, A’s to F’s.

“I got really depressed, and finally I just quit,” she said.

When she discovered the DREAM Act and how young undocumented college students were speaking out, she said, it gave her hope.

“I thought if they can do it, I can too. I got my act together with my grades and started getting involved again. I worked my butt off to remake my life.”

At the Winnetonka High School graduation, she gave the commencement address.
She’s lived in the U.S. since 4, when her mother fled the northern Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez in 1994. Hundreds of young women mysteriously were being murdered along the border. She said two aunts were among the victims.

She gave little thought to being an illegal, until the attacks of Sept. 11.

“I’m a patriot,” Orozco said. “I watched the attack in horror, too. I wrote letters to the soldiers and prayed for their safety. The feelings of patriotism grew strong inside me, that this is my home, a country I would easily go fight for, die to protect freedom.

“Freedom I didn’t even have.”

As Carrillo ate lunch in Westport last week, she talked about the long road ahead. Some days, working odd jobs babysitting, interpreting and housecleaning to pay for school, she gets discouraged.

Many American-born friends with whom she graduated from Ruskin High in 2003 have their college degrees by now.

“Life keeps going on for everybody, and they’re becoming the professionals they wanted to be,” said Carrillo, who graduated in the top 10 percent.

“Granted, you know, nobody’s life is perfect, but at some point I’m going to get really sick and tired of going to school.”

By the time she gets her bachelor’s degree, she’ll have nine years invested at local colleges. She has her associate degree from Donnelly College and hopes to get a bachelor’s from Rockhurst University in 2012.

The Obama administration has said criminal illegals and fugitives — not college students — should be the target for deportation. But since the Tucson arrest, Carrillo has found herself in that process.

She knows she could be sent back to a country she doesn’t really know. She speaks the language, but only because she’s majoring in Spanish. For years she has worked hard to speak, read and write the language of her parents.

Carrillo is where she wants to be. When traveling for a few months recently, she felt that pang of homesickness, eager to get back to Kansas City.

“This is home,” she said. “I’m willing to put everything on the line to stay here. And I have.”
It's getting tougher to keep hope alive for comprehensive immigration reform. Kansas' GOP candidates for Congress, like those around the country, have talked a lot about keeping illegal immigrants out, little about what to do with the millions already here.

"Secure the border" and "build the fence," they say — without much regard for whether that might be practical or effective, given the tenacity of those drawn to this nation for its opportunity and liberty.

In the U.S. Senate primary, two sensible, compassionate positions held years ago by Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Goddard — that taxpaying undocumented workers be eligible for driver's licenses and that children of illegal immigrants pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges — were harshly criticized by Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Hays, and quickly disavowed by Tiahrt.

Meanwhile, nobody wants to talk seriously about the reality of undocumented residents, the vast majority of whom stay out of trouble and contribute to our economy.

One such immigrant is 20-year-old Ricardo Quinones, a Johnson County Community College graduate and incoming University of Kansas junior who risks deportation since his recent arrest at a demonstration in Washington, D.C., in support of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (or DREAM Act).

It's easy to say people like Quinones should be sent "home." But Quinones and many others have known no other home except the United States.

Some 65,000 undocumented youths graduate from U.S. high schools each year to uncertain futures. With the DREAM Act, earlier versions of which were supported by Tiahrt and Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., kids who've been in the country since they were younger than 16 could pursue a path to citizenship by spending two years in college or the armed forces.

Quinones told the Lawrence Journal-World that he came to the United States with his parents as an ill 6-month-old. He cannot qualify for federal loans or grants. He cannot attend a public university in Missouri, where he has lived, because of a state law requiring proof of citizenship for students. He's been working in construction to afford out-of-state tuition at KU.

"I am tired of being told I don't belong here," Quinones said last month. "This is my home. This is my country. I believe passing the DREAM Act will show that our society doesn't believe in criminalizing children for the decisions of their parents."

That's just common sense, or should be.
The federal government isn't going to deport nearly 11 million people, which would be like trying to eject the entire populations of Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri.

Where are the leaders with the courage to acknowledge that illegal immigration is bigger than border security? Don't politicians realize that while they're pandering and failing to act constructively, lives hang in the balance?

**Letter from the Chancellor of the University of Kansas Urging Support of the DREAM Act**

April 26, 2010

The Honorable Dennis Moore  
1727 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Moore:

On behalf of the students and faculty of the University of Kansas, I respectfully request that you add your name as a cosponsor of H.R. 1751, the DREAM Act. This legislation updates federal immigration law to allow legal immigrant children who remain in the United States to complete a higher education degree.

S. 729 is good for KU, good for Kansas, and good for the United States. Under the law, any legal immigrant student seeking permanent residence status under the bill to attend a college or university must start the nationalization process to become a United States citizen.

Not only will these young legal immigrants become Americans, they will benefit Kansas and the nation’s economy. According to the recent Fiscal Policy Institute report on immigrants in the labor market, 48 percent of legal immigrants work in white-collar jobs—managerial, professional, sales, and administrative support. By comparison, 52 percent work in the service industry. In 13 of the 25 largest metro areas, there are more immigrants working in the mostly higher-wage white-collar jobs than in the mostly lower-wage service industry.

I hope you will see this economic analysis as a strong reason to support S. 729. The best investment local, state, and the federal government can make is in education. American and legal immigrants’ incomes increase with their education, bringing with them their contributions to a strong and safe community.

This is not without precedent. Everyday, legal immigrants who are not legalized citizens enlist in the Marines, Army, Air Force, and Navy. I hope you see that if it is acceptable for a young legal immigrant man or woman to enlist in the armed services, then they should also have the same ability to get a higher education degree.

I would be happy to arrange a meeting with you and our diverse KU student body about
the incredible benefits of expanding educational opportunities to legal immigrants.

KU appreciates your service in the United States Congress, and I look forward to working with you on behalf of the citizens of Kansas.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Gray-Little
Chancellor

Letter from Kansas City Public Schools Superintendent Urging Support of the DREAM Act
August 31, 2009

Senator Sam Brownback
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brownback,

I am writing to ask for your support for The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The DREAM Act is bipartisan legislation that addresses the situation faced by young people who were brought to the United States years ago as undocumented immigrant children, and who have since grown up here, stayed in school, and kept out of trouble.

This proposal would create a pathway to citizenship for thousands of young students who were brought to the United States years ago as children. These children have grown up in our communities and include honor roll students, star athletes, talented artists, homecoming queens, and aspiring teachers, doctors, and U.S. soldiers.

As a school district where approximately 25 percent of our students are immigrants, here in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools we know that some of the students that we serve lack the proper documentation to be in the country legally, even though they have spent virtually their entire lives here. Many of these students have done everything we have asked of them, and more, and serve as role models in their schools, and in our community.

In turn, we promise all of our students that, if they do their part by learning and doing well in school, we adults will take care of the rest, and make sure that there is a place for them to make a good life for themselves. As you well know, in this country, making a good life MUST include access to, and completion of higher education. The DREAM act would give this access to all of our students, and is the right thing to do for them, but also for the rest of us. We desperately need the talent and the motivation these students bring to continue to keep this country strong.
Again, please support the DREAM Act, and help the American Dream come true for all children who live and go to school in this country.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jill Shackelford
Superintendent, Kansas City Kansas Public Schools

---

**Ricardo Quinones:** Graduated from community college and will be an incoming junior at the University of Kansas. “Nobody wants to talk seriously about the reality of undocumented residents, the vast majority of whom stay out of trouble and contribute to our economy. One such immigrant is 20-year-old Ricardo Quinones, a Johnson County Community College graduate and incoming University of Kansas junior who risks deportation since his recent arrest at a demonstration in Washington, D.C., in support of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (or DREAM Act). It’s easy to say people like Quinones should be sent ‘home.’ But Quinones and many others have known no other home except the United States… Quinones told the Lawrence Journal-World that he came to the United States with his parents as an ill 6-month-old. He cannot qualify for federal loans or grants. He cannot attend a public university in Missouri, where he has lived, because of a state law requiring proof of citizenship for students. He’s been working in construction to afford out-of-state tuition at KU. ‘I am tired of being told I don’t belong here,’ Quinones said last month. ‘This is my home. This is my country. I believe passing the DREAM Act will show that our society doesn’t believe in criminalizing children for the decisions of their parents.’” [Wichita Eagle, 8/6/10]
Change.org: Victory: Jennifer Abreu Is Out of Detention
By Prerna Lal
November 24, 2010
http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/victory_jennifer_abreu_is_out_of_detention

When Jennifer Abreu was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement on November 15, 2010, and faced deportation back to Brazil, she had no idea whether she would ever see her family and friends again.

She knew her life was in danger. Her brother had voluntarily deported himself back to Brazil two years ago and tragically died at the hands of a street gang.

But thanks to your calls and over 1,500 emails, and the hard-work of the Kentucky DREAM Team, Jennifer will now get to spend her 19th birthday and Thanksgiving with her family. She was released from detention at 1pm today.

Jennifer has a message for everyone who signed the petition, made calls, and supported her through this tough time. "I just want to thank everyone for their help and their words of hope. Hope and faith in God has helped me through it in here, as well as the love and attention from everyone. I don't know if things happen for a reason, but if so, I've learn from this experience. I hope no one else goes through this, so let's work hard to get the DREAM Act passed!"

Jennifer is right. After Thanksgiving, it's time to turn the lame duck period into mighty duck and finally pass the DREAM Act so students like Jennifer don't need to face the test of detention and deportation away from their friends, families and homes.

Story: Jennifer Abreu

On Monday, November 15th, 2010, Jennifer Abreu was taken into ICE custody after a minor traffic violation led officers to find a deportation order written in her name. As a result, Jennifer will spend Thanksgiving and her 19th birthday in a detention center awaiting deportation away from her friends and family.

Jennifer was brought to the United States from Brazil when she was 13. She immersed herself in the community and in her studies. In addition to quickly learning English, Jennifer perfected Spanish and, in doing so, became a tutor and a mentor to her classmates. She graduated from Lafayette High School in Lexington, KY, where she was an active member of TeenBoard, a community service student organization that also planned activities to educate other students.
about issues affecting the world and their community like Invisible Children, human trafficking, and the DREAM Act.

Jennifer is an all-American girl. She was on the dance team and performed traditional Brazilian and Colombian dances many times at a local Festival Latino. She plays the piano, but her true dream is to become a journalist. She hopes to shed light on the issues affecting the community and raise awareness about issues of crime, oppression and injustice. At the time of her detention, Jennifer was scheduled to serve as a mentor during the 6th Latino Multicultural College Fair, where she would have encouraged youth to stay in school and plan for college. Instead, Jennifer was detained and is now facing deportation.

Jennifer’s pending deportation is the result of actions she had no control over. She has spent her formative years in the United States and has proven herself to be a great asset to this country. She would benefit from the passage of the federal DREAM Act. She is an excellent student, a dedicated mentor, and a hard-working community servant.

In the meantime, her case merits an administrative closure that would allow her to complete her education in the United States. In view of her family's modest economic circumstances, her only hope for finishing college and fulfilling her professional aspirations is here in the United States. For her to leave the United States at this time would be tragic given her potential for further academic and professional success.

[Source: Change.org]
Portland Press-Herald: Undocumented immigrants push for reform
By John Richardson
November 12, 2010

A 25-year-old Portland man fighting deportation to Guatemala joined other undocumented immigrants Thursday during a small rally in Monument Square to push for federal immigration reform.

Selvin Arevalo, who came to this country as a teenager, was detained by federal immigration agents for seven months before being released Friday on a $2,000 bond. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement began deportation proceedings against Arevalo in April after the undocumented immigrant fled a minor motor vehicle accident.

"I'm here," Arevalo said. "But I'm still in the deportation process."

Arevalo and other immigrants dressed in caps and gowns for the rally and said their best hope for becoming U.S. citizens and attending college is the passage of the federal DREAM Act, also known as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors bill. The bill would allow undocumented immigrants who came to this country as children to achieve legal permanent residency and citizenship if they meet certain conditions, such as attending college or serving in the military.

Arevalo's quest for citizenship has been taken up by the Student Immigration Movement, which organized the Portland rally to put pressure on Maine's senators to support the bill.

There are about 1 million young immigrants in the country who arrived here as children and could face deportation from the only home they know, said Kyle de Beausset, a reform advocate with the organization.

"This is their country. This is their home," de Beausset said. "We really need Sen. (Susan) Collins and Sen. (Olympia) Snowe to step forward."

De Beausset said the best hope for passage of the bill is for it to reach a vote in the next month because the newly elected members of Congress are expected to be less supportive of the changes in the new year.

For Arevalo, being set free last week made him more hopeful, although he was nervous Thursday about speaking out for reforms.

"It was very stressful to be there for seven months," he said of the jails in Maine and
Massachusetts where he was detained with other immigrants.

Arevalo was a few months away from getting his high school equivalency diploma when he was detained. "My dream is one day to go to college," he said. "I want to study computer science."

Arevalo said he does not yet know when his case will reach the courts. He has applied for asylum in hopes of staying in Maine, but said the federal reform is his best hope for becoming a citizen.

Renata Teodoro of Boston arrived from Brazil with her family when she was 6, she said. She had planned to go to college after winning a scholarship, but later was told she could not use the aid because she was undocumented.

Her family was forced to leave the country in 2007, but she managed to stay, working and paying for college courses in Boston, Teodoro said. She said she is taking the risk of speaking publicly because there are so many young people in the same position.

"If I don't speak about the DREAM Act, then nobody will know our stories," she said. "My family was silent for 15 years and then they were deported."

Katherine Asuncion of Lynn, Mass., said she came from the Dominican Republic with her family when she was a child and grew up feeling at risk of getting deported. Now she hopes Congress will open the door to becoming a citizen and looks forward to getting a college degree.

"I know one day I will go to college, even if I have to wait like five years," she said.

Maine Public Broadcasting Network: Undocumented Students in Maine Urge Passage of DREAM Act

By Josie Huang
November 11, 2010
http://www.mpbn.net/Home/tabid/36/ctl/ViewItem/mid/3478/ItemId/14171/Default.aspx

Selvin Arevalo was painting houses in Portland and working toward a high school diploma when he got into a minor car accident this spring. Immigration authorities discovered he was here illegally, and jailed him for seven months. He was released last week after friends came up with the $2,000 bond money.

One of his first stops was joining two other undocumented students from the Boston area for this Veterans Day rally in Portland in support of the DREAM Act. "I came to this country when I was 14 years old. I came to this country just seeking for education, seeking for a better life to support back my family who still in Guatemala."

Now 25, Arevalo is facing deportation. But he hope that the lame-duck Congress will pass the DREAM Act, so he can stay. "My dream is one day go to college, and I like computers--I want to study computer science. I know only the DREAM Act can give me that benefit."
Senator President Harry Reid, a Democrat from Las Vegas, is expected to bring the DREAM Act up for a vote soon. Activists are asking Maine's two moderate Republican Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins to side with Democrats on this issue.

"We're in crunch time right now--we've got one month basically before it becomes politically very difficult to pass the DREAM Act," says Kyle de Beausette, a Harvard student helping to lead the Student Immigration Movement in Boston. It help put on the rally with El Centro Latino Maine.

"And we really need for Sen. Collins and Sen. Snowe to step forward, to stand up for the almost 1 million youth that would benefit from the DREAM Act, who know no other country except for this as their home and want for nothing else than the opportunity to contribute to the only country they know as their home," de Beausette said.

"The DREAM Act as it exists is not going anywhere," says Mark Krikorian, executive director of Center for Immigration Studies, which wants tighter controls on immigration.

"I just don't see any kind of measure that would loosen immigration rules even conceivably being considered until 2013, and even then it would depend on the outcome of the presidential and congressional elections."

Krikorian says the DREAM Act is goes too far by including students who arrived in the U.S. before they were 16, and have stayed here for at least five years. "It has to be lowered to something like 8 or 10 years old, so that we're covering kids who actually have grown up as Americans, psychologically and culturally," he says. "Secondly, all amnesties create problems, one of which is that they draw more illegal immigration in the future."

Arevalo's not talking about bringing his Guatemalan relatives to the United States. Right now, he says he just wants to be able to visit his mother and not worry about coming across the border. He describes the U.S. as his country now. "And we believe that one day we're going to have all the opportunity of that the U.S. citizens have."

Arevalo learned he lost his request for asylum about two months ago, and is appealing the decision. In the meantime, he plans to continue taking classes.

**Letter: Selvin Arevalo Ovidio**

Dear President Barack Obama,

From the bottom of my heart, I plead to my God that you and your entire family receive blessings from the highest God while you are reading this letter. I admire and thank you for the great labor that you are fulfilling as a president in this big nation. My name is Selvin Ovidio Arevalo. I came to this country when I was 15 years old. I came from Guatemala to this country...
to fulfill my dreams because I always have believed that this is a country of many opportunities for those whom want to succeed.

Since I came to this country, I have been going to school to learn and enhance my English.

Three years ago, I enrolled with Adult Education in Portland, ME, for my high school diploma. Finally, in this June 2010, I shall have my high school diploma. I am already enrolled in college transition. I wish that at the end of this year, I can go to college, but what concern me about is getting financial aid. I cannot qualify for any financial aid because I am not legal in this country. The reason that I write you is to plead you for a solution to my problem. I have been a Christian since I was a kid. For eight years, I have been praying to my God to touch the heart of the leaders of this country to provide me legalization. I think that I have three important reasons for why I want to be legal in this country. First reason: I want to go to college and have a degree of computer science and more. Second: I am one of the leaders of a Christian church in Portland, Maine. I am the treasurer of the church, a musician; I play instruments in the chorus of my church, and a youth leader. Third: I have not seen my family (parents, sisters, and brother) for eight years. I have shed tears for them, but I am waiting until a legalization to go to see them.

I appreciate and thank you for spending your time reading this letter. Once again, I plead you for a solution to my problem. My faith is great; I believe that one day I am going to be legal in this country. Then my dreams will become true. Once again, thank you for your good will and I hope you have a wonderful time. May the peace of God be with you forever and ever!

Sincerely,

Selvin Arevalo Ovidio
Maryland

Washington Post: New push planned for DREAM Act
By Shankar Vedantam
November 27, 2010

Anngie Gutierrez knows how bodies decompose. She can deduce from a skeleton whether the person who died was a man or a woman. In her high school forensics biology class, she has learned to determine time and cause of death.

The 17-year-old Bladensburg High School junior readily admits her siblings do not share her taste for decomposition: "I am the weird one in the family."

Gutierrez wants to become a medical examiner or a forensic investigator, like the investigators she loves to watch on "CSI." But unlike her two brothers and her sister who were born in the United States, she was born in Guatemala - and is undocumented.

Thousands of high-school and college-age student-immigrants are lobbying Congress, introducing themselves to citizens by scheduling meals together and performing acts of public service to draw attention to the DREAM Act - a measure that seeks to provide legal papers for undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States when they were children. Gutierrez's parents, who also are undocumented, brought her here when she was 8 years old.

Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D), who was helped by the Latino vote in his narrow re-election victory in Nevada earlier this month, and current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) have said they will advance the measure - technically, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act - in the lame-duck session of Congress.

The bill was blocked in the Senate when Reid introduced it before the midterm elections. Advocates and critics both say the odds of it passing in the next Congress are slim, given that a Republican majority in the House is expected to concentrate on immigration enforcement measures. And Republicans have vowed to block the new bill because they believe it would provide amnesty to lawbreakers and legal status to criminals.

While the measure offers a path to legalization for immigrants such as Gutierrez who sign up for two years of college or military service, different versions of the bill currently under consideration would limit the benefit, depending on the age of the person. Military leaders have called for passage of the bill, citing its relevance in preparedness.

Large numbers of Republicans and Democrats once supported the measure, but a shifting tide of public attitudes toward illegal immigration has prompted many Republicans and some Democrats to reconsider.
"Many of these students are my students," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said at a recent news briefing to champion the DREAM Act. He was referring to students in the Chicago public schools where he worked before joining the administration. "The chance of going to college was denied them. It's absolutely unfair to those children and ultimately unfair to our country."

Duncan said that President Obama was willing to spend "political capital" on making sure the measure passes. Duncan said about 55,000 young people a year could benefit from the DREAM Act.

Opponents cite vastly larger numbers and say the bill would pave the way to legalization for millions of undocumented immigrants and attract new waves of illegal immigration.

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) warned his colleagues in an alert last week that while the DREAM Act could give "green cards" to as many as 2.1 million people immediately, the number could triple within a decade. The measure could offer legalization to people convicted of visa or marriage fraud, or DUI offenses, he said.

The measure calls for students to complete two years of college or serve in the uniformed forces to qualify for conditional permanent residency, but Sessions said that the bar was being set too low. Sessions also warned fellow conservatives that the measure would allow undocumented immigrants to receive in-state tuition benefits.

"When my parents came to the United States, no one asked, 'Do you want to stay or do you want to go?'' said Jaime Mauricio, 18, of Hyattsville, who recently visited Congress to lobby Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas to support the DREAM Act. "I was 9 years old [when his family brought him to America from Honduras.] This is the only country I know."

Gutierrez attended Thanksgiving dinner last week at the home of one of her high school teachers, Elias Vlanton. A group called United We Dream organized 300 to 500 events where DREAM Act-eligible students could share Thanksgiving dinner with citizens - and also perform various acts of service - according to Jose Luis Marantes, a senior organizer at the group.

"All teachers push every day to get our kids to go to college and work hard, and then you have kids who want to do that and are being denied," Vlanton said as he talked about what an exemplary student Gutierrez is. "It's painful - it's painful to you as a teacher."

Gutierrez said she was not sure what she will do if the DREAM Act is not passed.

"I guess they don't see it from our point of view," she said of the measure's opponents. "If the U.S. was an impoverished nation, if Guatemala was the rich country and the one with education, I bet then Americans that are opposing this would say, 'Hey, give us a chance!' But since they have it, they don't realize how important it is to us."
For 15 years, Marco Antonio Rua fixed toilets, replaced broken pipes and answered desperate midnight calls from residents of the Wisconsin, a 204-unit condominium in North Bethesda.

Now the residents have gone to work for him.

In September, immigration authorities ordered Rua and his 17-year-old daughter to leave the United States after his family's petition for permanent residency was turned down. Rua marked his last day of work at the Wisconsin on Tuesday.

The news of Rua's impending deportation shocked those at the condominium, whose well-connected residents include a U.S. senator, Hawaii's Daniel Inouye. In recent weeks, residents have lobbied Congress and the Department of Homeland Security, asking them to let Rua and his family remain in the country.

Gail Shultie, the Wisconsin's property manager, said that a petition circulated on Rua's behalf garnered 333 signatures within 24 hours. When she slipped a note under the doors of residents asking for donations to pay for Rua's legal fees, 15 checks totaling $2,400 came in within two hours.

"I have 204 angels behind me," Rua, 43, said as his teary-eyed wife, Liliana Rosario Rua, and his daughter, Andrea Rua, a freshman at Montgomery College, nodded. "No matter what happens, I am never going to forget what they did for me."

Even as anti-immigrant sentiment has swelled in large swaths of the country, many communities are willing to do battle for individual immigrants who have become part of their lives. Each year, their lobbying efforts produce scores of private bills in Congress seeking to grant individual immigrants legal residency. Few are passed.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has been one of the leading sponsors of private bills, with 29 introduced. They've been aimed, she said, "at helping families who are facing exceptional circumstances. These are people with no criminal backgrounds, who pay their taxes, who excel in school. In short, they are good members of the community who would face enormous hardship if deported."

In addition to the private bills, immigration officials also defer deportations in 500 to 900 cases a year, said Kelly Nantel, a spokeswoman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "ICE uses discretion on a case-by-case basis as appropriate and has the authority to grant a deferral of removal action based on the merits of an individual's case," she said.
Rua, who was born in Peru and came to the United States on a Spanish passport in 1995, has made himself indispensable to residents of the Wisconsin. His ingenuity has saved the condo thousands of dollars in maintenance and repairs, they said.

The campaign to help Rua "is not altogether altruistic," said Jerry Pruzan, vice president of the condo board. "We need him."

Rua said his family received faulty legal advice while petitioning the government to stay in the country. Rua obtained work authorization through his wife's application for permanent residency, but when that application was denied because it had not been filed properly, Rua was told that he would have to leave.

Rua and Andrea, a scholarship student, have been ordered to present their airline tickets for departure to authorities by Dec. 14. Rua's wife has a hearing before an immigration judge this month. Their 9 year-old son, Renzo, was born here and is a citizen. If the family is forced to leave, Rua and Andrea would go to Spain, and Liliana and Renzo would go to Peru, where Liliana holds citizenship.

"We're devastated," Rua said, his voice cracking. "I tell my daughter, 'You follow the rules, everything will be okay.' She wants to be a dentist, and I am really proud. But right now, I can't help her. I feel like I [let her down]."

Because Rua and Andrea are citizens of Spain, they entered the country as tourists without visas on what is known as a visa waiver program. Now that the petition for permanent residency - filed by Liliana's former employer - has been denied, the father and daughter are not allowed to contest the deportation order in court, said Rua's attorney, Julia M. Toro.

"I don't know what I did wrong," said Andrea Rua, 17, who came to the United States when she was 2. "All I want to do is study and be with my family. I don't think that is a lot to ask for. I feel people in prison and terrorists have more options than I do. I can't even see a judge, and I'm a minor."

Looming deportation

When Gail Shultie heard about the family's plight, she contacted the one resident who she thought could help immediately: Inouye.

Besides living in the building, Inouye is a co-sponsor of the DREAM Act, which would offer a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and are attending college or serving in the military. Democrats plan to re-introduce the DREAM Act during the current lame-duck session of Congress, but its chances for passage appear slim.

Inouye was sympathetic but told Shultie that it would be best if residents worked with Maryland's lawmakers. Although Democratic Sens. Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski declined to sponsor a private bill to keep the Ruas in the country, Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D) has lobbied the Department of Homeland Security to grant the family a reprieve until
Liliana Rosario's mother, a U.S. citizen, can sponsor her daughter for residency or the Ruas find some other way to maintain legal status.

If Rua is deported, Shultie said the condo would petition for his return.

Pruzan and his wife, Marcia, said their loyalty to Rua is only natural given his loyalty to them. The Pruzans recalled how once, past midnight, they discovered a leak in their apartment. When they called Rua at his home in Gaithersburg, he had been asleep but came immediately and fixed the problem.

A do-it-all man

Other residents said Rua knows their building as intimately as others might know their neighborhoods. If a leak on the second floor was caused by a malfunction on the 16th floor, with no trouble on any intervening floor, Rua would be the one to ferret out the problem.

Marcia Weinberg, a board member and resident, said that Rua was once working in her bathroom when she mentioned that she had to find an electrician to install a chandelier.

She said that he responded, "Oh, for heaven's sake, I can do that" - and did.

"It is such a broken [immigration] system that you can take people like Antonio and Liliana and their children and say, 'You're out' and 'We are going to tear the family apart.'"

As she put her arms around Andrea Rua, she asked: "How does this make America better?"

Letter: Yves Gomes

Dear President Obama:

My name is Yves Gomes. I am 17 years old and I just graduated from Paint Branch High School in Burtonsville, MD this June. Under the grace of God I was able to do well in my studies all my life and I graduated in the top 5% of my class and got into University of Maryland College Park and a handful of other colleges. However until today I had an order for deportation from this country on August 13, 2010, a few days from now. I spent the last year restlessly awaiting my unknown future. But today, thanks to the work of my lawyer, Mrs. Cynthia Groomes Katz, the help of the media (e.g. Ms. Andrea McCarren of WUSA9 TV) Organizations such as the We Are America project of the Center for Community Change and my family and friends, I was able to get Deferred Action after subsequent to Stays of Removal, and now I am ecstatic because I can stay in the United States.

I came to this country from India with my mom on tourist visas when I was barely more than a year old. I was born in India but I have never been back to visit nor do I remember anything about the life there. As far as I can remember, my earliest memories came in America and I
consider myself American. I grew up all my life here, completing my grade school education and assimilating into the American culture, which is so rich and diverse. My parents always told me to be grateful and realize how great the opportunities are in America, which is a sharp contrast of the life they described in the less developed countries where they came from, India and Bangladesh. My parents were deported back to their home countries last year. But with their words in mind, I continued to pursue my childhood goal to finish high school and get a scholarship into a college. I did achieve my goal, but it was devastating to see it escape me as I could not accept any of the college offers because of my status and my looming deportation.

All that changed today when I was granted a deferral, and with the deportation now on hold I can continue my life here in the US. Over the last few months fighting my deportation I learned that there are other young adults in the US who have received the same deferral of removal I received, but also that there are thousands of other students out there who are in similar and worse situations than mine and who don't have as many resources to receive help. I learned that the reason I was able to get an extension and keep my dream alive is because of the countless efforts made by my family, friends, attorney, community, organizations, and the willingness of the US government to comply with the efforts. This illustrates how the US is different from any other country in the world, because the government is willing to listen to its people when something is wrong.

Mr. President, it is clearly wrong that there continue to be so many promising young adults who are prevented from achieving their full potential simply because they don't have the right papers, trumping a bright, ambitious mind. To correct this wrong we need to pass the DREAM ACT.

Sincerely, Yves Gomes
**Boston Globe: Editorial--Kids of illegals deserve a shot**

December 2, 2010

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2010/12/02/kids_of_illegals_deserve_a_shot/

CONGRESS IS a long way from comprehensive reform of immigration, but it should be able to agree on granting legal status to the children of illegal immigrants who earn it by serving in the military or attending college. The Dream Act, as this path to a green card is called, is a win-win for the nation and for young immigrants. The economy needs more trained workers and the armed services need more recruits; the students and soldiers get the stability that legal residency provides.

Each year, about 65,000 children of illegal immigrants graduate from high school. Their ambitions are clouded by their inability to serve in the military or qualify for federal scholarships. Several states let them attend public colleges at in-state tuition rates, but most, including Massachusetts, do not.

The children are here through no fault of their own. For many, it’s the place they know best; they’re Americans at heart. To qualify even for conditional legal status under the Dream Act, high school graduates would need to have entered the United States before age 16 and been here at least five years. By then spending at least two years in the military or higher education, they can aspire to permanent legal residency.

The Dream Act has had the support of the Massachusetts congressional delegation except Senator Scott Brown. He should reconsider. The bill opens a door to opportunity, a Republican value if there ever was one.

**Berkshire Eagle: Editorial—Reform is a pipe dream**

November 15, 2010

http://www.berkshireeagle.com/editorials/ci_16623253

Federal immigration officials are increasingly going after the New England companies that hire illegal immigrants rather than the illegal immigrants themselves, a strategy that more efficiently gets to the root of the problem.

However, without the comprehensive, realistic immigration reform that can only come from Washington the illegal immigrant situation cannot be addressed, and as long as one political party uses the issue as raw meat to stir up partisans at election time, that realistic reform will never be realized.

A Boston Globe analysis found that fines levied against New England firms for employing illegal immigrants has increased nearly eight-fold over the fines levied in all of 2008.
This is a far better approach than conducting raids and trying to deport illegal immigrants, which was the strategy two years ago.

That resulted in expensive court costs and the knotty problem of what to do with the children left behind when their parents are jailed or deported defied resolution.

Companies that sought out illegal immigrants must now think twice, and those who did so inadvertently are signing up for E-Verify, a federal system enabling workers to check on the legal status of workers.

That system is not foolproof, however, and as a company that grows blueberries in Maine told the Globe, agricultural firms that hire seasonally have trouble finding workers who are not illegal immigrants. These businesses are tired of being caught in the middle because of Washington's failure to pass immigration reform.

It is physically and financially impossible to deport 12 million illegal immigrants, so reform must begin with a path to legal citizenship for those who are here illegally, combined with tougher restrictions to prevent the arrival of more people illegally.

Because the Republican Party opposes a path to citizenship even though it offers no realistic alternative, the problem of illegal immigration just gets worse while it rants about the need to stop illegal immigration.

As usual the GOP scapegoats the Obama administration even though the Department of Homeland Security deported more illegal aliens in 2009 than it did during the Bush administration, and is surpassing that pace in 2010.

The federal Dream Act, which provides a path to citizenship for the children of illegal immigrants through education and military service, is opposed by Republicans even though these children are guilty of no crime.

It's easier for Republican leadership to punish those who don't resemble their Tea Party supporters than it is to do what is best for the nation.

Until the GOP stops running for election and governs responsibly on occasion, the problem of illegal immigration, along with many other problems, will never be solved.

**Boston Globe: Case of Harvard student shows urgency of immigration reform**

**June 18, 2010**

WHAT COUNTRY wouldn’t want to be home to someone like Eric Balderas? Balderas was the valedictorian of his high school class and now attends Harvard on a full scholarship. He’s studying molecular and cellular biology and hopes to become a cancer researcher.

Despite those achievements and aspirations, the 19-year old Harvard sophomore could be kicked out of the United States and deported to Mexico. His mother entered this country illegally when Balderas was 4, and he grew up in San Antonio. On June 7, he was detained at a Texas airport by US immigration authorities when he tried to board a flight to Boston. He had lost his Mexican passport and was attempting to use a consular card from the Mexican government and his Harvard identification card.

The next day, he was able to fly back to Boston. But he now has a July 6 court date with an immigration judge. Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust is asking members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation for help.

His plight is another illustration of the urgent need for a reasoned national dialogue on the subject of immigration, with the end goal being comprehensive reform. As attitudes toward illegal immigration harden, more young people like Balderas risk detainment and deportation. But the logic that approach breaks down in Balderas’s case. Coming to the United States wasn’t his choice, and the nation has vastly more to gain by letting him stay.

A year ago, Faust urged Congress to support the Dream Act, the federal legislation that would allow young people who are illegal immigrants to apply for legal residency, under certain conditions. The Dream Act — once backed by a bipartisan dream team that included Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Arizona Senator John McCain — would create a path to legal residency for young people who come to America before they turn 16 and have lived here for five years.

Kennedy is no longer around to fight for the cause, and McCain has abandoned it. But the country loses if some of the world’s best and brightest are stopped from calling America their home.

**Boston Globe: Students here illegally rally in hope of living American dream**

May 26, 2010

Carlos Savio Oliveira stood in front of the State House yesterday sweating in the hot sun, risking deportation for the chance to ask US Senator Scott Brown to support legislation that could change his life.

Oliveira, 22, a native of Brazil, said he has been in the United States without legal papers since he was 8. The stocky former football player went to high school on Cape Cod and hoped to join the US Navy. But immigrants here illegally are barred from joining the military.

So yesterday, Oliveira and dozens of other members of the Student Immigrant Movement based
in Boston rallied at the State House and then marched to Brown's Boston office to urge him to support bipartisan federal legislation that would let Oliveira and thousands of other youths nationwide apply for legal US residency.

The Dream Act would create a path to legal residency for youths who arrived before they turned 16 and have lived here for five years. They would have to complete two years of college or the military, among other requirements to qualify.

``We want the opportunity; that's it," Oliveira said before he delivered his speech. ``We don't want a handout, just the opportunity to prove ourselves."

Yesterday's rally was timed to coincide with the approaching Memorial Day holiday and to appeal to Brown, a member of the Massachusetts National Guard for nearly three decades.

The Dream Act has been pending since 2001, but the rally underscored the growth of the student movement behind it. In Massachusetts and nationwide, students are intensifying their fight for legal residency, holding rallies and persuading the presidents of Harvard, Brown, Tufts, and other universities to support them.

About 400 unauthorized immigrant students graduate from Massachusetts high schools each year.

Around 11 a.m., students from Lawrence, Boston, Everett, Revere, Chelsea, and Lynn gathered at the State House, carrying handmade signs and waving American flags. Some wore mortar boards or T-shirts that read "Brown is Beautiful," with one set aside as a gift for Brown.

Maria, a 19-year-old from a Boston area high school who did not disclose her last name, said she took Advanced Placement classes in high school, created a Model United Nations club, played soccer, and joined the swim team. She hopes to become an American diplomat some day and plans to attend college on a private scholarship.

But because she has been here without papers from Mexico since she was 10 years old, she will be unable to work legally.

``I hope to make a difference in this world," she said to the crowd.

Oliveira had always been better at working with his hands. In that way, the Navy appealed to him.

But he is the only one in his family without legal papers, a young man with an American accent and broken Portuguese that makes returning to Brazil a daunting prospect. His father married a US citizen, but Oliveira said lawyers told him his father could not help him obtain legal status here.

``I believe in the values this country was founded on," Oliveira told the crowd, his hands shaking.
``I believe in this country, and I believe in protecting it."

Opponents of illegal immigration say passing the Dream Act would set a bad precedent, and they urged Brown not to endorse it, saying it would reward families that broke the law.

``We don't think it's a good idea," said Joseph Ureneck, cochairman of Massachusetts Citizens for Immigration Reform. "We think it would just encourage illegal immigration."

After the speeches, Oliveira carried the US flag on his shoulder and led the march several blocks down the Freedom Trail, to Brown's office in the federal building next to Boston City Hall.

Oliveira and Renata Teodoro, 22, a Boston resident also here without papers, carried five boxes filled with about 1,500 letters from supporters to Brown's office on the 24th floor.

Two Brown officials, Lydia Goldblatt and Jack Richard, met them in the lobby of the office.

``It looks like a lot of letters," Richard said, glancing at them wrapped as mock diplomas.

``This is for him, sir, if you'll give it to him," Oliveira said to Richard.

Teodoro read a letter urging Brown to support the Dream Act, then asked to meet with him so that he could hear their stories.

Richard explained that Brown had met with people on all sides of the issue and that he was in Washington. The senator has said that he would review the act, but has not yet taken a position on it, said Gail Gitcho, his spokeswoman in Washington.

In Boston, Teodoro said they would wait and sat politely on the couch. The four then met behind closed doors for about half an hour and ended without a commitment for a meeting.

As they parted, Brown's aides accepted a T-shirt from the group, and Oliveira and Teodoro left with the boxes of letters, saying they hoped to deliver them to Brown personally.

**Boston Globe: Desperate action; Many blame Brazilian immigrant's suicide on the pressures, limitations of illegal status**

May 10, 2010

MARLBOROUGH - In the grief-stricken search for answers, one thing was clear: Gustavo Rezende had hit a wall. He had dreamed of joining the military, getting a driver's license, and becoming an American citizen.

But the 19-year-old Brazil native was in the country illegally, a hard fact that put his dreams out of reach.
At Marlborough High School, he was popular, a talented artist. Then his friends went off to college and Rezende stayed behind, stocking bottles of soda at a sports complex. He got into trouble with the law and feared deportation to a country he hardly knew.

On March 4, weeks before Rezende's 20th birthday, police found him hanging from a tree in the woods near his house, next to Marlborough District Court.

The stunning public act, within sight of court clerks and commuters, has shaken a community and triggered an anguished cry for help from his family and friends, who believe Rezende killed himself in despair over his immigration status.

``He always said, `I've been here 11 years and I have no rights. . . . I have no right to a driver's license, no right to continue studying, I have no rights to anything,'" said his mother, Deusuita, weeping on her couch, near an array of photographs of her son. She added, ``I don't want what happened to my son to happen to someone else.''

Immigrant groups have invoked Rezende's death in the heated debate over illegal immigration. They have increasingly been pushing for Congress to pass the Dream Act, federal legislation pending since 2001 that would allow immigrant youths to apply for legal residency if they arrived in the United States before they turned 16, lived here for five years, and enrolled in college or the military.

``The story about Gustavo Rezende is one of the most compelling cases for immediate federal action to end suffering in our communities," said Kyle de Beausset, a 24-year-old activist who said he met last Sunday with Senator Scott Brown to urge him to support the legislation.

Others say Rezende's death should not factor into the debate, since nobody can say why he took his own life. Though friends and family said he often worried about his immigration status, he didn't mention it in a note he left at home saying where they could find him.

``It's exploiting the dead," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, which favors stricter controls over immigration. ``You can't second-guess that stuff because suicide is not a rational response that you can somehow adjust policy to address."

Colin Reed, a Brown spokesman, said the senator confirmed the meeting with de Beausset and would review the Dream Act. Reed said Brown told de Beausset that he favors streamlining the process for legal immigrants but remains opposed to amnesty for those here illegally.

Health care workers say suicide is usually the result of more than one issue, such as undiagnosed depression, mental illness, or drug and alcohol problems. But, they say, undocumented youths may be at greater risk because they are ineligible for many programs that might help them.

Rezende, nicknamed ``Goose," was born in Mato Grosso, a small town in Brazil, and came to the United States when he was 9 with his parents and younger sister on visas they later overstayed.
In 2000, his mother applied for legal residency through work - she cooked for a Brazilian restaurant - but was denied, she said, because her boss was underpaying taxes. She vowed to continue trying, though her marriage ended because her husband wanted to go back to Brazil.

``The kids didn't want to go," she said. "They liked it here as if it were their country."

In Marlborough, a small city of tidy houses centered on two scenic lakes, Rezende grew from a chubby boy into a fit and charming teenager who loved to draw, listen to music, and hang out with friends. He and one of his best friends, Kyle Hedin, planned to open an animation company someday.

During most of his schooling, Rezende did not face questions about his immigration status because a 1982 Supreme Court ruling allows undocumented students to attend public schools. But that protection ends after high school, making him ineligible for financial aid for college.

Even before graduation, Rezende felt the pressure of his family's predicament. He helped his mother clean offices at night, leaving little time for homework. He fell behind in school. When he was 17, police were called to his house after he argued with his sister and punched a hole in a door.

After he graduated in 2008, he tried to find work at a supermarket and fast-food restaurants - but most turned him down because he didn't have a green card. Finally, through a friend, he found work at an ice skating complex. He also got a part-time cleaning job.

Kyle Hedin said Rezende wished he could have the same opportunities as his former classmates.

``He always said, 'These kids go to school. They go to college, and they complain about it and they don't do anything worthwhile,'" Hedin said. "He was saying he would trade shoes with them in a heartbeat."

In February, Marlborough police found Rezende trying to change a flat tire, while allegedly intoxicated. Police arrested him on misdemeanor charges of driving under the influence and driving without a license.

The March 17 hearing in the case weighed on his mind. He had been caught with a fake driver's license from Brazil, and his mother said he feared he would be deported.

He had talked about suicide in the past, including in the weeks before his death, according to friends and the police report filed after his death.

``He had a hard time asking for help for himself," said Jane Hedin, Kyle's mother. "That's what's heartbreaking. . . . He had so many friends he didn't reach out to. Everybody loved him."

Mario Rodas of the Student Immigrant Movement, an advocacy group, said immigrant youths often fear deportation if they talk about their problems. The group regularly holds support groups to help the students.
``We tell them not to give up,'' Rodas said.

Two days before he died, his mother said, Rezende couldn't sleep. He was nauseous and called in sick to work.

The next day, his grandmother arrived for a visit from Brazil, the first time he had seen her since he left in 1999. In the early evening, Rezende hugged his grandmother, kissed his sister, and left the house carrying a rope, according to police, saying only that he ``needed it.''

Police found him the next morning about 150 feet into the woods, in a tree he used to climb, a dusting of snow on the ground.

About six weeks after his death, Rezende received a letter from the US government telling him to register for the draft. It wasn't a mistake: Federal law requires that all men ages 18-26 register with the Selective Service System, including illegal immigrants who cannot serve in the military, said agency spokesman Patrick Schuback.

Registering could help illegal immigrants if they ever apply for legal residency, he said, because it would show that they followed the law.

At home, his mother clutched the letter and wept.

``If that letter had arrived before, he would have been so happy,'' she said.

Associated Press: Tufts president asks aid for undocumented students
April 15, 2010

Tufts University President Lawrence Bacow endorsed this week a federal proposal that would allow undocumented college students a pathway to permanent residency and U.S. citizenship.

In a letter sent Wednesday to Massachusetts Sens. John Kerry and Scott Brown, a 1981 Tufts graduate, a Bacow pressed both to support a bill known as the Dream Act, a proposal being considered in Congress. It would open an avenue to conditional permanent residency for students who are illegally in the country but want to go to college.

"As an institution of higher education that seeks to prepare students for a life of active citizenship ... Tufts University supports the DREAM Act's goal of diversity and increased access to higher education," Bacow wrote Wednesday. "Let us alleviate the burden imposed under the current law by making higher education accessible to immigrants who take great pride in calling this country their home."

Under the bill, undocumented students would have a six-year grace period to pursue a college degree or join the military. The students still would not be eligible for federal financial aid but would be able eligible for student loans and work study, according to the proposal.
Tufts freshman Suzanne Emily Lis, 18, of West Hartford, Conn., who with a coalition of students asked Bacow to write the letter, said students were surprised how quickly Bacow threw his support behind the message.

Last year, Harvard President Drew Faust wrote a similar letter to Kerry and the late Sen. Edward Kennedy.

Kerry has said he supports the Dream Act. Brown has said he was against some proposals such as in-state tuition rates for illegal immigrants at state institutions.

"(Brown) is a Tufts alum so maybe that will get us some pull," Lis said.

**Boston Globe: Illegal status gives Harvard grad few options**
*July 27, 2009*

Back in the concrete suburb of Los Angeles where he grew up, they call him "Harvard." He is the pride of a neighborhood of children who grew up just as he did, bouncing from one crowded apartment to the next, sleeping on sofa cushions on the floor, wired to the constant threat of violence.

Alan was not just a street-smart kid in a baseball cap but a gifted student who breezed through math problems and quoted Milton and Dante. He was a voracious reader, the high school salutatorian, and last month, he graduated from Harvard with a degree in the humanities.

But now Alan has hit a dead end, because one night 19 years ago his mother led him across the Mexican border into California, making him an illegal immigrant. His only legal employment option as a college graduate now is to return to Mexico, where he has few contacts and fewer prospects.

Alan is among a growing number of students who have climbed to the country's highest academic echelons only to find themselves mired in the rancorous national debate over illegal immigration.

``One of the biggest ironies was that I'm going to graduate from Harvard and not be able to do anything," he said, sitting in one of Harvard's leafy courtyards, fallen quiet for the summer, wearing an engraved class ring on his right hand. ``Every class is like, you're the leaders of tomorrow. They build you up . . . and you're like, yeah, yeah, oh wait, they're not talking about me." He spoke to the Globe on the condition that his last name not be used.

Elite private universities such as Harvard have long been a haven for illegal immigrant children, granting them generous scholarships because they are ineligible for federal financial aid and struggle to pay nonresident tuition at public schools. Now the schools are increasingly pushing for legal residency for such students, under pressure from student groups and others working on their behalf.
In May, Harvard president Drew G. Faust endorsed federal legislation known as the Dream Act, which would allow an estimated 2.5 million illegal immigrant students to apply for residency, if they meet certain conditions. Stanford president John L. Hennessy came out in support of the measure last month, and Brown president Ruth Simmons in July.

This month, the American Council on Education, on behalf of 30 groups, including the Association of American Universities, said it "strongly" supported the act, which has been pending since 2001.

Illegal immigrant children are entitled to a free K-12 education under a 1982 Supreme Court decision, but that protection does not extend to college. In most states, illegal immigrants can enroll in college, but they are generally required to pay the pricier nonresident tuition at public colleges and are ineligible for federal financial aid.

Some of the strongest voices in support of the Dream Act are from college students themselves, who are saying it is unfair to educate illegal immigrants and then quietly abandon them after graduation.

"These are some of the best and brightest kids in the entire country," said Scott Elfenbein, who formed a Harvard student group last year to aid undocumented students after his best friend in Miami, now a student at Georgetown, was nearly deported to Colombia. "Most are people you would want running some organization."

But others say the private schools are wrong to admit such students.

"I think we really need to step back and say why are private institutions, or any institutions allowed to enroll illegal aliens in the first place?" said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington. "Essentially they're being trained for jobs that it's illegal for them to take."

From the beginning Alan, the son of Mexican laborers, loved school. He was the only child in his family who did not cry on the first day of kindergarten. He devoured books, loved math, and enrolled in a program for gifted students.

He loved computers so much that he persuaded his mother to sell his video games to buy him a bare-bones computer from a JCPenney catalog.

"For me things just like, clicked," Alan said.

Though she had a sixth-grade education, his mother monitored his report cards and made sure he got A's and B's.

But at home, things were tense, he recalled. His mother had three more children, and they moved a lot, often bunking with another family to save money. At one point, his entire family shared a single room.
"Teachers would say go home and find a study place," he said. "I was always like, 'Yeah right.' There was no place I could work for school."

Worse, his father grew violent, and would beat his mother, he said. Eventually, the two separated.

Alan did not know that he was here illegally until high school, when he wanted to apply for a job. He brought applications home to fill out and asked, "Mom, what's a Social Security number?"

His mother winced and shook her head.

"I always knew I was born in Mexico," Alan said. "But I never really knew the implications of all of it."

In high school, he enrolled in more than a dozen Advanced Placement classes, including English, European history, and calculus.

A teacher, who confirmed the details of Alan's life for the Globe, said she and Alan joked that he was bound for Harvard.

A year later, when he told her he was here illegally, she realized that a private college like Harvard was Alan's only hope. California is one of few states that allow students like Alan to pay the cheaper resident tuition at public colleges, but even that he could not afford.

With his teacher's help, Alan filled out college applications. When Harvard accepted him on scholarship, they were thrilled. They thought the Dream Act would have passed by now.

"That's what's frustrating as a teacher," the teacher said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "He did what he was supposed to do, and we did what we were supposed to do. And what's the end result? Everything was against him. Everything. And he rose above it all."

At Harvard, Alan had his own desk and room for the first time in his life. He attended lectures by world leaders, and had professors who appeared on CNN. He sat in auditoriums and watched Alan M. Dershowitz and Steven Pinker, and took a class with a leading scholar on Buddhism.

Alan kept quiet about his legal status. His mother sent him $200 every few months, and he worked cash-only jobs such as flipping burgers to pay for T passes and other expenses.

But it was clear that he was different. While his classmates studied abroad in Chile, Japan, and China, Alan stayed behind, knowing that if he left the United States he could not get back in.

When throngs of classmates in business suits hit the job fairs seeking internships or careers on Wall Street or at nonprofits, Alan made up excuses for not going.

"I would say, 'Oh, I missed the application deadline,'" he said. "'There was no point."
But he celebrated like any student this spring when he graduated, with a B average. His mother flew out for the ceremony.

Now Alan sees Mexico as his only option. His mother is against it: Alan barely knows his relatives there, and he has no professional connections. It is unclear whether Mexico's elite would welcome him, even if he is a Harvard man.

A maxim he learned at Harvard often runs through his mind: To whom much is given, much is expected. He has $15,000 in loans he intends to repay.

``I should be able to take care of myself," he said. ``I don't want to go home and sit on my butt and watch SportsCenter. If I do that, then these last four years have been a waste."

**Boston Globe: Harvard’s Faust backs path to legal residency; Illegal immigrant bill called ‘lifeline’**

*May 21, 2009*

Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust yesterday backed federal legislation that would clear the way for illegal immigrant students to apply for legal residency, an endorsement that stunned students and drew criticism for a president who has largely steered clear of fierce debates.

In a letter this week to federal lawmakers, Faust expressed ´strong support" for legislation known as the Dream Act, which would allow students who have been in this country since they were 15 to apply for legal residency under certain conditions. She acknowledged that students with "immigration status issues" attend Harvard, and said the bill would be a ´lifeline" to such students.

``I believe it is in our best interest to educate all students to their full potential - it vastly improves their lives and grows our communities and economy," she wrote in a letter to Senators Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry and Representative Michael E. Capuano, thanking them for their support for the legislation. ´This bill will help move us closer to this goal."

Faust, who declined to be interviewed, is not the first leader to endorse the Dream Act. But her action adds a powerful new voice to the debate over a bill that has languished in Congress since 2001.

The Dream Act often surfaces in the debate in individual states over whether illegal immigrant students should pay resident tuition at public colleges and universities.

But the latest version of the Dream Act focuses largely on allowing illegal immigrant students to apply for legal residency, which is an issue that affects public and private colleges such as Harvard because its graduates cannot legally work in this country. (The act would make it easier for states to charge resident tuition, but does not require it).
Private colleges do not rely on government funding and can decide to finance those students on their own.

Harvard students said they have been lobbying Faust for months on the issue. They held a rally and submitted a petition with 120 signatures, said Harvard junior Kyle de Beausset, one of the organizers.

In recent months, two Harvard students who are in the United States illegally met with Faust in her office to seek her support. Yesterday, one of those students, an 18-year-old former high school valedictorian who has been in the United States since he was 9, said he was thrilled.

``We realized that what we were asking her to do wasn't an easy thing. The issue of immigration is politically charged,'' said the student, who spoke on the condition that his name not be used. ``I am and will forever be indebted to this institution.''

But Bob Dane, spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, said Harvard should not admit illegal immigrants because they displace students here legally.

``Maybe the elites at Harvard should come down from their ivory tower and get some ground perspective on what kind of cost and competition that legal US residents are actually incurring these days,'' said Dane.

**Boston Globe: From In-Crowd to Out: Illegal immigrants often find the road to college blocked**

May 17, 2009

Until his final year of high school, Filipe fit right in.

A strong student at one of Boston's best schools, he excelled in sports and won a scholarship to state colleges because of his high test scores. He liked rock 'n' roll, video games, and the Red Sox. He spoke English like an American, with barely a hint of an accent.

Then he graduated, and all the doors closed. He couldn't claim his scholarship, a state college charged him the pricey nonresident tuition, and financial aid was unavailable to him.

The reason: Filipe is an illegal immigrant.

Across America, Filipe and students like him are welcomed into the public school system by a narrow 1982 Supreme Court ruling that guarantees them a basic education, regardless of their immigration status. After graduation, for those who want to attend college, the rules dramatically change.

The story that is rarely told is what happens to them next.
Filipe got a loan, enrolled in college, and sank $46,000 into debt. He took this semester off to work at a gym and pay down the debt. When he couldn't provide a Social Security number, he lost his job.

Now, he is broke, unemployed, and subject to deportation to Brazil, after spending nearly half his life in the United States.

"I never thought I'd be here," the 20-year-old said recently, speaking on the condition that his last name not be used. "It's a hard place to be."

Every year as many as 65,000 undocumented students like him graduate from high school nationwide, including hundreds in Massachusetts, according to the National Immigration Law Center in Washington. Ten states, including California and Texas, allow students to pay resident tuition and continue their studies, while several states actively prohibit it, including South Carolina. Private colleges set their own rules; some grant students private scholarships, and others do not.

Massachusetts rejected legislation that would have allowed students to pay resident rates in 2006. The nonresident costs here are double the resident rate, as high as $21,729 a year at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Advocates of stricter immigration controls say the students should not take spaces away from US citizens or legal residents. They say resident tuition is a privilege that should be for US citizens or legal residents only.

"The fault here lies with parents," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies. "I have a real moral problem with these parents claiming that we have a responsibility to fix their mistakes."

Advocates for immigrants say that children should not be punished for their parents' actions and that states could benefit by enrolling students who could not otherwise afford college. Massachusetts advocates say state revenues would increase $2.5 million a year if students could pay resident tuition.

"It wouldn't cost the state a thing and the state would gain from those who are not going to school now," said Eva Millona, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

At the national level, pending legislation called the Dream Act, first filed in 2001, would allow students to pay resident tuition at public colleges and apply for legal residency.

The Obama administration and the College Board support it, but congressional aides said it is unlikely to pass the House and Senate without an overhaul for all illegal immigrants in the United States.

Stéphania Lavalas, a 31-year-old from Haiti, discovered that she was an illegal immigrant three
months before she was to graduate from Dorchester High School in 1996.

Until then, she had racked up an impressive résumé: She was a top-ranked student, a volleyball player, a perfect attendance award-winner, and a tutor. She took college classes while she was still in high school. She wanted to be a teacher.

One day in March 1996, she won a college scholarship and rushed home to tell her father.

``He started to cry and I thought it was happiness,'' she said. ``That's how I found out how I came into the country and that I could not have that dream.''

She had arrived when she was 15, and did not know that her family had never obtained legal residency.

Her graduation ceremony was ``like a funeral.'' A month later, in anguish, she tore down the awards that had blanketed her bedroom walls. She contemplated suicide.

``One day I just cracked and felt like I did all this for nothing,'' she said. ``The purpose was for me to go into college and to help my father, who was working in a nursing home that was killing him. My mother was in a kitchen . . . The hardest part for me was running into classmates. Everybody knew that I was going to be huge.''

Her classmates went to college, and she stayed behind. She volunteered at local nonprofits, married, applied for legal residency, and was rejected. The stress broke up her marriage.

Last year she moved to Canada to apply to be a refugee and is waiting for her papers. If she is approved, college applications are next.

``I'm a survivor,'' she said in a telephone interview from Montreal. ``And I don't quit.''

W.G., a Haitian immigrant who also attended Boston schools, said he was saved by a scholarship to a private college in New York. They call him an ``international student'' and charge him only room and board.

``It's a blessing,'' said W.G., who spoke only on the condition that his name not be used.

Ironically, his parents send him $1,000 a year from Haiti to cover his minimal expenses, even though he fled that country because of its widespread poverty. His father is a lawyer, but violence and unemployment are widespread. At age 15, W.G. came to America on his own hoping to study medicine, and overstayd his visa.

In New York, W.G. spends almost all his time in the library. His budget is $25 a month, mostly for laundry. He eats only in the dining commons, loading up on extra food.

Nobody knows his immigration status, and he tries not to think about it.
``It can hold you back," he said.

That same attitude propels Filipe.

In Brazil, his family had a middle-class life, until his parents split up and his father moved 200 miles away. His mother followed a boyfriend to Massachusetts, and Filipe came after her when he was 12.

They lived in a small apartment in East Boston, sleeping on mattresses propped up on milk crates. She took a job cleaning houses.

Sometimes, she tells him she wants to go back to Brazil. It infuriates him.

``Don't even talk to me about it," he says.

Filipe has spent the past nine years transforming himself into an American, though not on paper. He does not send money home and he rarely speaks Portuguese. Most of his friends are Americans.

``I got sick of people saying you don't want to become Americans," he said. ``I decided to do my part to show that immigrants aren't some species of aliens, that we can be just like them."

In 2006, he lobbied state lawmakers to pass a bill to let him pay resident tuition and fees. The House voted it down.

Everyone tells him to wait until next year, and maybe something will change.

``I've been hearing `next year' for years now," he said. ``I had all the opportunities that every other kid had . . . but I can't use them."

---

**Eric Balderas: A Harvard University student.** “A Harvard University student who came from Mexico at age 4, Eric Balderas, joined their ranks after he was arrested by immigration agents at an airport in San Antonio. These immigrants are known in some circles as ‘Dream Act’ kids, named after proposed legislation that would grant them legal status.” [Los Angeles Times, 6/28/10]

---

**Story: Gabrielle M.**

Harvard College, Class of 2009

English and American Literature and Language
Teachers, counselors, administrators, community members, and elected officials … You, all of you, lied to me.

Every time you told me “hard work pays off,” every time you said, “if you try your best, you can succeed,” and every time you advised me, “believe in yourself and you can make all your dreams come true,” you lied to me.

The first time you told me such lies was in 1995, when I was a third grader, newly arrived from Mexico. You guided me to learn how to speak English correctly and without an accent. But, that was not enough for me. I wanted to learn to sing in English, to laugh in English, to dream in English, and you applauded me by allowing me to speak in front of my fellow students, in front of parents. You also guided me to learn to write in English. You taught me how to spell properly and to use proper grammar. But, that was not enough for me. I wanted to learn how to play with language, how to make it beautiful, how to make it ugly, how to mold it as one molds clay, and you encouraged me. You gave me awards praising my efforts: “Most Outstanding Essay,” “Excellence in writing,” “Writer of the Month,” and told me that this was just the beginning. “Keep up the good work,” you said with your hand on my shoulder, “and you can do anything you want to do in life if you stay in school.”

You gave me the incentive to do so by placing me in the Gifted and Talented Education program in fifth grade where you showed me how fun learning could be—with field trips, with guest speakers, with opportunities that the rest of the school would never have because I was special and so were my classmates in the fifth grade. You pampered me academically and introduced me to the “web of learning” that exists, where knowledge leads to more knowledge that is interrelated and connects the world. You gave me the key to this web because I was in “the smart class” and thus entitled to better classrooms, better teachers, better books, and better access to education than the rest of the school. Then you promoted me to junior high school where you promised “new learning adventures” and counseled me, “Continue earning straight ‘A’s; you are very smart and you can succeed.”

So, I started sixth grade with high hopes. Only, without a warning, you kicked me out of the GATE program. I should have known then that you were lying. I should have known that this was the first step you would take to separate me from those who, you knew, truly had an opportunity to succeed. After three years of top grades, after I had achieved amazing English skills, after I had wowed my teacher in fifth grade, you removed me from the Honors classes without double checking my grades, without analyzing my standardized test scores, without even glancing my way. And, when I begged you, my counselor, to change my class, when I continued to show up at your office to tell you there had been a mistake, you sent me back to class with a warning never to show up with that request again. I did not understand why, and until this day, I cannot make sense of it. You did not listen to my voice, the voice of a twelve year old pleading to be allowed in the door that you had once held open for her.

I did not care. With or without you, I would dream. You told me that I should not expect field trips or labs in my classes, that there was not enough money for US. And then, you, my science teacher, left me and was replaced by several long term substitutes whose job was to sit at their desk, read the newspaper, and occasionally take a nap while I was stuck using ten year old books
to complete a mindless assignment. So, I went home, went to the library, and while the GATE class prepared to dissect a cow’s eye, I paced back and forth in my back yard memorizing its different parts and functions, knowing that my class would never experience education the way “the smart class” did. Even so, I would not miss out on that knowledge, because I still held the key you had once given me, and no matter how much you would try, I would refuse to give it back. It was during this time that I said, “One day, I will go to Harvard.” It was during this time, that I understood the pain of being marginalized by my current classmates for having such lofty dreams and by you because you no longer wanted me in the classes that would help me get there.

And, as I dreamt, I also finished all the work I had for the rest of the semester. It was then that you, my Language Arts teacher, spoke for me and convinced the counselor that I was in the wrong class. You said, “You are smart, and the Honors class will be a better fit for you. One day you’ll be someone great.” It was on that day that I let out a sigh of relief because the promise of success and greatness was still a promise that was held out for me. You said so before and you were saying it to me again.

I continued to go to school every single day—until the eighth grade, when muscle spasms in my back prevented me from getting up the day after I was rushed to the emergency room. I cried. I begged my mother to ask the school nurse for the wheel chair, so I could use it throughout the day. This way, I would not have to miss a day of school because I wanted to learn. But, as I fainted from the pain, I realized that my perfect attendance would be blemished and I hoped that I could compensate by a perfect academic record. You praised my desire to learn by awarding me medals: “Principal’s Award,” “Outstanding Scholar,” “Outstanding Leadership” and told me as you smiled for the picture my parents were taking of us, “You are a great student, you can be anyone you want to be if your academics continue to be strong. But, you also need to be a leader.”

I joined ASB, became the Commissioner of Renaissance, a club that praised academic excellence. Instead of ending school at 2.30pm, I stayed at school planning events and having meetings with the teachers for the benefit of the student body. I loved to see change happen when I was proactive and I loved to see the effect of positive change on my fellow classmates. I loved being a leader, and I became good at it. “You’re ready to move on to high school,” you said and added, “Keep up the good work, and you will surely achieve your dream of going to Harvard and becoming anything you want to be.”

It was 7am when I showed up for my first day of high school, in the summer. I went to pick up my schedule and read “Basic mathematical functions and English Language Development.” You gave me the wrong classes, again. But, I showed up to the class because I did not want to be marked absent and when I brought it to your attention, you yelled slowly “the class is not hard—you can do it.” I would have understood you, even if you had not yelled. But, you did not listen to my voice. I had passed Algebra I with an “A” and I had passed Honors Language Arts with an“A,” and I had passed science and ASB, and even P.E.—all with “A’s,” and I did not know why you had given me classes that were below my skill level for the second time. This should have been a reminder that I was not entitled to the successful path that you, in your lies, had promised me time and time again in the past.
But, I walked out of your class and snuck into the counseling center, cutting in front of at least fifty other students to let You know, my counselor, that my class was wrong. “Yes,” you responded, “A bright young lady would get easily bored in this class. Do you want to take geometry?”

And I accepted because that would be a new challenge. It did not take me more than a week to earn the top grade in my class, which was full of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. “Why are you here, eighth grader?” a friend asked, and I told her that one day I would go to Harvard. “But,” she said picking up an eraser, “Mexican girls don’t go to Harvard.” I dropped my pencil and asked to be excused.

In the bathroom, I looked at myself and finally understood what you had been indirectly trying to tell me with the scheduling “mistakes” in my classes. I was Mexican and because of that I had no right to dream the dreams I was dreaming to learn the things I was learning to know the things I knew—I had no right to desire the success that you had promised me. But, I did not care. Because now, I had taken command of the path that you helped me carve, of the motion in which you helped to set me, of the goals you once allowed me to have.

And yet, you never admitted to these lies. In fact, you were quick to silence the voice of my friend, saying, “Believe in yourself and you can do anything.” At Back to School Night you told my parents you were very pleased with my work and reaffirmed that I had a bright future ahead of me, that you were confident that I would one day be running the school if I chose to or the city. But, I told you that I had fallen in love with Literature and with Education and that one day I wanted to return to teach at my high school because I still believed in the power of education to transform lives. You cheered my decision and flattered me by telling that I was already more qualified than twenty five percent of the teachers there. Meanwhile, I had to continue working hard, trying my best, staying on top of my academics and my extracurricular activities.

So, I continued to earn top grades and to be involved in my school and my community. And, it was not a problem because I loved the idea of helping my community and my school; I loved the idea of promoting academic excellence as president of the Honor Society. I loved the idea of learning and researching topics that we would never discuss in school through the debate team and winning team and individual speaker awards. I did not mind coming in to school at seven in the morning for debate class and leaving at six in the afternoon after calculus tutoring only to walk through a poorly lit street, so I could be at the library at six thirty to begin my community service.

And, one evening when I was sixteen years old, after a group of four guys threw me inside a car, made me take off my clothes, and were so close to raping me, I locked myself for months into shades of black and grey clothing; I stopped wearing makeup; I stopped looking at myself in the mirror, and I kept silent...because if I spoke out, I would no longer be allowed to go to the library to plan events that would promote literacy, and so close to the time of applying to Harvard, I could not allow this to happen. There were things more important than a terrifying twenty minutes—i.e. a dream that I had been holding on to for now four years—and I thought myself stronger than this event. I chose to follow the path that you helped to set out for me because it was the path that I knew lead to success. And when I finally spoke, it was because fears, night-
mares, and tears began to interfere with my normal activities, and I knew that I had to do any-
thing in my power to continue on that road towards my dreams. My voice was heard, and I was
assured that my dreams and the doors leading to them were still wide open and ready for me to
go through them.

You set out to prove that this was, in fact, the truth. You wrote letters for me, praising my “in-
nate abilities” my “natural leadership” my “love for learning” and gave me you highest recom-
mendations as I applied to Harvard and Princeton. And, on April 1st, 2005, six years after my
initial dream, you swore that the letter Harvard had sent me admitting me to their school was
proof that “hard work does pay off, that if one dreams and works hard anything is possible.”

So, I took my admissions to Harvard and walked among the world’s brightest and most talented
human beings—Nobel Laureates, poets, scientists, authors, historians, students—all glued
together by our different passions and desire to produce change in the world. And, every time I
came back to Santa Ana, you reaffirmed your pride in my accomplishments and you reaffirmed
your own work because my enrollment at Harvard also meant that you had done something right
in educating me and that the system actually did work.

Then, I started taking a mental roll call of all my classmates. Half of them had dropped out of
college. You knew that only half of the class from freshman year would be there on graduation
day, and you knew that only a fraction of those who went on to college would make it out with a
degree. You knew and yet, you had told them the same things you had told me—all those empty
praises and that empty encouragement had also been directed towards them.

But, during my breaks from Harvard, you insisted that I focused on me, on what a success I was,
representing my teachers, my schools, my district, my city at one of the most elite universities in
the world. My hard work, our hard work was finally being recognized, even more so as I con-
tinued to be successful at Harvard. During my senior year at Harvard, I was a full time student-
teacher and earned straight “A’s” in all my other classes during the entire year. I received my
Bachelor’s degree and my teaching certification on June 4, 2009.

Right now, you are burning to throw more praises at me, to congratulate me, and offer a warm
hand in recognition of my success. But, I will not allow it; because the piece of paper I received
might stand for a world class education that I received at Harvard, but it is also proof of your
lies. You told me I could be whatever I wanted to be. You told me that I would be someone
great. You told me that I would be successful. You lied.

Instead, I remain hidden, I remain quiet, I remain in fear. Because, at any given moment, a white
van with the letters ICE inscribed on its side can come and take me away from my family, from
my friends, from the people that swore on the life of the American dream that I would realize all
my dreams. But, you lied. You knew that for those students whose parents brought them to the
United States “illegally,” there were different rules, different paths, different dreams, none which
truly included the luxury or the freedom of success. You knew that even though the doors of
Harvard had opened up for me, the doors of the real world in the United States remained closed
with barbed wire and snipers barring my entrance into it. Yet, you sing a victorious song for me.
Meanwhile, my dream of helping the future dreamers of my city is indefinitely on hold while I continue to fall down from the cloud on which you allowed me to climb, each time faster and faster into a pit of disillusionment but a pit full of truth.

I have done everything you have asked from me and I have done more because the bar you set for me was never high enough. I have done everything short of dying in order to chase this carrot that you placed in front of me when I arrived in the third grade, and I have done more. I have fallen in love with learning, with education, with reading, with the potential of the students of my community. I have done everything you have asked of me and more. You knew my place in this entire game of the American Dream—you knew I did not have one—and yet, you vowed that I did, perhaps quietly hoping that by the time I left Harvard, something miraculous would have happened to allow your lie to go unnoticed.

But, I am done. Done with participating in a system that perpetuates injustice, inequality, and lies. Done remaining hidden, silent, lest the dreaded white van come and deliver me to where you knew I belonged—outside of the door of the United States, the door of my dreams, the door of my goals.

When you return to your classrooms, most of you will probably continue pouring lies out of your lips, attempting to silence the voice that spoke to you today because it would be unthinkable to look at your students in the face— to look at them and confess to them the lies that you have proliferated. Look at Maria and tell her she will never be an astronaut, look at Ramon and tell him he may not even graduate from high school, look at Luis and tell him he will not be a medical researcher, tell Karla that there is nothing but minimum wage jobs waiting for her in her community after she graduates from Yale as an undocumented student. Come up and tell me that Harvard will be the greatest thing I ever do, that I will never teach in Santa Ana, that Santa Ana students do not deserve a Harvard educated teacher.

You won’t. You will choose to continue spreading lies because these types of truths are unspeakable. As for me, I am done with your lies, and that is why I speak now. And this is why I choose to leave. Do not wait silently for something to hopefully happen between now and the time when your students are old enough to realize the emptiness of your words. This is my call to action and to real change, to bring a change that may not benefit me at all, a change that might not bring me out of the shadows and into the classroom where I wish I could be with all of my heart, but a change that will help each one of you to look at your students in the eye everyday and with confidence continue to impart the education you are trying to impart today.

[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]

**Story: Madison B.**
Harvard College, Class of 2009
Government and Literature

On a day like this in May of 2006, I stood among the crowd as one of the many who gathered that day in support of the immigrant communities around Boston and the entire nation. At that time I was a freshman, and not unlike many of you – I was proud to don the requisite red lanyard
around my neck and blend into the crowds of students holding banners. That day I was extremely proud of you, Harvard students and supporters, for turning up in great numbers for a cause that affected me so personally. My friends were standing by me, without a clue that I was, in fact, not like them at all. At the time, feared coursed through my veins and adrenaline from years of hiding, all threatened to end in tears. But tears would have given me away, so I was silent then, too.

And I have been silent for the past 15 years. I sat in the front row of my chemistry class in high school, and despite having answered nearly all the questions written on the board, I was silent. And silence means that I do not exist. I walked for four years in and out of classrooms; I do not exist. I finished my expository writing papers; I do not exist. I received my Harvard diploma this past June; I do not exist. I went to Church every Sunday; I do not exist.

I was eight years old when I came to this country. My family was fleeing political turmoil and poverty that has since overtaken the small Latin American nation that was my home. I never expected I would make it so far in my academic career, but worked tirelessly. Like many who wash dishes, serve at restaurants and pick vegetables under an unforgiving sun, I work in silence. We hope in silence. And we do not exist.

I face struggles that few of my peers will face – with an excellent education and honest work ethic, I cannot work to give back to this country that has given me so much.

I am happy that today we do exist. On this coming out day, we've had the courage to claim our human right to be. I encourage you to keep an open mind, and next time you sit at Widener Library, or the T, know that someone sits next to you, perhaps suffering silently. And if one of your friends comes out to you in need, lend a supportive hand. We have nowhere to turn, but to you, our peers and friends. We hope that politicians as well as citizens decide to end our silent suffering: we hope that you may in the words of the Psalm, “harden not your hearts.”

May we never live in fear again, may we all belong, and contribute someday to the wealth of knowledge that is woven in this great Institution. May we leave a humble mark upon the annals of history, that in a time of crisis we were not afraid. March forward then, since, in the heat of battle we have no choice but to fight.

[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]

**Story: Mariana R.**

**Harvard College, Class of 2009**

**Social and Cognitive Neuroscience**

Every great story begins with something about the self-evident, human right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. One day, I hope that my story will too, begin this way.

For now, all I have is a story about perseverance in the face of adversity. About patience through insurmountable frustrations. About a life full of hope, and about the dreams that someday will not only have to be just dreams.
I have spent the last 15 years of my life in prison, and I am only 23 years old. I never did anything wrong, but I have to live the life of an inmate, trapped in silence, always able to watch, but never able to do. In the last 15 years of my life, I have forgotten what freedom means.

At only 8 years old, I was forced to become an adult. I watched my family make the move that would change the rest of my life. But I grew up, I took responsibility, and I worked to become someone that my parents would be proud of.

Before I knew it, I had become more American than my American-born peers. I spoke the language, participated in the culture, I even dreamt in English. The strides I took in my academic life forced me to leave my peers behind; the children of immigrants, children who were just like me – for some reason, the system had decided to give me an opportunity that they would never have, because they too, did not belong.

After years of hard work, on March 31, 2005, I received a letter of acceptance. And as much as I wanted to celebrate, the realities sunk in. Although Harvard was “convinced that I would make important contributions during my college years and beyond,” my parents and I were not so sure. How could I even go to a place like that? How could I fly across the country if I couldn’t even drive? How could I excel in a land that had made its point so clear – I did not belong.

Somehow, I arrived in Cambridge that fall, ready to earn my place in the class of 2009. Somehow, I pushed through the guilt of having left my peers behind, and I promised myself that one day, I would go back to get them. Somehow, I tried to forget about the responsibilities I had left at home; I wanted to be a good example for my siblings; I wanted to make sure that they would never have to experience the feeling of being told that their hard work meant nothing. Somehow, I suppressed the feeling of desperation, as I knew I was alone, still in prison, still in silence.

And with these thoughts in mind, I lived day by day.

I sat with my classmates in the Science Center, taking notes about the central dogma. I completed every freshman’s rite of passage and became an editor of the Harvard Crimson. I wrote paper after paper, finished problem set after problem set. I volunteered with PBHA, trying to help those that needed it most. I was randomly assigned to a House. I changed my concentration multiple times and had several crises about whether I should write a thesis. But as senior year approached, none of these things mattered, because degree or no degree, I did not belong.

My final year at Harvard returned that familiar feeling of desperation. As my fellow classmates went off to law school, med school, grad school; as they accepted fellowships abroad; as they moved to New York to pursue their dreams; as they celebrated their greatest accomplishments to date, all I could do was watch. I watched as I received my degree, I remained calm, and I sat in silence, forcing myself to believe that someday, my day would come.

And I have sat in silence until today.
Today I take control of my life, because I have nothing to lose, and a real life to gain. Today I ask for the opportunity to be able to work hard in the place that I call home. Today I am ready to embrace more than the culture and the language of our country — I stand here ready to embrace the ideals, and the belief that in this land of self-evident truths, I too, am entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]

**Story: Nick L.**  
**Harvard College, Class of 2010**  
**Human Evolutionary Biology**

My mother and I made the perilous cross into the United States in June of 1993 when I was five years old. I became a Harvard graduate in May of 2010 when I was twenty-two years old.

After my parents made the decision that we should join my father in the United States, we made the journey to “el Norte” shortly thereafter. While most children grow up fearing the dark, monsters in the closet, or the boogieman, I grew up fearing a monster called “La Migra”: it could destroy homes, separate families, and leave little children without parents. The nuances of our illegal situation escaped me but I understood that we were supposed to be watchful. We were never to trust anybody with our secret. We were to fit in and avoid suspicion. My parents tried to tread lightly because they were on someone else’s land; unknowingly, they had made it mine. I learned the language and joined the ranks of “gifted and talented” children in fourth grade and became a skilled translator. By day I was learning to read and write, in the afternoon I went to order a new carburetor at our local auto body parts store for my father’s truck. I used to go outside and hide when I heard cars approaching, pretending that they were coming to get me. I will always wonder if it was a normal childhood game or if I was honing my escaping abilities for a potential encounter with my monster.

This country pretended to treat me as one of its own until my senior year of high school when, suddenly, I did not qualify for the vast majority of scholarships or opportunities that other students did, when I had to pretend that I was too studious to go through Driver’s Ed and get my permit, when I applied to nearly thirty schools and began researching the local community college despite being at the top of my class. My peers believed I was arrogant and wished to accumulate a book of acceptance letters and they resented me but I could not tell them my secret. I could not risk unleashing the monster upon my family and self.

I only applied to one scholarship, the only one that did not shun me away for lacking the nine digits I coveted so much; the committee acknowledged me with a $50,000 scholarship. I existed. I showed promise. I would be someone.

Fifteen years later, after my mother had become a U.S. Citizen, I became a U.S. Permanent Resident in January of 2009. I have been given a green card and a nine-digit number. I am finally safe from the monster. Unfortunately the monster continues to terrorize thousands of lives, it
continues to truncate thousands of dreams, and it deprives us of skilled individuals with untapped potential.

Just as the scholarship committee and Harvard’s admission committee did, legislators need to come together to acknowledge undocumented students’ potential and the immense contribution they are eager to make to this country; we have to pass the DREAM Act now.

[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]


**Battle Creek Enquirer: Editorial—Step toward real reform**

November 19, 2010  

If this nation is ever going to confront the issue of what to do with more than 11 million illegal residents, wouldn't the best place to start be with those who came here by no choice of their own?

We're talking about children whose parents brought them to this country and who have grown up here and now want to become productive, tax-paying citizens.

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act provides a reasonable path to U.S. citizenship for thousands of young people who otherwise now face uncertain futures.

In many cases they are bright, hard-working residents who have much to contribute to American society, such as the student government leaders at Miami Dade College in Florida and California State University-Fresno who just this week revealed they are illegal immigrants.

The DREAM Act is no "free ride" to citizenship, nor does it "reward" illegal behavior. The act, which President Obama this week again urged the Senate to pass before the end of the year, would apply to immigrants who were under age 16 when they came to the United States, have been in the country for at least five years and have earned a diploma from a U.S. high school or the equivalent. In order to become U.S. citizens, they must complete two years of college or military service, as well as meet all the other requirements for citizenship.

Most of these young people consider themselves American. They had no voice in the decision to come to this country without proper documentation. They are not guilty of criminal behavior.

Some opponents of immigration reform believe that anyone in this country illegally simply should be deported. Not only is that a totally unrealistic approach, but it would have a devastating economic and cultural impact on this country were it ever to happen. Anyone who thinks you can drain major portions of entire communities of illegal immigrants is delusional.

Our failure to address the issue only ensures that the number of illegal immigrants will continue to grow. We have to start somewhere, and the DREAM Act is a good place to begin.

**Story: Guillermo**
Guillermo came to the United States when he was just four years old. Since he was a little boy he has dreamed of becoming a Marine. He was in the junior ROTC for four years, where he served as a staff sergeant. When graduation came around he found himself not able to see his DREAM become a reality due to his lack of legal status. He now spends his days working long hours just to survive knowing that his hard work will one day pay off. He knows that one day soon he will be able to be one the proud, one of the few, a U.S. Marine.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Isabel Reyes**

I've come to realize that life is merely a succession of decisions made during precarious moments that alter life in its present form in ways that are inconceivable when those decisions are made. In my life, one of those moments took place in the summer of 1992. I was 5 years old when a decision was made for me that permanently changed the course of my life. My parents made the decision to try their luck in the US, the land of opportunity. My mom received a visa and we crossed at the El Paso-Juarez border on a balmy July night with my US citizen aunt. I was woken up and told to pretend to be asleep when we got inside a little building. My mom presented her visa and my aunt presented her naturalization papers. She held me in her arms while also presenting her daughter's US birth certificate. My dad came at a later date, having been sponsored by a different aunt.

It would have been nice to have had a say in the process that uprooted my entire life.

The simple fact that my aunt committed fraud by presenting me as her daughter means a lifetime ban from the only country I have ever known. If I'm ever forced to leave, I will never be able to return. While I always knew that I was illegal, I never understood the ramifications. I grew up naively thinking that if I worked hard and proved to everyone how amazing I was, someone would smile down on me and forgive the transgressions of my parents, as well-intentioned as they were, and my life would be happy from that point on. All my teachers encouraged me in this idealistic thinking because they never knew how the odds were stacked against me. I had assimilated so well, no one would have ever guessed that I was an immigrant, let alone an illegal one.

I worked so hard that in 8th grade I was among a select few that took the SAT as part of a gifted program in my middle school. I did well enough to qualify to attend Cranbrook, a private prep school with a sticker price of nearly $35,000 a year. I researched the school and fell in love with its buildings and the promise of a challenging education. This was one of the very first times when I realized that my undocumented status proved to be a scarlet letter of sorts when it came to my education. There was no way my family could afford the costs up front and there was no way I could apply for any financial aid from the school without a SSN. I was incredibly disappointed because I knew I had the merit to attend a school of that caliber and I had the work ethic necessary to succeed. The only thing that was holding me back was my lack of papers.

Fortunately for me, in addition to my merit and my work ethic, I also have a strong will to succeed. When I graduated high school in 2006, I left with about $22,000 in scholarships and
deep gratitude for the teachers who believed in me and helped me along the way. Although I didn't make it to Cranbrook, I did make it to college. I'm currently double majoring in Accountancy and Spanish with minors in General Business and Economics in a public university in Michigan. I spend most my time going to school, volunteering for a couple student organizations, and working to improve my 3.9 GPA. I hope to graduate in 9 semesters in April of 2011.

I also hope that the DREAM Act passes by the time I graduate. I've made my decision to take my CPA examination because my dream is to be an accountant in one of the big 4 accounting firms. I would like to set a good example for my little sister as well as my little cousins; I will be the first in my family to graduate from a university in the US. Another decision that I've made is to eventually pursue my MBA at Harvard Business School. I refuse to have others make any more decisions on my life. My mother and I have a U-visa application pending with USCIS, but it will probably take over a year to adjudicate our application. My best chance lies with the passage of the DREAM Act.

My sincere hope for the future is that other students like me have the opportunity to succeed in their respective lives because their success is a net benefit to the country that they grew up in and flourished in. It's rather easy to complain about the fact that we're here; it is harder to offer realistic solutions. As a future accountant, it pains me to read the simplistic nativistic idea of "go home and use your degree there" because the US invested in my K-12 education, much like a person invests in a business, and I feel like I should contribute back via taxes. Students like me are an investment - human and intellectual assets - not a liability. It's stupid to invest in a business and not expect a dividend, yet this is exactly the issue with my fellow Dreamies and I. We don't want a handout, just an opportunity to prove our collective merit and work ethic through either higher education or military service.

[Source: Change.org]

**Story: Rahmin**

My name is Rahmin and I am eighteen years old. I recently graduated from a Michigan highschool with a 3.9 GPA. In 1990, I was diagnosed with a form of blindness called Leber’s Congenital Amaurosis, a life-long eye condition that is not subject to change. News of my condition hit both my mother and father like a title wave. Fortunately, they were blessed with the energy of recuperation, but it left a burning desire for a cure in it’s wake.

Time passed and soon, our family was blessed with another child named. My mother gave birth to her in 1992. While sweet, my younger sister has a tendency to be extremely aggressive, which can be rather frightening. Day and night, she constantly wailed for no apparent reason. Both my parents tended to her twenty four hours a day, each person taking shifts be it morning, afternoon, or evening. After a visitation to the doctor, she was also deemed blind. The desire to rectify this disability mounted, so much so that we traveled from Lebanon, the country we were born in, to
the United States on April 10, 1994. Numerous people in the medical profession did not have a solution, thus a remedy for this genetic problem was never found.

Despite my visual impairment, the barriers I had to face were destroyed by braille, talking computer programs, and other devices. There is still one impenetrable door that my family and I have tried to grasp for fifteen years, but it is held in place by a lock composed of many unlucky incidents. Originally, we came here by way of a visa. However, it expired and according to various lawyers, there was nothing we could do to resolve the issue. Distraught but determined, my mother and father sought help from others, but all they received were words of hopelessness and discomfort. As they continually looked for assistance, we were placed in an elementary school that was able to provide us with equipment, education, etc. Another shock struck mom and dad like an anvil, the school that my sister was put into said that she was autistic partly because she bit, screamed, pinched, and had limited vocabulary.

In 1996, my second sister was born, but she was only blind.

Years went by and my older sister’s autism worsened considerably. I recall the frantic yells, crashes, and cries of sadness and frustration that rang throughout the house as she attacked my parents. Often my heart palpitated wildly, because I was afraid for everybody in the household. During a summer’s day in 2006, my younger sister and I hid in the bathroom due to her uncontrolled behavior. Eventually, she was placed in a rehabilitation center. She is making progress there, which pleases us greatly. She is learning braille, cane techniques, how to walk properly, and speech therapy.

My younger sister and I are also doing very well in school. In tenth grade, I took a course in Spanish and immediately loved it. Going beyond my high school’s requirements, I continued to study the language in eleventh grade. Additionally, I became a member of the jazz band and have made great friends. When I was two, I was given a small keyboard and as I grew, the keyboards matured. For the first time in my life, I went to a hotel and enjoyed the experience very much. All the band students were going to play at Central Michigan University in front of commentators as part of a jazz fest held there each year. I laughed, got nervous, and remembered the memories. Aside from playing at different concerts, I also performed three times for an organization called Access. Access helps people with translation, paperwork, tutoring, transportation, and such. I have also played for my school, another school called Star International in Dearborn Heights, and once at a wedding. In 2008, I won the academics award for CEC, which stands for Council for Exceptional Children. Overjoyed, my mom, two teachers, and friend accompanied me to Grand Rapids where I played my keyboard and received the award. Writing has been a passion of mine, so I participated in Journalism in December, and had one article published in the school’s newspaper.

Next year, I want to go to college and pursue a career in the writing or language department, but I am unable to do so because of my status in the United States. Right now, my dad is facing a court case and worry coils around my insides like a large and venomous serpent. He has been the block of stability for our family, and has never committed a crime. Believe me when I say that he epitomizes goodness in every way. A feeling of dread engulfs me whenever my thoughts stray to the upcoming event.
My mother has shed enough tears to create a river, and we grapple with fear, anger, and terror every hour, every week, and every year. We cannot vote, visit close family and relatives, or obtain SSI. Like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. we have dreams, and I do not wish to live a nightmare. I am asking for assistance, asking for reassurance, and asking for solace. Please do not deprive us because we have already been hurt enough. I beg you to take this letter into consideration, and rid us of this unholy manifestation. You will be condemning an innocent family to a terrible and undeserving fate if this note is ignored. Lift the weight off my father’s heart, and make my mother’s tears droplets of happiness. My sister and I hate listening to her anguish that results from our inability to acquire a green card or file for citizenship. The green card and citizenship papers can be used like key cards, opening the door to a slew of opportunities. Every person needs a key of success. Aren’t we people too?

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Sung**

My name is Sung and I am 23 years old. I was born in South Korea. I came to the US with my mom when I was 5 years old. I lived in Michigan, finished elementary, middle, and high school.

Now I am working on my college education, I am studying economics and political science. I have taken extensive time off from school because my parents could not afford to pay out-of-state tuition every four months.

These days, I work three jobs to save up and pay for school. I am committed to and actively participate in my local church. I enjoy being with my friends because they bring joy to my life when things get hard.

I hope to finish my college education and live a productive and faithful life pursuing the passions and the calling God has placed in my heart.

I conclude by saying I am American. It’s not just because I speak perfect English with a hint of a mid-western accent (if such exists). It’s not just because I want to vote and exercise my civic duties. Neither is it because this country has invested so much in me for it to go to waste would be a shame.

I am American because this country has instilled in me an undying love of freedom. I am American because this nation raised me to believe in equality for all people. I am American because I have inherited the wishes and desires of countless people before me; I desire what they desire, to see precious dreams soar on the mighty wings of freedom.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Letter: Mohammad Abdollahi**
Dear Mr. President,

My name is Mohammad Abdollahi and I am an undocumented immigrant. Two months ago I made history.

On May 17, according to the New York Times, I become one of the first undocumented students, along with two others, to "have directly risked deportation in an effort to prompt Congress to take up [the DREAM Act]." Risking deportation was no small act for me. Not only did I risk being forcibly removed from United States, the only country I know as my home, to Iran, where I don't know the culture or the language. I also happen to be gay. In Iran, people like me are tortured and executed. I am still at risk of deportation and execution, right now, and I will continue to be at risk until the DREAM Act is passed.

I took this risk because I had no choice. For all of my life, my future has been held hostage by politicians, both Democrat and Republican, who have used me as a political football. My family immigrated to the United States from Iran when I was just three years old. Undocumented immigrants are often told, "get in line!" without knowing that many of us were at one point in this infamous line. My family was "in line" until an immigration attorney miscalculated the processing fee for an H1-B visa by $20 dollars and our application was rejected. The second attorney my family hired to fix the application spent his time bickering with the old attorney instead of informing my parents that they only had 60 days to appeal our rejected application. The deadline came and went and we became undocumented.

I've known I was undocumented for a long time, but I still graduated from high school. While working to pay out-of-state tuition, I was able to earn my Associate's degree in Health and Human Services from Washtenaw College. When I had enough credits, I applied to Eastern Michigan University. I handed a counselor there my transcript and he said, "Mohammad, you are the kind of student we want at this university." He then handed me an acceptance letter. I was in.

I looked at this letter and thought of my mother. With this piece of paper, I could go to my mother and tell her that she didn't have to stay up late crying anymore. She didn't have to blame herself anymore. She hadn't done her children wrong by bringing them to this country. I could tell her it was all worth it. Then, the counselor brought back his supervisor, who told me that they could not accept me because I "needed to be in a line to get in". The counselor then reached over his desk and took my acceptance letter from me.

I left. My future was being held hostage. A short time later, the DREAM Act came up for a vote in the Senate, and 44 other people decided that they too were going to hold my future hostage. Three years later, my future and the futures of over 2 million others are still being held hostage. Two months ago, I risked my life because once again the window to my future is closing. I am in limbo. I cannot contribute to the only country I know as my home. I also cannot return to Iran, where the penalty for homosexuality is capital punishment.

My only hope is for the DREAM Act to pass, but time is running out in this Congress. The DREAM Act has more support in the Senate than any other piece of immigration legislation, but
it is being held hostage by Democrats who do not want to vote on it separately from comprehensive immigration reform, and by Republicans who refuse to publicly support legislation they have supported before.

I made history two months ago, and today, along with hundreds of other undocumented youth from across the nation, I will make history again. Hundreds of us are descending on Washington D.C. to ask Congress to stop holding our lives hostage and to pass the DREAM Act now. Please stand with us and ask Congress to pass the DREAM Act, now.

Sincerely,
Mohammad Abdollahi

Letter: Ivan Nikolov

Dear Mr. President,

In May, my mother and I were picked up in an immigration raid in our home. I was told that in 2002, when I was just 12, I missed a court date at which I was ordered removed from this country. I've been in detention for three months, now, awaiting my deportation. My mother was deported on Friday, August 6th, and I'm set to be deported any day now.

I immigrated to the United States from Russia when I was just 11 years old. My mother married a U.S. citizen who is the only father I know. I do not remember much about the journey to America, nor did I even know I was undocumented until I was 15 and asked my parents about getting a driver's permit. This is the only country I know as my home and I don't know what I would do if I were deported, now.

I am a long-time resident of Michigan. I have a fiancée who has been with me for over three years. It would be a great loss to her and to my community if I were deported.

In Russia, it would be difficult for me to survive. I barely speak the language and I have very little family there. I dream of studying film or music. I love my pets and my many friends in the U.S. I want to be able to see them again. Please take action now to stop my deportation.

Sincerely,
Ivan Nikolov

Missouri

Kansas City Star: Students support giving undocumented people path to citizenship via education
September 5, 2010
It wasn’t so long ago that Yahaira Carrillo wished for invisibility.

Stopping at a gas station in the middle of nowhere, say, for Pepsi and chips, she would get in and out as quickly and quietly as possible. If a law officer had stopped, too, for a cup of coffee, Carrillo would tense up, fearful somehow her secret would be discovered.

She’s undocumented. No papers, no legal status.

Now the 25-year-old Kansas City woman has shed her anonymity. When Tucson, Ariz., police came to arrest her in mid-May, she showed no fear.

She and others wanted attention for their sit-in, wearing symbolic graduation caps and gowns, inside the office of Sen. John McCain.

The cause of Carrillo and others like her at Kansas City area colleges is proposed federal legislation known as the DREAM Act — Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors.

It would allow undocumented students to legally stay and study in the U.S. temporarily and eventually, if they met mandated conditions, obtain permanent status.

At a time when illegal immigration is a highly charged issue, driving many foreigners without papers into hiding or back to their home nations, these students shrug at the risk of jail and deportation back to countries they may never even have known.

Their purpose is to pave the way to a better life for others brought here as babies or children knowing no other life than an American one.

“I’m an American, that’s what I think,” Carrillo said. “I just don’t have the citizenship or status to prove it, you know.”

Many disagree. They argue that parents broke the law when they illegally crossed the border into the U.S. with their children and neither deserves preferential treatment.

The DREAM Act is just a piece of the larger effort to grant a huge undocumented population amnesty, they said, which will just encourage more people to cross illegally.

“The DREAM Act is saying, ‘Don’t break our law and come here illegally. But if you do, there’s a green card for your kids,’” said Ira Mehlman at the Federation of American Immigration Reform, which opposes the bill.

“No question these kids are in a difficult situation, many of them,” Mehlman said. “This is a situation of their parents’ creation, but if people break the law, they have to understand there are likely going to be consequences for their kids.”
Carrillo, who spent the night on a hard plastic bench in a Tucson jail, faces the possibility of deportation after her civil disobedience arrest. Last month she had her second meeting with immigration officials.

“I was told all the time: ‘Don’t risk this, don’t risk that, because there’s so much on the line,’ ” she said. “Sometimes you have to make your own stand.”

•••


They are today’s “dreamers,” local names and faces from a mix of nationalities, immersed in what many regard as the human rights movement of their generation.

Proud to reveal their names and status in the face of those who wish them expelled from the United States, they said they hoped to change the image most people had of an illegal immigrant, and, if they could, to mute the ugly rhetoric they heard.

They march and protest with signs declaring “Stop Lying About Immigrants” and “Undocumented and Unafraid.”

“I see them out in front in the human and civil rights tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.,” said Rick Behrens, co-pastor of Grandview Park Presbyterian Church in Kansas City, Kan. “They are taking action not only for themselves, but they realize how many thousands in Kansas City are coming up just like them.”

According to the College Board, which promotes increased college access, 2 million children in the United States are undocumented. At least 65,000 graduate annually from high schools. Because many come from low-income families and are barred from government aid, only 5 to 10 percent pursue a college degree.

What the dreamers want is a chance at a college education — then a legal job and a profession. Raised on Sesame Street and MTV, they often grew up without a clue of why their parents worried about “papers,” which they don’t have.

Most don’t care to discuss their parents’ status. This is their generation’s fight.

“They crossed the border because they wanted to give me a better life,” said Martinez. “It is what any parent would do for their child.”

A 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling guaranteed a public education through high school for all children, including those of undocumented people. Denying early education would punish children for the actions of their parents.

But it said nothing about an education after high school.
“There is this whole generation of folks that have grown up here facing a brick wall,” said Jessica Piedra, an attorney on the board of the Missouri Immigrant Refugee Advocates.

“There is no path for these kids. They are stuck.”

When legislators first proposed the bipartisan DREAM Act in 2001, opponents came out in full force. Nine years later, opposition remains strong.

“We’re not treating all immigrants equally,” said Missouri Rep. Jerry Nolte, a Republican from Gladstone. “We are giving preferential treatment to those who came illegally.”

...  

Years ago, undocumented young people flocked to forums on the website DREAM Act Portal, where they learned they were not alone. They read about struggles like theirs and found answers, such as which states would let them enroll in college.

“A lot of people who navigated and spearheaded this movement met online,” said Juan Escalante, a college student in Florida who now helps run www.thedreamiscoming.com. “We can’t travel, don’t have money. We used the Internet.”

But many students moved from behind their computers in 2007 when the DREAM Act fell eight votes short in the Senate.

“We all came to realization we needed to bring this to a higher level,” Escalante said.

On March 10, 100,000 supporters of the DREAM Act marched through Chicago for a national “coming out of the shadows rally.” The march showed the spectrum of the movement. Students from Iran, Central America and Asia stood alongside American-born youths who had embraced the cause.

Erin Fleming’s red hair and freckles stood out in the midst of the Chicago crowd. The University of Kansas law student got involved in immigration issues two years ago.

“One lady looked at me at a rally and said, ‘You are not even Mexican,’ ” said Fleming, 22, a descendant of Irish immigrants. “Immigrants come from all types of countries — Africa, Asia and Europe. I love America. That is why I fight to maintain her image as the land of opportunity.”

She admits it’s easier when you don’t face deportation.

For those who do, the movement has become a calling.

...  

Ricardo Quiñones came to the DREAM movement through Carrillo. He’s 20 and a junior
psychology major at KU.

Two months after Carrillo and four others sat in protest at McCain’s office, Quiñones was with nearly two dozen students at a similar protest in the atrium of the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington.

It wasn’t the first time he found himself pleading for what to him is a freedom.

Five years ago, he stood before his parents in their Belton home crying and not understanding why they wouldn’t let him get his driver’s license.

“I promise to always be a careful driver,” he pledged. “I have kept my promise. I’ve been a good son. I am a good student. I work hard and I have good grades and I don’t get into trouble.”

What Quiñones learned that day flipped his young world upside down.

“They said, ‘We love you for being a good son, but we can’t help you. You are undocumented.’”

Quiñones’s parents brought him here when he was 6 months old. He had stopped eating, and doctors in Mexico could not determine why.

“They told my parents I would not live long.”

U.S. doctors discovered his lactose intolerance in a week.

Now he’s the only one in his family without legal status. His siblings are U.S.-born. His parents petitioned and received legal residence.

Without citizenship, he said, he’ll never be able to legally use the degree for which his parents are working hard to fund.

“That’s why I put the DREAM Act first in my life,” Quiñones said. “I don’t know what my tomorrow will be.”

⋯

Quiñones wants to be a psychologist, Martinez an environmental scientist, Carrillo a teacher or social worker.

And Myrna Orozco has dreams of being a lawyer.

Just look at these kids, said Behrens of Grandview Park Presbyterian. Look at the effect they could have on America.

Many graduate in the top of their class.
“People don’t realize the incredible potential and what we’re wasting by not taking advantage of what they have to contribute to our society,” said Behrens.

Jessica Piedra, a local civil rights attorney, agreed.

“We’ve already paid to educate them here,” Piedra said, referring to elementary and high school. “So they might as well stay here and contribute here. It doesn’t make sense to use our deportation dollars to deport valedictorians.”

Through middle school, Orozco aced every class and got involved in a host of school activities.

“I don’t want to say I was a teacher’s pet, but I was.”

She had planned her life out: Work hard through high school, get scholarships to a top university, then law school.

Looking back, the 20-year-old Donnelly College political science major said becoming a high school dropout was the furthest thing from her mind.

But that is exactly what happened.

Freshman year at her Raytown high school, she began researching college admission.

“That’s when I found out that at the schools I wanted to attend — Washington University, University of Michigan, the University of Missouri — I needed a government I.D. to enroll,” Orozco said.

She also learned the undocumented get no state or federal student aid.

That’s when she thought to herself: “Why am I doing this?”

Her grades dropped, A’s to F’s.

“I got really depressed, and finally I just quit,” she said.

When she discovered the DREAM Act and how young undocumented college students were speaking out, she said, it gave her hope.

“I thought if they can do it, I can too. I got my act together with my grades and started getting involved again. I worked my butt off to remake my life.”

At the Winnetonka High School graduation, she gave the commencement address.

She’s lived in the U.S. since 4, when her mother fled the northern Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez in 1994. Hundreds of young women mysteriously were being murdered along the border. She
said two aunts were among the victims.

She gave little thought to being an illegal, until the attacks of Sept. 11.

“‘I’m a patriot,’” Orozco said. “I watched the attack in horror, too. I wrote letters to the soldiers and prayed for their safety. The feelings of patriotism grew strong inside me, that this is my home, a country I would easily go fight for, die to protect freedom.

“Freedom I didn’t even have.”

•••

As Carrillo ate lunch in Westport last week, she talked about the long road ahead. Some days, working odd jobs babysitting, interpreting and housecleaning to pay for school, she gets discouraged.

Many American-born friends with whom she graduated from Ruskin High in 2003 have their college degrees by now.

“Life keeps going on for everybody, and they’re becoming the professionals they wanted to be,” said Carrillo, who graduated in the top 10 percent.

“Granted, you know, nobody’s life is perfect, but at some point I’m going to get really sick and tired of going to school.”

By the time she gets her bachelor’s degree, she’ll have nine years invested at local colleges. She has her associate degree from Donnelly College and hopes to get a bachelor’s from Rockhurst University in 2012.

The Obama administration has said criminal illegals and fugitives — not college students — should be the target for deportation. But since the Tucson arrest, Carrillo has found herself in that process.

She knows she could be sent back to a country she doesn’t really know. She speaks the language, but only because she’s majoring in Spanish. For years she has worked hard to speak, read and write the language of her parents.

Carrillo is where she wants to be. When traveling for a few months recently, she felt that pang of homesickness, eager to get back to Kansas City.

“This is home,” she said. “I’m willing to put everything on the line to stay here. And I have.”

**Kansas City Star: Protests could block American dream**

*May 19, 2010*
“They are running into the mouth of the wolf.”

A young woman who grasps the desperation and gravity of Yahaira Carrillo’s protest offered that assessment. Succumbing to the call of civil disobedience can mean deportation to a country that might be your birthplace but hasn’t been considered home for years.

Carrillo, a Rockhurst University student, offered herself up for that kind of sacrifice Monday when protesting in the Tucson offices of Sen. John McCain.

Interviewed by phone Wednesday, Carrillo remained solidly focused. “It’s not really about me.” Her group of protesters, she said, “really faced our fears. We took hold of our power and owned our power.”

Carrillo, a Ruskin graduate, hoped to gain McCain’s support for the DREAM Act, which Congress has dawdled on passing for nine years. It would allow students, brought illegally to the U.S. as children, to attend public colleges and gain a path to legality.

“Everybody is ready to follow, but everybody is too scared to lead,” Carrillo accurately says of Congress.

The other young woman and Carrillo once traveled to Washington together, part of a group of undocumented students calling for the legislation.

Carrillo and others tried petitions, visits with politicians, rallies. Now comes this week’s maneuver that so horrifies her concerned friend.

The protesters see themselves as modern day civil rights warriors. The “action” as they refer to it — camping out in McCain’s office and being arrested for trespassing — was timed to the anniversary of the Brown vs. Topeka decision.

McCain once supported the DREAM Act. Now he’s a poster child candidate for those cowering in fear of firebrand opponents who preach getting tough on immigration.

The protesters initially thought they’d be held in a detention center, better for the symbolism of oppression. But Arizona deported 81,000 people last year, far too busy to aid such a plan. Carrillo and two others were released Tuesday with orders to appear before immigration judges.

It’s a ridiculously high price to pay. And probably without the outcome desired — passage before Congress turns to the Supreme Court nominee and the November elections.

Years ago I naively thought the DREAM Act would pass with relative ease. It is one issue of immigration that makes sense to all but the most idiotically vehement. The students grew up as
“American” as their peers. They exemplify the work ethic and determination lauded by those who scream “illegal” the loudest.

But congressional leaders are spineless.

So we watch these brave, and perhaps a bit foolhardy, young people — some of the country’s most promising students — possibly sacrificing their futures by running at the jaws of those who couldn’t care less.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Watching dreams unravel
January 25, 2009

In the summer of 2003, Noe Guzman and his family - his mom, stepfather and baby sister - moved to New Haven from a small town in Michigan. Noe (pronounced Noah) had just turned 12 and was entering seventh grade. That might be a rough age to enter a new school - especially a small school where everybody has known everybody forever - but it didn't seem to bother Noe. He was the only Hispanic kid in the class, but that didn't bother him, either. He quickly made friends, and when he graduated two years later, he was salutatorian of the class.

High school has been more of the same. Now in the second semester of his senior year, he has been on the honor roll every semester. "He has an outstanding record of academics here," said Rhonda Helling, a teacher at New Haven High School.

He has also been a pretty good cross-country runner. This year, though, he needed gallbladder surgery and couldn't run. That didn't stop him from supporting the team. "A lot of kids, if they couldn't compete, would just drop out," said John Tucker, the cross country coach and a history teacher. "But not Noe. He became the manager. He made sure the runners had water, and he was our biggest cheerleader."

Noe also is a member of the student council and of the Future Business Leaders of America.

He wants to be a doctor. In other words, Noe is a small-town kid with big dreams. Sadly, Noe's dreams are in the process of unraveling. That process began when Noe decided to join the Marine Corps.

By the way, the Marine Corps is filled with young men from small towns who decided that the service was a way to kick-start their dreams. That's why the Marines send recruiters to small-town high schools. When the recruiters visited New Haven High, they set up a pull-up bar. Do 20 pull-ups and get a Marine Corps T-shirt. Noe did 22 pull-ups. "Have you ever thought about the Marine Corps?" a recruiter asked.

Yes, he had. "I love adventure," he told me last week.

So this summer he went to the recruiter in nearby Washington and said he'd like to sign up for a delayed enlistment. He'd head to boot camp once he graduated from high school in May. No
problem. The recruiter drove him to St. Louis to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test. Noe did very well.

He returned Aug. 13 to take his physical. He was at the Robert Young Federal Building with other young people in the process of enlisting when a man in civilian clothes led Noe to a room. "Did you really think you could get away with this?" he asked.

"He looked angry," Noe said. "I almost laughed. I think I said, 'You must have the wrong guy.'"

Noe said the man told him to stand up and put his hands behind his back. The man handcuffed him, then shackled his feet. "Do you know what kind of trouble you're in?" he asked Noe. He led Noe to another room.

A man from Immigration and Customs Enforcement was in the second room. Noe said he was calm and polite. The military had collected all of Noe's identification, and now the man from ICE put Noe's Social Security card in front of him. "This number does not belong to you," he said.

Noe didn't understand. He had used that Social Security number for work purposes. He had used that number when he filed taxes.

The man from ICE told Noe he was an illegal alien. Noe was stunned. He knew he had been born in Mexico; he had a vague memory of moving to the States with his mother at age 4. But illegally? The man from ICE told Noe that he could deport him right then. But he didn't. Instead, he told Noe to call his mother.

She drove to St. Louis. She told Noe that yes, he was an illegal immigrant. Your father was abusive, and I needed to get us away from him, she said. She had purchased the Social Security card once they arrived in this country.

Noe was released on his own recognizance. He was given a court date in October, and then one in December. Both times, he appeared without a lawyer - his mother and stepfather have little money. He now has a court date in February.

I visited him Wednesday after school. I asked if he were really completely surprised when he learned he was here illegally. "Oh yes," he said. "I never had any doubt I was a citizen."

He said he had been told he had little chance of avoiding deportation. He said he had been told he would need to meet three criteria - 10 years' residence in this country, no criminal record and somebody dependent upon him. He said nobody was dependent upon him.

He has an appointment Monday with a lawyer named Katie Herbert Meyer. She works for Interfaith Legal Service. I called her Friday afternoon. I told her what Noe had said about the criteria he would need to meet to stay in this country. Maybe if he had gotten married instead of trying to enlist he'd be all right, I said.
No, she said, a person facing deportation can file an application for cancellation of removal. That requires 10 years of residence, good moral character, a qualifying family member - parent, spouse or child - who is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident. Finally, the applicant must demonstrate that there would be an "exceptional and extremely unusual" hardship to that family member if the applicant were to be deported. Meyer said immigration judges were very strict when interpreting hardships.

It does not sound like Noe would qualify, I said.

Meyer said she had not been hired but would explore the situation when they met Monday for the initial consultation. "He is the exact type of person who would be helped if the Congress would pass the DREAM Act," she said.

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act was introduced in 2005 and would provide a path to legal residency for young people brought here as children, who fulfill requirements such as graduating from high school and attending college or serving in the military.

There is little chance of that passing in two weeks, I said.

"This is part of the broken immigration system you hear about," she said.

I spoke with Carl Rusnok, the director of communications for the central region of ICE. He said he could only confirm that Noe Guzman was referred to ICE after a Military Entrance Processing Station determined his Social Security number was fraudulent, and that his immigration hearing was scheduled for Feb. 3.

Noe said the waiting was tough. "Every day I look at the calendar and I think it might be another day closer to the last day I can be with my friends."

**St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Editorial—Helping Marie**

October 29, 2007

One day last week, Marie Gonzalez of Jefferson City found herself sitting in the gallery of the U.S. Senate and staring down to the Senate floor at her own picture.

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., stood in front of it, begging his fellow senators to help Ms. Gonzalez and other young people innocently caught up in America's mess of an immigration system.

"He was talking about my case," Ms. Gonzalez told us afterward. "I got all choked up."

Sen. Durbin was arguing - in vain, it turned out - for his American Dream Act. The bill would have allowed undocumented immigrants who were brought here as children to stay in America. They would have to have arrived before age 16, remained for five years, graduated from high school, be of "good moral character" and have no criminal record.
"Don't take your anger on illegal immigration out on children who have nothing to say about this," Mr. Durbin pleaded with his colleagues. "They were brought to this country. . . . They've beaten the odds. We need them."

He got only 52 of the 60 votes he needed to shut off debate on the bill; among those voting against it were Missouri's two senators, Republican Christopher S. "Kit" Bond and Democrat Claire McCaskill. Mr. Bond's vote was predictable; his party is pandering to anti-immigration hardliners. Ms. McCaskill's vote was a disappointment. Thoughtful politicians, including Mr. Durbin and his Illinois colleague, Democrat Sen. Barack Obama, can tell the difference between adults who flout the law and kids who had no choice in the matter.

Ms. Gonzalez was 5 years old when her parents came to Jefferson City from Costa Rica on a visitor's visa. They stayed on illegally after the visa expired, but, of course, little Marie had no say in that.

Her father ran a restaurant in the state capital and later got a state job as a courier. Marie went to school, pledged allegiance to the flag every morning and grew up as an American. She ran track at Helias High School, and fellow students elected her to the Homecoming Court.

Then in 2002, when Marie still was in high school, someone snitched on Marie's father. He was fired, and what was then the Immigration and Naturalization Service began deportation proceedings.

The people of Jefferson City rallied around the Gonzalez family. About 1,800 people signed a petition asking that the Gonzalezes be allowed to stay, but Marie's parents were sent back to Costa Rica. Marie was allowed to stay temporarily, thanks to the intervention of Sen. Bond, former Republican Sen. Jim Talent and Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Lexington. Marie Gonzalez is now a scholarship student at Westminster College in Fulton. Her latest temporary extension expires next June.

Marie is an American kid every way but legally. She speaks perfect English with a flat Midwest accent. Her Spanish is weaker. And the thought of deportation scares her.

Last May, she told a Senate committee considering Sen. Durbin's bill, "No matter what, I will always consider the United States of America my home. I love this country. Only in America would a person like me have the opportunity to tell my story to people like you."

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the Dream bill would have applied to fewer than 100,000 immigrants. Many, including Marie Gonzalez, can barely remember their native lands. To deport them would be cruel.

Opponents labeled the bill "amnesty" for illegal immigrants. Nonsense. A 5-year-old accompanying her family hasn't committed a crime willfully. This bill wasn't giving these young people amnesty; it was giving them a break.
There are 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, and we're in an increasingly rancorous debate over what to do about them. In the meantime, there's no reason to punish innocents such as Marie Gonzalez.

**Letter from Rockhurst University President Urging Support of DREAM Act**

April 21, 2010

Dear Senator McCaskill,

I am writing to ask for your full support of The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act). As you know, this bipartisan legislation seeks to grant temporary legal status for six years to undocumented students, who come to the United States as small children and have documented a good record in school and the community. During the six years, these students must complete two years either in post-secondary education or military service. If they complete either they can then apply for permanent legal residency.

There’s a certain irony in the fact that the acronym for this legislation is the DREAM Act. One of the definitions for dream is that of cherished aspirations, ambition or ideals. Our nation’s history and heritage is rich with the stories of immigrants with dreams and aspirations. I hope you will join your colleagues in helping to make this dream a reality for these young people.

If we prevent the realization of this dream for these young people, we will limit the aspirations and ideals of our nation. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this legislation and for all you do to encourage the dreams of all who wish to be part of the United States.

Sincerely,

Rev. Thomas B. Curran, O.S.F.S.
President
Former University student Piash Worthing did not know he was an undocumented immigrant until after graduating in the top 5 percent of his high school class and receiving a letter of acceptance from the University.

Worthing, who immigrated to the United States from Bangladesh at the age of 10, now attends Middlesex County College, because the out-of-state tuition rate the University required he pay was too expensive.

"I was a minor when my parents brought me here," he said. "I had no choice. I took 12 credits my first year, and that pretty much bankrupted me."

Worthing's story is common for many young people across the state, a situation the Latino Student Council is fighting to change.

About 50 students from the University attended a panel discussion on the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act and in-state tuition last night in the main lounge of Frelinghuysen Hall on the College Avenue campus.

The event, titled "The Faces of the DREAM: Not Just a Latino Thing," was a panel discussion of the issue of whether undocumented students who can prove long-term residency in New Jersey should pay the same tuition rates as U.S. citizens who live in the state.

"The purpose of the program is to educate people," said council political chair Jorge Casalins. "Number one: It's not just a Latino issue. Number two: It's an ongoing fight."

When it comes to in-state tuition for undocumented students, New Jersey is an ambivalent state, meaning each institution in the state may implement its own policies, said Casalins, a School of Arts and Sciences sophomore.

The group wants University President Richard L. McCormick to adopt the policy here, a decision its members hope he will make when they meet with him today at noon.

Casalins said he wanted the event to be an opportunity for students to see the issue of in-state tuition as less abstract.
"That's a big problem that we've had," he said. "We talk about the undocumented population as just a number, but you don't really see a face. When you see an actual student and they talk about their hardships and what they've had to go through, it really hits home."

Rutgers Union Estudiantil Puertorriquena Political Chair Shereen Hassanein mirrored that sentiment.

Marisol Conde-Hernandez is another one of the affected.

"I can only pay for, here at Rutgers, maybe six credits at most and even then, I'm barely breathing," she said. "If something like this passed in New Jersey, it would significantly alleviate stress."

Ten states across the country have in-state tuition policies, including California, where the Supreme Court upheld its policy yesterday, Casalins said.

"It just suggests that the federal government is out of the courts on this," said Rev. Seth Kaper-Dale, of the Reformed Church in Highland Park, also on the panel.

Journalists for Human Rights President Talissa Patrick, a School of Arts and Sciences junior, called the state's status a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"You can get the same [K-12] education, you can put in the same work, but unless you have the papers … they say you can't get an education," she said.

Kaper-Dale said the in-state tuition issue reaches beyond undocumented students and affects the nation as a whole.

"I'm thrilled to see there's advocacy on the local level," Kaper-Dale said. "We're making this decision for the betterment of society as we move forward."

Conde-Hernandez agreed with Kaper-Dale's idea that this issue affects all Americans.

"Think about how much American taxpayers — and my parents included in that group as well — invested in educating me through public school systems," she said. "You're not going to get a single penny of a return in your investment."

The New Jersey In-State Tuition Bill, which failed to reach the Senate floor in January, would have permitted students who have lived in the state for at least three years to pay the in-state tuition rate at public colleges and universities, regardless of citizenship status.

Gov. Chris Christie has voiced opposition in the past to granting the privilege to undocumented students.

"We live off of hope — that's our breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack," Conde-Hernandez said. "[But] there's going to be a time in which hope just won't cut it."
This is first event the council has hosted regarding in-state tuition since September's In-State Tuition Week, Casalins said.

Co-sponsors for the event included La Unidad Latina, Rutgers Union Estudiantil Puertorriqueña, Latinos Entering Government and Law, Lambda Upsilon Lambda, the Latin Images Special Interest Floor and Journalists for Human Rights.

**El Diario-La Prensa: Dedican desfile al Dream Act**

By Cristina Loboguerrero

October 4, 2010


NORTH BERGEN, NUEVA JERSEY — A ritmo de música andina, cueca, cumbia, mariachis, entre muchos mas, se realizó el Desfile Hispanoamericano de Nueva Jersey, en su edición número 35, a lo largo de la avenida Bergenline, dedicado este año al apoyo del Acta de Sueño, que permitiría a los jóvenes indocumentados obtener el estatus de residentes permanentes al completar sus estudios universitarios.

"Es un sueño que no debemos perder nunca", dijo emocionada Giovanna Hernández, una joven representante del Perú y que aboga porque se le dé a los estudiantes que fueron traídos de niños por sus padres a los Estados Unidos, la oportunidad de proseguir con la educación universitaria al tiempo que legalizar su estatus inmigratorio.

Durante cuatro horas los asistentes disfrutaron del paso de llamativas carrozas, grupos luciendo vistosos trajes y tocando la música típica de cada uno de los 18 países que participaron en la actividad, que se inició en la calle 80 y la avenida Bergenline de North Bergen y desfiló cruzando las ciudades de Guttenberg y West New York, para finalmente recorrer las 40 cuadras que finalizan en el corazón comercial de Union City.

Políticos del aérea dijeron presente. Como el caso del alcalde de West New York, Sal Vega, que dijo: "Es un orgullo para mi, como todos los años, participar en este desfile, que es uno de los mas importantes que se celebra en el condado Hudson".

Ante la proximidad de las elecciones, para algunos puestos, en varios niveles del sector público que se celebrarán el próximo dos de noviembre, la posición para alguacil del condado Hudson es una de las contiendas más importantes, para la que el alguacil Juan Pérez, que aspira a la reelección, anotó: "Hoy no es un día para hablar de política. Es una ocasión solo para decir lo orgulloso que me siento de ser hispano".

Rosalinda Machuca, quien vino desde Pensilvania para participar en el grupo folklórico de Bolivia, indicó. "Me encanta venir a Nueva Jersey, la gente de Bergenline es muy cálida y me siento como si estuviera en mi país".
Story: Camila

My name is Camila, I am 24. I was brought to this country from Israel when I was 5, and I have lived in New Jersey ever since. I graduated with honors with a B.S. in Biochemistry in 2006. Unable to use the degree I earned, I decided to continue with my studies. Just this fall, I started Graduate School.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

Story: Ivan

Hi, my name is Ivan. I am 27 years old.

I was born in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, in a small town in a valley of the Sierra Madre called Huamuxtitlan, on October of 1982 “Día de la Raza”. When I was nine years old, my mother sent for us from here in the US.

My siblings and I crossed the border through Nogales. It took us over a week to cross. We never got arrested but we did get delayed because the coyote wanted to save money and send us up to Kennedy Airport on a very cheap plane ticket, which meant we got stuck in the basement of a one-family home in Phoenix as soon as we made it in. Very scared and confused, we arrived in Paterson, New Jersey on September of 1992.

I was immediately enrolled in school. I started fifth grade in a bilingual class and within a year was transferred to an English-only class. I noticed very soon how the bilingual class was considered the school circus, with everyone else looking down at you like you were a lesser person because you couldn’t speak their language.

The first few years were very rough. I could not relate to anyone because I was scared that someone would turn me in. I made few friends and spent most of my days watching TLC and the Discovery Channel. The neighborhood we moved into was full of drug-dealers and drunks, always getting arrested and fighting in the street.

Eventually, we moved to a better neighborhood. The years passed, and my English got better and better. People say I don’t even sound like I was born outside of the US. My grades in school were always above average, but in my mind were never good enough to celebrate.

I look back at how little pride I took in being so smart and I realize that the fact that I was living in this country as undocumented always brought my hopes and dreams down. It didn’t stop me from doing good in school, though. I averaged a 4.0GPA in high school and graduated as salutatorian for my class at Passaic County Technical Institute, Class of 2000.

When college hunting started, I had Steven’s Institute of Technology and NJIT and my goals. They contacted me with full paid scholarships, only to turn around and turn me down because of
my legal status. No social security number, no visa, no greencard – no scholarships. I kept going either way.

I contacted St. Peter’s College in Jersey City and they gladly took me in. They gave me a grant for half the tuition cost and I went ahead and won a scholarship that paid for the rest through a special Essay Contest they were sponsoring. I had to commute for two hours from Paterson to Jersey City – public bus lines mostly – but it was worth it because I was able to continue my education. I think St. Peter’s allowed me in because they are a private Catholic college, nothing to do with the state the way the other two were. I’m very grateful for that.

In 2003, averaging a 3.72GPA with 98 college credits under my belt, I left St. Peter’s. According to them, I needed to fill out a FAFSA form in order to get my financial aid. When I did as requested, I was denied the state aid, which I expected, but I was also denied my grant and scholarship. I could not afford $17,000 a year. I left school and found a job.

In the last seven years, I see the days pass and try my hardest to accept this situation. My family had high hopes for me, and I know in a way they feel disappointed, and I don’t blame them. I’m disappointed too. I have a job instead of a career. All those Honor Roll certificates and awards are just papers, filed away with the rest of my past.

Now, I’m married with a three-year-old daughter and expecting a baby boy in November. I can actually say that even with my burden I have found meaning and happiness in this family that I’ve help create. Still, I’ve become what I always feared, another undocumented student with a stunted American dream.

I wanted to share my story with you because I know I’m not the only one living this life. I’ve been reading many articles and hear of many other sad stories of students like myself that never even got a chance to step into a college campus and fulfill their dreams. I hope I’ve helped in some way.

All of us students are living under the same shadow, and I hope that together we can some day make these people in Washington open their eyes to the true tragedy that is this darkness in our lives. That one day things change for us students and for all undocumented who have come here looking for a safer, healthier and happier future. People that have come here with genuine intentions of assimilation and good will. People that have come here against America’s laws, but not against their own morals and convictions to fulfill their innate right to survive. And I hope one day we all see the light at the end of the tunnel. In my case, the light I should have seen that night I crossed through Nogales.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Maria**

The year of 1996 was the year when I began to try new things, the year when my mother, two-year-old brother and I moved from Costa Rica to America. Moving to a new country as a six
year-old was more than an adventure; it was a chance for me to reunite with my father again as he had moved to America two years before us. It was also the first time I met my dad's family. It was also the first time I had ever held the soft, pure, cold snow, the substance that made me fall in love with America. My love for America grew even more when I realized that I was now living in a country where all dreams could become reality; a country with golden opportunities. That same love stayed with me through middle school even when I was isolated by my classmates because of a language barrier. That same love stayed with me when I was forced to sing the "Star Spangled Banner," but did not know the lyrics. I wanted to be accepted by classmates, but they only knew me as the girl with an "accent." I knew I needed to be the best in order to prove to everyone I was equally as good. With that realization, I tried my best to be on top of my class, and in seventh grade, I was encouraged by my teachers to apply to a program called NJSEEDS, a program that prepares economically disadvantaged inner city students with strong grades to attend college preparatory boarding or day high schools. I was one of 200 students throughout New Jersey to be chosen for this prestigious program. I attended Garrison Forest School, an all girl boarding school in Maryland. I felt more than honored to be selected among hundreds of applications to attend this private school. The love for America, which had grown over the years, stayed with me even as I applied to colleges my senior year at Garrison Forest, but had little hope of getting into them due to the fact that I was an undocumented student.

Senior year was a tough year for me, not because I had trouble with my academics, but because after going through the stressful process of applying to colleges for two months, I received letter after letter of rejection. I knew that I had not been rejected because the schools did not think of me as a strong candidate for their school. My strong academics, extra-curricular activities, and my teacher recommendations were also not the reason that I had not been accepted. I had been rejected for the sole reason that I lacked what every other classmate of mine had, a nine-digit code called a social security number. After reading each rejection letter, I naturally cried and became frustrated. I was afraid of the future that awaited me, a future without college or the opportunity to continue with my life. However, I knew that I was a strong person, and that I was not going to give up just because a few colleges had not accepted me.

It has now been two years since I have graduated from high school. During these two long years, my dreams have been put on hold. I have been living at home waiting for just one opportunity for me to continue with my education. Not so long ago a good friend of mine asked me, "Why do you want to go to college?" Though this may seem like a trivial question to ask someone, because the reasons would seem to be obvious, it is not the case for me. If most students were asked this question, their answer would most likely be along the lines of an opportunity for living away from their parents or a chance of meeting new people. However, for me, college is not just an experience; it is not just the next four years of my life, college is the opportunity of my lifetime. It is the chance that I have been so desperately waiting for the last two years of my life so that I may be able to finally realize my full potential as a student. I want to be able to experience new things that will help me grow as a student and as a person.

After graduating from high school and not having the chance to attend college, I felt as though I had been compressed into a small box with nowhere to go. It is like being stuck in one place, watching my friends' lives continue. It has been so frustrating to see my friends grow as students and people, see them fulfill their dreams while I, on the other hand, have been stuck in limbo. If I
was given just one chance, one opportunity for a college to see past my legal status and actually acknowledge all the hard work and dedication I put into my academic work all throughout high school, I would take full advantage of that opportunity.

When a person is given one shot at something that they have been denied all their life, that one person will not take such an opportunity for granted. A perfect example would be when African Americans were not allowed to attend the same schools as whites, and instead of giving up, they fought hard for that chance that they knew they deserved. Years later, we are in the 21st century where the first African American president has been elected. This would not have been possible had African Americans not fought for what they deserved, and had they not been given a chance.

Therefore, it is my firm belief that if undocumented students were to be given that same opportunity, other smart, driven, and successful leaders would emerge. I, as an undocumented student, will put all I have into becoming a successful student because I have been through a lot of hardship in reaching my goal of attending college. I have not given up hope in achieving this goal because I do not want the sacrifice that my family and I made in coming to America to be in vain. Even though colleges have said "No" to me numerous times, it does not mean I will say "No" to myself, "No" to my dreams.

[Source: Change.org]

**Story: Marisol Hernandez**

Marisol Conde-Hernandez was born in Puebla, Mexico and was brought to the U.S. by her teenage parents at 18 months of age. They settled down in Princeton, NJ, where they lived together for nine years until her parents separated. Moving around the Mercer and Middlesex Counties, Marisol focused her energies on her schoolwork as a way of coping with the separation.

During Marisol’s senior year at South Brunswick High School, her father was incarcerated and she was able to drop half of her classes in order to work full-time to help financially support her two youngest siblings. Nonetheless, Marisol graduated her Class of 2005 with 3.5 GPA, a member of the National Honor Society, President of the National French Honor Society, President of the Latino Culture Club and a HiTOPS Teen PEP Leader, delivering health promotion workshops to her peers addressing issues such as unplanned pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted infections, homophobia reduction and date rape.

Thanks to the encouragement of her AP U.S. History teacher, Marisol enrolled at Middlesex County College after giving up the application process for 4-year universities and scholarships due to the depression she felt from her father’s incarceration and her undocumented status. At Middlesex County College, now a sophomore and ready to graduate this January, Marisol is President of the Hispanic-American Club and works full-time at a local restaurant to pay full tuition by herself. On top of that, she serves as Secretary of the Board and as Program Director of Latino Reform Youth Council, a non-profit organization that promotes a positive Latino identity.
as a means of encouraging 18-25 year olds in the Greater Princeton area to attend and finish higher education while becoming socially involved in their communities.

Most prominently, Marisol is recognized by her advocacy work for the DREAM Act and the In-State Tuition Bill with several organizations such as the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network, the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the New York State Youth Leadership Council. She has been featured in local and state newspapers for providing her testimonial story as an achieving undocumented student at rallies, forums, community meetings, and press conferences.

[Source: The White House Project]

**Story: Piash**

My Name is Piash and I am an Undocumented American.

I was born in Bangladesh and lived there for ten years of my life. The year 2000 was a very exciting year for me. I was going to visit my aunt in United States for the first time in my life. I was promised a trip to Disneyland as well. I believed my parents when they told me all of this. What ten-year-old kid doesn’t believe his parents?

After about a month, my dad told me that we were staying in America permanently and I was to go to school here. I was enrolled in sixth grade the following fall and started my new life. My first year was the hardest for me. I was the foreign kid with the strange accent and I felt lost and confused. I didn’t have many friends but I spent a lot of time reading, learning English, and watching Saturday morning cartoons. As I immersed myself in this strange American culture, I started falling in love with it. As years passed, I started identifying myself as more American than Bangladeshi.

In high school, I found a group of close friends who welcomed me into their lives. I was happy with my life and I studied hard. I loved rock music. I stood in line for each new Harry Potter book. I was a big fan of ‘24’ and ‘Superman’ was my childhood hero. I loved history and learned all that I could about the United States and its past.

It wasn’t until my sophomore year of high school that I first found out that I was undocumented. I came home to show my parents that I got a 100 on my driver’s ed class and I wanted to go to DMV to get my learner’s permit. My parents told me that my dad’s asylum case was still pending in court and they didn’t know how long it would take. My dad assured me, as his lawyer told him, that once I apply for college, I could obtain a student visa. A year later, my dad’s case was dismissed by the court and my dad decided voluntarily departure was better than trying to appeal.

It was my senior year when things became chaotic. I started applying to schools and that’s when I found out that I couldn’t transfer to a student visa from a tourist visa without going back to Bangladesh. If I went back and applied, there was a good chance I would be denied the visa since I was undocumented and my tourist visa was long expired.
I was accepted into Rutgers but I was charged out-of-state tuition even though I’d been living in New Jersey for more than eight years and graduated from a New Jersey public high school. I couldn’t apply for Financial aid or any loans because I was undocumented. I didn’t qualify for any scholarships from Rutgers for the same reason. I decided to enroll in Rutgers for one semester and then transfer or take a semester off if my parents couldn’t afford to pay anymore. I wanted to study and graduate even if it took me more than four years.

I was depressed. I felt betrayed. I worked hard in school. I graduated in the top 10% of my class with a 3.8 GPA. Should I be angry at my dad for not hiring a more competent lawyer or at the broken immigration system that is ridiculously slow and ridden with loopholes? I was an American in every way except where it really mattered: documents. I never told my friends because I didn’t know how they would react. After all, it was high school.

In 2007, I found out that I wasn’t alone in my struggle. I learned of a bill in congress that was designed to help American students like us who lost legal status or were brought to this country illegally by their parents. We can’t drive or work legally. We can’t further our education or join the workforce and pay taxes to contribute to the economy. Over 65,000 undocumented students graduate each year.

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, also known as the DREAM act, is a bipartisan legislation that would permit these students conditional legal status and eventual citizenship granted they meet certain requirements.

In 2007, the Dream Act came up in congress as a stand alone bill and was narrowly defeated in amidst cries from Anti-immigration groups that it was an amnesty for illegal aliens. Dictionary.com defines Amnesty as “a general pardon for offenses, esp. political offenses, against a government, often granted before any trial or conviction.”

How can this bill be an Amnesty when the only crime that we have committed is obeying our parents? It is not an amnesty but rather, our only chance at living the American Dream.

It was very disheartening when the Dream Act failed in 2007. I felt rejected and I had two options. The first was to leave my friends and family to go back to Bangladesh, though most of my family lives in US legally and my father was in Malaysia at the time. I would have to start over in a country that I no longer considered my home. I would be as lost as I was when I came to United States 8 years earlier.

Instead, I’ve decided to stand up for what I believe and fight for my rights. In 1776, Americans declared that [They]“hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Dream Act is my fight for my life, liberty and pursuit of Happiness.

In 2009, Americans, both legal and undocumented, are uniting. Our goal is to raise awareness of this civil rights and immigration issue that should be solved as soon as possible. American taxpayers, including my parents, have already been invested into students like me during our
twelve years of public schooling. It would be wasted completely if we couldn’t pay taxes and become contributing Americans.

The Dream Act will return again in the 111th congress and it’s up to us to prevent the misinformation that plagued this bill in the past. Together, we can react as human beings and as Americans and help children achieve their dreams.

[Source: Change.org]

New York

Letter from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and a Coalition of CEOs In Support of the DREAM Act
May 27, 2009

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Lugar
United States Senate
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin and Senator Lugar:

We are writing in support of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (The "DREAM Act") which would allow the children of immigrants who have grown up here a conditional path to citizenship in exchange for a mandatory two years in higher education or military service. Passage of The DREAM Act would go a long way towards correcting an inequitable situation that drains our economy of talent and resources.

Under current law, children who come to the United States with parents who enter illegally are condemned to a life in the shadows. Many excel in school and dream of going to college, but the opportunity is denied them. With an education, and as legal members of society, they can legally join the American labor force, start new companies, develop innovative technologies, or pioneer medical advances. In other words, these youngsters can become productive contributors to our economy.

In New York City, tens of thousands of public school students do not have legal status. We are investing in them all the same, which is required by federal law and – just as importantly – honors the values on which the United States was built. New York has increased education spending by billions of dollars over the past seven years, and we have raised graduation rates and test scores significantly. Our City – and our country – can only reap a return on that investment if Congress allows all students to pursue higher education and legitimate careers. In today’s global economy, we simply cannot afford to chase home-grown talent out of our country.
The DREAM Act is not a substitute for comprehensive immigration reform, which is much needed to restore the strength and competitive status of the American economy. Ideally, the DREAM Act should be one component of a comprehensive reform bill. But if comprehensive action is delayed, Congress should not hesitate to pass legislation that provides immediate relief to children who should not be denied the opportunity to secure an education and contribute to the American economy. The Dream Act offers a fair bargain benefiting both children and the country. As you work to pass it, you will have our full support.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Candace K. Beinecke
Chair
Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP

Kevin Burke
Chairman, President, and CEO
Con Edison

Russell L. Carson
Co-Founder and General Partner
Welsh, Carson, Anderson & Stowe

Robert B. Catell
Chairman US
National Grid

Kenneth I. Chenault
Chairman and CEO
American Express Company

James Dimon
Chairman, President, and CEO
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Jeff Kindler
CEO and Chairman
Pfizer

Rochelle B. Lazarus
Chairman
Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide

Martin Lipton
Senior Partner
FOX News: DREAM Act Students Volunteer to Serve in the Military
December 1, 2010

A group of young undocumented immigrants gathered Tuesday at a military recruiting center in the U.S. capital, offering to serve as volunteers in the military of the country they grew up in.
Their demonstration was an attempt to pressure Congress into approving the DREAM Act, legislation that would allow immigrants whose families brought them into the United States illegally to obtain legal residence if they serve in the Armed Forces or go to college.

"This is our country, the country we love," 21-year-old Lizardo Bujelet told Efe. "All we ask is justice, not a favor."

Born in Peru and now a resident of San Antonio, Bujelet said it was only three or four years ago when he found out he was undocumented.

In high school Bujelet joined the ROTC where he learned to march like the other volunteers, as he now marched with all the young people demonstrating in front of the Washington recruiting office.

The problem for undocumented immigrants, according to Mexican-born Cesar Vargas, a third-year law student in New York, is that they can't get financial aid for their studies.

"Since (the terrorist attacks against the U.S. in) September 2001, I felt that I wanted to serve the country I call my land, my home," Vargas said, adding that he is eager for Congress to pass legislation that would allow him to join the Marine Corps.

Reporters were not allowed in the offices where volunteers were being interviewed, but Vargas said that the army officer in charge of the interviews "showed his support and told us that he knows many immigrants who have a greater sense of patriotism than many Americans born here."

Alina Cortes, 19, told Efe that she learned of her undocumented status when, shortly before graduating from high school, she was notified that she did not qualify for a scholarship or government grants for going to college.

"I had to study with the aid of private scholarships and the efforts of my family," said Cortes, a Mexico City native attending college in Texas who also wants to become a Marine.

The DREAM Act is a bill introduced by Democrats and Republicans that would legalize hundreds of thousands of young people brought to the United States as children and raised in this country.

Shu Ohno, spokesperson for the Immigration Forum, said that similar activities are being carried out in a number of states including California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Texas and Wisconsin.

On Monday, 15 demonstrators were arrested at the San Antonio offices of Texas Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison after a six-hour protest asking the lawmaker to support the DREAM Act.
The demonstrators were members of a group of students who 20 days ago began a hunger strike in support of the DREAM Act.

**New York Daily News: Protesters rally in Brooklyn to push for approval of DREAM Act for illegal immigrant youth**

By Erin Durkin  
November 22, 2010  

Hundreds of protesters rallied in Brooklyn Sunday for a bill that would create a path to citizenship for young illegal immigrants who go to college or join the military.

Supporters of the DREAM Act, which would apply to immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, hope it reaches a vote in Congress in the next few weeks before Republican gains in Congress effectively kill its chances.

"The window of opportunity is closing, but we will not rest until we get it done," Rep. Nydia Velasquez (D-Brooklyn) said at the rally at a Bushwick church.

Velasquez met with President Obama last week to push for the bill. "The least we can do is to pass the DREAM Act as a down payment for comprehensive immigration reform," she said.

Undocumented immigrants are barred from joining the military, and usually don't qualify for college financial aid.

"I've lived all my life here," said Kendy Rodriguez, 15, a high school sophomore from Queens whose family brought her here from Mexico when she was 3. "I have no say in how I got here. ... I haven't done anything wrong."

**Newsday: Editorial—Create a path to citizenship**

September 20, 2010  
[http://www.newsday.com/opinion/editorial-create-a-path-to-citizenship-1.2299494](http://www.newsday.com/opinion/editorial-create-a-path-to-citizenship-1.2299494)

At a time when comprehensive immigration reform is still an elusive dream, the Senate has a chance this week to enact a small but meaningful piece of that agenda, the DREAM Act. It shouldn't let the chance go by.

The idea has been around for almost a decade: Young immigrants who came here as children, and have gone through our schools, did nothing wrong in arriving here; they just obeyed their parents. But they're still considered illegal. So the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act would give them a path to legal permanent resident status: two years in college or the military. A recent estimate is that about 825,000 people would earn legal status under this bill.
It's narrowly drawn, with tight eligibility requirements. It might even be too narrow, offering only college and the military as paths to legality, and not trades or other avenues. But even that narrow bill has not passed as stand-alone legislation. Now Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) wants to attach it as an amendment to a defense authorization bill.

Republicans growl: It's not germane. But the Defense Department, sensing access to high-quality recruits, wants it. So it is germane - as is an amendment allowing the overdue repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military.

Both address issues long needing redress. The defense bill, up for debate this week, isn't the perfect vehicle to pass them, but it's the one available. The Senate must get it done.

**Daily News: Column--’No papers’ but endless courage**  
**August 12, 2010**

THE APPEARANCE of Sonia Güinansaca, a 21-year-old New York resident, before a Washington criminal court judge this morning could decide the shape of the rest of her life and the lives of countless other talented young people.

Güinansaca is no criminal, mind you. She is an above-average student in her junior year at Hunter College with a social conscience and an impassioned desire to give back to the country she loves. She has never ran afoul of the law but she has a problem that has made her serious and thoughtful beyond her years.

"I have no papers," said the Ecuadoran-born Güinansaca, who has lived in Harlem since she was 5 years old. "And I am a DREAM Act activist and this year we made a conscious decision that enough is enough, that we would not be afraid any more."

Although the Obama administration appears to be holding off on deporting young people who would come under the proposed bill languishing in Congress, there is no guarantee, no stated policy. Deportation still lurks as a dark menace for these young undocumented Americans.

The DREAM Act would allow immigrant youth brought to the U.S. as children, graduated from high school here and completed two years of college or military service, a path to citizenship.

At the same time Güinansaca appears in court stemming from an act of civil disobedience another group of immigrant students, supporters and community members will end four days of protests with a demonstration at the Manhattan offices of Sen. Chuck Schumer. They will demand that Schumer and Rep. Nydia Velázquez(D-Brooklyn/Manhattan) lead efforts for the immediate passage of the DREAM Act.

A few days ago, Schumer introduced a border enforcement-only bill, that successfully passed with GOP support. The legislation entails $600 million more for border security and further criminalization of immigrants, but does nothing to resolve the crisis. DREAM Act students were
outraged.

"The DREAM Act is a bill that has bipartisan support and has the potential to be passed as a stand-alone measure, yet Sen. Schumer has not taken any action," the students wrote on the New York State Youth Leadership Council website.

Güinansaca says she is concerned about her court date - but unafraid.

"I have no one in Ecuador, my grandparents passed away," Güinansaca said. "

As a member of council, Guinansaca lived up to on the group's motto, "Don't just dream, act".

On July 20, Güinansaca and a group of 20 DREAM Act supporters - many of them undocumented - were arrested when they staged sit-ins at the Senate office buildings to call attention to the urgent need for the legislation. In an act of defiance - unimaginable even a few months ago - they freely revealed their full names and immigration status knowing it could mean deportation.

"We cannot live our lives in fear...The worst that can happen is that our dreams are not fulfilled," Güinansaca said.

Today's court hearing will be further indication of the administration's intention in regard to the undocumented students. Initiating deportation procedures against them would mean punishing these young people for something they are not responsible for since they were brought to the U.S. as children by their parents. It would be a travesty.

Depriving about 1.5 million young people of their dreams would also, absurdly enough, deprive the nation of their enormous potential, talent and drive.

"This is my home," Güinansaca said, "and I want to be able to give back to my country."

She and her fellow dreamers deserve that opportunity.

Newsday: Students rally for DREAM
April 30, 2010
http://www.newsday.com/long-island/students-rally-in-support-of-dream-bill-1.1887422

For years, Johhner Morales wanted to join the U.S. Army. Last year, after graduating from Freeport High School, he signed up. But he received a letter saying he'd been rejected because he had come to the United States from Colombia at age 7 without documents.

Morales, 22, joined 50 other students at Nassau Community College at a rally yesterday supporting a law that would offer a path to residency for immigrants who arrived in the United States illegally.

"This country has been wonderful to me, and I felt it would be an honor to serve," said Morales,
who is studying at Nassau while waiting for another chance at the military.

The students called on politicians to support the DREAM Act, which would give six years of temporary residency to those "of good moral character." During those years they would need to complete at least two years of college or serve in the military. As residents, they could qualify for college financial aid and in-state tuition.

Introduced last year, the bill, called the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, was sponsored by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and two prominent Republicans, Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana and former Sen. Charles Hagel of Nebraska. Even supporters admit they see little likelihood of the legislation passing this year.

The immigration debate became more bitter last week after Arizona made it a state crime to be in the United States illegally and allowed police to question anyone suspected of being an illegal immigrant.

"Those who love to hate, who love to divide us, are expressing their views in a very loud voice," Assemb. Charles D. Lavine (D-Glen Cove) told the students. He said the United States has already invested in the education of an estimated 65,000 immigrants who arrived as children without documents. "It costs infinitely more to have a permanent underclass" than to give illegal residents a chance at becoming college students, soldiers or taxpayers, he said.

Sarah Moeller, a coordinator for the New York Public Interest Research Group, urged students to ask Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford) to support the bill. But in a statement yesterday afternoon, King said he won't consider such legislation "until the borders are secure, and that looks to be a number of years in the future."

Students like Yesenia Reyes, 21, still hope for a change in Washington. Reyes arrived in Massapequa from Peru at age 15 and, like Morales, overstayed her visa. "I'm asking for an opportunity to work here, help people and be a taxpayer," said Morales, who is studying nursing.

**Story: Carol**

A would-be teacher in New York City Public Schools.

I came to this country when I was six years old and have been in this country ever since. My parents brought me to this country to have a better future and life. Unfortunately, life in Mexico during the early 1990's like today, was full of poverty and corruption. Therefore, my parents opted to risk my life as well as theirs, to come to this unknown land, the one described by many as the land of opportunities, the land where dreams come true, the land of the United States of America.

At the tender age of six I comprehended everything that was surrounding my life. I clearly remember the traumatic and life-threatening experience I had when my parents and I crossed the border. After that experience I have been motivated to do everything in my power to excel and make my parents proud of me. I dedicated myself to my studies and excelled academically at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Due to my academic and community service
achievements as well as school activities I was the first person in my family to attend a prestigious university, Rutgers University, and qualify for many scholarships. However, like you must already know, I was unable to receive financial assistance and therefore qualify for any scholarships due to my illegal status.

My dream since a young girl had been to become a teacher. I have done everything in my power to fulfill that dream. And even though this minor obstacle was put in front of me, I still kept on with my dream and continued with my plans to attend college. I had to get two jobs in order to have enough money to pay for my tuition. I struggled many days and sleepless nights working extra shifts at my job to have sufficient money to pay for my school.

After a lot of obstacles and struggles and most importantly with God's help I graduated college. Part of my dream was fulfilled. This past May I graduated college and became once again, the first person in my family to obtain a college degree. I was extremely content with my achievements, however, once again my reality smacked me right across the face and almost knocked me down. Right after my graduation, I was accepted into a prestigious Alternate Route Teaching Program for New York City. It was an alternate route teaching program that enables candidates to obtain a teaching license and a Master's degree. I was accepted into the program and was about to start the orientation when I was informed to bring my documents to verify my legal status. When I informed the representatives of my situation, I was informed that I was unable to continue with the program and that my application and admittance had to be revoked. I was devastated because my dream was shattered into little pieces. I tried my best to find a loophole; I talked to anyone that I could. I even talked to the chancellor of New York City's public schools but all was in vain. There was nothing that could have been done. Due to the fact that I am an illegal immigrant I have no opportunity to fulfill my dream and help those who truly need the most help of all, the children. Although this has been a major obstacle in my life that has prevented me to work and establish myself as a professional, I decided to keep studying. Currently, I am enrolled in a community college pursuing a nursing career. I pray to God that once I am done with this field of study and new career the Dream Act will be a law and therefore I will be allowed to work and fulfill my dream.

[Source: Change.org]

**Story: Cesar**

My story begins when I came to the U.S. when I was five. I don’t remember much from that night, but, like many DREAMERS, I never thought to myself that I was leaving my “homeland.” I have always seen myself as a normal Brooklyn born and raised American. However, my true story begins when I was in high school. Since high school I always saw myself as graduating from Westpoint. That did not happen. During college, I saw my friend join the Marines through the ROTC program and become a Marine Officer. My friend prodded me to join, but I said I was going to join after college. That did not happened. After 9.11, like many, this desire to serve became more personal. Fruitlessly, I contacted recruiting offices to hear the
same piercing words: we cannot accept people without legal status. I still have the pamphlets from the Marines officer program that I requested over five years ago as a reminder to myself! Now after almost a decade of attempting to serve my country, I am once again knocking on the door of the military. But today, I am a high school graduate, college graduate, and now a third-year law student at the City University of New York School of Law. I hold a 3.8 GPA. I am the founder and president of the Prosecutor Law Student Association. Recipient of various scholarships, including the Puerto Rican Bar Association Merit Award. I am actively involved both in and outside law school. I have had prestigious internships in DA offices and in the judiciary. I speak spanish, french, italian, and currently perfecting my russian and cantonese. I am captain of my soccer team. And yet, this means nothing without the DREAM Act.

I know I can make the big bucks after law school. I am confident that I can beat out the competition in getting a cozy corporate job. However, in line with the mission of my law school, I’ve chosen a career dedicated to public service and the public interest. A career dedicated to the only country I call home: the United States. Whether it is serving in the Marines as a JAG officer or serving in the front line as an intelligence officer to lead fellow Marines, who themselves may be DREAMERS, I want the opportunity to earn my place next to the great heroes of our nation that have and are fighting to defend the bedrock principles that are embedded in our Constitution. In fact, I also believe that DREAMERS make not only great soldiers but also exceptional officers. A sentiment that I express in an article I am writing that will be submitted for publication. To conclude, I want to summarize by saying: my blood may be Mexican, but my soul embodies the values of the American citizen-soldier: Courage, sacrifice, and loyalty. Congress give me an opportunity to live my dream!

**Story: Juan Ramirez**

My story begins with a letter I wrote to a friend while I was traveling on the Greyhound from Charlotte, North Carolina to Rochester, NY. On that afternoon, I had just graduated from college. There was no time for celebrations or to go back home, since my plan was to attend the University of Rochester for a Master’s degree in Education. The plan was to look for a sponsor to attain a visa and thus attain legal status, since my parents had brought me to this country without inspection when I was 9 years old. Everything seemed to be in place except for the Border Patrol who boarded the bus I was in the next day.

I slept most of Monday morning and early afternoon while the bus was on its way to Rochester. It made a stop at Syracuse to pick up more passengers. When I saw the men in green uniform outside the bus station at Syracuse, I immediately looked away from the window. I looked around me and in the back of the bus I noticed one of them was talking to passengers. Then, another one boarded the bus and came straight to me and asked me whether I was a US citizen. I did not respond to his question. He asked me for ID and I was only able to give him my former college ID. He did not find that acceptable and asked me to get off the bus.

From there, one thing led to the next. They took me into custody and sent me to the local county jail for about a week. Of course, in the process, the border patrol officers were not very friendly. Not even neutral. One of them yelled at me because I refused to answer to him. The others
checked my personal belongings and papers, such as essays, books, etc. The only thing they did not look at was my college diploma, the most visible item on my bag. After filling out paperwork and taking my fingerprints, they shackled by hands again and drove me to the county jail.

After I had been bailed out a week later, I had nowhere to go. I found myself standing in the lobby of the sheriff’s office, distraught. I called Byron, one of my closest friends, and started to sob, endlessly. Afterwards I called friends and family to figure out a way to get out of that place. Eventually a friend contacted a Unitarian Universalist minister and his wife who took me into their home for the night and drove me the next morning to Rochester.

I am in school now on my second semester, even though I was sure I wouldn’t be able to continue my education. However, I am currently under deportation proceedings. I can’t do anything about it, except go to the hearings and get a good lawyer to plead my case. Only the DREAM Act can help stop this process in the year 2009. Another possibility includes finding a sponsor who would be willing to adjust status in this country once I attain my Master’s degree. I am looking forward to see how my life plays out in the year 2009 and I deeply hope that life provides an opportunity for me to make a difference in the country that allowed me to meet the most important people in my life and that has given me the opportunity to give back in so many different ways to help those in need.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

Story: Marco

Jan 10, 1990. It's unusually cold here tonight in the arid town of San Miguel, Oaxaca. There's apparently no soap to wash me, so I'm laid to rest on my mother's stomach (as we sleep together for the first time) to keep the ants away. From what I'm later told, only my grandmother was present to aid my mother in the delivery.

Spring 1992. My mother and father left today, they plan to work for one year in New York and then return.

Spring 1993. There's been a change of plans, after a year of separation our father has returned to take my older sister and me across the border and to our new home in New York. We cross the border somewhere in Arizona, the three of us, with our aunt. Looking back, I can't remember a time when I didn't live with my parents, but I did, anyways, I’m glad our family is together again.

Fall 1994. With much anticipation, I’ve begun school. I’m actually too young to enter kindergarten at four, but my mom submitted a forged Mexican birth certificate. For the next 13 years by birthday will be December 10, 1989. My sister began her elementary school career last
year, and can't stop talking about it. Lastly, although my thoughts, wishes, and entire vocabulary are in Spanish, I’m not too worried about my ignorance of the English language.

1995-1996. I’m now fluent in English, somewhere around this time my imagination and dreams were translated entirely into English, and will remain in that language, I don't mind the loss too much, I just find it peculiar.

Winter 1999. I’ve begun my application process into the district's magnet school; apparently my standardized test scores were barely good enough to make me a candidate.

Spring 1999. After an entrance exam and an interview I’ve been accepted into Mott Hall, next fall I’ll be entering the 5th grade in a new school.

Fall 2002. I lied to my lab supervisor at the local community college where I’ve started to do research in order to fulfill my community service requirement. I told him my parents vote in New York, it's a small lie, to be sure, I’m just not a good liar is all....

Winter 2003. I’ve been granted admission to Deerfield academy; I forgot to tell you that I’ve been taking extra courses outside of school in preparation for boarding school. I can't begin to assess how much my life will change after these four years, I haven't really thought much about it really, my conscience is clear knowing that this is a really good school.

September 2003. We rolled into Deerfield, Massachusetts, on a quiet and perfectly still fall morning. The beauty of this dainty town almost hurts you. Though I’m miles away from the world of “crosswalks, concrete, and cranes,” I don't feel too out of place. My first year dorm - well actually house - John Williams, is older than our nation, and our dorm parent, Mr. Brush seems to be as well.

Summer 2006. During my first week at my first internship I received a call from the Prep for Prep intern coordinator. As expected, the digits I submitted as my social security number are not valid and so my stipend will be delayed. I was upset at first but I know that this experience will prove of value whether I’m paid or not. I was mainly startled, if you want to know the truth, I wasn't expecting any calls at the Brookdale Center of Gerontology, and it was pretty uncomfortable to talk on the phone about by legal status in front of my fellow intern.

Fall 2006. Due to my undocumented status my potential college list has been altered. Most of my initial liberal art colleges have been crossed off, thankfully the CEO of Prep for Prep is a trustee for Kenyon College, and my grades fit their admitted students profile so I should have no problem getting in. Either way, I wish I had more options, though I remain thankful for what I have.
Winter 2007. I applied early to Kenyon and was granted admission; at least my life is secure for four more years.

Spring 2007. I received a call from the international student's office today, I was told that I’ll be registered as a non-resident alien in the college files, seeing as applying for a student visa would require me to return to Mexico, and there's no guarantee that I’ll be able to return, the risks are just too big.

Summer 2007. Our supervisor at the office of the public advocate came around asking for our social security number, I gave her the number the number my parents use to fill out their tax forms, thankfully the public advocate's office won't be paying me this summer, either way, I hope I didn't look too nervous.

Return from Winter Break, Jan. 11, 2008. I’m now 18 years old and getting through airport security won't be as easy without a government ID today an officer of the department of homeland security pulled me aside and had me searched. Thankfully, my mother couldn't see from the waiting are when they frisk-searched me, it was pretty humiliating but I tried to make small talk as my backpack was emptied, I kept on wanting to tell the officers that I posed a threat to no one and was just like any other college on their way back from the holidays.

Summer 2008. The CEO of New York Disaster Interfaith Services came by today with new employee agreements I had to sign. Though they're not paying me this summer I still had to fill in the social security line, I’m getting pretty tired of having to lie, but I don't want any problems.

Return from Spring break, March, 2009. Our Greyhound bus spontaneously stopped today in between Buffalo and Syracuse, two Department of Homeland Security officers boarded and I obviously lied to them, telling them I was a US citizen, I didn't have to show any documents, just uttering the words was sufficient. Unfortunately, the three young men, whom I gave some clothes to in Buffalo, weren't as lucky, were I courageous I would have stood up for them, and asked why they had to be hand cuffed as if they were criminals, or at least silenced the laughter I heard coming from the rear. But since I’m not, I just dug my head in the seat in front of me and recited the opening line to Psalm 91 repeatedly, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

End of School Year, May, 2009. Sophomore year just ended. Today just before leaving Buffalo, NY, a couple of Department of Homeland Security officers boarded the bus, when one asked if I was born in the US I looked at him straight in the eyes and said yes, its slightly discomforting to
realize that I’ve been getting better at lying to them, but it helps to have so much rage, not at individuals, just at the entire system.

Spring 2009. Today, during a heated argument on affirmative action, I made the statement that I would not be present on the campus were it not for concerted efforts made to assist minority groups that were historically and institutionally prevented from attending college. One classmate looked at me and asked how did I feel taking someone else’s spot? I didn’t know how to respond and unable to justify my existence at Kenyon, stated that I loved it here, and couldn’t imagine my life without this opportunity. Looking back, who I don’t think anyone should or can justify their existence, too much goes into the existence of one human being, and I wouldn’t want it any other way.

Fall 2009. During the church offering today we were asked to fill out an organ donor application. I couldn’t help asking myself that if I died here in America would my heart, lungs and tissues be illegal too? And thought pleasantly on those lines from e.e. cummings: “when god lets my body be/ from each brave eye shall sprout a tree …. the purpled world will dance upon my lips which did sing.”

Late May, 2009. I’m volunteering at an immigrant rights group from the summer, and while discussing my responsibilities for the summer I was asked if I was a US citizen, I said no.

That's all I have to say for now, I omitted the events of September 11, and my father being laid-off repeatedly, my mother working grueling hours in a clothing factory, and my older sister’s frustration at our condition. I fear that I’ve painted a pretty miserable picture of my life, though these dates aren't entirely representative of my life, they are, however, "precious parts of my experience" and their significance play out continually throughout my narrative (Ellison). Also, it's not a good habit to continually lie to people; thankfully I’m slowly getting better at speaking the truth. I just wanted you to get a fuller understanding of my story, which is now your story.

Hassan tells me that some good must arise from living illegally in the United States, and I’m tempted to agree. Without romanticizing our condition too much, I can say that knowing everything I have ever worked for can be immediately taken away from me has made me appreciate what I have. I love the bond that unites all who live without proper documentation in the United States, our shared stories, emotions, and psychology. There’s also something to say about the narrative that we share with other aliens people, whether the Israelites living in Egypt or black slaves in America, and that our struggle is the next chapter in the long, but beautiful, struggle for civil, natural, and human rights.

[Source: Papers the Movie]
Story: Nick

Nick is founder of Dream Act Portal, a website for undocumented students.

Sometime in junior high school I started asking my parents, “What are we going to do about our immigration status?”

“Nikolay, your job is to study,” they told me, “let us worry about things like that.” By my second year at James Madison High School in Brooklyn, it was obvious no one had an answer to my question. There was simply no “getting in line,” and, in the face of a 10-year ban from the country and people I love, no “going back.”

So I moved forward. In September 2004, amidst my parents’ disagreement and eventual divorce over the decision, I enrolled at Polytechnic Institute of New York University. Because I lacked proper documentation, I was unsure if I’d ever get my diploma. The emotional toll was layered on the financial cost, which my grandmother helped to pay by working past retirement in Germany.

In spring of 2008, I graduated from NYU-Poly with a dual Bachelor of Science degree in computer engineering and electrical engineering. Unfortunately, my diploma was not sufficient as an ID. With that, my dreams of moving to Silicon Valley and starting a tech company were brought down. My sights shifted toward the passage of the federal Dream Act legislation.

Four years ago, while still in college, I founded the Dream Act Portal Web site. At the time, we were a community of a couple of dozen people, regularly invaded by those looking to “debate” us out of existence. The site has since grown into the largest community of undocumented students on the Web. It has served as a hub for undocumented students who wanted to go to college, but could not find the support and answers they needed elsewhere.

As I read the hate mail that makes it to our inbox and the thousands of stories of pain, depression, hiding in plain sight, overcoming, and accomplishment that have been posted on our Web site, I see our struggle and the Dream Act for what they are, a fight for human rights and a common sense approach to revitalizing our economy.

The Dream Act is not about a few star students who are in limbo because of hiccups in our immigration laws. The issue has grown into a human rights crisis that is affecting hundreds of thousands of determined, patriotic and bright young people in this country. Squandering our potential, in the opposition to the Dream Act, is squandering of an investment made by the American people. Voting “Nay” on the Dream Act is fiscally irresponsible; not voting “Yea” is socially destructive.

[Source: New York State Youth Leadership Council]

Story: Yelky

Being undocumented? I know what that entitles. Fear and hope defines the outermost emotions of this unpleasant rollercoaster.
I was brought to this country 5 years ago at the age of 13. Not speaking the language was enough of a barrier getting through my first year of high school in this country (started as a sophomore). Yet, perseverance, discipline, and a little bit of help changed my high school experience in just about a year. In my junior year, I was no longer an ESL (English as a Second Language) student, I was placed in regular English classes, and a semester later, I became an honor student. Since language was no longer an obstacle, I engaged in extracurricular activities, from the Softball team to Student Government to the Yearbook Committee to being the President of ARISTA (National Honor Society) of my school.

In 2008 along with high school graduation, I finally understood what it means to be an undocumented student. I was my class valedictorian, and that alone made me eligible for numerous scholarships I only had the pleasure to know about because my illegal status qualified me for none. This not only limited my possibilities of attending school but it also narrowed the choices of school I could attend. Walking down of the stage after giving my speech at graduation, I felt blessed with the news of a private donor that cover the financial aspect of my dream to attend college.

I am 18 years old now and going through my junior year at Baruch College. There have been plenty of discouragements in this journey. I am excluded from all paid internships opportunities, special programs, fellowships, legal paid jobs and any college student’s dream of traveling. Yet all the frustrations have been no excuse to not be the best I can be. I am actively involved in school and outside organizations; I have taken non-paid internships, and volunteer time and effort as often as I can. I am hungry to acquire the skills you can only obtain with experience. I want to be ready for what can happen in the future, eager that for once, the issue about undocumented students is addressed by the legislative agents of this nation. Until then, My life will continue to be a realistic dream full of hope to be accomplished.

Semester after semester, I only hope the blessing souls that financially support my dream of attending college can do it a semester more. But I am afraid of what will happen next. I am afraid of what will happen when I get to the exit of this long dark tunnel.

[Source: New York State Leadership Council]

**Letter: Wendy**

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Wendy and I am a daughter, a friend, a student, and, most importantly, a dreamer. I came to this country in 1999 from Peru when I was seven years old, accompanied by my mother, father, and sister. Getting on the plane, I did not know that words like "undocumented" and
"dreams" would play such a major role in my young adult life. Growing up in New York, I began to embrace the United States and the feeling of being an American; I learned to balance this country's traditions with my own without difficulty. I came to notice that the people around me, regardless of their different ethnic backgrounds and customs, were not so different from me after all.

As early as elementary school, I worked hard to get good grades, going from ESL in second grade to straight A's by third grade. I graduated the sixth grade with a great reputation amongst my peers and teachers; the logical thing to do at that point was reach for the same level of success in high school. Upon entering high school, I was sure that I would flourish both socially and academically--with nothing to get in the way of me and my aspirations. I thought high school would be yet another chapter in my life that would be full of ease and more opportunities to make my parents proud. Academically, I was able to flourish. I was in advanced classes as a freshman and sophomore, which made it possible for me to take Advanced Placement College level courses in my junior and senior years. I became involved in various extracurricular activities, and tried my best to hold office or be as much of an active member in everything that I joined. Being a member of clubs such as Students Against Destructive Decisions (S.A.D.D.) and the Foreign Language Honor Society allowed me to do two things that are very important to me: reach out to the youth in my community by teaching them about healthy decision making, as well as advocating unity amongst all individuals regardless of their backgrounds.

With all of that said, it was shattering to me when the burdens of my situation began to reveal themselves. With high school came a serious reality check. There were several setbacks I began to come across, all dealing with my future. Up to the age of 16, the effects of my legal status were just an impending nightmare that seemed very far away. While my closest friends threw lavish sweet sixteen parties, purchased their first cars, found steady jobs, and began to look into colleges, I found myself making more and more excuses for my lack of participation in these American 'rights of passage.' The frustration built up until my senior year in high school. The counselors at school could provide me with little to no information about my 'undocumented' dilemma and what I was to do about college. It was devastating to see so many doors being shut in my face so close to the end. My visions of going to a prestigious private university and getting awarded scholarships for my high grades quickly disintegrated. For the first time, I began to feel alone; I also felt very confused--how was it that innocent youth were being denied one of the most basic human rights? the right to be educated. There was nothing left for me to do but to condense my high expectations to accommodate my family's financial possibilities, as the scholarship money I received was not enough to cover the full tuition of the schools to which I had applied. Without financial aid not much is possible. After several sleepless nights and stressful days, I came to the conclusion that something needed to be done.

I have enrolled in an honors program at a community college and will start attending this fall, working towards getting my associates degree in Liberal Arts. Although I am privileged enough to be able to continue my education beyond high school, I cannot say things have gone they way I'd expected. After I graduate from community college I would love to continue my education at Binghamton University--whose acceptance I had to respectfully decline--or Fordham University at the Lincoln Center campus. I know it was not my grades that prevented me from applying to the best universities, as I graduated with a 4.0 GPA and ranked 12 in my class--it was the lack of...
those nine digits. What's worse is I did not willingly get myself into this situation; my parents, who had nothing but the best intentions for me and my sister, made the choice because they envisioned us achieving the American Dream. I want to make their visions a reality.

The DREAM Act would allow me and thousands of undocumented youth to give back to society. All I want is a great education so that I can grow up to become a professional. I want to make an honest living in this country. I want to stay here. This is my home now. I have marched in Washington D.C. and I have joined the fight for the DREAM! I no longer want to live my life in the shadows, constantly afraid of what could happen. I have learned to accept the fact that I am undocumented, and I'm finally unafraid. I have done nothing wrong and only wish to have the same opportunities as all of my peers. Please Mr. President, you have the power to make my dreams a reality; DREAM ACT 2010!

Sincerely,
Wendy
Nevada

Prensa Latina: Editorial: Algún día se cumplirá el sueño
28 de septiembre de 2010

Miles de estudiantes que residen en los Estados Unidos se llenaron de esperanza luego de que fuera anunciado por parte de los Senadores que el proyecto de ley del Dream Act sería subido a votación.

Sin embargo, en lo que se ha llamado el martes negro (martes 21 de septiembre), la algarabía se derrumbó al conocerse que los resultados de la votación no fueron favorables para que avanzara y las caras tristes se dejaron ver por miles.

Algunas personas calificaron como una “paralización” de los sueños de los jóvenes migrantes.

Antes del martes fueron días de constante trabajo y movilizaciones de estudiantes y organizaciones que apoyan el Dream Act o Ley del Sueño, que permite legalizar el estatus migratorio de miles de estudiantes indocumentados que cumplan ciertos requisitos.

Infinitas cartas, llamadas, manifestaciones, marchas y visitas a los legisladores, e incluso el pronunciamiento del propio presidente Barack Obama a favor del Dream Act no fueron suficientes para lograr que el Senado decidiera dar el primer paso de lo que sería una reforma migratoria.

Faltaron sólo cuatro votos para alcanzar los 60 necesarios y proseguir con el debate y poder hacer realidad el sueño de muchos estudiantes que no pueden ir a la universidad o servir al país por no tener estatus legal.

“Esta decisión no nos detiene, vamos a seguir luchando. Deseo cumplir mi sueño de servir a la Guardia Nacional”, dijo Diana Banderas de 17 años.

Las razones políticas

En este debate ambos partidos se culpan de haber politizado el tema del Dream Act y la reforma migratoria.

A los republicanos se les acusa de no apoyar el Dream Act simplemente porque es una ley promovida por los demócratas.

Y a los demócratas se les tilda de utilizar la presentación del Dream Act como una manera de conseguir el voto de los hispanos en las elecciones del 2 de noviembre.
“Esto no significa que estamos fuera de tiempo para hacer lo correcto. Senadores de ambos partidos pueden seguir trabajando juntos, poner sus politiquerías baratas a un lado y pasar el Dream Act antes que el Congreso culmine su sesión”, dijo Oscar Chacón, director ejecutivo de la Alianza Nacional de Comunidades Latinoamericanas y Caribeñas.

Los hispanos están aprendiendo que en los Estados Unidos todo se rige por la política y dicen que van a utilizar su mejor arma, el voto, para premiar o castigar a quienes apoyen o no las propuestas que los benefician como comunidad.
North Carolina

Change.org: Hat-Trick: ICE Releases Fredd Reyes
By Prerna Lal
November 24, 2010
http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/hat-trick_ice_releases_fredd_reyes

Change.org users have pulled a hat-trick with this latest victory: Fredd Reyes is out of detention, making three victories today.

Twenty-two years ago, a family fled political persecution and threats of violence in their native Guatemala, and arrived in the United States with their two-year-old son, hoping for a better future. After twelve years of waiting, their petition for asylum was denied. Ten years later, Immigration and Customs Enforcement pulled their son Fredd, now 24 years old, from his sleep on the day of his exams at Guilford Technical Community College and put him in an inhumane detention facility in Georgia.

Immigrant rights advocates across the country were not about to let Fredd, a talented young singer and actor, spend Thanksgiving in detention. With over 3500 emails in support of Fredd Reyes pouring in from all over the country, ICE relented and released him a few minutes before the North Carolina DREAM Team held a press conference on his behalf.

Even though Fredd is on his way home, the fight is not yet over. As Fredd, Jennifer, and Bernard celebrate Thanksgiving with their families, thousands of other young people like them are sitting in detention facilities across the country, awaiting imminent deportation.

The DREAM Act, which is up for a House vote right after Thanksgiving, would provide Fredd, and undocumented students like him who have grown up here, a pathway to citizenship. It is imperative to make sure that the legislation passes so we do not need to expend energy each time Immigration and Customs Enforcement decides to detain and deport another talented, young student from this country.

Winston-Salem Journal: Immigrants push for DREAM education
By John Hinton
November 11, 2010

As a senior at Starmount High School three years ago, Moises Serrano realized that his lack of U.S. citizenship would be a problem when it came time for college, despite being brought as a child to Yadkin County — a place he now calls home.
“My very own country was telling me that I didn’t belong here,” Serrano said. “I felt no better than the scum of the earth.”

Serrano, 21, who lives in Yadkinville, was one of four speakers at a rally yesterday in front of the Yadkin County Courthouse in support of the DREAM Act, federal legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants.

The DREAM Act or the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors legislation died in the U.S. Senate in September when it failed to get the 60 votes needed to proceed as part of a defense bill.

The Senate majority leader, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., have said they plan to bring up the DREAM Act during Congress’ lame-duck session that begins later this month.

The bill would give undocumented minors — who have been in the country for more than five years and have earned a high-school degree or GED — a chance to become citizens if they complete two years of college and serve in the U.S. military.

A crowd of about 30 demonstrators attended the rally carrying signs with slogans such as “Let Us Serve.”

Serrano told the crowd that his parents came to the United States when he was 2 as migrant farm workers. His family lived in Boonville and he attended Boonville Elementary and Starmount High School, where he graduated in 2007.

Serrano said he was student leader at Starmount, where he learned how to write, edit and videotape newscasts.

He wanted to attend college in pursuit of a career as a television news anchor or producer, but he couldn’t because he was an undocumented minor.

Martin Rodriguez, 19, of Hamptonville said tens of thousands of undocumented students graduate every year from U.S. high schools.

“We are forced to live in the shadows,” said Rodriguez, a freshman at N.C. State University in Raleigh. “We are called aliens, but I ask you, what is our crime? We are here today because we have a duty to fulfill.”

Viridiana Martinez, 24, told the rally’s participants that she was born in Monterey, Mexico, but grew up in Sanford, N.C.

“I’m still undocumented because no path exists to legalization,” she said. “My parents came here for a better life. We don’t want a free ride. We want to earn our citizenship.”
Wooten Gough, 19, a rally organizer who lives in the Forbush community, said the demonstration was held in part to “put a face to the undocumented person” in Yadkin County. Census figures show that 3,500 Hispanics live in Yadkin.

The Herald-Sun: Editorial—More American Dreamers
August 13, 2010

This editorial appeared in The Washington Post

In many ways, Eric Balderas' story is the typical American dream. He came to the United States with his parents at age 4. He was the valedictorian of Highlands High School in San Antonio and was admitted to Harvard's class of 2013. There, he studies molecular and cellular biology and is about to begin his sophomore year. He dreams of helping to find a cure for cancer.

But there is one problem: He is not in the country legally. On June 7, boarding an airplane back to Boston after visiting his mother in San Antonio, he was arrested and threatened with deportation. There was an outcry -- on Facebook, in newspapers, even from members of Congress. Finally, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it would not pursue his deportation, allowing him to remain in the country to continue his studies.

Eric is only one of a number of students whose deportations the Obama administration has declined to pursue, sensibly focusing its efforts on deporting those undocumented immigrants who have committed crimes. But this policy is not official -- and the administration has said it won't be without the passage of immigration reform. Instead, the Department of Homeland Security tackles student deportations case by case, leaving it vulnerable to criticism for selectively enforcing the law and consuming time and resources better spent expelling criminals. But even an official moratorium on student deportations would only serve to keep students in the country, not offer them a path to citizenship.

Rather than allowing this state of limbo for students to continue, Congress should pass the Dream Act.

Sens. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., and Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind., conceived the Dream Act to offer a path to citizenship for thousands of promising young people who came to the country illegally when they were children. Some of these students do not even know they are undocumented until they try to apply for driver's licenses or scholarships. Rather than deporting them to countries many of them barely remember, the Dream Act would help lead to naturalization for youths who came to the United States before age 15, earned GEDs or high school degrees and completed two years in college or in the armed forces. The measure is carefully aimed, targeting only young people with clean records who have resided in the country continuously for at least five years. Such students demonstrate the hope and promise of a better life that America has always held out to those who seek its shores. But without the Dream Act, they remain vulnerable to deportation.
Comprehensive immigration reform is necessary to repair the broken immigration system that strands thousands of deserving would-be immigrants on endless waiting lists. But it may not be achieved before the end of the congressional session. This is no excuse not to pass a sensible, narrowly tailored measure that could have a significant, positive impact.

Charlotte Observer: Immigrant succeeds here, for now
June 15, 2010

Paulina Ameneyro arrived in Charlotte a decade ago, a 7-year-old Mexican immigrant from a poor family who spoke little English.

Last week, the pint-sized 18-year-old marched out of Garinger New Technology High School as one of its top graduates, a student who excelled in math and computer-technology classes even as she painted a Marilyn Monroe portrait that hangs in the principal's office.

Admiring classmates and teachers call her a role model: polite, community-minded and downright tenacious when it comes to education and self-improvement. She finished as the school's co-valedictorian.

"She's an outstanding young lady," math teacher Ray Adams said. "I treat her like my own."

He was one of many teachers and classmates who smiled or waved or stopped to chat recently as she sat in the school office, talking about her life and hopes.

Alesha Russom, her digital media and Web design teacher, described her as driven but with an active mind and warm personality.

Another staffer stopped, peered over her glasses at Paulina and exclaimed: "Isn't she just a little doll baby!"

"Stop it," Paulina said, laughing. "You guys are embarrassing me."

As much as she's enjoying the accolades, she knows her work is far from done. She wants to earn a degree in mechanical engineering, maybe own a business someday.

But the path to that goal is unclear. Paulina, the kid with the bright smile and all-American-girl resume, isn't an American citizen.

Adjusting to America

She was born in Mexico City, the third of five children. Her parents split up soon afterward. Her mother worked in a bakery, boosting her income by selling lunches to high school kids.
Seeking a better life, Hilda Ramirez crossed the border. When she sent for her kids a year or two later, Paulina says she was finishing third grade or starting fourth.

The adjustment was hard. When she got to Charlotte, the school system placed her in second grade and enrolled her in English as a Second Language classes.

She couldn't stand hamburgers, and knew so little geography she thought a quick car trip could get her back to Mexico City.

But she made friends. She studied hard. And by fourth grade she no longer needed the ESL lessons.

By the eighth grade, she stood at the top of her class.

Emerging as a school leader

She arrived at Garinger the first year the campus was split into five small themed schools. She joined New Technology, where Principal Barry Blair was building a program and had a knack for helping students from low-income backgrounds.

She emerged as a leader among its small, tight-knit student body. Her friend, Honoré Likulumbi, says Paulina led and organized so many school events that she seemed more like a staff member than a student.

"Besides Mr. Blair, I think she runs the school," he said. "Even when she graduates, she'll still be the unofficial mom of the school."

Things weren't as smooth at home. Family financial problems near the end of her sophomore year forced her to take a job as a server's assistant in a restaurant.

As the crisis persisted, she seriously considered dropping out. But Blair and other school staff members wouldn't let her, much to her relief today.

"It would have been a big mistake," she said, smiling.

Closing doors to federal aid

She's been accepted at both Queens University of Charlotte and at her first choice, N.C. State University, where she wants to study mechanical engineering.

But N.C. universities say illegal immigrants must pay out-of-state tuition. For N.C. State, that means $18,000 in tuition and fees as opposed to $5,500 for in-state.

With federal student aid closed to illegal immigrants, she's thinking about returning to Mexico for college.
"I'm hoping I can get somebody to sponsor me, or different companies to sponsor me," she said. "I really want to go to N.C. State. I really want to stay here."

Thousands of other illegal immigrants face the same issue. Brought here by parents or relatives, an estimated 65,000 graduate from U.S. high schools each year only to face steep college bills without federal financial aid.

A UNC Chapel Hill spokeswoman said 24 such students attended the University of North Carolina system's 16 schools last year.

"Paulina is a perfect example of why it makes sense to have comprehensive immigration reform," said Ruben Campillo, N.C. director for Reform Immigration for America, an advocacy group seeking a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

"We have many, many students like Paulina who are at the top of their classes.... They have embraced our values and culture, but they find at graduation that they won't be allowed to continue."

One advocate of tougher immigration enforcement applauds students like Paulina but said the country can't keep giving benefits to noncitizens.

"It's wonderful for someone to try to get an advanced degree," said Ron Woodard, director of N.C. Listen. "But the first thing she's doing is taking a position at N.C. State that doesn't belong to her because she's not a citizen.

"I wonder what the person who would have gotten her space would say about her complaining about paying out-of-state tuition."

In some cases, however, colleges benefit financially. A study done last year for the N.C. Community College System board said out-of-state tuition more than covers the state and local costs of enrolling undocumented students - though not capital costs or special programs.

Dreaming about legislation

Eleven states have laws allowing in-state tuition for illegal immigrants. They allow in-state rates if students graduate from state high schools and have two to three years residence in the state, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In most, the student must sign an affidavit promising to seek legal status.

On the other hand, South Carolina in 2008 became the first state to ban illegal immigrants from attending state-supported universities.

Paulina is putting her hopes in the Dream Act, federal legislation that would give many illegal immigrants who are college students a path to legal status and let states offer them in-state tuition and financial aid.
She traveled to Washington, part of a group of about 20 students, to speak to political leaders about it, but they came away with few promises.

She already has Mexico as a backup. Her godparents there are pledging to help; her uncle works for a major telephone company and will try to get her a scholarship.

A good idea, said N.C. Listen's Woodard.

"America's not the only country that has colleges," he said. "I wish that young lady a lot of luck back in her home country, and I hope she's a success in life."

Blair, her high school principal, said whatever happens, he'll bet on Paulina.

"Life," he said, "has a way of working out for people like her." Franco Ordonez contributed.

Charlotte Observer: Play tells of undocumented students living in ‘Limbo’

July 9, 2008

The second definition for the word "limbo" in Webster's New World Dictionary reads: "A place or condition of neglect or oblivion for unwanted things or persons."

Playwright Glenn Hutchinson found the sobering word an apt description for his play about the lives of undocumented children in the United States.

"Limbo," which will premiere at CAST Theatre, is the first full-length play by Hutchinson, a UNC Charlotte professor.

It is largely based on interviews with Marie Gonzalez, a 22-year-old college student who moved to the U.S. from Costa Rica when she was 5.

Gonzalez' parents were deported in July 2005, when they were reported to the immigration office in their home of Missouri. Gonzalez, who will graduate from Westminster College in December, is an activist fighting for legislation that will allow people in her situation to continue their education and apply for U.S. citizenship.

Hutchinson was affected in many ways.

As a professor, he teaches students who speak English and are culturally integrated. But legally, they are not Americans.

As an actor and a director, he yearned for theater projects that were connected to the Latino community.
As an academician, he was aware of the debate in North Carolina over whether to allow undocumented students to participate in the community college system.

When he read about Gonzalez and her work advocating for the DREAM Act, he was intrigued.

The DREAM Act, introduced in 2005 by Illinois Sen. Richard Durbin, proposes that undocumented children who entered the U.S. before they were 16 be eligible for a conditional residency status once they complete an associate's degree or two years of military service. At the end of this conditional residency, the applicant can apply for citizenship.

Hutchinson told Gonzalez that he wanted to tell her story.

Gonzalez was nervous, but e-mailed Hutchinson and wrote, "I'm always glad to tell my story, and even though it is hard reliving it, I hope that some good comes out of it. I think the play will be a wonderful addition to the fight for immigration reform."

Gonzalez will host a talkback after the opening weekend performances.

She thinks change will come when there is a realization "that many of us know no other home besides the U.S., and also how much we truly love this country."

"I hope the audience finds listening to these young people talk about their thoughts and dreams helps them connect to this feeling of being in limbo," Hutchinson says.

**Rosario Lopez, Viridiana Martinez and Loida Silva participated in a hunger strike to try to persuade Sen. Hagan to support the DREAM Act.** “Three young women living illegally in the U.S. since childhood haven’t eaten in more than a week in the hope of persuading U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan to back a bill that could make them legal residents. The women - Rosario Lopez, 25; Viridiana Martinez, 23; and Loida Silva, 22 - have set up tents across the street from the state legislative building in downtown Raleigh and subsisted on water, Pedialyte and Gatorade since June 14. They’ve lost 23 pounds total… The trio plans to continue the hunger strike, hoping to pressure Hagan to change her stance on what’s being called the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act).” [News and Observer, 6/23/10]

**Story: Fredd Reyes**

On a September morning, just before dawn, ICE came knocking on Fredd Reyes’ door. It was 5 AM and Fredd was asleep after a long night of studying for his exam at Guilford Technical Community College that very same day. Instead of taking his exam, Fredd was pulled from his sleep, handcuffed by ICE and taken from his North Carolina home to North Georgia Detention Center then transferred to the infamous Stewart Detention center in Lumpkin, Georgia (of Pedro Guzman and Mark Lyttle fame).
Twenty-two years ago, Fredd’s family fled their native Guatemala in the face of death threats and persecution. Needless to say, they haven’t been back since. In spite of the clear danger they faced back in Guatemala, our broken immigration system denied their bid for asylum in 2000.

Fredd earned his Associates Degree from Davidson County Community College and transferred to Guilford Tech to continue his education, studying to become a dental hygienist.

Fredd DREAMs of utilizing his acting and singing skills to become a professional actor and renowned singer.

[Source: DREAMActivist]
Manuela Maldonado is a Painesville mother of six who faces the wrenching choice of leaving her four American-born children behind when she is deported to Mexico next month for illegal entry 13 years ago. She also is a heartbreaking symbol of our nation's fatally fractured immigration system.

No matter where Americans stand on illegal immigration, forcing a mother to decide, after more than a decade of productive residence in this nation, whether her children should be uprooted from the only life they've known or effectively become orphans (Maldonado's husband Diego was deported weeks ago) does not reflect this nation's highest values. It does not reflect our belief in fair laws and in human dignity.

There has to be a better way to handle illegal immigration.

Our current heartless system allows hardworking, undocumented immigrants to obtain a job, pay taxes and give birth to American children without giving them a chance to make amends for their illegal arrival, even if they have not broken any other law.

If they're caught in an immigration sweep, as the Maldonaldos were, they get the boot. Meanwhile, the employers who enabled the Maldonaldos all those years and who failed to check their documents and make sure they were American citizens likely will face little or no punishment. That's grossly unfair.

America needs to protect its borders, no doubt. But it also needs "a safe, orderly and fair system" for immigrants, as David Leopold, a Cleveland lawyer who is president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, puts it.

That means laws that allow immigrants needed in seasonal work such as Lake County's nursery industry to come in the front door, and not sneak through the back. And it means a lawful path to citizenship for otherwise law-abiding residents of longstanding, like the Maldonaldos.

President George W. Bush tried to reform these broken laws in 2007 but failed. Many politicians who backed reform paid a political price. But ignoring the problem just makes it worse. President Barack Obama, despite the many pressing matters before him, should strive for immigration reform as well. Do it for the other Maldonaldos -- and for Americans troubled by their plight.
Paige Sales, wearing a white T-shirt on which she had written “Free Bernard” in red and blue marker, walked out of the visitation room Saturday afternoon at the Morrow County Jail.

Tears fell from her eyes.

Sales, 18, had just talked through glass on a phone with Bernard Pastor, her prom date and fellow 2010 Reading High School graduate.

Pastor, 18, is being held in federal detention as supporters try to prevent his deportation. He had been brought from his native Guatemala by his parents at age 3 and lived the past 15 years in the United States, the last six in Reading.

Springdale Police arrested the honor student and soccer star after a minor car accident Nov. 17. Saturday was visiting day for federal detainees in Mount Gilead; 26 people – including nine of Pastor’s classmates and seven Reading High seniors – made the 300-mile roundtrip drive to Morrow County.

“He was the ultimate gentleman,” Sales said.

“He has the most manners of any of us,” said Ryan Kiefer, 19, another 2010 Reading graduate now at the University of Cincinnati.

Due Tuesday to the intervention of Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and U.S. Rep. Steve Driehaus, D-West Price Hill, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency delayed Pastor’s deportation.

A caravan of vehicles left Reading Stadium at 9 a.m. Saturday. Students painted U.S. flags on their car windows with various slogans – “Free Bernard” and “Support Not Deport.”

They held hands, prayed and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner” before leaving. By 12:30 p.m., they had gathered again in a cold wind outside the jail, joined hands and prayed.

The Rev. Troy Jackson, pastor of University Christian Church in University Heights, led the prayer and quoted from the Bible.

“When Jesus was just beginning his ministry, he said, `The spirit of the Lord is on me because God sent me to set the oppressed free,’” Jackson said.
Ryan Kiefer’s mom, Linette Kiefer, drove her son and other classmates. She stood in the circle before the group went into the jail.

“There’s a saying that stays in the community, but Reading takes care of its own,” Linette Kiefer said.

A few minutes later, in the jail lobby, Daniel Wicks, 18, Pastor’s soccer teammate picked up the thought: “He’s as Reading as any one of us.”

Wicks and another former Reading soccer teammate, Zach Ray, 18, brought a ball and kicked it in the jail parking lot, all in a show of solidarity.

“He was a great soccer player, all conference (Cincinnati Hills), he has a Reading record with four goals in one game,” Ray said.

Since The Enquirer broke Pastor’s story on Monday, the larger world has come home to his Reading classmates and the community at large.

“He and his family are Americans,” Wicks said. “I’m bitter. It’s the law, but it’s so unfair. The law has to be changed.”

As many as 65,000 undocumented immigrants, like Pastor, brought to this country as children graduate from U.S. high schools each year yet face deportation.

The bipartisan DREAM Act, which could be voted on again as early as Monday by the U.S. House of Representatives, would provide a six-year opportunity for these types of young immigrants to work toward naturalization status.

Pastor’s parents, brother and sister, all undocumented, are in hiding. The family’s asylum appeal was denied in 2003. They left Guatemala because their feared reprisal for converting from Catholicism to the evangelical Pentecostal Church. The family of Pastor’s uncle received asylum under the same claim.

The family’s lawyer, Firooz Namei, said he is getting the court papers from both cases from federal courts in Arkansas, where the families lived at the time. Namei said he will ask the federal Board of Immigration Appeals to re-open the case.

Pastor on Saturday, in his third jailhouse interview with The Enquirer in an eight-day period, said he appreciated the support of his classmates and community.

A volunteer and musician in the Pentecostal church, Pastor said he remains safe in God’s hands.

“If my case helps anyone else, this was supposed to happen to me,” said Pastor, wearing a lime-green jail jump suit. “I always wondered what my legacy was. I know this is my destiny.”

In groups of three or four, visitors talked with Pastor for an hour.
State and national activists from United We Dream, dreamact.org and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) also visited with Pastor. United We Dream posted an online petition calling for Pastor’s release that has 1,900 signatures.

“What we try to do is show the individual our support and work with the young people like this to help build their leadership skills,” said Israel Valerdi, 26, a United We Dream organizer from Chicago.

Brandon Minor, 19, a Wilmington College student who graduated with Pastor, organized the visit Saturday and is planning another protest this coming Saturday at the Butler County Jail in Hamilton – like Morrow County’s jail, a federal detainee site.

“It’s about Bernard,” Minor said. “We’re listening to him. If he does get sent to Guatemala, we want to know where we could send him money. We will do whatever he needs.”

Jenny So, 18, of Sharonville, another 2010 Reading graduate, walked out of the visiting room to the women’s restroom to compose herself.

A few minutes later, she said, “It was great to see him but heartbreaking to have to talk to him through the glass. He doesn’t deserve this. It’s unfair. It’s wrong.”

She blinked hard.

“Tears of joy,” she said, “tears of sadness.”

**WLWT.com: Friends: Teen Deserves Chance to Avoid Deportation**

November 24, 2010


The community is coming together for an area high school graduate who's facing deportation after a traffic stop.

Friends said 18-year-old Bernard Pastor is a model student and deserves to stay in this country, where he's lived illegally for 15 years.

The Reading High School graduate came to the U.S. from Guatemala as a child with his parents, and authorities said Pastor is here illegally.

"This kid came to the U.S. when he was 3 years old," said Alfonso Cornejo, president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. "He didn't drive here, he didn't jump -- he just came following his family."
Pastor was arrested Saturday when he was unable to produce a driver's license after a minor accident, but plans to deport him have been placed on hold after Sen. Sherrod Brown and Rep. Steve Driehaus appealed to federal authorities on his behalf.

"This is a human rights issue," said Jason Riveiro, Ohio director of the League of United Latin American Citizens. "At the end of the day, this is cruelty at its finest."

Friends held a vigil Tuesday evening to show their support for Pastor, who was selected homecoming king and dreamed of going to a seminary and serving as a minister.

Riveiro said Pastor's case could help win support for the Dream Act, a piece of proposed federal legislation that would afford some illegal immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children the opportunity to earn conditional permanent residency under certain conditions.

"It comes at an interesting time when we are discussing the Dream Act because so many other students in similar situations that could be effected by this type of law," Riveiro said.

Supporters plan to visit Pastor this weekend in jail in Morrow County, and a court hearing is planned on the deportation process.

Pastor said his father, a Pentecostal minister, told him Tuesday to continue to trust that what is happening to him is part of God's plan.

"He said that maybe I was to be someone whose life could help other people in the future who are in the same situation," Pastor said.

Despite the delay, the deportation order remains in place.

"It doesn't negate the order," Khaalid Walls, a spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said. "It's a delay, not a stay."

**Cincinnati Enquirer: Longtime Ohio resident’s deportation postponed**

By Mark Curnutte

November 24, 2010


The potential deportation of 2010 Reading High School graduate Bernard Pastor has been delayed for at least several weeks.
Meghan Dubyak, a spokeswoman in the Washington office of Sen Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said Tuesday that Brown received notice Department of Homeland Security officials -- of which Immigration of Customs Enforcement is a part -- will hold off on any deportation efforts for several weeks.

ICE confirmed the delay Tuesday night.

A Brown staff member drove from the senator's Cincinnati office to the Morrow County Jail in Mount Gilead, where Pastor is being held by ICE, to get his signature on a necessary document known as a Request for Assistance, said Firooz Namei, Pastor's Cincinnati attorney.

Pastor, an illegal immigrant from Guatemala who has lived in the U.S. with his family since age 3, was arrested last week following a minor traffic accident in the Cincinnati suburb of Springdale.

When police discovered he was an illegal immigrant, he was turned over to federal agents from ICE. The agents transferred him Monday from the Butler County Jail to another holding site in northern Ohio. The next step in any potential deportation would be to send him to a federal prison camp in Oakdale, La.

The development Tuesday capped a day of frenzied activity to keep Pastor in the United States. Representatives of Brown and U.S. Rep. Steve Driehaus, D-West Price Hill, contacted Namei's office Monday and again early Tuesday, the attorney said.

**Change.org: Victory! Senator Brown Intervenes on Behalf of Ohio Student in Deportation**

By Prerna Lal  
November 24, 2010  

I was hunkering down to write about the case of Bernard Pastor, an undocumented youth from Ohio who seemed headed to spend Thanksgiving in detention, when word came from Senator Sherrod Brown's office that his deportation has been delayed.

Bernard Pastor is an 18-year-old, devout young man who was brought to the United States at the age of 3 to escape religious and military persecution in Guatemala. He worked hard and graduated as one of the top five students in his class. Bernard is also a gifted athlete who takes pride in his country. He was nominated for Homecoming King and sang the National Anthem at his team’s soccer games.

Bernard dreams of going to the seminary to serve his community in Ohio as a pastor. On Saturday, November 20th, he was on his way to help at his church when he got into an accident.
Since Bernard was driving without a license, the police took him to jail and started deportation proceedings.

Overnight, Change.org users sent more than a thousand emails to Senator Brown's office and the Department of Homeland Security. America's Voice, an pro-immigration organization lobbying hard for the DREAM Act this year, also joined in the effort, along with other students and community members who rallied behind him. After a frenzy of activity from aides of Senator Sherrod Brown and U.S. Rep. Steve Driehau, Brown's office announced that DHS is willing to let Bernard stay in the country for several more weeks.

Other students still in detention over Thanksgiving include talented singer Fredd Reyes from North Carolina and an aspiring journalist, Jennifer Abreu, from Kentucky. The United States is cleverly spending over $200 a night of taxpayer dollars to keep these non-criminal, young, hard-working, aspiring Americans in jail. Their future is now in our hands and we must ensure that the immigration system affords them administrative delay plus a chance to get in line.

**Kentucky Post: Youth pastor faces possible deportation**

*By Jenell Walton*

*November 23, 2010*


A 2010 Reading High School graduate finds himself behind bars and miles away from his family after a fender bender accident in Springdale.

Springdale police arrested 18-year-old Bernard Pastor after it was discovered that he was driving without a driver’s license on Tuesday, Nov. 16.

Police then discovered that Pastor was living in the United States illegally.

Pastor's friends have launched an online campaign to keep him in the country.

There's a Facebook page and a petition drive at Change.org.

"We have a Facebook page. We have fliers going around. There's a petition right now that already I think every hour gets about 300 more signatures signed. We're just doing everything we can," said Pastor's friend, Trent Estes.

Pastors friends from Reading High School say they had no idea he was living in the country illegally.

He came to America with his parents when he was 3.

"He came here when he was three by his parents choice. It wasn't his choice but it was because of their religion. They were getting persecuted over there for their religion. That is what the USA is about freedom of religion. That is all they were trying to get," said friend, Zach Roy.
Pastor is from Guatemala where friends said his father once worked as a Pentecostal preacher. However, they said the family fled Guatemala for fear of religious persecution from the military and the Catholic church.

Reading High School soccer coach Bill Simpson said Pastor is a youth pastor at his father’s church and had planned to continue his education by attending a school for mechanics.

He said it breaks his heart to think Pastor is locked away miles away from his family at a detention center in Morrow County, Ohio.

“I think there are proper channels to go through. I think sometimes when we fall through those proper channels or those loopholes, you’re dealing with people and it just breaks my heart because I know Bernard so well,” Simpson said during a phone interview from Alabama.

If Pastor is deported to Guatemala, friends believe he could be killed for his religious beliefs.

He reportedly has a grandmother in Guatemala, however, his friends said he has not had a lot of contact with her over the years.

More than 200 people have clicked "like" on a Facebook page called "Free Bernard Pastor" and dozens of messages of support have been posted.

Bernard’s friends said his family is in hiding, but have hired an attorney to try to stop his deportation.

A traffic crash report states identifies the teen as Bernard Didler Pastor-Lopez.

The report from Springdale Police states Pastor failed to stop at a light rear-ending another vehicle.

**Cincinnati Enquirer: Reading grad faces deportation**

By Mark Curnutte

November 22, 2010


A 2010 Reading High School graduate finds himself in an urgent, uphill battle against time.

Bernard Pastor, 18, could be deported at any moment. He was arrested Wednesday night after a minor auto accident in Springdale.

When he could not produce a driver’s license he was incarcerated, his lawyer said. Then police checked his immigration status and learned he was in the country illegally without documentation. Pastor has lived in the United States since age 3.
Springdale police took Pastor to the Butler County Jail, a holding site for federal agents from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement. On Monday, federal officials transferred Pastor to the Morrow County Jail in Mount Gilead, Ohio, the next step in what ICE officials call the removal process.

Following his move to Morrow County, federal officials would next fly him to the Federal Detention Center in Oakdale, La., according to his immigration attorney, Firooz Namei of Cincinnati. Pastor and his family – his parents and an older brother and sister – lost their asylum case in 2003.

“There is nothing I can do for him,” Namei said.

It is technically illegal for police to ask for immigration documents, Namei said, yet driving without a license is a misdemeanor punishable by 180 days in jail. Springdale officers incarcerated Pastor, at which time they checked his immigration status and contacted ICE, which asked police to hold Pastor for its agents, Namei said.

Immigration reform and Hispanic advocates in Greater Cincinnati say Springdale police are among law enforcement departments that racially profile Hispanics, an allegation Springdale police have denied.

Khaalid Walls, regional spokesman for the ICE office in Detroit, said early Monday that Pastor’s situation is not uncommon.

Later Monday, Walls confirmed what Pastor’s lawyer had said. There was little hope of him staying in the United States.

“Bernard Pastor is a native and citizen of Guatemala who is currently under a final deportation order from a federal immigration judge,” Walls wrote in a statement e-mailed to The Enquirer. “He has fully exercised his right to due process, and has challenged his removal orders before the courts.

“ICE is charged with enforcing immigration and customs laws, including enforcing court-ordered deportation orders. Mr. Pastor will remain in ICE custody pending his removal from the U.S.”

Pastor was brought here from Guatemala by his parents to escape religious and military persecution, his lawyer said.

Pastor is the type of young person who could be helped if the DREAM Act were to become law. Introduced as a bipartisan bill in 2001, the act would provide undocumented students with a six-year window to earn a permanent visa and citizenship. Up to 65,000 undocumented students graduate each year from U.S. high schools.

Among DREAM Act requirements would be high moral character and the ability to earn a two- or four-year degree or serve in the military.
Chuck LaFata, Reading High School principal, described Pastor as a model student.

“He was a very good kid academically and a good soccer player,” LaFata said. “There was never a problem with discipline.”

Pastor ranked in the top five of his 107-student graduating class.

News of Pastor’s deportation spread quickly through the halls of Reading High School.

“Is there anything we can do?” asked Andy Callahan, Pastor’s Spanish teacher.

Pastor was also Callahan’s student aide. There was talk of getting the Reading school community to sign petitions demanding that Pastor’s case be re-opened.

“Truly, he is an upstanding person of great moral character,” he said. “The whole family is wonderful. It’s like another teacher just said to me, ‘Bernard is one of the good kids.’”

Despite the grim prognosis, advocates statewide and nationally lined up Monday behind Pastor.

State and local officers Jason Riveiro and Leo Pierson with the Hispanic civil rights group League of United Latin American Citizens pushed Pastor’s case onto the desks of U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Gov. Ted Strickland. After being contacted Monday morning by the Enquirer, a Brown staffer contacted attorney Namei on Monday night to ask for a summary of Pastor’s case. The group also contacted the office of Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio.

Nationally, the group dreamactivist.org is putting its resources – including getting Pastor’s story out to national media – on the Pastor case.

“We’ve been successful in stopping the deportation of some students around the country,” said Nick Torres, Ohio coordinator for dreamactivist.org. “He is an American in every sense of the word, except for a nine-digit Social Security number.”

To that end, Pastor said he loved to sing the “Star-Spangled Banner” before his soccer games at Reading.

“I am an American,” the former honor student said during an interview in the Butler County jail. “It’s all I know – American school, American history (and) American culture. It was a great honor for me to sing the national anthem. Where I was born doesn’t define me.”

Pastor lived with his parents and an older brother and sister. His father is a minister in the Pentecostal Church.

His father worked for Guatemala’s agricultural ministry and ran afoul of the military and Catholic Church because of his evangelical efforts as a Pentecostal minister, Namei said.
Bernard Pastor’s uncle and family received asylum under the same conditions. “There is no consistency,” Namei said. “This young man’s life will be in danger in Guatemala.”

Pastor said he speaks little Spanish and knows no family in Guatemala, except for a grandmother whose photograph he has seen.

He said he has no fear because of his faith in God, but those close to him are nervous.

“They could kill him if he returns. This is not a game,” Bernard Pastor’s father said through a Spanish-speaking interpreter Monday morning. “This is a big problem for my son. His mother can not stop crying.

“If he dies, it should be on the conscience of the people who deported him,” he said. “God sees all. What they are doing to him is a great injustice.”

He was volunteering in his father’s church as a youth minister and musician – drums and guitar – at the time of his arrest. His short-term goal was to attend trade school to learn auto mechanics to help his family financially before entering formal ministerial studies.

“I want to be a pastor of a church,” he said.

Pastor spoke via phone from the jail three times to his father, who is in hiding with the rest of his family.

He said he has been re-reading his Bible since his arrest.

“My life is in God’s hands, where it has always been,” said Pastor. “I am not praying for myself. It is better to pray for other people than oneself. I know I’m here for a purpose, even if I don’t know what it is. Not a leaf falls from a tree that God does not know about.”

**Akron Beacon Journal: DREAM of an act**

August 5, 2010


Congress is not about to embark on comprehensive immigration reform less than three months away from midterm elections. Even if it did, the chances are slim to nil the legislative debate would yield rational solutions to the country's complex immigration problems. Sen. Arlen Specter observed recently that "the political pandering on the immigration issue has reached the hysterical level."

Indeed, it has. The disgrace of it is that otherwise reasonable lawmakers, such as South Carolina's Sen. Lindsey Graham, have jumped on the anti-immigration bandwagon, among other ploys targeting for repeal the 14th Amendment, which, since the 1860s, has guaranteed citizenship to those born or naturalized in the United States. And all this at a time when the U.S.
economy needs to attract and develop the vital energies and capabilities that hard-driving, motivated immigrants bring.

None of this is to deny that the country has an immigration problem. Estimates are that more than 11 million people are living here illegally. The vast majority of them come searching for political and economic security and are prepared for the hard work to secure the future for their families.

The realistic objective, especially for a country that cherishes its roots as a nation of immigrants, is to create a process that would simplify and encourage legal residency and citizenship. If Congress lacks the appetite to do battle now on comprehensive legislation, it certainly can take up a more manageable aspect of the problem: a means to legalize the status of children who are illegal residents through no decisions of their own.

That is the purpose of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minority Act, the most recent version of which was introduced in 2009. Better known as the DREAM Act, the bill proposes that children who were brought into the country before they were 16 years old earn conditional residency status if they have lived here at least five years, are of "good moral character" and have earned a high school degree or equivalent. After six years, they can apply for permanent residency if they have completed at least two years of post-secondary education or military service.

The bill offers these youths the incentives they need to develop into productive contributors, a pool of talent the country should not reject.

Congress is not about to embark on comprehensive immigration reform less than three months away from midterm elections. Even if it did, the chances are slim to nil the legislative debate would yield rational solutions to the country's complex immigration problems. Sen. Arlen Specter observed recently that "the political pandering on the immigration issue has reached the hysterical level."

Indeed, it has. The disgrace of it is that otherwise reasonable lawmakers, such as South Carolina's Sen. Lindsey Graham, have jumped on the anti-immigration bandwagon, among other ploys targeting for repeal the 14th Amendment, which, since the 1860s, has guaranteed citizenship to those born or naturalized in the United States. And all this at a time when the U.S. economy needs to attract and develop the vital energies and capabilities that hard-driving, motivated immigrants bring.

None of this is to deny that the country has an immigration problem. Estimates are that more than 11 million people are living here illegally. The vast majority of them come searching for political and economic security and are prepared for the hard work to secure the future for their families.

The realistic objective, especially for a country that cherishes its roots as a nation of immigrants, is to create a process that would simplify and encourage legal residency and citizenship. If Congress lacks the appetite to do battle now on comprehensive legislation, it certainly can take
up a more manageable aspect of the problem: a means to legalize the status of children who are illegal residents through no decisions of their own.

That is the purpose of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minority Act, the most recent version of which was introduced in 2009. Better known as the DREAM Act, the bill proposes that children who were brought into the country before they were 16 years old earn conditional residency status if they have lived here at least five years, are of "good moral character" and have earned a high school degree or equivalent. After six years, they can apply for permanent residency if they have completed at least two years of post-secondary education or military service.

The bill offers these youths the incentives they need to develop into productive contributors, a pool of talent the country should not reject.

**Toledo Blade: German-born teen to graduate tomorrow; Bartsch follows immigration bill closely, hoping he can stay in U.S.**

**May 18, 2006**

Seniors at Pandora-Gilboa High School don't seem to mind that the television crews coming to their graduation tomorrow night are really only interested in seeing Manuel Bartsch get his diploma.

Just a few months ago, no one knew if the German-born teen would graduate at all after he was jailed and ordered deported by U.S. immigration officials over Christmas break.

"I think it's well-deserved attention for all he had to go through," said classmate Charlie Maag. "And I think there is a problem with the immigration system, and this is one way to bring attention to that."

Between finishing school, applying for college, and shooting hoops with his friends, Mr. Bartsch, 18, also is keeping his eye on the different immigration bills bouncing around Congress.

"I'm hoping something could happen by Memorial Day," he said after school yesterday.

One proposal he's especially interested in is the "Dream Act," a clause in one Senate bill that would allow noncitizens conditional residency if they were younger than 16 when they came to this country, if they have been continuously present in the United States for five years, if they graduated from high school or have been admitted to a U.S. college, and if they can demonstrate good moral character and that they are not terrorists.

Mr. Bartsch, who was brought to the United States at age 10 by his step grandfather, would qualify if the law passed, said his attorney David Leopold.

"There are a lot of kids who have been brought here by their parents. They may have migrated when the child was a baby. He grows up, goes to high school, excels, and all of sudden, he can't
go to college," Mr. Leopold said. "It's cruel to say you can't go to college. This is actually really a smart piece of legislation."

Mr. Bartsch has been accepted to the University of Northwestern Ohio, a private college in Lima, but until his immigration woes are worked out, he doesn't know if he'll be attending classes in the fall or not. He also cannot get a summer job or a driver's license.

"I really don't have a plan," he said. "I just have to wait for everything to go through."

Mr. Bartsch was born in Germany and raised by his grandparents. In 1993, his grandmother was killed in an auto accident. In 1997, his step grandfather, Toby Deal, brought him to Putnam County on a 90-day visa waiver.

Mr. Deal never filled out the necessary forms that would have made it legal for his grandson to stay in the country, but that did not become an issue until Mr. Bartsch made an appointment with immigration officials in Cleveland last December to see how he could straighten out his legal status.

He was immediately jailed in Bedford Heights and spent two weeks behind bars.

Immigration officials were adamant about deporting him, but Mr. Leopold agreed to represent him for free and was able to get a federal immigration judge to listen to Mr. Bartsch's plight.

Federal authorities ultimately released the young man, saying they had received new information about his case that changed his status and took away their ability to detain him.

Yesterday, immigration officials said Mr. Bartsch is still here illegally and still the subject of removal proceedings, although he is not in immediate danger of deportation.

Last month, two private immigration bills were introduced in the House and Senate by U.S. Sen. Mike DeWine (R., Ohio) and U.S. Rep. Paul Gillmor (R., Old Fort) that would specifically give Mr. Bartsch permanent resident status.

Breann Gonzalez, spokesman for Senator DeWine's office, said the chairman of the Senate subcommittee on immigration, border security, and citizenship has asked U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for a report on Mr. Bartsch - a move that automatically gives Mr. Bartsch a stay of deportation.

While Mr. Bartsch has had a rocky road, his case has garnered support from places far from the Putnam County community he considers home. Among the people who jumped on his bandwagon early on was Dan Pocek, the mayor of Bedford, Ohio.

Mr. Pocek said he first heard of the teen's plight when a local auto dealer, who had immigrated from the United Kingdom, angrily asked why his city had put the young man in jail. In fact, Mr. Bartsch was in jail in Bedford Heights - a different suburb - but Mayor Pocek said he promised to make a few calls.
"I'm still making a couple calls," he said this week. "The more I found out about the case, the more I felt compelled to do it."

He contacted city councils and county commissioners throughout Ohio asking them to pass resolutions in support of the private relief bill for Mr. Bartsch.

"It's a no-brainer," Mr. Pocek said. "Government has got to have a heart."

Mr. Bartsch said he's been bowled over by the total strangers who have helped fight for him.

"I think all of this happened because the government was created for the people," he said. "To me, the American dream means to stand up for what you believe is right, and I think that's what happened."

Pandora-Gilboa High School Principal Mel Heitmeyer said Mr. Bartsch has taken the difficulties life has handed him in stride. He has been living with his great-uncle near Ottawa, relying on friends to get him to and from school, and keeping a smile on his face.

"He realizes he gets by with a little help from his friends," Mr. Heitmeyer said.

Mr. Bartsch will be speaking briefly at graduation - telling his story and thanking the community for its support.

"He said to me the other day, 'I'll never be able to repay it,' " Mr. Heitmeyer said. "I said, you'll never be able to repay the people who helped you, but there will be someone down the road who's going to need your help. That's how you repay it."

**Story: Marco**

Jan 10, 1990. It's unusually cold here tonight in the arid town of San Miguel, Oaxaca. There's apparently no soap to wash me, so I'm laid to rest on my mother's stomach (as we sleep together for the first time) to keep the ants away. From what I'm later told, only my grandmother was present to aid my mother in the delivery.

Spring 1992. My mother and father left today, they plan to work for one year in New York and then return.

Spring 1993. There's been a change of plans, after a year of separation our father has returned to take my older sister and me across the border and to our new home in New York. We cross the border somewhere in Arizona, the three of us, with our aunt. Looking back, I can't remember a time when I didn't live with my parents, but I did, anyways, I'm glad our family is together again.
Fall 1994. With much anticipation, I’ve begun school. I’m actually too young to enter kindergarten at four, but my mom submitted a forged Mexican birth certificate. For the next 13 years by birthday will be December 10, 1989. My sister began her elementary school career last year, and can’t stop talking about it. Lastly, although my thoughts, wishes, and entire vocabulary are in Spanish, I’m not too worried about my ignorance of the English language.

1995-1996. I’m now fluent in English, somewhere around this time my imagination and dreams were translated entirely into English, and will remain in that language, I don't mind the loss too much, I just find it peculiar.

Winter 1999. I’ve begun my application process into the district's magnet school; apparently my standardized test scores were barely good enough to make me a candidate.

Spring 1999. After an entrance exam and an interview I’ve been accepted into Mott Hall, next fall I’ll be entering the 5th grade in a new school.

Fall 2002. I lied to my lab supervisor at the local community college where I’ve started to do research in order to fulfill my community service requirement. I told him my parents vote in New York, it's a small lie, to be sure, I’m just not a good liar is all....

Winter 2003. I’ve been granted admission to Deerfield academy; I forgot to tell you that I’ve been taking extra courses outside of school in preparation for boarding school. I can't begin to assess how much my life will change after these four years, I haven't really thought much about it really, my conscience is clear knowing that this is a really good school.

September 2003. We rolled into Deerfield, Massachusetts, on a quiet and perfectly still fall morning. The beauty of this dainty town almost hurts you. Though I’m miles away from the world of “crosswalks, concrete, and cranes,” I don't feel too out of place. My first year dorm - well actually house - John Williams, is older than our nation, and our dorm parent, Mr. Brush seems to be as well.

Summer 2006. During my first week at my first internship I received a call from the Prep for Prep intern coordinator. As expected, the digits I submitted as my social security number are not valid and so my stipend will be delayed. I was upset at first but I know that this experience will prove of value whether I’m paid or not. I was mainly startled, if you want to know the truth, I wasn't expecting any calls at the Brookdale Center of Gerontology, and it was pretty uncomfortable to talk on the phone about by legal status in front of my fellow intern.
Fall 2006. Due to my undocumented status my potential college list has been altered. Most of my initial liberal art colleges have been crossed off, thankfully the CEO of Prep for Prep is a trustee for Kenyon College, and my grades fit their admitted students profile so I should have no problem getting in. Either way, I wish I had more options, though I remain thankful for what I have.

Winter 2007. I applied early to Kenyon and was granted admission; at least my life is secure for four more years.

Spring 2007. I received a call from the international student's office today, I was told that I’ll be registered as a non-resident alien in the college files, seeing as applying for a student visa would require me to return to Mexico, and there's no guarantee that I’ll be able to return, the risks are just too big.

Summer 2007. Our supervisor at the office of the public advocate came around asking for our social security number, I gave her the number the number my parents use to fill out their tax forms, thankfully the public advocate's office won't be paying me this summer, either way, I hope I didn't look too nervous.

Return from Winter Break, Jan. 11, 2008. I’m now 18 years old and getting through airport security won't be as easy without a government ID today an officer of the department of homeland security pulled me aside and had me searched. Thankfully, my mother couldn't see from the waiting are when they frisk-searched me, it was pretty humiliating but I tried to make small talk as my backpack was emptied, I kept on wanting to tell the officers that I posed a threat to no one and was just like any other college on their way back from the holidays.

Summer 2008. The CEO of New York Disaster Interfaith Services came by today with new employee agreements I had to sign. Though they're not paying me this summer I still had to fill in the social security line, I’m getting pretty tired of having to lie, but I don't want any problems.

Return from Spring break, March, 2009. Our Greyhound bus spontaneously stopped today in between Buffalo and Syracuse, two Department of Homeland Security officers boarded and I obviously lied to them, telling them I was a US citizen, I didn't have to show any documents, just uttering the words was sufficient. Unfortunately, the three young men, whom I gave some clothes to in Buffalo, weren't as lucky, were I courageous I would have stood up for them, and asked why they had to be hand cuffed as if they were criminals, or at least silenced the laughter I heard coming from the rear. But since I’m not, I just dug my head in the seat in front of me and recited the opening line to Psalm 91 repeatedly, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."
End of School Year, May, 2009. Sophomore year just ended. Today just before leaving Buffalo, NY, a couple of Department of Homeland Security officers boarded the bus, when one asked if I was born in the US I looked at him straight in the eyes and said yes, its slightly discomforting to realize that I’ve been getting better at lying to them, but it helps to have so much rage, not at individuals, just at the entire system.

Spring 2009. Today, during a heated argument on affirmative action, I made the statement that I would not be present on the campus were it not for concerted efforts made to assist minority groups that were historically and institutionally prevented from attending college. One classmate looked at me and asked how did I feel taking someone else’s spot? I didn’t know how to respond and unable to justify my existence at Kenyon, stated that I loved it here, and couldn’t imagine my life without this opportunity. Looking back, who I don’t think anyone should or can justify their existence, too much goes into the existence of one human being, and I wouldn’t want it any other way.

Fall 2009. During the church offering today we were asked to fill out an organ donor application. I couldn’t help asking myself that if I died here in America would my heart, lungs and tissues be illegal too? And thought pleasantly on those lines from e.e. cummings: “when god lets my body be/ from each brave eye shall sprout a tree …. the purpled world will dance upon my lips which did sing.”

Late May, 2009. I’m volunteering at an immigrant rights group from the summer, and while discussing my responsibilities for the summer I was asked if I was a US citizen, I said no.

That's all I have to say for now, I omitted the events of September 11, and my father being laid-off repeatedly, my mother working grueling hours in a clothing factory, and my older sister’s frustration at our condition. I fear that I’ve painted a pretty miserable picture of my life, though these dates aren't entirely representative of my life, they are, however, "precious parts of my experience" and their significance play out continually throughout my narrative (Ellison). Also, it's not a good habit to continually lie to people; thankfully I’m slowly getting better at speaking the truth. I just wanted you to get a fuller understanding of my story, which is now your story.

Hassan tells me that some good must arise from living illegally in the United States, and I’m tempted to agree. Without romanticizing our condition too much, I can say that knowing everything I have ever worked for can be immediately taken away from me has made me appreciate what I have. I love the bond that unites all who live without proper documentation in the United States, our shared stories, emotions, and psychology. There’s also something to say about the narrative that we share with other aliens people, whether the Israelites living in Egypt
or black slaves in America, and that our struggle is the next chapter in the long, but beautiful, struggle for civil, natural, and human rights.

[Source: Papers the Movie]
Oklahoma

Washington Post: Editorial--Congress can help young immigrants fulfill their promise through the DREAM Act
December 1, 2010
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/01/AR2010120105886.html

MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ, who turns 24 in a few days, has wanted to be a Marine ever since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when she was in ninth grade. After graduating from high school - she was the first to do so in her family - she tried to enlist but was turned away. For even though Ms. Rodriguez has lived in Oklahoma since she was 5, when her mother spirited her across the Rio Grande from Mexico on a raft made of tires, she remains an illegal immigrant. As such, she is ineligible to serve in what she calls "our military."

Ms. Rodriguez has no memories of her birth country, where she said her mother endured domestic abuse before fleeing to the United States, and she's never been back there. Her Spanish, she said, is rough. At high school in Tulsa, she ran track and and was president of the dance club. In conversation, she's inclined to call her elders "sir" and "ma'am" and speaks reverently about her dreams, which include becoming a nurse one day after serving her country. "It's special to be a Marine," she told us. "You know - the few, the proud."

For a decade, Congress has turned its back on legislation that would make people like Ms. Rodriguez eligible for citizenship if they serve in the military or go to college. The legislation should be a no-brainer. Each year it would give an estimated 65,000 high school graduates who were brought to this country as children - Americans in every sense but for their lack of documentation - the chance to fulfill their potential in the only country many of them think of as home.

The legislation, known as the DREAM Act, is expected to come up for a vote by the end of the year in Congress's lame-duck session. But despite having sponsors from both parties, it faces broad opposition from Republicans who have adopted a blanket "no amnesty" stance. Logic, and America's self-interest, are on the other side.

By offering a leg up to youngsters with unblemished records and promising futures, the DREAM Act would, at a stroke, turn workers in the underground economy into taxpayers; expand the military's recruitment pool at a time when war has stretched it thin; and induce more people from modest backgrounds to attend college, gaining critical skills to keep America competitive.

For now, Ms. Rodriguez makes ends meet by helping her mother clean houses every weekday morning. The rest of the time, she takes courses at a community college and cares for her 2-year-old son. Her long-standing dream of serving in the Marines owes nothing to Washington's political machinations and everything to simple patriotism.
"This is my home," she said. "I want my son to know his mom would put her life on the line to make a better life in America." By continuing to deny her that chance, Congress only hurts the nation.
In a small classroom at Portland State, the university president, two elected officials and a pack of students rallied Tuesday around a cell phone delivering the voice of Hector Lopez.

"I want go home to Portland," said Lopez, 20, from Mexico City. "I spent my life in America. I just want to come back home, where I belong."

Lopez is among 2 million young people across the nation who grew up in the United States without citizenship because their parents are undocumented immigrants.

A bill in Congress would create a course to citizenship for those like Lopez stalled in the Senate Tuesday amid debate over a Pentagon spending measure.

Lopez was 6 weeks old in 1990 when his parents came into the country illegally and settled in Milwaukie. Siovhan Sheridan-Ayala, his Seattle lawyer, said that when Lopez was 9, his parents paid someone to file immigration papers. They never knew that the person never did the work or that a judge later issued a deportation order.

Lopez did well in school and became senior class president at Rex Putnam High School. He got a Social Security number and an Oregon driver's license. He coached Little League and did hundreds of hours of community service. He aimed to enroll at Portland State to study marketing.

But on Aug. 23, federal authorities picked up Lopez and his father on the 11-year-old deportation order. On Sept. 1, they were shipped to Mexico -- where Lopez said Tuesday he doesn't speak or write the language and cannot find a job.

Lopez's defenders called a news conference Tuesday at Portland State to urge passage of the bill in Congress, the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors or DREAM Act.

"The country is better for us being here," said Portland State President Wim Wiewel, who emigrated to the United States as a young man. "We are fools if we do not change the current system."
Jeff Cogen, chairman of the Multnomah County Commission, and City Commissioner Amanda Fritz -- also an immigrant -- said their governmental bodies have unanimously approved resolutions asking Congress to pass the bill.
Pennsylvania

**Associated Press: Immigrant vets face deportation despite service**

October 24, 2010

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hA64ehSM_gMiIll-3uly5nQslsYg?docId=2baf89df6bbf495397d9b8727b20eb74](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hA64ehSM_gMiIll-3uly5nQslsYg?docId=2baf89df6bbf495397d9b8727b20eb74)

When Rohan Coombs joined the U.S. Marine Corps, he never thought one day he would be locked up in an immigration detention center and facing deportation from the country he had vowed to defend.

Coombs, 43, born in Jamaica, immigrated to the United States legally as a child with his family. He signed up to serve his adopted nation for six years — first in Japan and the Philippines, then in the Persian Gulf during the first war with Iraq.

Up to 8,000 non-citizens enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces every year and serve alongside American troops. As of May 2010, there were 16,966 non-citizens on active duty. The military does not allow illegal immigrants to enlist.

If non-citizens die while serving, they are given citizenship and a military funeral. If they live and get in trouble with the law, as Coombs did, they can get caught in the net of a 1996 immigration law that greatly expanded the list of crimes for which non-citizens can be deported.

"As far as I was concerned, I was a citizen," said Coombs, whose soft-spoken, introspective nature contrast with his physical presence. Coombs stands 6 foot 5 and weighs more than 260 pounds — a gentle giant, according to his fiancee, Robyn Sword.

Now advocates of non-citizen servicemen and women are trying to change that. Attorneys are taking cases like Coombs' to court, arguing that an immigrant who serves in the Armed Forces should be considered a U.S. national and protected from deportation.

"These are people who served us — whether they are model human beings or not," said Coombs' attorney, Craig Shagin of Harrisburg, Pa. "They served in our uniforms, in our wars. If they were POWs, they'd be considered American prisoners."

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, is looking into potential changes to the law so immigrants who serve in the military can avoid deportation.

"You come back from Iraq or Afghanistan today, you have put yourself on the line for this country," said Filner. "An incredible number of kids come back with an injury or illness that puts them in trouble with the law. To simply have these people deported is not a good way to thank them for their service."
Advocates estimate that thousands of veterans have been deported or are in detention. Government officials say they have no tally but plan to begin tracking the numbers.

The push comes as criminal courts are increasingly listening to arguments for leniency for veterans.

So-called veterans courts, which give them specialized treatment, now number more than 30, with a dozen more planned.

Next month, new U.S. Sentencing Commission rules will make it possible for federal judges to consider a criminal defendant's military service and mental and emotional condition to issue a lesser prison sentence. The rules, however, would not apply to immigration judges.

Most immigrants serve with distinction. The Center for Naval Analyses, a federally funded research and development center for the Navy and the Marine Corps, found that non-citizens are far more likely to complete their enlistment obligations successfully than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Coombs was one who did not make the grade.

He spent 10 months in the Persian Gulf and lost friends to combat, he said. After the war, he felt depressed and anxious. His family was far away in New York, and he said "whining" to fellow Marines didn't seem an option.

Instead, he got involved with drugs, and he got caught.

In 1992, he was court-martialed for possession of cocaine and marijuana with the intent to distribute, and was given 18 months of confinement and a dishonorable discharge.

He continued to struggle with drugs.

"Things would be going well, then something would happen," he said.

He got married, and that helped. When his wife died in 2001 of diabetes-related complications, he started smoking marijuana again.

In 2008, he was busted for selling marijuana to an undercover officer while working as a bouncer in an Orange County bar. He spent eight months in state prison.

"I don't want to make excuses. I made mistakes. I thought I knew the consequences — I served my time," he said in a telephone interview.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement found that his criminal convictions made him eligible for deportation, and he was turned over to ICE after serving his sentence. He has been held in a San Diego immigration detention center for 22 months and is appealing to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court.
Coombs was stunned to realize he could be forced to leave the country for his crimes.

"This is the only life I've known," he said. "The only time I left this country was when I was deployed overseas. This is my home."

On the other side of the country, Dardar Paye is appealing his deportation case to the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Paye came to the U.S. from war torn Liberia as a 13-year-old. He joined the Army in 1998, serving in Kuwait as part of Operation Desert Fox and then in a NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. He returned to New Jersey, where his family lives, to spend another year and a half with the Army National Guard.

In 2008, he was convicted of six weapons-related offenses, including two involving firearms dealing, and served time in federal prison. Now, like Coombs, he is facing deportation and is feeling betrayed.

"When I was in Kuwait, in Kosovo, I was like everyone else who was there, putting their lives on the line," said Paye, who in the Army was an armored vehicle crewman. "Now I feel like they just used me for what they wanted, and now they're throwing me away."

Advocates and immigration attorneys say that before the 1996 Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, few immigrant veterans were deported, because immigration authorities could take their service into consideration.

The law added crimes such as drug possession for sale to the list of serious crimes that could lead to deportation of a legal immigrant.

"Drugs, anger management, weapons charges, that's what a lot of vets are getting caught for, and there is no relief," said Margaret Stock, a recently retired Army reservist and immigration attorney who taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point. "The 1996 law really put the nails in their coffin."

Coombs' attorneys, Shagin and Heather Boxeth of San Diego, Calif., who have represented or advised immigrant veterans in similar straits, estimate up to 4,000 veterans who served as long ago as World War II are now in immigration detention or have been deported, but acknowledge that there are no hard numbers.

ICE spokeswoman Lori Haley said identifying and removing dangerous criminals from the country is an agency priority — and that the cases of people with prior military service are carefully reviewed.

Meantime, the military has started to offer a fast-track to citizenship to immigrants currently serving. Now, most joining the Army can expect to be citizens by the end of basic training, said Stock. Other branches are expected to join the effort by the end of the year.
That help doesn't extend to those who have already served such as Paye and Coombs.

"If I had died," said Coombs, they would have made me a citizen, given me a military funeral, and given the flag to my mom. But I didn't die. Here I am. I just want another chance."

**Philadelphia Inquirer: Reaching for a dream**
March 6, 2010
[http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/86703612.html](http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/86703612.html)

Congress should pass a bill that would give good students who were brought into this country illegally as children by their parents a better chance for success as citizens.

Under the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, a path to citizenship would be provided to these children after they graduate from high school and enroll in college or the military for two years, steps that would help them become productive members of society.

Critics argue such action condones or encourages illegal immigration, but that's a narrow-minded view of a much bigger problem. There are at least 12 million illegal immigrants who live and work in the United States. Since most are not returning to their homelands, this country must find a good way to move them to permanent-residency status.

Short of a comprehensive national policy on immigration, the DREAM Act bill provides lawmakers with an opportunity to pass one segment of the sweeping reform that's needed.

President Obama had promised to take up immigration his first year in office. But with other issues on the table, in particular health-care reform and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he has been forced to delay tackling another divisive issue.

First introduced in 2001, the DREAM Act, however, already has widespread bipartisan support. It nearly passed the Senate in 2007, falling short by a few votes. The bill was introduced again last March. The College Board, which represents more than 5,000 schools and administers the SAT college entrance exams, supports the legislation.

Under the bill, illegal immigrants under 30 who entered the country before they were 16 would be eligible if they meet specific criteria. They must have clean records, and must have lived here for five years. They also would have to apply for conditional legal status. After six years, they would become eligible for U.S. citizenship.

Those seem like reasonable guidelines. An estimated 65,000 illegal immigrants graduate from U.S. high schools annually and have the potential to excel in college. But because of decisions made by their parents, many face uncertain futures.
The bill would further make those who qualify under the new law eligible for in-state tuition and some federal financial aid. Without that, many cannot afford college, or they won't apply out of fear of deportation.

Already, 11 states offer illegal immigrants reduced tuition. A similar measure in New Jersey fell short earlier this year.

Although many illegal immigrants work and pay taxes, giving their children a chance to attend college or serve in the military would help those families contribute more to the economy with better jobs and higher wages.

That's no substitute for a new immigration policy that addresses the larger issues. But the DREAM Act can be a first step to put the children of illegal immigrants on the right path.

**Philadelphia Inquirer: Editorial—They’re not going away**
May 1, 2009

Children who grew up in the same neighborhoods and went to the same schools may pay more than their classmates to go to college, if they came to this country illegally.

That may sound fair. But, for the nation, it's a case of cutting off your nose to spite your face.

These children of illegal immigrants are going to stay in this country. It is best that they become well-educated, gainfully employed, and able to give back to American society. Some of these kids are top scholars. If they do well, the entire country will benefit from their contributions.

Congress has before it legislation that would help these children by making undocumented immigrants eligible for in-state college tuition and financial aid. Such a move would open up educational opportunities to thousands of students.

Of course, it's only a partial solution to a bigger problem. This country needs a new immigration policy that would provide a pathway to legal residency for millions of people working and raising families in this country.

The College Board, which represents more than 5,000 schools and administers the SAT college entrance exams, supports the tuition legislation. It was spurred to take a stance after several states sought to block illegal immigrants from paying in-state tuition or even enrolling in public colleges and universities.

The College Board estimates that 360,000 illegal immigrants with a high school diploma could qualify for the tuition aid. An additional 715,000 between ages 5 and 17 would also benefit.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that illegal immigrants are entitled to a K-12 public school education, but failed to address the issue of college.
Under the proposed Dream Act, illegal immigrants who arrived in the United States at age 15 or younger could seek conditional legal status after graduating from high school, if they have lived here at least five years. That status would make them eligible for in-state tuition and some federal financial aid. After two years of college or military service, they would qualify for permanent legal residency and citizenship.

A blue-ribbon panel in New Jersey recently recommended in-state-tuition legislation. And Gov. Corzine has endorsed the idea. But a recent Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey poll found most state residents oppose it.

People shouldn't let their emotions about illegal immigrants blind them to the reality that many of them, if given the opportunity for a good education, will work hard to give back to the nation that gave them a chance.

---

**Story: Maria**

I have decided that a tiny little piece of paper and a 9-digit number are not going to decide what I am or what I am not. I don't define myself by my undocumented status. Yes, I am undocumented, but I am an American first.

I am an American because of the pride I feel when I hear The Star-Spangled Banner and the pride I felt when I saw our first black President take the oath of office; only 45 years after Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I am an American because I love this country and what it stands for. I am an American because this is my home.

I was born in Lima, Peru and lived there for the first 12 years of my young life. My parents had lost their business and only source of income due to the economic situation of the country. As my parents struggled to find jobs to keep our family afloat, they were left with no choice but to keep me out of school for a year as they could not afford it. This is not what parents want for their kids, and this is not what my parents wanted for me. This is why they finally decided to seek a better future in "the land of opportunity;" to provide my siblings and I with the tools necessary to build a good life.

October 2000 marks the day I stepped foot on U.S. soil for the first time. My parents had told me and my siblings that we were going to Disney World for vacation. Part of me knew better, but I wasn't going to argue with them...I was going to go see Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse! Little did I know that would never happen. I haven't been to Disney World to this day. Despite the disappointment, I was thrilled to be in America, a place I had only seen in movies and television shows. It was more beautiful than I had thought.

My first year in the U.S. was difficult as I began to adjust to a different culture and a new life. My parents enrolled me in 9th grade a month or two into the school year. Not only was it nerve-racking because I was the new foreign kid, but also because I hadn't been to school in more than a year. The first class I took was ESL, but it became boring after a few months as I began
learning the language and carrying conversations without difficulty. The rest of my classes were regular classes, which were both exciting and challenging. I remember my first time reading Romeo and Juliet and learning about the Civil War. While I wasn't aware of my undocumented status yet, I knew my parents had abandoned their life in Peru to provide me with a better education and future, and I wasn't going to disappoint them. I finished my freshman year with top grades.

Sophomore year flew by and without thinking I began to identify myself as an American more and more. I had become fully assimilated to the American culture and I loved learning about the history of this country, starting with the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, to the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for equality. Then junior year began and my hopes and dreams came crashing down. It was the time to start applying for college and I had my mind on a few already. I took as many college applications from the guidance office as I could and was ready to fill them out. It was then when I realized I couldn't go to school because I didn't have the magic 9-digit number. Disappointment does not even begin to describe the way I felt when I found out I couldn't continue my education. My parents wanted a better future for me and I was going to let them down. It was heart breaking watching my friends get accepted to the schools of their choice while I was stuck in neutral. I tried not to let this get me down and I was able to graduate high school with top grades, despite an uncertain future.

A year went by and I was getting more and more frustrated about my situation. I wanted to go to school; I wanted to be a normal 19 year old. My frustration led to determination to find a college that would let me study. I researched and called several schools until I was accepted as an international student at the community college in my area. I knew paying international rates for classes would be a challenge, but the truth is I didn't care. I was finally able to attend school and I wasn't going to let money stop me. Thankfully, I was able to save up enough money during my year off to take two classes. I am still attending community college taking two to three classes per semester, and paying for them is still difficult without any financial help but I am not giving up. I currently hold a 4.0 GPA and I am three classes away from finishing my two years of college. My plan is to transfer to Penn State University to finish my four years as a political science major. My dream is to one day work for an organization like the American Civil Liberties Union and fight to defend the rights and freedoms of those who need it, to always be politically active, and to help make the average citizen feel like they can truly make a difference.

Just like me, there are thousands of students facing the same obstacles. We consider ourselves American, but are denied the opportunity to attend college and work legally. We don't want or expect "freebies." What we want is a chance to prove what an asset we can be to this country we call our home. We want to be the future nurses, doctors, teachers, and engineers that will shape this country's future and continue to make it great.

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act is a bipartisan piece of legislation that would give students in the same situation conditional legal status if they meet certain requirements. This bill would give us a chance to attend college or enlist in the military for at least two years and help us toward a path to citizenship to finally have that piece of paper that is so needed in this country.
Despite all of these obstacles, I am thankful to be living in this country and my patriotism has not wavered. We, DREAMies, are not asking much; just the opportunity to give back a little of what this country has given us. We won't give up hope and will continue to work hard to finally make our dreams a reality.

[Source: Change.org]
My name is Christian Escareno and I am an undocumented student at Brown University. I was born in Mexico in 1988. When I was 7 years old, my parents brought me to the United States illegally, in their search of better jobs. Ever since arriving, I have always felt a sense of separation; of not being equal to everyone else; a feeling of not belonging; and this feeling that I have felt all my life stems from the undocumented status my parents bestowed upon me when they brought me to this country.

Back in Mexico, I had had a good life and had been the brightest student in my class. Here for about $7.50 an hour, my parents provided me with a good life but this life didn’t feel right. At school, I faced problems from not being able to speak English. Consequently, I was no longer the brightest or smartest student at school. Instead, I was often mocked by other kids for failing to pronounce certain words or for being “weird” in dress and appearance because of my socioeconomic background. Growing up, I oftentimes wondered why my parents had brought me to the US when I had been happy back in Mexico.

Around the time I was in 6th grade, my parents got divorced. Not long after, my Dad was arrested on a charge of D.U.I., was sent to prison, and then deported to Mexico, where he has been since. Because of this, my mom raised my younger brother and I, alone.

In high school, I took up track and field because I enjoyed long distance running. I turned out to be gifted at it: I had the ability to run exceedingly fast for very long amounts of time. As the years went by in high school, I received good grades and won great races across the state of Illinois. By the time I was a senior, I had a good GPA and a great ACT score and had managed to break every single long-distance running record my school had. And while I was achieving a lot in my academic life, at home, my life was not all right.

The day I won the state championship, I brought home the 1st-place medal and beamingly handed it to my mom, who said, “What’s this? Can this earn you wages? Can this help your family out?” and as much as I cared to not let her words bother me, I couldn’t help to think that she was truly right. Instead of working and helping my mom pay the bills, I was chasing false hopes and dreams; dreams that were vague and uncertain; dreams that would most likely never get me anywhere because of my status as an undocumented student.

In the fall of my senior year of high school I began to apply to colleges. I had little hope of being accepted to any university, for as far as I knew, I did not exist in the United States: I lacked a social security number and citizenship. When spring came around, I received many college letters explaining to me that they could not accept me because of my lack of a social security number.
Many universities understood that I was an undocumented immigrant though and were willing to help me. One of these schools was Brown University and it welcomed me into the class of 2010. Since then, I have made Brown proud. I have led the cross country and track and field teams for three years placing 16th, 9th, and recently 2nd at the Ivy League Cross Country championships (a race that holds 130 of the best varsity runners in the Ivy League); I’ve placed 10th in the Northeast Regional; and have also qualified to the NCAA championships (being the first in five years that Brown sends to the championships).

Academically speaking, I am nearly done with my economics degree and this I have done through much diligence and perseverance. One of the reasons I have pursued this field is to understand the economic impact that immigrants have on this country. One of my dreams is to study economics in graduate school. I am currently studying for the GMAT so that I can apply to graduate programs or business schools.

Being at Brown has given me the chance to take a wide variety of classes and learn from excellent professors. Here, my thoughts and ideas have been challenged and have evolved as I’ve grown older. I couldn’t be happier here. At the same time though, I can’t help but to feel sad about my uncertain future. One day I will graduate and nothing will await me. After spending my life trying to succeed as a student and an athlete, the country I call home, the United States, will still not want me and this hurts because I wish I were given a chance to pursue my dreams.

One way that I have channeled the energy that comes from my position in life is by devoting myself to the Latino and low-socioeconomic communities of Rhode Island. Here at school, I belong to two student organizations called BIRC and SIM: the Brown Immigrant Rights Coalition and the Student Immigrant Movement. We have weekly meetings attended by Professors Steve Rabson and Alexandra Filindra from Brown University, Professors from Rhode Island College and Providence College, and Community Outreach Coordinators from the International Institute of Rhode Island.

Together, we have reached out to the community and provided guidance, support and leadership to the undocumented youth of Rhode Island. In Providence, I have found undocumented students like me with the dream to become citizens or attend college. I have found many, many students who in tears have told me, “What’s the point of all the work that I am doing if I’m never going to go to college?”

I guide a junior at Blackstone Academy, named Diana Giraldo who was born in Colombia. She has been in the USA since she was 11 and always brings me to tears when she says, “How come I can’t go to college like all my friends? I am the top of my class. Why is this happening to me?” Then there are more tragic cases like that of my dear friend Antonio Albizures, who already graduated from Blackstone and is from Guatemala: he saw his chance of going to college disappear because of his status as an undocumented student, even though he arrived to the US at the age of one – he has been in the US for 17 years. Today, he is a soccer coach for a group of 12 year olds and when he is not doing that, he is working for low wages to help his family. Diana on the other hand, still has a chance and she is not giving up and that is the reason I provide guidance and relief for her.
Our stories may sound rare, but they are not. Every year 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school and they do not have the ability to seek higher education because this society has told them that they do not belong in school; that they do not belong in college; and that they should give up on their dreams.

This is done in the form of a simple barrier that all undocumented students face: the social security number. In other words, the very few students who, from broken homes and low-socioeconomic backgrounds, excel in school and seek higher education have to face the heavy burden of finding their own paths to college - even if they have lived 16 (me), 17 (Diana), or 20 (Antonio) years in the country they have always called home: America.

Oftentimes, my friends have asked me, “Why haven’t you attained or applied for citizenship?” and to be honest, I have tried. I have talked to lawyers, and sought help, and done much all to find out that for people like me (anyone who overstays their visa) there is no path for citizenship. In fact, the only way for me to become a citizen would be for me to leave this country, which has been my country for the past 15 years, and to stay out of it for 10 years. This infraction or injustice is imparted upon me because when I was a little boy, I overstayed my visa visit for longer than 90 days. I don’t understand how I am to be blamed for this since at the time, I honestly did not know I was doing any wrong.

It has been hard to not be sad at times about all that I have to face to be where I am today but one way to fight for my dreams and the injustice I face is to seek out and help other dreamers like me. Together with BIRC and SIM, I have given talks at forums, conferences and universities across this great state and beyond about the struggles of being undocumented. High school students, mothers, and teachers attend these conferences seeking hope and an opportunity for themselves, loved ones or their students. My vision is that all immigrant students will have equal access to higher education, are not discriminated based on their immigration status and collectively realize their full potential. One way to get to this dream is through the DREAM Act.

In March 2009, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-IL and Sen. Dick Lugar, R-Ind. re-introduced the DREAM Act to congress. This bipartisan bill is meant to help students like me who were brought to the U.S. illegally at a young age. The bill would permit students like me to become residents if they came here as a child (younger than 16), have been here for five years, have good moral character and attend college or enlist in the military for at least two years.

This bill is not amnesty. It’s specifically tailored to assist a select group of young people to earn legal status: someone like me who came here with my parents when I was too little to understand the consequences. This bill would allow me and many other undocumented students with great potential to contribute more to this society.

The DREAM Act has come close to becoming law. When the the DREAM Act was introduced back in 2004, the bill received 52 votes in the Senate, a majority vote - including 11 republicans - but they needed 60 under Senate rules.

It’s September 2010 and the DREAM Act will soon come under review by Congress again. I hope that this time around, it passes.
[Source: Act on a Dream at Harvard College]
The rapid resurrection and subsequent defeat of the DREAM Act over the last two weeks stirs up, for us, strongly mixed emotions.

The well-worn bill provides a path to citizenship for children brought to this country by illegally immigrating parents, if those children attend college or join the military, and has been voted on in a number of different congressional sessions. This time, it was an obvious partisan political ploy, anticipated and rightly decried months in advance by U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and others.

The conventional wisdom driving this political stunt works like so: Democrats are on the ropes, seeing their control of both houses in Congress jeopardized by a combination of independent voters angry at the incumbents over the shape of the economy, energized Republicans eager to be the beneficiaries of this general dissatisfaction, and apathetic Democrats who may stay home on election day. Nothing the Democrats can do now will mollify those mad at them before November, and the Republicans sure aren't going to give them a break, so their only chance is to do everything they can to persuade their own voters to turn out.

In this case, the Hispanic vote was the target. By trotting out a bill that's both symbolic and sentimental to the Hispanic community, the thinking goes, perhaps they'll see the Republicans who defeat it as the bad guys and vote against them in November, saving the Democrats' hides. (This is all the more true in Nevada, home state of Senate majority leader Harry Reid, fighting woeful approval numbers as he seeks re-election.) So Democrats attached the DREAM Act to a defense spending bill, and promptly saw it defeated, as expected. Even many Republicans who support the bill in concept voted against it this time.

We'd gladly condemn the Democrats for their cynicism and be done with it, but that would be ignoring the sacrificial lamb here: a very good piece of legislation, and the children it would help. Most Americans, in general, believe children should not have to suffer unduly for the sins of their fathers - hence our special social programs for children of criminals, for example. Likewise, while our frustration over our immigration laws being flaunted may be genuine, we ought not direct it at the kids who are brought to this country illegally by their parents.

After they graduate high school, they enter a profound legal and social limbo, and forcing them to go back to a country they likely do not even remember is a poor remedy. When those children show the initiative to work hard enough to get into college or participate in our armed forces, they are showing the determination and drive that makes our country great, and we should reward them for it with citizenship - exactly as the DREAM Act would have done.
This, however, is only one facet of an extremely complex set of shortfalls in our immigration policy. A comprehensive approach to the entire problem would be far better, but when even the straightforward policy solutions are being used as political battering rams, a bipartisan solution to anything seems impossible.

Perhaps the voters' "throw the bums out" mentality is not so misplaced at all.

**Rock Hill Herald: Editorial—Give DREAM Act a chance**  
September 27, 2010  

In the recent failed effort by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to attach amendments to the defense authorization bill, most of the attention was focused on the proposed repeal of the Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. But another sensible amendment was blocked when Democrats came up just short of the 60 votes needed to overcome a potential filibuster.

Reid had used this vote to try to revive the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (or DREAM) Act. We hope this won't be the last effort to pass this compassionate measure.

Whatever hostility some Americans might have toward adults who enter this country illegally, it is hard to imagine that this same anger could be directed toward the innocent children who are brought to the U.S. by their immigrant parents. Many are children who are raised in the United States from a young age who have no connection with their parents' home country, who, in effect, are Americans without the benefit of official citizen status.

The DREAM Act is designed to provide both a path to legal status and a means for these young people to use their talents to the fullest.

The DREAM Act originally was introduced in 2001 by Sens. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. Different versions of the measure have been debated in both houses, but it has never come to the floor as a stand-alone bill. Nonetheless, the basic premise behind the DREAM Act has retained bipartisan support through the years.

The latest version offered conditional legal status to as many as 800,000 immigrants who were brought to this country before they were 16 years old. To be eligible, they would have had to have been residents of the U.S. for at least five years prior to the enactment of the law.

Once eligible, they would have six years to gain permanent resident status. They would have to serve for two years in the military or complete an associate's degree or two years toward a degree at a four-year college. States would be permitted to offer in-state tuition charges to students who had earned conditional legal status.
Again, these are young people who have grown up in the United States. Should we invite them to experience the American dream or condemn them to a furtive life as an alien with limited opportunities to excel or serve the country?

The DREAM Act is not a certain path to citizenship nor in any way a free ride. It is an incentive to serve in the military or pursue a college education.

It is an opportunity for people brought to this country and raised here through no choice of their own to pursue their dreams. To deny them that opportunity is both unfair and a waste of talent.

We should pass the DREAM Act not only to benefit these young immigrants but also to benefit this nation.

**Dayana Rodrigues:** Graduated in the top 5% of her high school class and wants to become a nurse. “Dayana Rodrigues graduated in the top 5 percent of her high school class in 2007 and completed nursing prerequisites at Horry-Georgetown Technical College. But in January, the college refused to re-enroll the 20-year-old returning student because she is an undocumented immigrant, The Post and Courier of Charleston reports. ‘You know it’s not personal,’ she said. ‘But it is.’ The South Carolina Illegal Immigration Reform Act became law in June and, among other measures, banned illegal immigrants from attending colleges and universities that receive state money.” [Community College Week, 3/9/09]
Leaf-Chronicle (Clarksville, Tenn.): Editorial—DREAM of being a citizen
September 27, 2010
http://www.thleafchronicle.com/article/20100927/OPINION01/9270305

When the Senate Democrats failed in their attempt to bring a defense spending bill to a vote last week, most attention focused on the "don't ask, don't tell" provision in it. But the bill also contained a measure supported by the Pentagon as a way to bring new recruits into the ranks.

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act - or DREAM Act - would allow illegal immigrants who met several requirements - 35 or younger, came to the U.S. before turning 16, have lived here at least five years, no criminal record and have earned a high school diploma - to become conditional residents for up to six years. They would be eligible to become permanent residents if they completed two years of college or two years in the military.

It's been estimated that 725,000 people would be eligible immediately for conditional residency.

The Department of Defense has included the DREAM Act in its three-year strategic plan as a way to help fill the ranks. "If we needed to expand the pool of eligible youth, the (DREAM) initiative would be one of several ways to do it," spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said in an e-mail to USA Today.

Prior to the Senate vote, Retired Gen. Colin Powell, the son of Jamaican immigrants, spoke on behalf of the act during an appearance on "Meet the Press." He said that the United States could not afford to be anti-immigration: "Immigrants are fueling this country. Without immigrants, America would be like Europe or Japan with an aging population and no young people coming in to take care of it. We have to educate our immigrants. The DREAM Act is one way to do that."

Many Americans who oppose illegal immigration say they would not challenge legal immigrants who followed a pathway to citizenship.

But illegal immigrants brought to this country as children have been stuck in the middle. They had no choice in coming to the U.S., but they grew up here, and now this is a more familiar home to them than their country of birth.

If they are willing to devote two years of their lives either in the military - defending this country - or at a university - developing skills to contribute to society - then this pathway to citizenship is one that deserves a fair consideration in Congress.
Patricio Gonzalez: After finishing half a semester at Christian Brothers University, he was forced to leave because of his immigration status. “Founder [of Memphis based nonprofit Youth for Youth] Patricio Gonzalez, 19, came to the U.S. from Argentina when he was 5 years old. He ranked high in his class at White Station High School and graduated with a 4.7 grade-point average. After half a semester at Christian Brothers University, Gonzalez had to leave because of his undocumented status. ‘We came at an age when we had no say,’ he said. ‘We’re called aliens, undocumented workers, criminals - what have I done?’” [Commercial Appeal, 7/26/10]

Abril Marcial: High graduate who was involved in ROTC and wants to serve in the military. “One afternoon, while talking to her high school counselor about her college opportunities, Abril Marcial suddenly realized her education opportunities were very limited because she is in the country illegally. ‘The only thing that says I’m Mexican is the color of my skin and a birth certificate that says I was born there,’ said the 17-year-old Mexico native, who has lived in the United States since she was 3…Abril, who has been an ‘A’ student and involved in different extracurricular activities, including soccer and Junior ROTC, says her greatest dream is to serve in the military and go to college to study criminal justice. ‘I want to serve my country. I would be an excellent soldier,’ she said. ‘The only thing that separates me from an American is a piece of paper.’” [Chattanooga Times Free Press, 3/7/09]
Texas

FOX News: DREAM Act Students Volunteer to Serve in the Military
December 1, 2010

A group of young undocumented immigrants gathered Tuesday at a military recruiting center in the U.S. capital, offering to serve as volunteers in the military of the country they grew up in.

Their demonstration was an attempt to pressure Congress into approving the DREAM Act, legislation that would allow immigrants whose families brought them into the United States illegally to obtain legal residence if they serve in the Armed Forces or go to college.

"This is our country, the country we love," 21-year-old Lizardo Bujelet told Efe. "All we ask is justice, not a favor."

Born in Peru and now a resident of San Antonio, Bujelet said it was only three or four years ago when he found out he was undocumented.

In high school Bujelet joined the ROTC where he learned to march like the other volunteers, as he now marched with all the young people demonstrating in front of the Washington recruiting office.

The problem for undocumented immigrants, according to Mexican-born Cesar Vargas, a third-year law student in New York, is that they can't get financial aid for their studies.

"Since (the terrorist attacks against the U.S. in) September 2001, I felt that I wanted to serve the country I call my land, my home," Vargas said, adding that he is eager for Congress to pass legislation that would allow him to join the Marine Corps.

Reporters were not allowed in the offices where volunteers were being interviewed, but Vargas said that the army officer in charge of the interviews "showed his support and told us that he knows many immigrants who have a greater sense of patriotism than many Americans born here."

Alina Cortes, 19, told Efe that she learned of her undocumented status when, shortly before graduating from high school, she was notified that she did not qualify for a scholarship or government grants for going to college.

"I had to study with the aid of private scholarships and the efforts of my family," said Cortes, a Mexico City native attending college in Texas who also wants to become a Marine.
The DREAM Act is a bill introduced by Democrats and Republicans that would legalize hundreds of thousands of young people brought to the United States as children and raised in this country.

Shu Ohno, spokesperson for the Immigration Forum, said that similar activities are being carried out in a number of states including California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Texas and Wisconsin.

On Monday, 15 demonstrators were arrested at the San Antonio offices of Texas Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison after a six-hour protest asking the lawmaker to support the DREAM Act.

The demonstrators were members of a group of students who 20 days ago began a hunger strike in support of the DREAM Act.

San Antonio Express News: DREAM Act hunger strike spreads
By Melissa Ludwig
November 24, 2010

University students across Texas this week joined San Antonio students in a hunger strike aimed at pressuring U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison to vote for the DREAM Act, a bill that would provide a path to citizenship for students and soldiers brought to the country illegally as children.

Started two weeks ago by a dozen students at the University of Texas at San Antonio, the hunger strike spread this week to UT campuses in Austin, Dallas, Arlington, Brownsville and Edinburg, as well as the University of North Texas in Denton, according to members of DREAM Act NOW!, the UTSA student group that organized the strike.

The group is part of a national coalition called United We DREAM, which brings together activists in each state. Universities in Florida and Indiana have also begun striking in solidarity, members said.

“Now that they have seen we are still going and not planning to stop, some have joined us,” said Claudia Sanchez, one of the UTSA strikers. Sanchez, 29, is a U.S. citizen, but many of her fellow strikers are in the country illegally.

Hutchison met with a DREAM Act activist in Washington last week in hopes the meeting would end the hunger strike, according to a spokeswoman. Sanchez said San Antonio strikers want a face-to-face meeting with Hutchison when she comes home to Texas for the holidays.

“We want to start talking about the specifics of the DREAM Act so she can tell us exactly what she doesn't agree with,” Sanchez said. “We are giving her until Thanksgiving. If not, we are going to start stepping up our campaign. We will put more pressure on her.”
In a statement issued Tuesday, Hutchison said she would not support the current bill because it “goes far beyond the intended group of children who grew up in the U.S. and attended primary and secondary schools here.”

Hutchison is concerned for the safety and welfare of the students, but has already met with people from many parts of Texas on the issue and does not plan change her position, the statement said.

Sanchez said she hoped Congress would vote on the bill next week during the lame-duck session.

The act would provide a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants brought to the country before the age of 16. To be eligible, the immigrants must have no criminal record and either attend college or serve in the military for two years. It would likely benefit about 825,000 immigrants, the vast majority under the age of 35, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

Critics have called it an unfair amnesty.

Catholic News Service: Hunger strike, arrests, other lobbying aim to push DREAM Act forward
November 19, 2010
By Patricia Zapor

Taking a page from civil rights protesters of another era, eight young adults in San Antonio are waging a hunger strike to try to pressure Congress to pass the DREAM Act, a law they say is their only real shot at having a successful future in the United States, the only country they know as home.

Trying to rally support for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act was also why Noemi Degante got arrested Nov. 17, charged with unlawful conduct and demonstrating in a building in the Capitol complex after failing in a daylong wait to meet with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and then staging a sit-in outside his office.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi have both said they would bring the measure to a vote as a stand-alone bill before the 111th Congress adjourns in December, leading to a flurry of activity across the country to round up votes in Congress.

The bill has long enjoyed bipartisan support in both houses of Congress, but it has repeatedly gotten hung up in procedural maneuvers or been defeated along with legislation to which it was attached. The latest version, introduced by Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., Nov. 18, had not yet been posted to the Library of Congress website as of Nov. 19.
In general, the legislation would give young adults who lack legal residency the chance to become legal residents and eventually citizens if they go to college or join the military. It would apply to people who were brought to the United States by their parents as minors.

In a teleconference with reporters Nov. 18, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said he and President Barack Obama have been and will continue to make calls to members of Congress pushing for their support of the bill, which Obama has promised to sign.

"This one's personal for me," Duncan said, because of his experience with the challenges facing immigrant students while he was CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, the advocacy organization which hosted a Nov. 18 news conference about the DREAM Act, said much of the current lobbying effort for the bill is directed at 11 Republican senators who have previously voted for versions of the DREAM Act. Some of those, have reversed their position, such as Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, who voted for it in 2003 but now says he wants enforcement at the border to come before the DREAM Act or any other immigration legislation.

A report by UCLA's North American Integration and Development Center estimates that up to 2 million people might be eligible to legalize their status under the DREAM Act, although less than 40 percent, or about 825,000, might ultimately be likely to take advantage of it because of academic requirements.

Supporters of the legislation estimate that about 65,000 such young people a year graduate from high school and are stymied in their ability to afford college or to work legally because they lack legal residency. Several states bar students without legal immigration status from obtaining in-state tuition or government-funded scholarships. Lacking Social Security numbers, such young people also are barred from working.

Los Angeles Coadjutor Archbishop Jose H. Gomez joined a chorus of advocates for the DREAM Act at the news conference, asking members of Congress "to remember how we are all immigrants or descendants of immigrants and ... to put aside politics in this instance and to vote on the merits of the proposal." He called the bill "the right thing to do."

Also speaking at the news conference, Ramiro Luna, who would be covered by the DREAM Act, said he has joined the eight Texas hunger strikers, marking his ninth day without food.

"This is our home," said the resident of Texas, who came to the United States from Mexico at age 7. "I am an American." He added that though he may be physically weak from his fast, he is highly motivated to advocate for the bill, which could mean the difference in whether he can legally work once he finishes his degree in bilingual education at Texas Tech University.

Degante and other young adults who were arrested outside McCain's office also were at the news conference. McCain also previously has voted for the DREAM Act.
Degante told Catholic News Service she and five other would-be beneficiaries of the DREAM Act waited all day in McCain's office, only to be rebuffed when he finally was sighted. Degante said the group followed McCain to an elevator and told him they wanted the chance to serve the country like he did. "Good, go serve," he told them.

She said they returned to the office to wait again. She and three others were arrested when the office closed and they refused to leave the hallway outside. The charges against them are misdemeanors.

A native of Mexico, Degante, 27, came to the United States at age 5. She holds a bachelor's degree in liberal studies, made possible because California, where she lives, does not require proof of legal U.S. residency for long-term residents to get in-state tuition.

The California Supreme Court on Nov. 15 upheld that policy.

**San Antonio Express-News: Students Stage DREAM Act Hunger Strike**

By Melissa Ludwig

November 11, 2010


A dozen students at the University of Texas at San Antonio, some of them in the country illegally, declared a hunger strike Wednesday to urge passage of a federal law that would give students a path to citizenship.

Called the DREAM Act, the law addresses immigrants who were brought to the country as children and go on to earn a college degree or serve in the military. The law suffered a recent defeat in Congress, but Democratic U.S. Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada has vowed to bring it to a vote during the lame-duck session.

Organized by a UTSA student group called DREAM Act NOW!, the strikers gathered Wednesday at the university's Sombrilla Plaza and vowed to fast until Republican U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison throws her support behind the bill. Other events planned for the week include a Veterans Day rally and a visit to Hutchison's San Antonio office on Monday.

“She's our last hope,” said Pamela Resendiz, a 22-year-old political science major at UTSA. “We know she has a good head on her shoulders, and we need her to stand up for us.”

Hutchison has backed the DREAM Act in the past but voted against a more recent version attached to a defense bill. She does not support the current version, according to a statement that urged UTSA students to “find safer ways to voice their opinions.”
“The Senator appreciates the passion of these young people for their cause, but she has been clear that she does not support the current DREAM Act legislation,” the statement said. “The Senator had previously proposed a way for students, who have gotten their primary and secondary education in the United States and want to go to college here, to get a temporary visa. She believes the current legislation goes far beyond the intended group of children who have grown up in America.”

The DREAM Act — or Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act — would provide a conditional path to citizenship for immigrants who entered the county before the age of 16, have been here five years, who stayed out of trouble and have completed two years of college or served in the military.

Many pay for college out of pocket because they are not eligible for financial aid. It's estimated that 2 million immigrants could benefit from the law, first introduced in 2001.

“It's been 10 years and we are still here struggling and fighting,” said Claudia Sanchez, 29, a UTSA student who is a citizen. “We are tired that our voices have not been heard.”

UTSA's rally is part of a national action week for supporters. Students are staging hunger strikes, rallies, marches and candlelight vigils at universities across Texas, including the University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, Lamar University and Texas A&M-Kingsville.

Controversial immigration bills filed this week in the Texas Legislature, including a copycat of the Arizona law, have become a rallying cry for the so-called DREAMers.

“We know our Latino community is going to be under attack,” Resendiz said.

Resendiz's parents brought her to the U.S. from Mexico City when she was 9. She is facing deportation after being arrested in Austin, accused of blocking a road during the South by Southwest music and film conference.

The ticket was dismissed, but Resendiz sat in the Travis County jail for two days before being moved to the T. Don Hutto immigration detention center in Taylor, where she spent four days.

“I had no rights,” Resendiz said. “There was a sense of being discredited as a human being.”

Activism around the DREAM Act has escalated in the past two years, with more undocumented students rallying in Washington, D.C., and risking deportation by speaking publicly.

Benita Veliz, a graduate of St. Mary's University and a national poster child for the movement, is facing deportation after a traffic stop in 2009.

“There has been an ideological shift,” Veliz said of the movement. “It used to be hush-hush — just be normal and go to class. Now it's like, let's come out and be done with it. Life without papers is not life anyway. The American dream is worth risking everything.”
Tyler Norris, chairman of Young Conservatives of Texas at UT Austin, said the DREAM Act may encourage immigrants to come to the country illegally, and it should not be passed until the borders are secured.

“It makes sense to close the border and then look at expanding the ways to citizenship, or cutting the red tape to become a citizen,” Norris said.

**Huffington Post: A Q&A With Deported Student Saad Nabeel: ICE Abuses, Strip Searching, and Cell Confinement**

By Saad Nabeel

October 4, 2010

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/saad-nabeel/saad-nabeel-was-abused-by_b_742734.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/saad-nabeel/saad-nabeel-was-abused-by_b_742734.html)

1. Alright Saad, can you give us a summary of who you've been working with these past few months?

Well for the past several months I've been working with a man named Mr. Ralph Isenberg who's based in Dallas, Texas. He's not an attorney but the way he handles immigration matters is definitely of the best that I've ever seen. Now Mr. Isenberg and I communicate everyday and it's pretty common that we talk for several hours at a time. He insists that I fully understand what's happened to me and my family so that I can respond to all the nasty and misinformed comments out there that are directed towards me and my family.

2. Now what do you want to say to the people who direct these nasty comments at you and your family?

To clarify to everyone: my mother, my father, and I were never illegal immigrants. We came to the United States in 1994 on visitor visas when I was three years old. My father feared returning to Bangladesh because he was involved in politics there, so he filed for political asylum. It was only when his asylum was denied, that we became out of status. Now being out of status is not the same thing as being an illegal immigrant, there's a clear distinction there. We always paid taxes, we always abided by the law, and we always lived just as normal citizens would have lived. Our legal counsel at the time told us to stay in America at all possible costs until our I-130 petition my uncle filed for my father had been approved. In the mean time, my father never lied about his name, nor did he forge any document while we waited for the petition to be approved.

3. And what about your father working with ICE?

When I was seventeen, my father was briefly detained. When he was released, he was put on a supervision order that required him to report to ICE every month. He was working with the ICE office in Dallas and they were trying to help us out. They extended our time to stay in the United
States so that I could finish high school and they wanted to extend our time again so that we could receive our green cards that had already been approved. An ICE Supervisor named James Smith agreed to extend time for my dad. My dad's case officer was Phillip Martinez.

4. So ICE was helping you along to get your green cards, but what went wrong?

In November 2009 my father called ICE to report to them, just like he did every month, but this time he was assigned to a man named Officer Todd Lyon. Now Officer Lyon was bitter, rude, and pretty racist. He knew we had approved green cards because our other ICE officer had marked them on our files, but he and Officer Martinez chose to ignore the fact that we were supposed to get an extension. And instead Officer Martinez called my father and told him to stay where he was because "he did not have time to mess with him" and that we was sending Officer Lyon to detain him from our home. Now my father did nothing wrong, he could have fled from our home, he could have gone somewhere else, but he stayed there because he knew he didn't want to break the law.

5. Now all the articles we've seen so far have mentioned you and your mother going to Canada, what can you tell us about that?

Now before any of this happened, my father was able to get ICE's permission to seek refugee status in Canada. He knew he had to have a backup plan if he was unable to remain in the United States and ICE knew it was dangerous for us to go to Bangladesh, so they granted him permission to go to Canada. Officer Todd Lyon completely ignored anything that was promised to my father and insisted on detaining him and taking him to jail, even when his supervision order said that the family could stay in the United States.

6. OK so your father was detained and this is what caused you to and your mother to have to go to Canada alone?

Yeah this is exactly what forced my mother and me to go to Canada ourselves. We did exactly what ICE instructed us to do and we left voluntarily. We were not deported. My mother and I just assumed that my father would be joining us soon. And at the time, things were moving so quickly that we never even contemplated what would happen if Canada rejected us. We really needed my father at the time because he was always the one to handle immigration matters. When my mother and I were being interviewed, we didn't even really know how to answer the questions and so we had no idea what would happen once we got rejected.

7. What happened after the rejection from entering Canada?
Well for lack of a better statement, I was now at the mercy of ICE. Mr. Isenberg likes to refer to ICE as a "rogue police force that makes their own rules up as they go along." I can certainly testify to that. ICE failed to recognize that I was still a minor under immigration law which clearly states that adulthood occurs at the age of 21.

8. So ICE broke the law?

Yeah, ICE should have recognized that my status as "an accompanied minor" ended the second I was separated from my parents. ICE had a legal obligation to treat me as "an unaccompanied minor". An unaccompanied minor is handled by the US Department of Health and Human Services, not ICE. They had no right to detain me and the law is very clear on this. Unaccompanied minors have rights, and one of these rights is legal assistance. I asked for legal assistance and instead, ICE threatened me and refused.

9. What other things did you ask ICE about?

I asked ICE multiple times to be able to talk to my mother and father but all of my requests were denied. I told ICE I wanted to file for political asylum because they were about to ship me off to a place where I have no memory of, to a place where I don't even know the language, to a country where I don't even know a single person living there. I expressed this fear to ICE pretty clearly.

10. What did ICE say to this?

Every person who's subject to deportation has the right to file for political asylum. I was not given that right. Instead, ICE told me "Because we are deporting your father, we are going to deport you and your mother as well." Now see, that's not how the system works at all. ICE lied to me and I know that if they had given me over to the US Department of Health and Human Services as required by law, that my case would have been handled a lot differently.

ICE knows that every attempt is made to reunite "unaccompanied minors" with family and ICE knew I had an uncle in New York City that was more than willing to take care of me. But instead, they felt the need to throw me in a cell with sixty adult males; many of these males were hardened criminals. Now the threat of being abused by one or more of these people was very real.

Seldom did a day go by that someone didn't make an inappropriate comment directed at me. Being referred to as "fresh meat" wasn't something I was prepared to deal with. I simply stopped existing for 42 days and hid in my bunk for days on end.
I was handcuffed and strip searched.

One second I am a student studying electrical engineering and the next second I am treated like a criminal. I did nothing wrong. **No human deserves to be treated the way I was treated, especially in the United States of America.**

**Fort Worth Star Telegram: Politics interrupts a dream**  
August 19, 2010  

Most parents will do anything for their children. And when mom and dad are in the United States illegally, this includes volunteering to spend the rest of your lives in the shadows if it means your kid can step into the light.

On a recent trip to Phoenix, I sat down for dinner with a pair of illegal immigrants — a married couple who overstayed their visas about 15 years ago and have been trying, with the help of an attorney, to get right with the law ever since. They’re not the only ones who lack legal status; they have a child, born in Mexico, who is now a teenager with an uncertain future. Mom and dad agree that they’d be willing to forgo their chance at legal status if, at least, something could be done for their child.

That something is the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM, sponsored by Sens. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Richard Lugar, R-Ind. The bill is aimed at young people in the country illegally, offering them “conditional permanent residency” if they came before they were 16 and if they attend college or serve in the military. Once they graduate or complete their enlistment, they would get permanent legal residency with a chance to apply for U.S. citizenship. Anyone who didn’t enroll in college or join the military would be subject to deportation.

As far as my dinner companions are concerned, the legislation is a gift from above.

“We’d be willing to wait 100 years for the chance to stay here legally,” the father said, “if our child could have that opportunity right now through the DREAM Act.”

This bill is a fantastic idea. It identifies young people who want to make a contribution and separates them from those who don’t. And it allows the United States to keep precisely the kind of individuals that other countries would love to have. The legislation represents good policy and good sense. So, naturally, it’s having trouble making it through Congress.

Immigration-reform liberals are split. In one camp are those who think Congress should pass the DREAM Act to solve a small part of the immigration problem. In the other are those who want to stay focused on the larger and more elusive cause of comprehensive immigration reform.
Part of it has to do with the numbers. It is estimated that the DREAM Act could impact as many as 700,000 people; those who are pushing for comprehensive immigration reform have their eye on changing the status of more than 10 million.

Some say it’s time to settle for the DREAM Act as a “down payment” on immigration reform.

Adding to all this, there’s also drama on Capitol Hill. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is in a tough battle for re-election. Should he lose, it would set off a gladiator match to succeed him between the second-ranking Democrat (Durbin, who is sponsoring the DREAM Act) and the third-ranking Democrat (Sen. Charles Schumer of New York, who is supposedly going to propose — one of these days — a comprehensive bill).

The Hill newspaper reported a few months ago that Durbin is “soft-pedaling” the DREAM Act so as not to undercut Schumer’s reform effort. He’s doing this even though his supporters think it’s every senator for himself now and that No. 2 shouldn’t be doing anything to help No. 3 — especially since, many immigration advocates acknowledge, it’s Durbin’s bill that stands the better chance of passing.

Political junkies love this stuff, but most people couldn’t care less about the politics holding back the DREAM Act.

They include those parents in Phoenix who just want a safe haven for their child and thought they had seen the last of this kind of political dysfunction when they left Mexico.

They also include the several hundred undocumented high school and college students who recently marched on Washington — in caps and gowns — to rally support for the bill. Some of them occupied senators’ offices and got arrested, risking deportation. By their actions, these students showed more courage and character in confronting this issue than our lawmakers have shown in ducking it.

And there’s the best argument for passing the DREAM Act — so that deserving young people get the chance to realize their full potential. With so much of politics driven by the self-interest of politicians, we’re fresh out of leaders in this country. So we had better start growing a new crop.

**Washington Post: Editorial--Dream Act could save immigrant students from deportation**

*August 12, 2010*


IN MANY WAYS, Eric Balderas's story is the typical American dream. He came to the United States with his parents at age 4. He was the valedictorian of Highlands High School in San
Antonio and was admitted to Harvard's class of 2013. There, he studies molecular and cellular biology and is about to begin his sophomore year. He dreams of helping to find a cure for cancer.

But there is one problem: He is not in the country legally. On June 7, boarding an airplane back to Boston after visiting his mother in San Antonio, he was arrested and threatened with deportation. There was an outcry--on Facebook, in newspapers, even from members of Congress. Finally, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it would not pursue his deportation, allowing him to remain in the country to continue his studies.

Eric is only one of a number of students whose deportations the Obama administration has declined to pursue, sensibly focusing its efforts on deporting those undocumented immigrants who have committed crimes. But this policy is not official -- and the administration has said it won't be without the passage of immigration reform. Instead, the Department of Homeland Security tackles student deportations case by case, leaving it vulnerable to criticism for selectively enforcing the law and consuming time and resources better spent expelling criminals. But even an official moratorium on student deportations would only serve to keep students in the country, not offer them a path to citizenship.

Rather than allowing this state of limbo for students to continue, Congress should pass the Dream Act.

Sens. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) and Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) conceived the Dream Act to offer a path to citizenship for thousands of promising young people who came to the country illegally when they were children. Some of these students do not even know they are undocumented until they try to apply for driver's licenses or scholarships. Rather than deporting them to countries many of them barely remember, the Dream Act would help lead to naturalization for youths who came to the United States before age 15, earned GEDs or high school degrees and completed two years in college or in the armed forces. The measure is carefully aimed, targeting only young people with clean records who have resided in the country continuously for at least five years. Such students demonstrate the hope and promise of a better life that America has always held out to those who seek its shores. But without the Dream Act, they remain vulnerable to deportation.

Comprehensive immigration reform is necessary to repair the broken immigration system that strands thousands of deserving would-be immigrants on endless waiting lists. But it may not be achieved before the end of the congressional session. This is no excuse not to pass a sensible, narrowly tailored measure that could have a significant, positive impact.

**Fort Worth Star Telegram: Deporting students isn't the best answer to immigration problems**

August 10, 2010


If dealing with the thousands of youths in the U.S. illegally were a midterm exam, there's hardly an answer the Obama administration could give that would be seen universally as the right one.
If Immigration and Customs and Enforcement follows a strategy of "deport them all," the agency runs into situations such as former University of Texas at Arlington student Saad Nabeel's. He came to the United States as a preschooler and graduated from high school in Frisco, but he and his family were deported to Bangladesh. Nabeel and his friends are using Facebook and YouTube to blast the administration and try to facilitate his return here.

If ICE picks "let them stay" and instead spends its finite resources on removing criminals, there's a buzz saw of criticism for not shipping out every person who is in the country illegally. And the complaints churn despite figures showing that more noncitizens are being deported than ever before.

Policing illegal immigration is a complicated, multifaceted operation, and priorities have to be set on how best to use funds and manpower.

Despite public misperception that immigration laws aren't being enforced, removal of illegal aliens has increased each year since 2005, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a nonpartisan project at Syracuse University.

In fiscal 2005, ICE removed 195,000 people, and that grew to 389,834 in fiscal 2009, the clearinghouse reported on Aug. 2. The number was more than 279,000 for the first nine months of fiscal 2010 (through June).

The clearinghouse found that, from 2005 through 2009, the increases resulted largely from catching people who entered the country illegally or overstayed visas.

But, during the last part of 2009, ICE appeared to switch its enforcement strategy to target "individuals who had committed crimes while in this country," the clearinghouse reported. That's resulted in a record number of criminal alien deportations. ICE and the border patrol are also referring more cases for criminal prosecution.

Those efforts haven't appeased administration critics upset about a New York Times report that officials aren't deporting students living in the U.S. illegally after being brought in as children.

Those students personify a conundrum that persists because immigration reform efforts have failed.

By and large for these students, the U.S. is the only home they know. They've spent their lives pursuing the American dream: staying in school, staying out of trouble, preparing for the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship -- but it's a citizenship they don't have and can't acquire. There are about 700,000 of them.

In April, Democratic Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois and Republican Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, sponsors of the DREAM Act, asked the Homeland Security Department to defer student deportations while they try to move their bill forward. It would create a mechanism for students who came to the U.S. before age 16 and have spent five years here to move toward legal status.
Officials didn't declare a moratorium but appear to have put one into practice.

Some Republicans have called it selective enforcement and legislating from the White House.

No president should get to cherry-pick laws in defiance of Congress. But that's not what this looks like. Immigration agencies indeed are enforcing the law against illegal aliens who pose a danger to communities. Congress is trying to find a rational solution to the problem of students whose only offense is that they were brought here illegally.

Focusing limited border enforcement resources where they can be most effective is good practice and smart policy -- and the best answer available until Congress does the hard work of improving the immigration system.

---

**Janet Reyes:** Received a Masters from the University of Houston. “Janet Reyes graduated magna cum laude from the University of Houston in May with a master’s degree in social work. And then, the 26-year-old said, her life essentially came to a standstill. Like tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, Reyes found that her job prospects after graduation are nonexistent without legal status. ‘We’ve got a diploma in our hands, but we are unable to use it,’ said Reyes, whose parents brought her to the U.S. from Mexico illegally when she was 8 years old. Reyes has pinned her hopes on the DREAM Act, a bill that would provide a path to citizenship for children brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents before age 16.” [Houston Chronicle, 6/24/09]

**Edith Paulin:** Graduated from the University of Texas and was the first person in her family to earn a college diploma. “A little over a year ago, Edith Paulin stood amid thousands of soon-to-be college graduates on the University of Texas campus, reveling in the pride of being the first in her family to earn a college diploma. In the stands, she spotted her mother and father, who had brought her to the U.S. from Mexico when she was 9 years old… Edith was walking away with a college diploma, but she still is missing another important piece of paper - a Social Security card. Without legal status, she knew her prospects for a job, her plans for the future, were essentially grinding to a halt.” [Houston Chronicle, 5/30/10]

---

**Story: Adan**

Coming from a low-income Mexican-American family, I have faced many hardships on my path to reaching all my goals and more are yet to come. However, through my dedication hard work and perhaps sometimes ridiculously stubborn determination I have been able to overcome most
of them. I was brought to the United States when I was eight years old and entered the fifth grade. Since then I had to overcome a huge obstacle: learn a completely new language without getting behind in any other subject. Surprisingly even to myself, I was fluent enough to carry on conversations by the end of the academic year. In fact, although I wasn’t speaking completely perfect English, I was still being chosen for student of the month among other awards just months from arriving.

I had always excelled in school and coming to a new country and having to learn a new language was not going to change that, it just made me try that much harder. By the end of sixth grade, I was completely fluent and had perhaps fewer grammar and spelling errors than other kids who had been here their entire life. At the beginning of high school, however, I decided that being a regular student like most everyone else was not enough challenge for me, which made me enroll in AP classes not knowing exactly what I was getting into. The AP classes alone were several steps higher than regular classes, but the biggest challenge was breaking the barriers and stereotypes that were set for Mexican-American students and prove to everyone, teachers included, but especially myself that I was capable of being a straight A student in AP classes. With hard work I made my way into the top 10 percent of my graduating class.

As senior year in high school quickly approached, I started looking into colleges and universities although I had no encouragement from other people. In fact, I was always told that I would not be able to attend higher education because of my family’s low income, but most importantly because I was not born here and didn’t have a social security number. However, I would not let anyone tell me what I would be able wouldn’t be able to accomplish, so I did my own research and luckily found out about Senate Bill 1528. SB 1528 allowed me into A&M, where I would fulfill my dream of being in the Fightin’ Texas Aggie Band. I had gone through and overcome many obstacles on my way to reaching my goal of attending A&M and learned so much from them that I wanted the challenges to keep coming, which is one of the main reasons I joined the Corps of Cadets (a military organization) and the Aggie Band. I truly believe that hardships and setbacks often lead to exponential personal growth which is why it is the main learning and training method of the Corps.

There is one obstacle, however, that I wish I didn’t have and have yet to overcome—not having a Social Security Number or legal residence and citizenship. This is a huge hindrance that has set me back a great deal throughout my life because it affects just about every part of life. Many times I have been upset at the fact that, because I was brought here as a young child, I consider myself an American and respect and honor the American Flag and everything it stands for. Then I look around and so many people lack that pride of being an American because they just take it for granted. I try to be the best citizen and person I can yet I cannot enjoy some of the freedoms and liberties my peers do—freedoms so necessary for everyday life such as being able to legally drive. Not having a Social Security Number not only did it make it harder for me to get to college, it also keeps me from being eligible for Federal financial aid, making it even harder for me to stay in college.

The most frustrating thing about this obstacle is that I cannot do anything to overcome it. The process of receiving legal residence is a long tedious process that takes about ten years if there
are no problems with the application. My family and I have waited for eight years; however, it is not for certain that once the ten years have passed that we will get our legal residence.

This burden that has been with me and my family since my childhood years, setting me back constantly, could potentially keep me from getting a job upon graduation. This is in fact one of the biggest fears I have always had. Although I would be an Aggie Graduate with a degree, this one obstacle that is to no fault of my own and completely out of my power could potentially make all my hard work, all the obstacles I have overcome, all the goals I have reached, meaningless and crush every dream I ever had including the American dream of climbing to the top through hard work, by forcing me to settle for a minimum-wage, dead-end job. As I have demonstrated, most obstacles can be overcome through hard work, which makes you a better person. I am not afraid to face challenges because I know that dedication will get me through any obstacle and make me appreciate reaching my goal that much more. I have learned to not take anything for granted and work towards all your goals because I truly believe that anyone can do anything they set their mind to.

[Source: Change.org]

Story: Benita Veliz

My parents brought me to the US when I was 8 years old on a tourist visa, form Mexico. The visa expired after one week but we remained in the country. We have lived in San Antonio, TX since. I am 23 years old. My grandmother is an American citizen. I’ve never been married. I don’t have any children. I went straight from high school to college and then to work. The only family I have left in Mexico is on my mother’s side and I have only seen them once or twice in my life, as a young child.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

Story: Gloria

I was brought to the States by my aunt when I was 15. My parents got divorced when I was 3, and since then my grandma had been taking care of me. She was getting older and older each day, and if I were to continue through high school in Taiwan, she would not have been able to pay for my tuition.

To ease up grandma’s financial burden, aunt brought me in with a visitor’s visa, hoping that once I get in, they would be able to adopt me and my status would be changed. Unfortunately, in order for them to adopt me, they would need my dad to give up custody, but he was nowhere to be found (he was always a drifter). Next thing you know, I turned 16 and I was no longer eligible for adoption.

I, however, was completely unaware of all that happened around me, as I was busy adapting to the new culture (also because typical Chinese parents don’t usually discuss “grown-up matters”
with their kids). School was not easy for me, as English was not my primary language. I was made fun of at school, because of my “FOB”ish (“Fresh-Off-the-Boat”) accent, and I could barely understand my teachers.

But growing up in a divorced family, I was much more determined compared to other kids. I would not have given up so easily. Every night, I stayed and studied until 2 AM (if not later). An average American kid might spend an hour to finish her history homework, but I had to spend three hours, because I needed to look up every other word in the passage.

Whenever there was a presentation, I would spend hours practicing my speech in front of the mirror, correcting every single word that I was pronouncing wrong, just so nobody could make fun of my accent.

By junior year, I was able to speak English almost flawlessly (I did grow up in Texas, so I do speak it with a little southern accent…).

Finally, I was able to graduate high school with a 3.8 GPA, and I was engaged in National Honors Society, Student Congress, and many other extracurricular activities. I worked so hard, and all I ever wanted, was to get into a good college, so I could make my grandma proud.Â I went to U.S. News, and printed out all the information for the top schools. I wanted to be a doctor, I wanted to study interior design, I was interested in psychology, I even wanted to become a professor. Finally I decided that I wanted to be in the medical field, so I requested applications from schools such as Johns Hopkins, Standford, UPenn, Duke, …etc. When I was filling out my application forms, I came across a new vocabulary called “social security number”. And that nine-digit number shattered my dream. I couldn’t get into any of those schools, neither could I ask for financial aid. My aunt worked for a factory, there was no way she could pay for my tuition without financial aids.

But I promised grandma I would get a college degree… I would never disappoint her. I started looking through every single application that I had collected, and finally I saw that the Texas Common Application was the only form that did not ask me for my social security number. I decided to give it a try, and I was lucky to get into a local school. Unfortunately, the school was newly developed, it did not have a medical school, nor did it offer interior design, psychology, or education degrees. I had to choose between Computer Science or Business-related degrees. I chose Accounting during my second year of college, and like that old saying, “make do with what you got”, I thought to myself, “if I work hard enough, maybe I will be able to find a company that is willing to sponsor me.”

I was able to obtain my bachelor and masters degree in five years, with a 3.9 GPA, while I juggled officer positions in Accounting Honors Society and several other organizations. As accounting students, we had countless internship opportunities to work at one of the firms. Every time when there was a chance, I would stand in front of the sign-up sheet, but I never gathered up enough courage to put down my name. How do I tell people that I need sponsorship? What if they ask me for my social security number? Would I be deported? I could not risk the chances of not being able to graduate.
Finally during my last year of college, I took a class called Internal Audit. It was a very tough class, but the professor gave us a chance to work on actual projects with the firms (without having to fill out the papers). I seized the chance, went through with the interview, and I became the student lead for the biggest project. To other students, that was probably an irrelevant project, they just needed that project to pass the class. But to me, that was the first time I ever got a chance to “work” in the corporate setting. I was wearing my business suit, I was an internal auditor, I was doing what most people hated doing – working, but it was my Dream come true.

In the end, I won the award for “Best Student Lead” and our group won the “Best Team” award. The professor urged me to sign up for the interview to work for Deloitte, as it was the Dream company for most internal auditors, including myself, and I could have easily gotten the job offer, given my performance throughout the year. But I had to turn down the offer…because I could not legally work in the States, and no company would be able to sponsor me. I “came out” to my professor, hoping that through his network, he would be able to find someone to help me. Once again, my Dream was shattered, even after all these hard-working years, I was denied the right to work.

I cannot help but envy my friends, the ones who did not even have to try hard, and they are already in a position that I wanted to be in. They can drive, they can work, they can go on business trips, they can pay for mortgage, they can drop deposit slips through their bank’s drive-thru, they can wear their business suits, and make presentations in front of all these people…. These may seem like small things in life, but to me, it’s like a dream that will never come true.

Right now I am working as a waitress at a Chinese buffet. Every once in a while I would come across a customer asking me, “wow your English is perfect, were you born here?” I would smile and shake my head.

I may talk like a Texan, but will I ever enjoy the rights as one?

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Kay**

This battle is not simply over just a piece of paper, but the things that piece of paper represents.

You see, without that piece of paper, living life is simply hard to do. You are suddenly not 100% human, as if humanity is something that can be rationed. Suddenly, your voice is harder to hear, as if expression is something to be looked down on. Your face is ripped of its defining features, as if your identity is something to be erased and forgotten. Slowly but surely, faced with rejection day by day, pieces of your being are torn away, until nothing is left but your body, now an empty shell.
Tell me how do you love when love has been denied to you? How do you live when your fate rests in someone else's hands? How do you laugh when your voice has been silenced? How do you hope when your future seems bleak at best? How do you jump, shout, play, or dance? How do you be when your very being is on trial?

This is about more than just a piece of paper. This is about the sanctity of life. This is about human beings - young, eager, promising human beings asking for nothing more than control of their lives back. This battle knows no color, no race, no nationality. It is life we ask for, and that is all.

All for an insignificant piece of paper. What a shame.

I believe these words still ring true almost a year after I wrote them. I am an undocumented college student. I came legally on a visa to the U.S. when I was six years old from the Republic of Nigeria. But wait, I know what you're thinking: She's not Hispanic! No, I'm not, I was born in Nigeria, and contrary to popular belief, the face of the undocumented is more United Nations than Latin American.

I don't say "my home country" or "my native country," as those are titles I would give to the U.S. Nigeria is the place that I happened to be born in; other than that, I don't feel a part of the history or culture of that country. I consider myself to be 100% American, in every way except birth. On the same note, there are people who, even though they were born in the United States, do not consider themselves American. We do not choose where we are born, so why be punished for such a mundane matter as location?

As for my educational background, I speak English perfectly well. I started in the U.S. in a "gifted & talented" program in the second grade. I graduated in the top 1 percent of my high school class 2 years ago, 9th out of a class of 1,000. I'm currently a sophomore in college, and am majoring in math and economics, with a minor in political science. My GPA is currently 3.7. I had been fed the message that with my good grades and hard work, I'd be able to get into the best schools with enough scholarship money to pay for everything. I believed in those promises, but when it came time for me to reap my reward, I found there was none. I see kids around me who could care less about school that are receiving grants and scholarships left and right. They drive new cars and wear nice clothes because they don't have to worry about how to pay for school. They get internships to gain work experience that I can't apply for. They have the option of working on campus, or working part-time for a little extra beer money, but I don't have that flexibility. My life is consumed with school, work, and commuting, so I don't have time to enjoy the college experience. I can't join a sorority or play sports or join organizations and gain leadership experience because my life is filled with much greater responsibilities. I'm so young, yet I feel much older; I feel I've been robbed of an adolescence I'll never be able to get back. It's one thing to take away my right to call the U.S. home, but it's entirely different to rob me of an education that I've worked so hard for, not to mention contributed my own taxes to, therefore disabling me from succeeding anywhere else in the world I go without a college degree.

As of now, the passage of the Dream Act is my only realistic hope. My story differs from a lot of other DREAMies in a few ways. The biggest dividing factor, and the most unfortunate one, is
that my family, myself included, is currently in removal proceedings. My life these days is consumed with thoughts of being deported, as it is now a very sickening reality. I feel stuck in neutral: there's no means to look forward and no use looking back. My goal is to persuade you that, whatever your views are on immigration, the DREAM Act is VITAL. Look past the big, controversial issue that is immigration and see the true issue at hand: human beings punished on a daily basis for a decision they did not make for themselves. How is that even morally sound, or constitutional? If a man robbed a bank, got caught, and happened to be so great a role model that he brought his young son along, would the kid be sent to jail also? That is exactly the case here - What did I, as my own person, do wrong? Exactly what crime, on the record books, did I commit? I’d love to know.

There really is no way for me to deal with being treated as a lesser being. It makes it so much harder to get up and face the world everyday, but you do it simply because you have no choice, and because maybe one day, things will be better. I definitely self-identify as a DREAMer, even though I might not be able to take advantage of it once, not if, it passes. I identify as American, not African-American, or Nigerian-American, but simply American. I consider myself agnostic at the moment because it's been hard to believe in the greater good and have faith when I'm being treated as if I'm less than human. I identify as a female, and aspire to be a strong, driven, independent female one day. I identify as a student, but not completely sometimes. I identify as a caretaker for my sister. Most importantly, I identify as a voice that has been silenced, as a forgotten victim of a very flawed system.

My greatest fear, the one that consumes my thoughts incessantly, is that I'll be deported. I fear for my future, or rather my lack of a future. I fear that I'll always be the story of unrealized potential. I fear I'll be another lost statistic. My dreams don't involve cars or money, only the freedom to live.

[Source: Change.org]

**Story: Mike**

My name is Mike. I was born in London, England, and was brought to the U.S. when I was 2 years old. I didn’t find out I was undocumented until I was 17 years old. I suppose my mother didn’t want me to know till then. It was a shock, but I suppose the signs were there.

I am currently in college. I was always being dragged by my mom to do well in school until the year I applied. I didn’t really aspire to do much. Luckily I still did well while going to a science and medical focused high school that put me on a good path. The summer before I started college, I finally got serious and it showed. I guess seeing my mother have to work hard, and me not being able to work changed me. I am currently a Junior at a Texas University, and have 3.96 gpa about to get my B.Sc in Biology. I hope to apply to medical school in 2009 if the DREAM ACT can pass. I know the situation I am in is tough, but I am in a way happy that I went through it. I would have never have discovered what I was really capable of if I continued to not care about my studies; as I did before I started college. Not being able to much to do allowed me to
discover that. I have been given so much by this country, and my mother. I now want to start to give back, and I will when the DREAM is finally passed.

[Source: DREAMActivist]

**Story: Nelly**

Nelly came to the U.S. at nine years old with her parents who wanted to provide her with a better life. She went on to graduate high school with a 4.0 GPA, was elected class president, and even served as Cadet Commander of her high school’s ROTC program – all while holding a job to support her family.

“I took the military entrance exam and got very high scores. I was set to get a good job in the army,” she said, “but when it came time to submit my documentation, I couldn’t go any further.”

[Source: Let Us Serve]

**Letter: Saad Nabeel**

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Saad Nabeel and I am writing to you from Bangladesh. Prior to my arrival in this nation, I lived in the United States for 15 years. My parents brought me to America at age three. It is the only home I know. I used to attend the University of Texas at Arlington with a full scholarship in Electrical Engineering. Through no fault of my own I was forced to leave my home, friends, possessions, and most importantly, my education behind.

November 3rd 2009 is a day I will never forget. My mother called me and told me that my father had been detained by ICE and that we needed to leave immediately to Canada to seek refugee status. Being an only child, I had to take care of my mother and go with her.

My mother and I were denied entrance into Canada and sent back to the USA as if we were common criminals. I was separated from my mother and sent to a detention facility where I was forced to live with 60 men, many of whom were hardened criminals. There was no privacy and I was forced to use the facilities and showers while fully exposed. I lived in constant fear of being abused. I was without food for upwards of 14 hours a day and received little to no medical attention. When I asked for legal counsel I was threatened with criminal charges and jail time in a Federal Penitentiary. To this day I still have nightmares about being detained. Everything my parents taught me about human decency was replaced with humiliation. Mr. President I hope you are as outraged as I am hurt by this ordeal.

Bangladesh is extremely hot and humid. We have no air conditioning as the power goes out every day. These power outages can last twelve hours or more. The air is heavily polluted and I get food poisoning every week from the poor quality of food here. Raw sewage flows in open drains in front of our apartment. I see people outside with mangled bodies dying on the street.
because of the heat and starvation. I see mothers practically giving their children away because they are unable to feed them.

I do not know the language and I fear going outside because I am different from everyone else. Speaking in English is an easy way to be targeted here. We cannot afford to live in a safer area. I have not left the apartment for 8 months. It simply is too dangerous for me to leave the apartment unless my parents go with me. I cannot attend school due to the language barrier. I do not know anyone in Bangladesh.

On top of all this, my parents are both ill and have been for months. My father suffers severe asthma attacks that make him bedridden on most days. My mother has post traumatic stress and cannot accept the fact that she is not at our home in Texas.

These events transpired after we were approved to receive our Green Cards. ICE forced my family to leave knowing that Green Cards were available to us. We have been waiting for our Green Cards for 15 years now.

Mr. President, you are the most powerful man in the world, all I ask from you is to bring me home. All I ever wanted was an education so I could become an engineer. I just want to go home and go back to college. Please don't keep me exiled any longer. Please bring me home.

Sincerely,

Saad Nabeel
The last thing the United States needs is to create a permanent underclass consisting of the children of illegal immigrants, with no chance to assimilate or get ahead regardless of ability. One result might be an increase in resentment and crime. But the bigger tragedy would be that the United States would squander the talents and contributions of many bright and gifted young people.

That's why the DREAM Act, which has languished in Congress for much of a decade but which could come up for a vote in the Senate next week, ought to become law.

As with so much else in Washington, this legislation has been whip-sawed by political cross-currents. Sen. Orrin Hatch originally introduced the act in 2001. He has since withdrawn his sponsorship with little comment. There may be political reasons for this change of heart; still, it is regrettable.

The DREAM Act would allow children of illegal immigrants, who were not born on U.S. soil, to legally attend college under certain conditions. They would have to document that they arrived in this country before the age of 16, have lived here five consecutive years and that they are of good moral character. If they commit any crimes, they would become ineligible. They also must have graduated from high school and have qualified for college admission.

Once accepted under the act, these students would have six years in which to either obtain a degree from a two-year college, complete two years toward a four-year degree or serve two years in the U.S. military. If they meet these criteria, they would be eligible to apply for a permanent resident status. They would not be eligible during this time for a Pell grant, but they could obtain students loans.

The United States has much to gain from allowing such people, whose illegal status is no fault of their own, to succeed and thrive. Critics often complain about illegal immigrants supposedly draining taxpayers services. This would be an opportunity for the children of these immigrants to contribute far more to society than what may have been taken.

The DREAM Act would not encourage illegal behavior. Its rules are far too strict and require too many years of residency to act as any reasonable incentive. It would not provide preferential treatment to illegal immigrants. The students would be subject to the same tuition and admission requirements as anyone else. Individual states would have to decide whether they should pay out-of-state tuition rates at public universities.
What it would do is provide a way for children who, in many cases, are as immersed in American culture as the children of citizens, to contribute, succeed and thrive.

**Salt Lake Tribune: Utah’s undocumented students stand up for a future**

**September 7, 2010**

[http://www.allvoices.com/s/event-6702467/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5zbHRyaW1uY29tL3NsdHJpYi90b21lLzUwMjE5MTI0LTc2L3V0YWgtc3R1ZGVudHMtdW5kb2N1bWVudGVkLWNvbGxlZ2UuHRtbC5jc3A=](http://www.allvoices.com/s/event-6702467/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5zbHRyaW1uY29tL3NsdHJpYi90b21lLzUwMjE5MTI0LTc2L3V0YWgtc3R1ZGVudHMtdW5kb2N1bWVudGVkLWNvbGxlZ2UuHRtbC5jc3A=)

Sam has cleared numerous hurdles to get to her third year in the University of Utah's graphic design program. She came to the United States at age 7 with her mother and older sister. They had little money and English language skills, and no documentation. Still, she said she graduated from Highland High School in 2008, and was admitted to the U. with the help of advisers and private scholarships.

Sam, who asked that her real name not be used, is among 30 undocumented Utah students whose portraits and stories will hang on the U. campus this fall to inject faces and voices to the debate over the DREAM Act. The proposed legislation, which would create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who arrived as children, has been mired in immigration politics for nearly a decade.

The exhibit opens tonight at the College of Social Work with a reception and panel discussion.

"A lot of students were babies when their parents brought them. This is the only home we ever knew. I can't imagine moving back, it's so dangerous there and I don't know anyone there," said U. student Brizia Ceja, a panelist who left Sinaloa, Mexico, for Utah at age 13.

The United States is home to about 2.1 million undocumented immigrants who arrived as children. Under current law, many cannot legally work, go to college or obtain financial aid. Undocumented students in Utah enjoy in-state college tuition, but only if they attended Utah schools for three or more years.

Sam's U. education will be sidetracked for want of an internship. She needs professional experience in a print shop to get her degree, but without a Social Security number an internship is out of reach. Her best hope is a change in U.S. law.

"Otherwise I'm not going to graduate, and even if I graduate, I won't be able to get a job and all these years will be wasted," Sam said. "There is nothing for us in Mexico, we don't even have family. I hope one day my mother doesn't have to work for me and I can work for her. If I don't have an education the best I can get is a restaurant job that pays minimum wage."

Foes of illegal immigration offer little sympathy.
"It's foolish for them to get an education in Utah unless they are able to get a job," said Phyllis Sears of the Citizens Council on Illegal Immigration, based in St. George. "I'm opposed to passing any kind of an act that increases taxes on our citizens for noncitizens' benefit."

Immigrant advocates say Sam's story illustrates the need for the DREAM Act -- the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act -- now up for consideration on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

"They are being penalized for a decision that was not theirs," said Annie Brewer, a social worker at Salt Lake City's Horizonte Instruction and Training Center. "Their parents were trying to build a better life for them. They have tremendous potential, having survived moving to a new country and learning a new language, living in poverty and succeeding in school. They have tremendous strength of character."

Brewer's work at Horizonte brought her in contact with many high-achieving, but undocumented, students who aspired to college and productive careers. But their undocumented status halted their educational progress by rendering them ineligible for financial aid, scholarships, internships and, after graduation, jobs. These students' stories spurred her to team up with photographer Lynn Hoffman-Brouse to create the portrait exhibit.

"If the law is going to change, public opinion has to change," Brewer said. She recruited students to pose for Hoffman-Brouse, who photographed them in ways that would capture their character without revealing their identity, while Brewer interviewed them. The students' first names and stories accompany their portraits.

"They have big plans like everyone else," said Hoffman-Brouse, a former teacher at Judge Memorial High School. "A few wanted to be teachers, which they can't be. A few wanted to be police officers. One girl wants to work for the gang units to convince kids to not go that route."

Another subject in the exhibit is a Horizonte graduate, who came from Mexico to California at age 2. He can't get in-state Utah tuition because he attended school in Utah for only one year, Brewer said. With the help of a new private scholarship, he started at Salt Lake Community College this fall.

SB81, Utah's 2008 anti-illegal immigration law, shut down public scholarships to undocumented students, said Ceja, a 2010 U. graduate in speech communications and political science. She graduated before the scholarships dried up, but now hopes to enter the U.'s new graduate program offering a joint degree in law and social work.

"We really want to do better. We are not out joining gangs. We have to work harder to get scholarships and we have to work harder to go to college," Ceja said. "If I don't have documents I can't be a lawyer. I can't take the bar exam. It's not just punishing us, it's punishing our communities."
Letter from Voices for Utah Children, University of Utah Students and Community Leaders and Community Organizations

September 17, 2010

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hatch,

In 2001, you introduced the DREAM Act after becoming aware of the plight of a Utah student, Silvia Salguero. You may remember that at the age of 13, Silvia had fled her native Mexico with her father and three siblings to join her mother and other family members in Utah. In 2001, Silvia and her teachers were unaware that her background would pose a problem at college. She seemed to have everything she needed to succeed: a 3.2 grade-point average, a letter of admission to the University of Utah and $4,000 in scholarships – everything, except a Social Security number.

The DREAM Act is common sense legislation that is good for the students who qualify for it and good for our country. These young people are Americans in every way but their citizenship, and it helps no one to keep them undocumented. Passing the DREAM Act on a bipartisan basis this year would be a sign that Washington is not completely broken, and an important stepping stone to comprehensive immigration reform early next year.

A report, “Young Lives on Hold” released last year by the College Board, stated that undocumented students “are currently trapped in a legal paradox. They have the right to a primary and secondary education [under the 1982 Supreme Court ruling, Plyler v. Doe] and are generally allowed to go on to college, but their economic and social mobility is severely restricted due to their undocumented status.”

Every year that Congress fails to act, another entire class of outstanding high school students will graduate without being able to plan for the future, and some may even be removed from their homes to countries they barely know. These are kids who want to be doctors, lawyers and public servants. They have overcome tremendous obstacles—language barriers, poverty, and public anger—to earn the privilege of sitting in lecture hall. And they are fully, painfully aware what a privilege it is.

Silvia Salguero still needs your help, as do thousands of other promising students. We urge that you take advantage of any opportunity to pass this critical legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

• Karen Crompton
  Executive Director
  Voices for Utah Children
• United Way of Salt Lake
• University of Utah
• Associated Students of the University of Utah (ASUU) 2010-2011
• Tami Beck, ASUU Senate Chair 2010-2011
• Tayler Clough, ASUU President 2009-2010
• Holy Cross Ministries
• The Peace & Justice Commission of the Utah Catholic Diocese
• ACLU of Utah
• Salt Lake Community Action Program
• Utah Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
• The Somos Foundation
• Comunidades Unidas
• Dixie and Robert P. Huefner
• Joanne R. Milner, Education Partnership Coordinator, Office of the Mayor of Salt Lake City
• Dr. Theresa Martinez
• State Senator Luz Robles
• State Representative Rebecca Chavez-Houck
• David Mortensen
• Ceri Jones
• Karen Hale
• John Florez
The Honorable Howard Berman
U.S. House of Representatives
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lincoln Diaz-Balart
U.S. House of Representatives
2244 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Berman and Representative Diaz-Balart:

We are writing to express Microsoft’s strong support for your recent re-introduction of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (The "DREAM Act"). We applaud your efforts to ensure that America fully empowers – and reaps benefits from – bright students who are dedicated to education and hard work. To maintain its position of leadership in the global economy, America must be the locus of the world’s best minds. It is essential to our nation’s competitiveness and success to nurture the talent we have and to incorporate bright, hardworking students into the workforce to become the next generation of leaders in this country.

As you know, strengthening education is one of Microsoft’s highest priorities. Microsoft sees great synergy between the DREAM Act and Microsoft’s initiatives to support education and workforce training in the United States. The DREAM Act reinforces and protects America’s substantial investments in the education of its youth, and ensures that America will reap the benefits of those investments. The DREAM Act rewards those who place high value on education, on hard work, and on service to country.

Microsoft is putting its dedication to work through a host of initiatives, including:

- Through our Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills program, in the US, we’ve invested $85 million in cash, software and training support to more than 4,500 community technology since 2003;
- Through our Partners in Learning program in the US, we have invested $35 million in resources and training in K-12, touching more than 2.3 million students and teachers to actively increase access to technology and improve its use in learning; and
- Through our recently launched Elevate America program we will offer 1 million learning vouchers for no cost that provide the skills needed for people of all ages who are preparing for job opportunities in today’s changing economy.

The overarching goal of all of these initiatives is to invest in and improve the education and skill levels so that America’s workforce can be the best in the world. This goal is frustrated when America loses that investment by turning the educated away when they are poised to enter the
workforce – and when America is poised to reap the powerful benefits these bright individuals stand ready to offer.

Opening the door to the best intellectual resources our country can muster is essential to our future strength. Your introduction of the DREAM Act is an important step toward that goal, and an important sign of momentum toward the broader reforms that our country so urgently needs.

Sincerely,

Fred Humphries
Managing Director, U.S. Government Affairs

Seattle Times: Pass the Dream Act to give undocumented young people a future
January 28, 2010

UNIVERSITY of Washington President Mark Emmert has joined an impressive list of educators and corporate leaders in urging Congress to allow some students living in the United States illegally a chance to contribute to their adopted homes.

Earlier this month Emmert wrote to the state's U.S. senators confirming his support for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The act would permit these students — many brought to the United States by their parents illegally as children — to gain conditional permanent residency if they attend college or serve in the military.

They must have clean records and after six years become eligible for U.S. citizenship.

Through no fault of their own, these young people must live in the shadows, at risk of deportation. Though many achieve well academically, their futures are foreclosed by their immigration status.

But society has already invested in these young people, who are educated in our K-12 schools regardless of their immigration status. We should not waste this investment.

Since 2003, when Washington law changed to allow students without legal status to pay in-state tuition, more than 2,000 such students have enrolled at the state's colleges and universities.

Immigration reform is a divisive issue, but it makes no sense to throw away this human potential — or public investment — and that is exactly what is being done under our nation's utterly broken immigration system.
Emmert joins a growing list of endorsers, including Gov. Chris Gregoire, Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Microsoft, Macy's, American Express and many other national corporations.

The DREAM Act should be peeled away from the larger issues surrounding immigration reform and passed soon before the potential of more promising young people is squandered.
Democrats and President Obama can condemn Republicans all they want for the filibuster of a defense spending bill. But Democrats bear at least some of the blame for the failure to pass the needed bill on military spending because they tacked the Dream Act on as an amendment to the measure.

The Dream Act has nothing to do with how much money the U.S. spends on the military, so it didn't belong piggy-backed to the spending bill.

Congress will most likely approve the defense spending, but not until after the fall elections. Whether it will ever approve the Dream Act is unclear, but it should.

The Dream Act is aimed at the thousands of young people who are caught in the middle of the illegal immigration battle that has been going on for too many years. They are the children brought to this country by their parents, who are themselves illegal immigrants. But the children have grown up as Americans, and many have excelled in high school. But because their parents chose to come here illegally, the children are excluded from pursing their dreams.

The Dream Act would give these young people a path toward citizenship.

But it's not an easy one.

They would have to either graduate from college or serve two years in the military and pass a thorough background check — all this just to get in line for citizenship. They would still have to meet all of the requirements and pass the tests in order to become a U.S. citizen.

This path toward citizenship is not amnesty, as some would have us believe.

The Dream Act allows for no cutting corners; no bypassing of others in line for citizenship.

It would also give the military a recruitment tool because it opens the door for many who otherwise would have no way of ever legally becoming a citizen, so perhaps it does have a legitimate tie to a military spending measure.

But we think the bill is a sound one that can stand on its own merits.

And the Dream Act is not new, nor is it strictly a Democratic idea.
Republicans Orrin Hatch, Sam Brownback, John McCain and Lindsay Graham, were supporters of the plan early on, but have since pulled back. The Dream Act has never been considered by itself; it has usually been tacked onto another immigration bill that had problems of its own.

While the Dream Act is not the comprehensive immigration reform the country so desperately needs, it does give some very bright young people — who had no choice in how they got here — hope for a better and productive future.

**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Editorial - Dreams deferred**

September 21, 2010


Having no say in the matter, they came as children with parents who were looking to do the work others wouldn't do. That children have been caught up in the tempest that is the immigration debate is just one of the many unsavory facets of this national discussion.

Their dream is to stay in the only country many of them know. As a matter of both compassion and national self-interest, Congress should have answered those dreams with passage of the DREAM Act on Tuesday. But Senate Republicans, joined by a few Democrats, blocked the defense authorization bill to which it was attached from advancing.

So, both the DREAM Act and repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy are dead for the time being. That's just plain wrong in both instances.

In the DREAM Act's case, a coupling with a defense authorization bill might seem incongruous. Not so. The Pentagon knows that an all-volunteer force requires, well, volunteers. To be eligible, the act would have required people to finish high school, be of good moral character and serve at least two years in the military or earn a college degree before they could earn citizenship.

This is where national self-interest came in and why this amendment was a good fit. Personal advancement - which will pay dividends for the country's productivity - and service to country are part of the requirements here. That many would serve their country in the military if the DREAM Act passed is inescapable.

As a matter of compassion, it makes no sense to deny a path to legal residency or citizenship for youngsters who had no say in their arrival here. About 65,000 illegal immigrant students graduate from U.S. high schools every year.

The charge was that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat in a tight re-election contest in Nevada, added this to a defense bill to pander to the Latino vote in his state. As opposed, we guess, to a lack of desire for votes from members of Congress who have blocked this and comprehensive immigration reform generally.
One person's pandering is another's stand on principle. And there is plenty of principle to stand on here.

Congress had an opportunity to demonstrate principle, compassion and bipartisan pragmatism. Instead, we got gridlock as usual.

**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Editorial—The Dream Act: a path for dreams to come true**
March 20, 2010

Imagine your life ending immediately after high school.

Not ending as in you quit breathing, but ending as in you have no discernible future - no future because of restrictions purposely placed on who and what you can be. And this occurring simply because of who you are.

This is what confronts Juan, an illegal immigrant brought from Mexico to this country without documents at age 9 by his parents. He graduated from a Kenosha high school last year, but far from this being a time of celebration, it was the beginning of his glimpse into a bleak future.

We are not using Juan's real name, at his request. We don't want to put him in jeopardy of deportation.

Coming from a family of simple means, there is no one stepping up to pay for his college. He is an illegal immigrant not by choice but by virtue of transport - his parents brought him here. Parents can sponsor a child for permanent U.S. residency, but not Juan's. They also are illegal immigrants.

He has attended technical college but quit because of lack of money. He is not working at the moment - also a function of his undocumented status and hampered also by an inability in Wisconsin for people like him to get driver's licenses (an item for a future editorial).

His dream of attending Loyola University in Chicago and getting a criminal justice degree or becoming an actor are on permanent hold.

What a waste.

Juan, 18, is reasonably fluent in two languages and intelligent; he got reasonably good grades in school. He did this though he had to learn English as he learned all the other stuff students are tasked with learning. Slim, dark and with an ability to speak confidently and passionately, he is fairly oozing with potential. One senses that, under different circumstances, he could be whatever he wanted to be.
His circumstances, however, are that his dreams are for naught without a Dream Act.

The Dream Act is legislation pending in Congress, versions of which have seemingly been on hold since at least 2001. It was reintroduced last year by Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois and Rep. Howard Berman of California, both Democrats.

The Dream Act would grant conditional permanent residency to people like Juan. If, within six years, these students earn a bachelor's degree or higher or complete at least two years in good standing or join the military and serve for at least two years, they will be eligible to apply for permanent legal residency.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled immigrant children cannot be denied public school education on account of language or their immigration status. So, that has taken Juan to high school graduation.

But no further.

Continuing to college means financial aid, much of which is off-limits because Juan is undocumented. Up until last year, illegal immigrant students like him would have found tuition at Wisconsin's state schools even more prohibitive because he would have had to pay out-of-state rates, though he has lived here for nine years and his native Mexico is only a distant memory.

Last year, Gov. Jim Doyle signed a budget bill that contained a provision - made possible by Rep. Pedro Colon (D-Milwaukee) - that allows in-state tuition for students like Juan.

The reality is that, without financial aid, even this is out of reach for would-be students like Juan.

Juan's brothers will not be in the same boat when they graduate. They were born here and are U.S. citizens.

Though they share parents, the difference is not lost on Juan.

"I was brought here illegally," he said. "I didn't decide to come here."

It has long been an article of faith in this country that children are not held responsible for the perceived sins of the fathers. But that is precisely what happens to illegal immigrant children brought to this country at tender ages and who know the countries of their birth only through their parents. Deportation would mean being returned to a country in which, even if they speak the language, they would be lost.

"I don't remember my country," he said. "I feel like my life is on hold right now."

Juan says that approval of the Dream Act would be "the best thing that would happen to me in my life."
Yes, for him and the estimated 65,000 students who find themselves in these straits yearly. They are among the country's 2.8 million who graduate from high school every year.

Penalizing students like Juan doesn't even pass the pragmatism test.

Having invested in educating these students from kindergarten to 12th grade, it simply makes no sense to essentially halt the development of these young men and women. This is a waste of assets and investments.

This Editorial Board has long been on record for comprehensive immigration reform. Fair reform would include beefing up border security and added penalties for employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants. But it would also include a path to legal residency for the estimated 11 million or so undocumented residents already here. On Thursday, Sens. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) offered a peek at what a promising reform bill they're working would look like.

This path to legal residency - demagogued most commonly as "amnesty!" - generates passions and is likely the provision most responsible for congressional failure to pass such reform. No matter that such "amnesty" proposals have included fines and would only be conferred on those without criminal backgrounds.

But surely Americans can agree that children who had no say in coming here shouldn't suddenly be cast adrift, forced to return to a country they don't know or sentenced to a furtive lifetime of low-paying, menial labor if they remain.

Congress needs to approve the Dream Act, separate from comprehensive immigration reform. Wisconsin's congressional delegation should lead.

And if it doesn't pass?

"I would be (part of) a lost generation of kids - someone who can't improve his life," said Juan. "It would be the most horrible nightmare."

If it passes?

"It would set me free."

And, we'd add, say something very good about this country.