

Colleagues and Students: Earlier today, the Riverside Press Enterprise, San Bernardino Sun and Inland Valley Daily Bulletin published an Op Ed of mine that addresses the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) debate and where I stand. I wanted to share that message with each of you...



DACA: Choosing the Answer that Makes Us Proud

By Tomás D. Morales

In the 1960s, the issue of Civil Rights blazed to the national forefront. Concerned individuals from across the United States stepped up and joined the fight for dignity, fairness and equal opportunity for African Americans in what proved to be the country's defining movement of the 20th century.

Decades later, young people would ask their elders, "What did you do in the struggle for justice?" The answer was a prideful moment for some and an awkward admission for others.

Today we struggle with an issue that is just as important and just as divisive, one that again goes to the very heart of the rights and freedoms of this great nation. Each day there are headlines portending a dismal future for young people, brought to this country by their parents, who are threatened with separation and deportation from the only home many have ever known.

For far too long young undocumented immigrants were relegated to the shadows of the American Dream. Through no fault of their own they were branded as being illegal, commonly denied the opportunity to pursue a college degree and expand their capabilities, their incredible potential remaining untapped and ignored.

Following years of political wrangling and ineffectual legislative efforts, U.S. President Barack Obama chose in 2012 to use an executive order to establish the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. It allowed foreign-born youth raised in the U.S. to stay in the country, attend college, and work. These individuals, known as Dreamers, have proven they have an immense amount to contribute.

As the President of California State University, San Bernardino, I am proud of the heritage of our university's educational mission and impact. For more than half a century, we have served the residents of San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Our commitment as educators is to help all students who seek to better themselves and their community through education. Our present enrollment of more than 20,000 includes nearly 800 students who identify as being undocumented.

President Obama's order created an incredible windfall for California and the nation. In this state, DACA allowed 223,000 young people to step out of the shadows. Across the country, 97 percent of the nearly 800,000 granted DACA status are either employed or enrolled in school, with most of those pursuing bachelor's degrees.

An analysis by New American Economy, a coalition of U.S. mayors and business leaders, reports that DACA recipients earn nearly \$20 billion in income annually, pay more than \$3 billion in local, state and federal taxes, and contribute nearly \$2 billion to Social Security and \$470 million to Medicare.

Yet in September 2017, current President Donald Trump chose to end the DACA program, leaving it to Congress to determine the fate of those already registered. That choice came in spite of polls indicating a substantial majority of Americans, regardless of political affiliation, support allowing DACA recipients to stay in this country and either be given a clear pathway to citizenship or be allowed to remain as lawful permanent residents.

I, along with my fellow presidents in the California State University system, have joined CSU Chancellor Timothy White signing onto the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. This coalition of college and university leaders are urging Congress to find a legislative solution for all those affected by the repeal of DACA and give these individuals the certainty, protection and acceptance they deserve.

With every passing day, each of us must assess our commitment to this issue. Whether that means contact our congressional representatives, publicly voicing our opinion, or contributing to a college scholarship fund, we must openly support these inspiring young people.

Every time I look in the eyes of my grandchildren, I need to know that I am doing all I can.

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