

Dear President Trump, Children Aren't Bargaining Chips

By Shawnta S. Barnes - January 10, 2018



Will their
DREAM
end?

On September 5, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced DACA protections for undocumented youth who were brought to America as children by their parents would end and Congress had six months to resolve the issue and pass legislation. To make matters worse, on December 29, 2017, President Trump tweeted:

The Democrats have been told, and fully understand, that there can be no DACA without the desperately needed WALL at the Southern Border and an END to the horrible Chain Migration & ridiculous Lottery System of Immigration etc. We must protect our Country at all cost!

When I read this tweet, all I could think about were the children who are affected. Some people who were brought to America by their parents are now adults. But some of the people, who will be deported if a DACA solution is not reached, are children. For these children, who go to school each day, the fear of deportation is real.

Towards the end of last school year, I was waiting after school with a student. His father had not arrived to pick him up and over 30 minutes had passed. I called all phone numbers listed in his file and they were disconnected or went to voicemail. Then, I called my principal, who was off campus at the time, and I was instructed to call school police. When I told the student what the principal said, he said, "Please, Mrs. Barnes. Please, don't call the police." I called the police and tears flooded his eyes and his audible sobs were drowning out the police officer's voice on the phone. I told him the police officer was on his way to the school to drive him to his house to see if someone was home. Then, he said, "You can't let them take me." To calm him down, I told him I would ride with him in the police car and he just started shaking his head and responded, "They will take you away too. We'll never come back. They'll take you, me and my family away." An uncle arrived to pick him up before the police arrived. I later learned his mom and dad were at the hospital with his younger sister. The fear and anguish on his face stuck with me. He was fearful of deportation. He was fearful of the police going to his home and taking them all away even though this was just the school police. This was before Sessions' announcement September 2017, so I only imagine what the fear level is now.

As an educator, I am charged with ensuring all students learn academic standards no matter if they have food to eat at home, no matter if they are being abused, and no matter if they fear deportation of themselves or their family members. But for the nation's leader to hold out on resolving the DACA issue, over getting what he wants, a border wall, is cruel and inhumane. How could you stoop so low to use children as bargaining

chips? How do you expect students to learn when their futures are uncertain? We need leaders who are going to solve problems without using children, are most vulnerable citizens, as a negotiation tool.

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