

Defend DACA; Don't Rip Away the Dream

By Shawnta S. Barnes – September 4, 2017



On August 28, 1963, 54 years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. said during his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Today, ‘Dreamers,’ who had to prove they were of good character by obtaining an education and not committing crimes, may have the American dream ripped away.

‘Dreamers’ are undocumented immigrants who came to America with their parents as children. Under the Obama Administration the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was implemented. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service Department undocumented immigrants could remain in America if they met the following requirements:

1. Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday;
3. Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
4. Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
5. Had no lawful status on June 15, 2012;
6. Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and
7. Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

These upstanding hard working people face an uncertain future because President Trump is expect to end DACA with a six month delay to force congress to find a solution. There has been an outcry against this action from both sides of the aisle.

Vermont Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders tweeted, "Taking legal protections away from 800,000 young people raised in this country is absolutely counter to what we stand for as a nation."

Utah Republican Senator Orrin Hatch released a statement in response to Trump's pending decision on DACA:

I've urged the President not to rescind DACA, an action that would further complicate a system in serious need of a permanent, legislative solution. Like the President, I've long advocated for tougher enforcement of our existing immigration laws. But we also need a workable, permanent solution for individuals who entered our country unlawfully as children through no fault of their own and who have built their lives here. And that solution must come from Congress.

Over the coming months, I'll be working closely with my colleagues in Congress and with the administration to pass meaningful immigration reform that will secure our borders, provide a workable path forward for the Dreamer

population, and ensure that employers have access to the high-skilled workers they need to succeed in our technology-driven economy.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) pointed out in a radio interview, “These are kids who know no other country, who were brought here by their parents and don’t know another home. And so I really do believe that there needs to be a legislative solution.”

When asked by a reporter, “Should Dreamers be worried?” President Trump replied, “We love the Dreamers.”

To strip away protections and send people back to a country they might not remember, where they might not know the native language, where they will be separated from their families is an interesting way to show love. Some of these immigrants may also be affected by Hurricane Harvey to compound matters even more.

As a former English language learner teacher, I think about the impact this decision will have on students in the classroom, who are undocumented or have undocumented family members. They have been driven to do well in school, master not only conversational English, but also academic English, in hopes they can live the American dream. How can they continue to stay motivated when at a moment’s notice they are or their family members are snatched away and sent to a country where their fate is uncertain.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his speech during trying times, he still said, “I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.” Even though the future is not clear, there are many people fighting alongside the ‘Dreamers’ to ensure their dreams won’t be uprooted and their families torn apart. The question is, “Will you push your representatives to pass legislation to protect the ‘Dreamers’ if DACA is ended or will you be one of those good people standing by the side doing nothing?”