



Column: If Trump revokes DACA, it will create a humanitarian crisis

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August 31, 2017

As Americans are still reeling from the shock of hearing their President dignify the actions of hatemongers, there is another social crisis brewing. Starting on Sept. 5, more than a million immigrant children could be kicked out of their jobs, rounded up by police, and deported to countries where their lives are at risk—and which are foreign to them.

This is because several attorney generals have challenged a program that former President Obama launched in 2012 which allows young, unauthorized immigrants, known as “Dreamers,” to live in the U.S. without fear of removal and work legally. The deadline the attorney generals have given is Sept. 5, and all indications are that President Trump will either let this program lapse or fail to defend it.

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The Migration Policy Institute estimates there are as many as 1.8 million children who could qualify for legal permanent residence under the Dream Act of 2017, a bill that has been under consideration but not enacted by the House and Senate. The parents of these children brought them here to give them better lives. The children didn’t knowingly break any laws. These Dreamers grew up as Americans, believing they were entitled to the same rights and freedoms as their friends were. Yet when they became old enough to work or to go to college, they learned that there are limits on where they can study and what they can do. They had to live as second-class citizens—in the shadows of society.

In June 2012, Obama launched the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allowed Dreamers who passed a rigorous background check to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and eligibility for a work permit. The plan was to follow this up with comprehensive immigration reform—a full legalization of status.

Nearly 800,000 children put aside their fears and applied for the permit under the belief that this would take them closer to gaining legal status. They provided detailed information about their backgrounds and locations. Now, this trust in the American government may lead to their deportation.

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Trump has on several occasions expressed compassion for these children. He said at a press conference in February: “We’re going to show great heart. DACA is a very, very difficult subject

for me, I will tell you. To me, it's one of the most difficult subjects I have because you have these incredible kids." He refrained from doing what he promised during the election campaign: to deport these children.

But Trump may have been as deceptive about this impending tragedy as he was about his sympathy for racists in Charlottesville. Because at the same time, according to the The Los Angeles Times, the White House had been looking for ways to end protection for Dreamers and shield the president from the blame; it was considering having several states do the dirty work by filing a lawsuit against DACA and then having the Justice Department provide new guidance on deportations.

The LA Times speculated that Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who was a vocal critic of deportation relief as a senator, would direct department of Justice lawyers to review the program and, if they determined "that DACA is not legal or is no longer a responsible use of prosecutorial discretion, the Department of Homeland Security would be instructed to stop awarding and renewing work permits." And then "Sessions could instruct his lawyers not to defend the program in court, exposing it to indefinite suspension by a federal judge."

This is exactly the scenario that appears to be playing out. Ten states, led by Texas, have written a letter demanding that the 15 June 2012 DACA memorandum be rescinded by Sept. 5, failing which they will file a lawsuit. Given that in 2016, Texas successfully challenged an effort by President Obama to expand DACA, it is likely that such a lawsuit will succeed. And the chances that Sessions will defend DACA are slim given that in July, he reiterated that the Department of Justice could have no objection to abandoning it "because it is very questionable, in my opinion, constitutionally."

David Bier of The CATO Institute estimates that with DACA rescission, 110,653 permits will expire in 2017, 404,909 in 2018, and the remainder in 2019. This means that these children will be subject to deportation at the whim of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents—who will be given vague guidelines. And even though President Trump has shown no willingness to move more aggressively against DACA recipients than is necessary, "certain ICE agents seem zealous about targeting them," Bier writes.

The hell we have seen in Charlottesville is nothing compared to what lies ahead. And by playing with the lives of immigrant children, we are hurting the soul of America itself.