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## As Trump's DACA decision nears, Dreamers await their fate

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Is there a limit to the Trump administration's willingness to scapegoat immigrants?

We'll soon find out, as the president decides whether to end a program that protects some young undocumented immigrants, brought here as children, from deportation.

The answer could change Sandra's life. The 19-year-old Fenway High graduate was brought here from Mexico by her mother when she was four. She didn't even know she was undocumented until five years ago, when President Obama announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. Her mother, who had overstayed a visa and worked restaurant jobs to support Sandra and her two other children, urged her to register.

"I knew I wasn't born here, but I'd never really thought about it," Sandra said. Without DACA, she would be struggling to find work, unable to get a driver's license, facing a future in the shadows because of a decision her mother made for her. And so she registered, handing over her personal information for renewable, two-year work permits. A security officer at a clothing store, she can now help her mother, and support her own criminal justice studies at Curry College. But now she sees she has made herself, and her mother, vulnerable: An administration that appears hell bent on sending away every undocumented immigrant knows exactly how to find her.

"I kind of put myself out there now," she said.

There are 800,000 Sandras across the country, and, as scapegoats go, they're a remarkably sympathetic group. Just children when they arrived, they've grown up American, with few connections to the countries of their birth. To qualify for DACA, they underwent rigorous background checks, and had to be enrolled in — or have graduated — high school. They're undocumented immigrants even some Republicans can love: Legislation to give them a path to citizenship has received bipartisan support since 2001.

Why, even House Speaker Paul Ryan, always loathe to challenge President Trump, found a shard of backbone on Friday when asked whether the president should end DACA. "I actually don't think he should do that," Ryan said, arguing that Congress should enact legislation to make the protections permanent.

The argument for doing so goes beyond basic humanity which, as we all know, is no longer the basis on which we make decisions in this country: Ending DACA and deporting recipients would cost the federal government \$60 billion in lost revenue, and reduce economic growth by \$215 billion over the next 10 years, according to the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. Hundreds of CEOs have signed an open letter asking the president to retain the program.

So, even for this president — who has conjured menacing stereotypes of undocumented immigrants as rapists, given comfort to neo-Nazis, and pardoned a sheriff who terrorized communities of color — targeting this group is a politically risky proposition. He vowed to end the program during the campaign, but on Friday the president said “We love Dreamers. We love everybody.” Perhaps he’s feeling the pressure.

That may not stop him from ruining Sandra’s life, though.

A group of states are trying to force his hand with threats of a lawsuit challenging DACA. They’re led by Texas, whose attorney general said on Thursday that, even as his state is crippled by one of the worst natural disasters in American history, he’ll press ahead with the legal challenge on Tuesday unless Trump nixes the program. What commitment!

Others in Trump’s nativist base have likewise made their wishes clear. Their view of undocumented immigrants is black and white: They have no worth; they add nothing to this country; they are to blame for American workers’ problems; every last one of them must be deported. Those protected by DACA are an uncomfortable reminder that reality is way more gray than that.

Spare a thought for them this holiday weekend, tending to patients in hospitals, waiting tables, preparing for school, and waiting to know: Will a president who pillories their parents, and plays to Americans’ worst instincts, look inside himself and find a heart?