



The statistics in a previously published viewpoint on Dreamers “are a nightmare”

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Dreamers are Americans in every way but on paper. They have grown up in our communities and pledge allegiance to our flag. They’re contributing to our economy and thriving in our universities, workforce and military, including 220,000 in California alone. Dreamers represent the best of who we are as a country and know no other place but the United States as their home.” – Senator Kamala Harris

In this viewpoint we will refer to DACA recipients, Dreamers and their families as undocumented persons. We will consciously object to the use of the dehumanizing term “illegal alien.”

By the way a previously published viewpoint portrays these young undocumented people, you would think they were a newly discovered set of villains here to take over our country. We did not have to wonder whether this viewpoint was misrepresenting a contributing portion of the American population. Instead, we checked the facts and we are here to provide rags for all of the previously spilt tea.

Dreamers and the military

In the United States according to pew research, 0.4 percent of the general population serve in the military. Comparing orders of magnitude, 0.4 percent and 0.1 percent (the cited proportion of serving DACA members) are not different. While we acknowledge that 0.4 percent of the population represents much more than 900 people, we would like to contend that the presence of even 900 DACA recipients in the military is an impressive feat considering the requirements for enlistment. In order to serve in the military, a candidate has to have their name checked with the national immigration database to confirm that they are a citizen. If they do not hold a green card or status as a citizen they may not enlist. The 900 DACA recipients currently enlisted were only able to join the armed forces through a pilot program called MAVNI (Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest). Seeing as DACA recipients are only able to serve in the armed forces with specific governmental approval, we think we can put the argument that they do not contribute to the American military to rest.

Dreamers and education

“According to research published by the Migration Policy Institute, only 4 percent of DACA recipients have obtained a college degree.” Conveniently left out in this statement is the fact

presented by the same source that “DACA recipients are almost as likely as U.S. adults in the same age group (15-32) to be enrolled in college (18 percent versus 20 percent).”

Continuing in the theme of convenient omissions, the leader of the research cited concerning DACA dropout rate, Harvard professor Roberto G. Gonzalez (a correction to the published reference to him as Robert G. Gonzales) emphasizes that DACA requires applicants to certify that they have acquired their GED or are currently in school, which leads us to believe that the academic performance of DACA recipients is not as disappointing as the previous viewpoint article implies.

As the statistics reveal, Dreamers aren’t “vastly less academically successful than the native population.” Four-point-nine percent of DACA recipients are “finally earning that Ph.D” as compared to 1.7% of the total American population.

Dreamers and crime

As the previous viewpoint article relied solely on crime statistics within Arizona, we could not find comparable data to argue this point.

Side note: In order to obtain and maintain DACA status one cannot have been convicted on any criminal charges.

Dreamers and economic impact

The previous viewpoint states “that 73 percent of DACA recipients are living in low income housing and relying on taxpayer subsidized benefits, including school lunch programs and some federal welfare programs.” To clarify, this percentage represents approximately 500,000 of the 52.2 million people that rely on government-funded assistance programs. The majority of people supported by the U.S. government have a Social Security card and a birth certificate at the local courthouse. These 51.7 million people are not members of DACA.

With regard to the “already saturated labor market” that Dreamers are apparently impinging on, this argument begins to seem questionable (and quite tired), when the fact that the unemployment rate in America is sitting at the lowest it has been in recent years (3.9 percent) is taken into account.

Vague conjectures about potential changes to GDP per capita aside, CATO research estimates “that the fiscal cost of immediately deporting the approximately 750,000 people currently in the DACA program would be over \$60 billion to the federal government along with a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade.”

Dreamers and English Literacy

In the same research used to claim widespread illiteracy among undocumented persons, the following qualifying point is made: “The picture brightens for U.S.-born Hispanics, of whom nine out of 10 say they speak English ‘very well’ or speak only English at home.” We would like to extend this argument to immigrants of all non-English speaking nationalities as well. A DACA recipient would likely have been in the US from a young age due to DACA eligibility requirements, and a study done by researchers from three Boston-based universities shows that “children are proficient at learning a second language up until the age of 18.” Thus, we believe

that DACA recipients not only have the ability to learn English, but that they can become sufficiently fluent. Not so triste after all.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is not to antagonize a fellow student and viewpoint writer, but instead to highlight what we feel is a misuse of available data. We, the authors, are not DACA recipients ourselves, and we cannot propose to capture or fully understand the experiences of an entire community. With this note, we felt we could not stay quiet when fellow members our Notre Dame community were being maligned in print.

And although it should go without saying, we will explicitly make this point: of course, no human is illegal. And sure, there may be Americans who have faltered, but we, as Catholics, are taught to forgive and be kind to our neighbors. We can, so let us choose to love each other despite our country of origin or our native language. Let us choose acceptance.