

## Immigration from a Human Perspective

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On the elimination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, President Donald Trump commented, “I do not favor punishing children, most of whom are now adults, for the actions of their parents, but we must also recognize that we are a nation of opportunity because we are a nation of laws.”

The first thing Trump said is in acknowledgement of the fact that rescinding DACA would be punishing children for the actions of their parents. This is a critical concession to pay attention to. The legal justice system is only just and meaningful if there is a stringent relationship between crime and perpetrator, between punishment and guilty party. To be held responsible for breaking the law, one must have personally broken the law. Those who arrived in this country before they knew what a country or a law was are not beholden to the contract of either.

Let us contest the idea that the actions of illegal immigrant parents are even deserving of punitive retribution in the first place. Legal and moral accountability only exist in circumstances in which a person meaningfully chose to break the law, however decisions made under extreme or exceptional circumstances are not considered meaningful engagements with disregard for upholding the law.

People do not immigrate illegally for fun. It is dangerous, terrifying and traumatically disruptive to a person’s life. People immigrate illegally when their government has broken its half of the social contract — when the people are submitting to a government that is not representing them. Immigrants have the moral right to leave when they are looking at a life that is void of opportunity for improvement, that is void of human rights, that is void of physical safety. When you are looking at a child who you have brought into this world and see a world that is becoming uninhabitable around you, you leave. In literal and practical terms, if the United States refuses to make a safe home for these people, it imposes a draining immigration process in order for these immigrants to live elsewhere. I refuse to stop believing that every person deserves to have a safe home on this earth.

Immigrants are not harmful to American society. On the contrary, DACA Dreamers are an economic and societal windfall. Dreamers are not eligible for federal welfare. They do not qualify under DACA if they are criminals. Most Dreamers are employed. A libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute, estimates that ending DACA could cause the federal government to lose nearly \$280 billion dollars in tax revenue over the next 10 years. The elimination of DACA is not being done for the economy. It is not being done for any conceivable, defensible, legal or moral reason. So let us ask ourselves — why is DACA being eliminated?