

The Decision Is Ours...

Ediberto Roman

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Come with me for a moment and imagine instead of our relatively secure lives, we turn back the clock and are once again young adults doing what young adults do. We are going to school, working, socializing, and at times even thinking about our futures. Imagine in the midst of our routines, instead of making a prudent decision, we make a grave mistake, a mistake that will not only affect our respective lives, but sadly, will lead to punishment levied not only against us, but also against our children.

Most of us would be mortified at the thought of such a decision and its grave consequence. Imagine instead that the decision was not the typical foolish ones many of us may have made as young adults... perhaps including... speeding, driving while intoxicated, trying an illegal substance, etc. No, the decision I am placing us in in this hypothetical is not a foolish decision over whether we would do something immature. Instead, let me place us in having to make a decision over whether we will be able to feed our families. This is a decision that thousands, if not millions, of the undocumented have made. For some, such decisions were rational, for others, such a decision -- to cross a border to seek employment -- was illegal and that ends the conversation. I ask what would you do, if, but for providence or dumb luck, you were placed in a similar dire circumstance?

While our airwaves are replete with rhetoric of an immigration threat, the reality is that such a threat is largely based on anything but reality. Indeed, in my upcoming empirical work on the issue -- *Those Damn Immigrants: America's Hysteria Over Latin American Migration* -- illustrates that not only is there not an immigration threat, but that study after study from the government, left-leaning and right-leaning think tanks like the CATO institute establish this point. Moreover, we fail to hear on our airwaves that undocumented workers actually aid our economy. We also never hear that the primary historical and current reason the undocumented reside in this land is because of the demand for their labor created by domestic industries like agriculture, construction, and service-related ones.

Despite the reprehensible media rhetoric mentioned above, slowly the tide seems to be changing. More and more informed souls are speaking up and challenging the ill-informed talking heads and political hacks. In particular, the Latino and Latina community, and others, are challenging the immigration narrative.

Politicians in turn are slowly responding, despite decades of failed promises. Well, they appear to be responding to at least one important aspect of the immigration debate... how to treat college-age children who came to this country as minors with their undocumented parents. For over a decade, a bi-partisan group of congressmen proposed a law that would allow such young adults the opportunity to adjust their status after military service or completing a college education. The DREAM Act was the gateway for these young talented and law-abiding young adults to achieve the American Dream (Note, despite rhetoric to the contrary, the DREAM Act would, not only aide our economy, it would apply to those with a clean record and those that have demonstrated a record of success).

While the DREAM Act failed to pass Congress repeatedly, the efforts of young undocumented and documented activists, the so-called DREAMers, have had an impact on the national stage. It now appears political momentum is with them. With the recent case of the Miami-area valedictorian [Daniela Pelaez](#), an undocumented young adult whose order of deportation was deferred after Republican and Democratic leaders fought on her behalf, new versions of the DREAM Act are being introduced.

Congressman David Rivera has [proposed](#) two bills: (1) the ARMs Act -- allowing for adjusted legal status for those that have served in the military, and (2) the STARS Act -- an apparently more restrictive version of the DREAM Act. Just today, news [reports](#) are that U.S. Senator Marco Rubio is prepared to introduce his own version of the DREAM Act. While specifics are yet to be available, Rubio apparently is tracking the DREAM Act without a guarantee of citizenship. While the creation of a permanent underclass would not be acceptable for this writer, many are waiting to see the details of these bills. Many will also not accept mere posturing by either party on this issue.

Though Democrats and Republicans will inevitably takes sides, the question that remains is whether we are witnessing another example of political gamesmanship with this decade-long legislative solution, or are we facing some real solutions?

One way to get both an answer and a solution is for the group the *Time* Magazine [cover](#) proclaimed to be the deciding force in the next presidential -- the Hispanic community -- to demand a resolution to the issue. Studies have shown that [90 percent](#) of this population support the DREAM Act. It is now time for us to insist on some version of it passing. As a long-time advocate for reform, I could care less for party labels. I want not only change, but a solution. If indeed this community appreciates the equity of the case of the DREAMers, let us demand for the passage of a federal law that provides a path to legalization for these young successful law-abiding adults. Enough already with promises, or as many in our community might say "Basta Ya!"