

LASA condemns rescinding of DACA, urges Congress pass stand-alone DREAM Act

September 2017

On September 5, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump administration would end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which shields young undocumented immigrants from deportation and grants them temporary legal status, which allows them to work, study and contribute to their local communities. The administration's six-month "phase out" would end the DACA program on March 5, 2018. The action has created a climate of fear and uncertainty for DACA recipients and their extended families.

More than 80 percent of "Dreamers" were brought to the United States by parents from Mexico and Central America, according to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Many of them were fleeing violence and seeking a better future. Much of that violence and limited life chances is a result of U.S. foreign policy and military, economic, political and covert intervention in the region. They're here, because the United States is there.

About 1.9 million undocumented young people are eligible to apply for the DACA program. Nearly 800,000 had their request for DACA status granted in 2016. That is, nearly one million young people believed our promise that they would be safe revealing their undocumented status on the pathway to residency and citizenship, and trusted that our democracy values human and civil rights.

Of those who have DACA status, about 576,000 are enrolled in college. A full 95 percent of DACA recipients are either working or in school. The United States is their home. To further endanger their status here and deport them is wrong. Period.

In light of this situation, the Executive Council of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), the largest professional Association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America, invokes the idea of Pan-Americanism proposed by José Martí in his 1891 essay "Nuestra América." Martí's idea inspires us to work towards the promotion of a hemispheric vision of justice, inclusion, and respect for human rights across the Americas, including in the United States, which has long insisted on human rights and U.S.-styled democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, while not adhering to those same standards within its own borders.

The Executive Council of LASA strongly condemns the rescinding of DACA and urges Congress to act immediately to provide protections for young people and their families whose lives are disrupted and endangered. We call on our members to contact their members of Congress to insist that they take immediate action to reverse President Trump's action and allow DACA recipients to remain in the United States.

Further, we call on Congress to pass a stand-alone DREAM ACT that would provide a path to citizenship. We further urge Congress to enact a comprehensive immigration reform policy that welcomes immigrants to our shore.

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About LASA

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 12,000 members, over 65% of whom reside outside the United States, LASA is the one association that brings together experts on Latin America from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors, across the globe. LASA's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and its people throughout the Americas, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and public debate.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or lasa@lasaweb.org.

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