



The DACA Myth: What Americans Need to Know

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The DACA Myth

The public narrative surrounding the unconstitutional Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is that it was put in place by the Obama administration to protect “kids” who were brought here through no fault of their own.¹ Proponents of the DACA program implied that applicants were almost universally Hispanic² and that as poverty-stricken citizens of Latin American republics a short distance away from the wealthy and successful United States, their parents’ decision to violate U.S. immigration laws was somehow legitimate.³ They were also portrayed as brilliant “valedictorians” and proud “members of the military.”

In the wake of the Trump administration’s decision to end the DACA program, political leaders from both parties have said that it would be cruel to deport anyone covered by the DACA program because these “incredible kids” would be unable to assimilate if sent back to their country of birth⁴ – after all the U.S. was “the only home they had ever known.”⁵

DACA Truth: “Kids” Who are Actually Grownups

From the outset, much of that narrative rang hollow. In a column for the Washington Post, Mickey Kaus described it as public-relations-style “hooley.”⁶ Here’s why:

- Many of the DACA “kids” were **not** brought here as young children. Instead they were smuggled into the United States as “tweens” (ages 8-12) and teenagers.⁷
- A large number of DACA applicants weren’t “brought” here by anyone – they crossed the border themselves:

- The DACA program did not require that applicants were brought here without their consent.
- Anyone who entered the U.S. prior to age 16 and who was under 31 on June 15, 2012 could apply.⁸
- One would expect that children brought to the U.S. between ages eight and eighteen would have some ability to speak the native language of the country where they were born. So the argument that the DACA “kids” would have a hard time reintegrating in their country of citizenship appears to be false.
- They’re not all valedictorians: Over 2,000 individuals approved for DACA had their status terminated because they were convicted of crimes ranging from alien smuggling to sexual assault.⁹ And the number of DACA recipients subject to termination is still growing.¹⁰
- Fewer than 900 DACA recipients – slightly more than one tenth of one percent of the total DACA population –joined the military.¹¹

DACA Truth: Many Applicants are from English-Speaking Countries

However, new data released by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) definitively establishes that much of the DACA narrative is false – particularly overblown claims that deported DACA “kids” would inevitably be strangers-in-a-strange-land.¹²

USCIS lists 149 countries of origin for DACA applicants. At least 26 of those are countries where English is the national language, including: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, among many others. A large number of other applicants were born in countries like India, Hong Kong, and the Philippines where there are enormous English-speaking communities.

DACA Truth: Many Applicants are from Countries of Origin with Standards of Living

Other statistics also undermine the claims that the United States must “take care of the DACAs” or condemn them to a life of isolation and poverty:

- At least 36 of the nations of origin listed by USCIS are European. They include Portugal, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland.

- Scandinavia – where many of the world’s wealthiest and most advanced societies are located – is also well represented with applicants hailing from Denmark, Sweden and Estonia.
- Applicants also originate from at least nine Asian countries with fully developed or rapidly developing economies, such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia.
- 360 nationals of Israel applied for DACA benefits. Israel is a developed nation, with a thriving economy, that – as a matter of law – accepts all returned citizens and provides free instruction in Hebrew to returnees and immigrants.

In fact, many DACA applicants’ birth countries are listed on the higher end of the Social Progress Index, a “standard of living” scale published by the non-profit Social Progress Imperative.¹³ Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom are actually rated higher than the United States. Which means that DACA advocates are arguing that the United States has a moral obligation to undermine its own laws in order to avoid returning European illegal aliens to countries whose citizens are considered to have a higher standard of living than Americans. One wonders why it has never occurred to Congress that its primary obligation *should* be protecting native-born American kids from illegal aliens who compete with them for entry-level jobs and seats at colleges and universities.

DACA Truth: Many Applicants Are From Terror-Prone or Hostile Nations

All of the foregoing is bad enough. What is truly alarming about the data released by USCIS, however, is the number of DACA applicants who come from countries that are associated with terrorism or that are overtly hostile to the United States. This is an area of significant concern given the “lean and lite” vetting¹⁴ used to quickly approve DACA applications:

- More than 1,000 DACA applications were accepted from Pakistani nationals despite concerns over growing anti-U.S. sentiment within the country and the Pakistani government’s overt support of jihadist terror groups.¹⁵
- At least 60 applicants were accepted from Iran, and more than 2,000 from Venezuela, even though both nations are overtly hostile to the United States.¹⁶
- Applications were accepted from Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis even though the Obama administration had placed travel restrictions on nationals of those countries, due to terrorism concerns.¹⁷

Conclusion

Based on the facts – rather than the myth – it seems pretty clear that the individuals who applied for, and received, DACA were not the oppressed, well-meaning, high-achievers that the media and the open-borders lobby portrayed them to be.

The DACA program was illegal. But it was also bad from a long-term policy perspective. Rewarding people who violate our laws only encourages more people to become lawbreakers. Accordingly, President Trump’s decision to cancel the program is a welcome one.

However, that decision does not appear to herald a return to the rule-of-law. The first response from legislators – on both sides of the aisle – was a call amnesty. Members of the House and Senate have repeatedly asked, “Would it be fair to deport the DACA ‘kids’?” But that’s the wrong question. The one our representatives should be asking is: “Is it in the national security, public safety and economic interests of the United States to reward 800,000 immigration law violators?” The answer to that question is, “No” – especially when one realizes that much of the DACA narrative is utterly false.

And the low standards for the DACA program should have every American wondering just exactly who will be given amnesty if the more expansive DREAM Act, or similar legislation, should pass. If history is a guide, expansive amnesty programs are the last thing that will make America great again.

¹ Dara Lind, “Why Ending DACA Is so Unprecedented,” *Vox*, September 5, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/5/16236116/daca-history>

² Alicia Parlapiano and Karen Yourish, “A Typical ‘Dreamer’ Lives in Los Angeles, Is From Mexico and Came to the U.S. at 6 Years Old,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/09/05/us/politics/who-are-the-dreamers.html?mcubz=3>

³ Stephen Dinan, “Pelosi: Dreamers’ Parents ‘Did a Great Thing’ in Sneaking Them into U.S.,” *The Washington Times*, September 20, 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/sep/20/pelosi-dreamers-parents-did-great-thing/>

⁴ Michael D. Shear and Julie Hirschfeld Davis, “Trump Moves to End DACA and Calls on Congress to Act,” *The New York Times*, September 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/us/politics/trump-daca-dreamers-immigration.html?mcubz=3>

⁵ Robin Abcarian, “Young Latino Immigrants Overwhelm Agency as They Seek Help to Stay in America, the Only Home They’ve Ever Known,” *The Los Angeles Times*, <http://beta.latimes.com/local/abcarian/la-me-abcarian-chirla-daca-20170922-story.html>

⁶ Mickey Kaus, “Don’t Buy Into All of That Rosy PR About DACA,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 13, 2017, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-perspec-dreamers-daca-narrative-0914-story.html>

⁷ Paul Bedard, "Feds: Most 'Dreamers' Post-College Age, 94% From Latin America," September 26, 2017, *Washington Examiner*, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/feds-most-dreamers-post-college-age-94-from-latin-america/article/2635615>

⁸ See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "DHS DACA FAQs," <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/frequently-asked-questions> for a list of DACA requirements.

⁹ Paul Bedard, "Feds: 30% Surge in Illegals Losing DACA Freedom for Crimes, Gang Violence," August 29, 2017, *Washington Examiner*, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/feds-30-surge-in-illegals-losing-daca-freedom-for-crimes-gang-violence/article/2632820>

¹⁰ Jenny Jarvie, "Deportations of 'Dreamers' Who've Lost Protected Status Have Surged Under Trump," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2017, <http://beta.latimes.com/nation/la-na-daca-deportations-20170419-story.html>

¹¹ Kathryn Watson, "Pentagon Says DACA Recipients in Military Number Fewer Than 900," *CBS News*, September 6, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pentagon-says-daca-recipients-in-military-number-fewer-than-900/>

¹² USCIS Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Population Data as of September 4, 2017, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca_population_data.pdf

¹³ 201 Social Progress Index, <https://www.socialprogressindex.com/>

¹⁴ Aaron Bandler, "Flashback: Obama DHS Scrapped Background Checks for DACA," *The Daily Wire*, September 5, 2017, <http://www.dailywire.com/news/20662/report-obama-dhs-scrapped-background-checks-daca-aaron-bandler#>

¹⁵ Ayaz Gazul, "Pakistan Reacts Sharply to U.S.'s Anti-Terror Criticism," *Voice of America*, February 14, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-sharply-reacts-to-us-anti-terror-criticism/3723821.html>

¹⁶ Emmanuelle Ottolenghi, "Meet Venezuela's New VP, Fan of Iran and Hezbollah," *The Hill*, January 13, 2017, <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/314283-meet-venezuelas-new-vp-a-hezbollah-fan>

¹⁷ Caroline May, "DHS Places Additional Travel Restrictions on Libya, Somalia, and Yemen," *Breitbart*, February 18, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2016/02/18/dhs-places-additional-travel-restrictions-on-libya-somalia-and-yemen/>