



The DACA Myth: What Americans Need to Know

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Introduction

In June 2012, then-President Barack Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to provide a form of de-facto amnesty to certain illegal aliens who arrived in the country before the age of 16. The program gave these illegal aliens temporary, renewable protection from deportation for two-year terms, and also provided them temporary work permits.¹ Overall, nearly 800,000 illegal aliens have taken advantage of the program since its inception.

Former President Donald Trump attempted to phase out DACA beginning in 2017, but constant litigation kept the program alive for the rest of his tenure as president. On President Biden's first day in office, he signed an executive order directing government officials to preserve and strengthen the program.²

DACA Myths

Much of the public narrative surrounding the DACA program was built by open borders proponents and the mainstream media and is constructed of several core myths. These myths include:

- That the program protects “kids” who were brought into the country through no fault of their own.
- Applicants are almost exclusively Hispanic, 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 acceptable, if not honorable.
- They are often portrayed as having skills well beyond what reality suggests, while the media amplifies that perception by focusing on the rare “valedictorian” in order to create the impression this represents the general DACA population. Likewise, others try to suggest that many are proud members of the U.S. military.

- Open borders advocates also claim DACA recipients are needed as critical essential workers.

Of course, open borders advocates work hard to find rare exceptions in an effort to paint a false picture of the DACA population that convinces Americans the program is a benefit to the public.

Political leaders from both parties also commonly claim that it would be cruel to deport anyone covered by the DACA program because these “incredible kids” would be unable to assimilate if they are sent back to their country of birth – after all, the U.S. was “the only home that they have ever known.”³

Focusing on “kids” is a deliberate way to shift attention from the parents who came here illegally with their children seeking legal status. Rewarding minors with amnesty is giving their parents the very thing they broke the law to achieve. DACA absolved illegal aliens of their fundamental responsibilities as parents and instead suggests that if you violate U.S. immigration policy, American society is responsible for fixing the mess you created for yourself and your family.

DACA Facts

From the outset, much of the narrative surrounding the DACA program rang hollow. In a column for *The Washington Post*, Mickey Kaus described it as public-relations-style “hooley.”⁴ Here are a number of reasons why:

- Many of these DACA “kids” were not brought here as young children. Instead, they entered or were smuggled into the United States as older teenagers.
 - In fact, the current average DACA recipient is 27, and as of 2017, 64 percent of all applicants were beyond high school age.⁵
 - 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 prove they were brought into the country without their consent.
 - Anyone who entered the U.S. prior to age 16 – and who was under 31 on June 15, 2012 – could apply.⁶
- Very few are valedictorians:⁷
 - Despite being a requirement for the program, less than half (49 percent) of all DACA beneficiaries have a high school education.
 - 24 percent can be categorized as functionally illiterate in English.
 - Only 46 percent have basic English skills.
- Many have committed serious crimes.

- Of the 756,166 aliens who were approved for DACA, 79,398 (10.4 percent) had at least one prior arrest. Of that total, roughly 16,000 were arrested again at some point after their DACA applications were approved.⁸
- Some of the charges included DUI, theft, assault, burglary, sexual assault, and even murder.
- Fewer than 900 DACA recipients – slightly more than one-tenth of one percent of the total DACA population – joined the military.⁹
- Many DACA recipients are from non-Spanish-speaking countries.¹⁰
 - At least 36 of the nations of origin listed by USCIS are European, including: Portugal, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland.
 - 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 have 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.
- Many DACA recipients are from terror-prone or hostile nations.
 - 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.¹¹
 - At least 60 applicants were accepted from Iran, and more than 2,000 from Venezuela, even though both nations remain overtly hostile to the United States. Since DACA does not require a thorough vetting process, it's impossible to know whether these individuals are fleeing these governments or if they retain sympathies for the failed states.¹²
 - Applications were accepted from Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis even though the Obama administration had placed travel restrictions on nationals from these countries due to terrorism concerns at the time of the program's implementation.¹³

The evidence shows that most DACA recipients are not shining valedictorians or medal-of-honor recipients like open border proponents and the mainstream media commonly suggest. Furthermore, neither are they typically young children who were brought into the country by no choice of their own. Instead, they are mostly adults in their 20s and 30s, many of whom did not even meet the basic qualifications for the program but were offered DACA status anyways. Tens of thousands of recipients are criminals.

Conclusion

The DACA program was poorly constructed and likely illegal.¹⁴ But it was also bad from a long-term policy perspective. Rewarding people who violate our laws only encourages additional lawbreaking. Accordingly, President Trump's decision to cancel the program was a welcome one, and President Biden's subsequent calls to not only preserve the program, but also promise citizenship to DACA recipients is alarming.

Any discussion of amnesty or permanent status for illegal aliens should be put to a halt by Congress. This is especially true while millions of American citizens continue to go without work due to the economic impact of COVID-19, and a humanitarian crisis created by the Biden/Harris administration rages out-of-control at our southern border.

However, even in "normal times," any talk of amnesty only leads to additional illegal immigration. At the very least, strong deterrence measures must be implemented before any consideration of offering permanent status to DACA recipients is entertained. This includes securing our border, making the usage of E-Verify mandatory for all public and private employers, and stepping up worksite enforcement to ensure that employers who try to hire illegal aliens face stiff penalties. Otherwise, masses of illegal aliens will again flock to our country with the hopes of being a part of the next mass amnesty.

The DACA program (along with the perpetually proposed DREAM Act, which offers citizenship to illegal aliens who entered the country as minors) implies that we have a moral obligation to help minors who entered the country illegally. However, this is nothing more than emotional blackmail. If we accept that theory, then what absolves this country from retaining that same moral obligation for those illegal aliens who smuggle their families here in the future. This theory creates an unsustainable merry-go-round of illegal immigration and subsequent amnesties based on flawed morality. The United States is not in a position where we can take in everyone who wishes to come here, and it's unfair to citizens and immigrants alike to pretend otherwise.

References

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¹⁴ Ibid FAIR “DACA, What You Need to Know”