

Undocumented¹ & Unafraid:²
A So[ul]cial History of the Student Immigrant Movement



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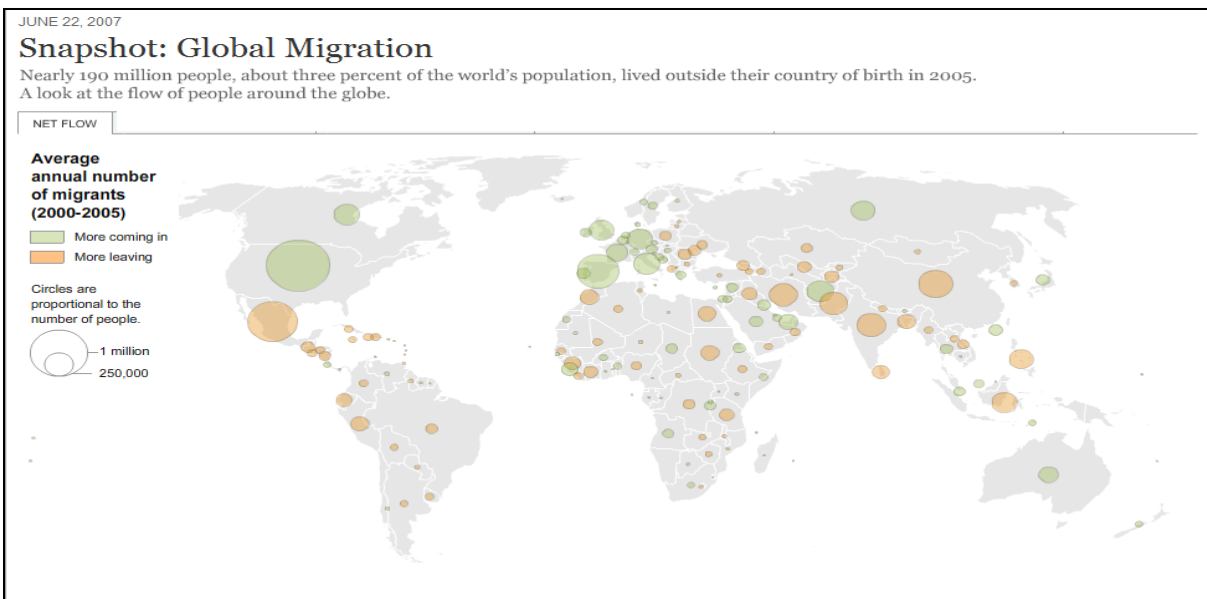
Sociology Senior Exercise
Marco Saavedra
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¹ Undocumented describes immigrants who lack legal status to reside in the United States. It is an identity that student immigrants have appropriated to describe themselves thereby serving as a common, unifying property around which to organize.

² Unafraid refers to the internal change that occurs to an undocumented individual who has decided to “come-out”: purposefully being forthright with their status. It is a personal choice whereby one decides to use one’s own “personal narrative to create political change” (Unzueta, 2010: 1). Unafraid is the rallying call around which the student immigrant movement comes together, strategizes, and acts.

Abstract

The impetus of this research came from wanting to investigate how personal narratives become political using the student immigrant movement as a case study. What my subjects – DREAM Act beneficiaries, or dreamers – and their movement revealed was that the personal is always political: humans are – according to Aristotle - political by nature³, and - according to Marx - products of the society we reproduce.⁴ Further, the poetry and prophecy found in these politicized narratives served – and continue - to recreate the present political reality in a more humane and humanitarian fashion. Sociology, particularly the form practiced by W. E. B. Du Bois, was elemental for these words to be written; as I explore this world through stories (both in the media and on social networks), American culture, politics, and policy, and overridingly: dreams. This senior exercise is dedicated to the close to two hundred million souls (see map below) who strive doggedly and mightily against seemingly indefatigable odds; to the sleepless nights that allowed me to dream; and to the dreams that saved me – and continue to save us - from depression, detention, and deportation. It is to these “dreams in exile” articulated in a fiercely fearless movement, at a most inopportune time, “that we now turn” (McCarthy, 2009: 18).



³ “Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that [hu]mans are by nature a political animal. And they who by nature and not by mere accident is without state, is either a bad [hu]man or above humanity” (Aristotle, *Politics*: 1941: 1129).

⁴ “The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstance” (Marx, 1845: 144)

These are particular narratives seen through the lens of an individual participating at a specific moment in time that if read honestly may better guide your current understanding of our present predicament.

The Problem

“Herein lie” words of an uncompleted movement and unresolved struggle, “that if read with patience,” yet due diligence, shed light on the present condition of two million undocumented youth – so called DREAMers⁵ – that today demand most earnestly and doggedly to be fully recognized as human beings (Du Bois, 1903: 1).

To become an undocumented⁶ immigrant requires very little but is a result of tremendous social, economic, political and environmental forces; I offer my story as example: My family had been farmers for millennia – ever since first setting foot on this continent. We had settled in a small village (*San Miguel Ahuhuititlan*) located in the rugged southern state of Oaxaca where the *Sierra Madre Sur* and *Sierra Madre Oaxaca*, the unconnected southern spine of the Rocky Mountains, unite. The place, until recently, spoke mainly *mixteco* – the native dialect – and possessed little in roads, potable water, and houses with more than a dirt floor – save for the Catholic Church at the center of town. The church and the villager’s last names – for only those that fled to higher uplands were able to keep their native family names - are vestiges of Spanish

⁵ There is an estimated two million undocumented youth population belonging to the age cohort the DREAM Act (the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) addresses, but “given prior educational, poverty, and linguistic trends . . . only about 755,000 – or 38 percent – would likely satisfy the DREAM Act’s postsecondary or military requirements to obtain legal permanent status.” (Migration Policy Institute, 2010:1).

⁶ From here on I will utilize the term undocumented immigrant instead of illegal immigrant for I believe that the way we speak about immigration also affects what is ultimately decided. Further, I agree with other immigrant advocates and Justice Sotomayor that the term “illegal” is pejorative. Moreover, the term is grammatically and legalistically wrong: crossing the border is crime, residing in the United States unlawfully is a civilian offense that is only determined in a court of law. Therefore, labeling someone “illegal” without a trial preempts procedural law and presupposes that they do not qualify for refugee or other protected status.

colonization. My ancestors remained in that village through the fall of the Spanish Empire and Mexico's first hundred years as a sovereign nation.

What finally made us flee north was the start of a new era – unfair and unbalanced neoliberal trade agreements between Mexico and its richer neighbors destroyed our ability to sustain ourselves. Our market – we were told – had become global, and, after a period of transition, would eventually ensure a more vital nation and people: where wealth trickled down to fulfill the needs of all classes. Needless to say, such wealth never came and, moreover, the hunger, debt, and suffering of the nation increased.

I was born on a cold January day, on the dirt floor of my grandmother's house, where only *nana* was present to aid my mother in the delivery. Lacking any soap with which to wash me, my mother laid me on her to avoid the ants which would've been attracted to our blood. Two years later my parents would leave for America, leaving me and my older sister of three behind to be under the care of our maternal grandparents. A year of separation proved too much and eventually my parents thought it best to have their family here in America with some hope of an education and decent living rather than in Mexico where life was increasingly scarce and the outlook grim.

NAFTA and other trade agreements provided and continue to allow free flow of goods and capital across borders;⁷ unfortunately my family's attempt to seek a livelihood which was no longer feasible in their home nation was deemed an unlawful act.⁸ I, at the age of three, knew

⁷ Mexico is currently one of the most accepting nations of neoliberal trade agreements (Villareal, 2010: Summary).

⁸ Additionally the 2,000 mile US-Mexico border is the largest militarized border in the world shared by two countries at peace. The border is a social construction meant largely for political gains rather than effectual policy: more migrants stay in the US as a result, and most inhumanely border crossers suffer increasingly perilous journeys placing them at greater risk from human

nothing of my actions or their repercussions, and today at the age of twenty am no longer ashamed of all past experiences that brought my family and me to this place in time.

However, my story is not unique. In fact, two million narratives share the same plot under similar circumstances. Stories of economic displacement, political asylum, and spiritual refuge are particular to the souls trapped in similar predicaments. What these sojourners have begun to organize around is the DREAM Act - a proposal that would provide temporary legal residence to undocumented youth who came to this nation as minors (before the age of 15), have resided in America for five continuous years, registered for selective service, possess good moral character - with no criminal record - and have graduated from high school or the equivalent. Having met these initial requirements, recipients would have ten years of temporary legal status to complete two years of military service or college; after three additional years of waiting the individual would be eligible to apply for citizenship (National Immigration Law Center, 2010:1). The bill would not provide access to in-state tuition or allow recipients to qualify for federal financial aid. Additionally, the bill only applies for immigrants who are between twelve and thirty years of age on the day of enactment:

Table 1. Estimates of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries Under the Age of 30

	Total	
	Estimate	Share (%)
Already meet requirements for legal permanent residence*		
18-29 with at least an associate's degree	78,000	4
Eligible for conditional nonimmigrant status		
18-29 with a high school diploma/GED	541,000	27
Eligible in the future for conditional nonimmigrant status if obtain a high school degree		
Children under age 18	934,000	47
Not eligible for conditional nonimmigrant status unless obtain a GED		
18-29 with no high school degree	421,000	21
Total	1,974,000	100

* Even beneficiaries who meet the higher education requirements for legal permanent residence upon enactment of the legislation would still have to spend ten years in conditional nonimmigrant status and meet other conditions (i.e., maintaining good moral character and passing required medical and background checks) before becoming eligible to adjust to legal permanent residence.

(from Migration Policy Institute, December 2010)

Upon application the student will receive a conditional “non-immigrant” status for ten years, but would remain ineligible for almost all social services, including provisions included in recent health care legislations (NYSYLC, 2010: 1).

Nearly a decade has passed since the bill was initially proposed, without much success:

Table 2. Legislative History of the DREAM Act

Year	Congressional Session	Bill	Final Action
2001-2002	107th Congress	S.1291; H.R.1918	Introduced
2003-2004	108th Congress	S.1545; H.R.1684	Introduced
2005-2006	109th Congress	S.2075; H.R.5131	2006: Attached to Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (S. 2611): Senate vote 62-36, fails to pass conference committee which would've reconciled the Senate and House bills.
2007-2008	110th Congress	S.774 and S.2205; H.R.1275	Failed to achieve passage by a vote of: 52:44 (10.24.07). June 2007: Attached to Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007: Senate votes failed: 35-61 & 46-53.
2009-2010	111th Congress	?	September 21 2010 – failed to achieve cloture by: <u>56-43</u> December 8, 2010 – Passes the House of Representatives: 216-198 December 18, 2010 – Cloture vote in the Senate fails: 55-41

(from Thomas.gov, 2010)

The students continue to grow in number and strength, yet they prove to be of little or no match to the cowardice and fear hovering in Washington. Years of bickering and blaming have yielded little to no relief while students struggle to continue their education to ultimately be denied access to legal work and have the “doors of Opportunity” shut in their face (Du Bois, 1903: 5).

What these students ask might pique the curiosity of intellectuals, critics, and the opposition alike. What is an American? Who sets the standards? Can our definition of America change? - Shift? Who decided who gets to participate in democracy? Who is represented in the legislature? What views or priorities shape the discourse of our nation? All this and more will

hopefully be addressed in a modest attempt to unearth what it means to live in the most powerful nation at the start of the twenty-first century with little to no rights to claim.⁹

What I ultimately seek to explore, using the student immigrant movement as example, is how a personal¹⁰ narrative become political.¹¹ What are the necessary elements in this particular presentation of self? What is the effectiveness of using one's stories as a tool for recruitment and movement building?

Method

In seeking to interweave narratives within their greater socio-political context I borrow heavily from W. E. B. Du Bois, both in objective and method. Du Bois will serve as the theoretical and methodological framework for my paper. His seminal collection of essays, *Souls of Black Folk*, (1903) contextualizes the Black experience following reconstruction within a moral argument, positing that Blacks have souls, identities, histories, stories, and music worth expressing and recording. Similarly, I hope to use the narratives of undocumented youth to

⁹ Questions loosely based off Du Bois' Criteria for Negro Art (1926):

What do we want? What is the thing we are after? . . . We want to be Americans, full-fledged Americans, with all the rights of other American citizens. But is that all? Do we want simply to be Americans? Once in a while through all of us there flashes some clairvoyance, some clear idea, of what America really is. We who are dark can see America in a way that white Americans cannot. And seeing our country thus, are we satisfied with its present goals and ideals?

¹⁰ In other words: What does it feel to be the actual embodiment of the problem: a being who's self and spirit are continually denied within the greater political and social context? Or as posed by Malcolm X (one of the intellectual heirs to Du Bois): "America's problem is us. We're her problem. The only reason she has a problem is she doesn't want us here. And every time you look at yourself, — a so called [*illegal*] — you represent a person who poses such a serious problem for America because you're not wanted" (*Message to the Grassroots*, 1963).

¹¹ I am adapting Aristotle's definition of humans as political, in other words: individuals are selves incarnated in a being with consequential actions in greater society and therefore a product of society: "[hu]mans are by nature a political animal." (Aristotle, *1941*: 1129).

contextualize their plight, thereby humanizing a discourse that, more often than not, generalizes and overlooks nuances.¹²

In order to do this I will both deconstruct basic elements of “coming-out” narratives which have been posted online or reported in the media. Similarly, I hope to contextualize these autobiographical blogs or biographical sketches within the greater socio-political arena. Ultimately, I hope that a content analysis of these stories reveal a blend of the personal and political and that their effects cover and transgress both arenas. My gateway into this world will be social networks that grant their participants some protection and anonymity in regards to their identity while allowing them to express themselves. This particular phenomenon has grown exponentially since the vote for cloture on the DREAM Act as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill failed in 2007. At that point immigrant youths around the nation consciously decided to speak and advocate for themselves due to the inability of others to fully understand immigrants and immigration – it is to that spirit of “self-consciousness, self-realization, [and] self-respect” that I write (Du Bois, 1903: 9).

At current, student immigrant groups exist in geographic regions with high immigrant populations with internet portals specific to each chapter:

Groups mapped include: New York State Leadership Council , Immigrant Youth and Justice League (Chicago, IL), Students Working for Equal Rights (FL), Kansas-Missouri DREAM Alliance,



¹² With the publication of *Souls of Black Folk*: “Negroes of training and intelligence, who had hitherto pretended to regard the race problem as strictly personal concern and who sought individual salvation in a creed of detachment and silence, found a bond in their common grievances and a language allowing of expression” (Saunders Redding as quoted in *Black Voices*: 493). I similarly, hope to show that it is through the sharing of narratives that the DREAMers have started to organize - through and towards a common goal. Further, I – like Du Bois – hope that if I capture the soul of these stories, the soul of the movement will be revealed.

Student Immigrant Movement (MA), IDEAS @ UCLA (CA), DREAM Team L.A., Dream Activist Virginia, One Michigan, North Carolina DREAM Team, Washington Dream Act coalition, DREAM ACT UT- San Antonio, DREAM Act Indiana, Kentucky Dream Coalition, Pennsylvania Dream Activist, and the Arizona Dream Act Coalition

Concurrently national sites such DREAMActivist.org and theDREAMiscoming.com serve as larger organizing and advocacy websites.

I will follow the examples of Perez (2010) and Field (2006) who blend individual stories within a social context thereby showing how politics affect individuals and vice-versa. As articulated before, Du Bois' ideas of double consciousness (1903) will be interwoven with modern Chican@ ideas of oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 2000) to further explore the psychological effects of living between and betwixt two worlds. The studies of Chaudry (2010) and Cebulko (2010) demonstrate the repercussions of internalizing fear, repression, and uncertainty through interviews; I suspect that the confessional narratives of students will also reveal the dire consequences of experienced oppression. Diaz-Strong (2010) demonstrates the compromises and choices immigrant youth must make when presenting themselves, omitting damaging details and articulating how "American" they are to their audience; in doing so, it is worth exploring if these youth abnegate some of the criticism which years of living in the margins have granted them. Lastly, Olivas (2009) grounds the current student immigrant movement in the wake of larger and longer civil right struggles: *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) granted education from kindergarten through high school¹³ to all students regardless of immigrant status

¹³ As a result the capacity of public universities is determined by the state's student population regardless of their citizenship, therefore undocumented students are taken into account when computing the capacities of these institutions – and do not rob citizens of seats in the academy. The 40 states that currently do not allow for undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition are missing out on significant capital. In 2009 Massachusetts could have reaped in an additional \$2.5 million through the enrollment of its undocumented youth (Young Lives on Hold, 2009: 24).

building on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Fourteenth Amendment clause of equal protection under the law for all “persons.”¹⁴

Looking at the history behind the question of whether undocumented students deserve to be provided an education illuminates our present quandary. In 1975 the state of Texas made it law for undocumented children to pay a \$1,000 yearly fine for their public education through twelfth grade. The Supreme Court took up a case disputing this statute in *Plyer vs. Doe* (1982). Ultimately, the majority – achieved by a 5 to 4 vote – decided that the Texas ordinance was in violation of the fourteenth amendment. Justice Brennan noted in the majority opinion that under equal protection guarantees to all people a state could not “enact a discriminatory classification ‘merely by defining a disfavored group as nonresident’” (as cited in Olivas, 2004: 442). Brennan did not agree with the primary argument presented by the state positing that the fines imposed upon undocumented Mexican children were necessary to maintain the states’ “limited resources for the education of its lawful residents” (as cited in Olivas, 2004: 442). That argument was mitigated by the majority’s primary concern: “the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries, surely adding to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare, and crime” (as cited in Olivas, 2004: 443).¹⁵ The dichotomy between rights held for citizens and non-citizens (though still persons) is more clearly seen in *Demore v. Kim* (2003)¹⁶

¹⁴ Following the Civil War Congress adopted the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution, the due process and equal protection clauses read: “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of **citizens** of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any **person** of *life, liberty, or property*, without due process of law; nor deny to any **person** within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (1868, emphasis mine).

¹⁵ The fear of creating an under class of individuals within our society is the same reason why President Obama supports the DREAM Act (Obama, 2008: 1).

¹⁶ “The case was brought by Hyung Joon Kim, a lawful permanent resident who was convicted in state court of first-degree burglary and petty theft. He was then detained by Immigration &

where: “The Supreme Court upheld the use of mandatory detention for certain non-citizen until deportation proceedings are over. Writing for the majority, Chief Justice William Rehnquist quoted the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act: ‘Congress regularly makes rules that would be unacceptable if applied to citizens’” (as cited in *Deportation Nation*: 2010).

What one ultimately must ask is: why must there be such a clear bifurcation between rights granted to citizens but not to immigrants. Or, why must one be a citizen of the United States to be given certain rights? Who makes these decisions, and under what circumstances? Is there enough justification for this divide? Or, is this the latest format of a recurring problem in American society? When will we truly be of a land that promises, allows, and grants: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” to all (Jefferson et al., 1776: 1)?

Aware of this, participants of the student immigrant movement have consciously appropriated language from the GLBTQQ and women liberation movements to contextualize their own struggle within the greater quest for natural, civil, and human rights.

This present plight is of most concern to you and me, oh “gentle reader,” for the tragedy of these young folks is a tragedy of our age, holding ransom our collective humanity (Du Bois, 1903: 1). Lastly, it is worth repeating that you, I, and them – we – are all “bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh” of the same human body and that our communal subsistence depends on whole and unequivocal justice (Genesis 2:23). Now that I have laid down before you the foundation of

Naturalization Services (INS) under a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that allows the government to take into custody any immigrant convicted of an aggravated felony. Kim argued he posed no danger to society and was not a flight risk; the Supreme Court overturned the lower court appeals ruling that “INS had not justified his detention without bail” (*Deportation Nation*, 2010).

our current crisis let us delve deeper into the pain and beauty which dreamers experience each and every day.

END (*or, Education not Deportation Campaigns*)¹⁷

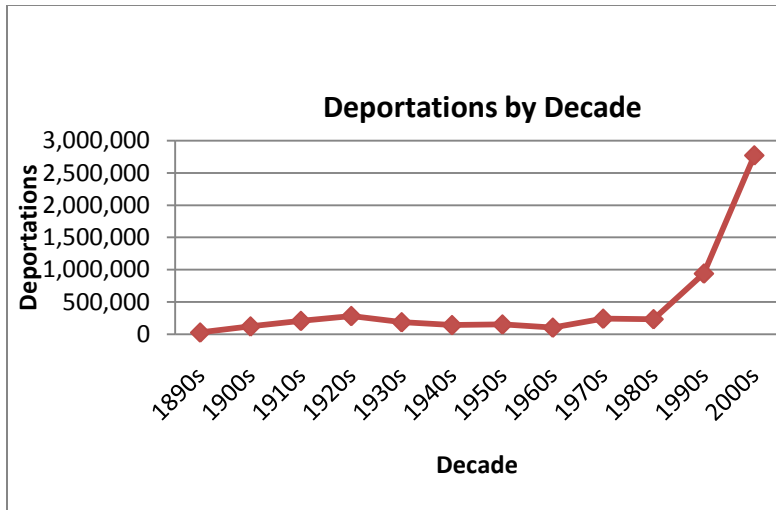
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
(Eliot, *1943*: 59)

Some would say that we would have never have come out of the shadows had the rapid detention and deportation of our people not escalated following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.¹⁸

Decade	Deportations
1890s	25,642
1900s	119,769
1910s	206,021
1920s	281,464
1930s	185,303

¹⁷ The way these campaigns work is that every time a Dream Act eligible youth is detained and placed in deportation proceedings a campaign begins seeking to obtain deferred action on their case. Social networks, blogs, e-mails, text messages are all crucial to disseminate information on the latest victim. Concurrent petitions are held online, which are then sent to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Homeland Security, the Dream student's local Senators and Representatives all asking for relief. These same officials are also targeted through phone calls, faxes, and e-mails to build pressure for a favorable response. Additionally, social media helps efforts at a grass-roots level as locals become organized around an individual and provides an avenue of publicity even if traditional press is not around to report. Lastly, the stories and courage of these students are posted on-line to build coalitions and spread the word on the Dream Act and the youth it will benefit.

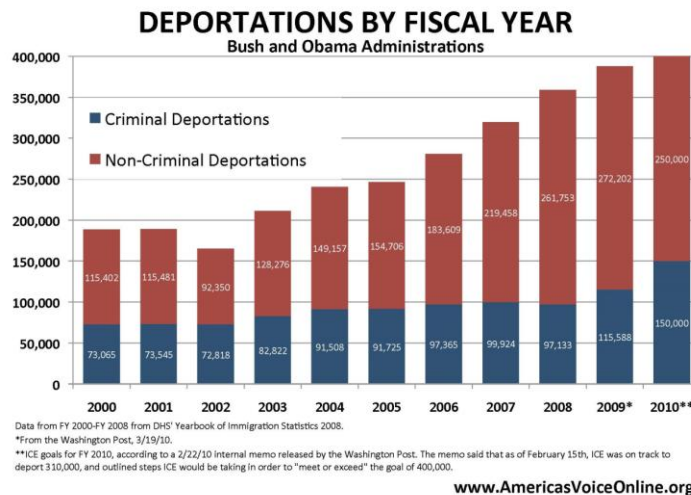
¹⁸ The largest reassignments of government officials occurred in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks when the Department of Homeland Security was created. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) was transferred from the Department of Justice to this new secretariat and renamed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (the largest investigate department in the government with the broadest authority and the largest law enforcement agency in the country, Customs and Border Patrol: 58,575 members) (Immigration and Customs Enforcement: 2010).



1940s	141,112
1950s	150,472
1960s	101,205
1970s	240,217
1980s	232,830
1990s	939,749
2000s	2,771,297

(Department of Homeland Security [DHS] Statistics)

But truths are truths, and sometimes they must be accessed through remembrance of the past in order to understand the present. Between 1892 and 2000 2,623,784 people were forcibly deported from the U.S., though in that same period close to 41 million immigrants opted for voluntary departure (DHS Statistics, Immigration Statistics: 2010). Since 2001 numbers continue to escalate; approximately [2,771,297](#) deportations have occurred in the first decade of the 21st century, over passing the sum total of the previous century:



In regards to the DREAM Act, the deportation proceedings of charismatic leaders led to the paradoxical building of coalitions and relationships which detention is contrary to. Such was the case of Alonso Chehade, a soccer player, student in marketing, and graduate from the University of Washington. With the Washington Dream Act coalition, Alonso was able to obtain deferral of his deportation through an internet campaign which instructed participants to fax, e-mail, and phone-call Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials and legislators on Alonso's behalf. This experienced is shared by Walter Lara from Miami-Dade County, Florida (SEIU; speaking at a DREAM Act mock graduation in Washington DC¹⁹ on June 23, 2009, before hundreds of youths, Lara asked: "What did I do wrong? What could I have changed to avoid this predicament? - I cannot find an answer, the only thing I see is the DREAM Act . . . keep your head up high because even in those twenty days in detention I was still free, it doesn't matter what they tell you, you belong here" (Lara, 2009).

Similar END (Education not Deportation) campaigns have expedited coalition building in Grosse Pointe Farms, MI, through the campaign for Herta Lusho, who proclaimed at a congressional hearing on October 23rd, 2009: "I'm just one of these stories – a typical story – there's thousands of stories out there just as mine"(Lusho: 2009). Successful campaigns have won deferrals for: Benita Veliz a double major in Sociology and Biology from San Antonio, TX (2009); Eric Balderas, detained during the summer of 2010 following his first year at Harvard College; Ivan Nikolov in Roseville, Michigan (Fall 2010) who married his fiancé upon release, but separated from his mother due to her deportation, could only communicate through Skype during the ceremony; and Hector Lopez (Portland, OR) whose asylum-seeking case is still pending but was allowed to return home in time for the 2010/2011 holiday season.

¹⁹ These mock graduations have been taking every place every summer during the past 9 years, each year they draw increasing media attention and turnout (Ricard, 2009).

Most recently, the campaign for Bernard Pastor in Cincinnati has inspired the predominantly white working class community of Reading, OH (the home of acting Republican Speaker of the House Boehner). During his month long detention Bernard motivated thousands by consoling them with his deep spirituality: “Not a leaf falls from a tree that God does not know about” (Pastor as quoted by Fraccaro, 2010). Bernard was released on December 17, 2010.

Still to be determined is the case of Selvin, Arevalo in Portland, ME, a campaign that suffers due to the lack of immigrants in the city and state. Thankfully Selvin’s campaign has drawn out-of-state attention to focus on both Senator Collins and Snowe and hopefully attain their support for the DREAM Act.

Even though Dreamers must pay out-of-state tuition in 40 states (though they might have completed their schooling in that same state)²⁰ – which may be up to four times the cost of in-state tuition, forcing them to register later than their peers, and allowing less opportunity and flexibility in course scheduling. And, though they are ineligible for federal aid and most private scholarships; and despite the fact that 40% of Dreamers live in poverty and belong to households that make 40% less in income than US citizens or permanent legal residents (Passel, 2005).²¹ And even though 65,000 to 70,000 Dreamers graduate from high school faced with these circumstances allowing for only 5 to 10% of them to continue onto college; there are countless of

²⁰ Only ten states allow for undocumented youth to pay in-state tuition if they meet residency requirements through legislation overriding Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA): California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin (NILC, 2010: 1).

²¹ Among the Dreamers without a high school degree the median household income is between \$30,000 and 32,000 (about 1.2 million – over half of - Dreamers live close to the poverty line). Among those who’ve completed high school (18-34 years of aged) 85% of males and 62% of females work, coupled with ineligibility to PELL grants (which can meet up to \$5,500 of the \$7,000 of an in state-college tuition) (Campus Progress: 2010).

stories of youths excelling in the classrooms of America's most prestigious universities (NILC Summary, 2010: 2).

Dan-el Padilla grew up poor and, at times, homeless, yet he exhibited great promise as a child and with the help of a mentor was able to enroll in Collegiate High School and then Princeton University. Through a dogged work ethic he acquired mastery of Latin and Greek and fluency in French. Proscribed to domestic research, Padilla researched the "historical and social context" of four Roman marble stones, delving into their "paleography and iconography" while conducting scientific analysis on to their compositional make-up and origins (Quiñones, 2006:1). Having graduated salutatorian of his class at Princeton, delivering the commencement address – as is tradition – in Latin, he has been heralded as one of the greatest classicist of his generation and is currently continuing his studies at Oxford; although his return to and future in America is uncertain. After appearing on the cover of the Wall Street Journal on May 19, 2006, Padilla and his story became another billboard for the nascent movement; and as a trailblazer, Padilla has continued to share his testimony to gain support and allies.

Similarly, the April 2010 edition of the Harvard Crimson featured an article on its undocumented students, one of whom stated: "silence means that I do not exist" (Pezza, 1). Another undocumented student added "I have spent the last 15 years of my life in prison, and I am only 23 years old" (1). All ask: "if you hide who you are; then do you become what you're not?" (IYJL: 2010). Another youth added "being undocumented is a life of constant fear . . . It's a life of uncertainty all the time, and it's a life of no future" (Pezza, 2). Ultimately their narratives reveal unparalleled resilience and hope in face of daunting adversity: "there's something empowering about working hard for the sake of working . . . you're contributing to the

cause by not giving in to the idea that because you're a victim of circumstance you have to remain that way" (2).

Depression,²² Detention, Deportation²³

Sadly, the tolls that oppression renders upon one human body can be seen in the story of Gustavo Rezende who committed suicide at the age of nineteen upon mounting fears of detention and deportation while facing the cruel reality that he was responsible for the sustenance of his household. Rezende's court case for driving violations (because his lack of legal status would not permit him to apply for a driver's license) was scheduled for March 17, 2010, a couple of days after her committed suicide. Furthermore he feared returning to Brazil and had wished,

²² One student – Angel – described his funk as a condition in which he continually feels “little,” experiencing difficulty to even look others in the eye. This sentiment is felt day-to-day as he continually fears if immigration officials will separate him from his communities. But ultimate the fire in him has energized him to work with the California DREAM Network with the security that “justice is what love looks like in public” (Cornel West, as cited by Angel: 2010)

²³ “To deport the estimated 10 million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States would cost an estimated \$206 billion over five years resulting in a \$2.6 trillion loss to overall US economy for the next 10 years” (Center for American Progress, 2010: Summary); a plan not all-together feasible but proponents believe in “enforcement through attrition” or, in making conditions so intolerable that immigrants would voluntarily return to their nation of origin. On the other hand, the legalization of these immigrants through comprehensive immigration reform would cut the federal deficit by \$1.5 trillion (Center for American Progress: Summary).

unsuccessfully, to join the US Army; conscribed to a job at a food service station and with a pending court case looming, Rezende opted to take his life. One thousand people attended his wake (Crocetti, 2010).

Perhaps the best arbiters on the policy of mass deportation and policing are the children. One such second grade child confronted Michelle Obama on May 25, 2010 stating: ““My mom ... she says that Barack Obama is taking everybody away that doesn’t have papers” and continuing by saying that her mom did not possess legal status (as quoted by Johnson, 2010). Earlier this year, the Urban Institute published a study on the psychological toll draconian immigration enforcement exacted on children, entitled: “Facing our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement.” The report tried to gauge the emotional repercussions that the “5.5 million children (75% of whom are US citizens) of unauthorized immigrants” might experience under current enforcement procedures (Chaudry, 2010: *Abstract*). One particular interview worth meditating on describes the relationship between a mother without legal status and a her five year old daughter fearful of her mother’s disappearance after witnessing a worksite raid. The mother describes the child as:

really sad at school . . . her teacher says that she sometimes sees her, well, sad and that she doesn’t want to pay attention to what she’s doing . . . and she gets home and tells me that she has a lot—a lot of sadness in her eyes, she tells me. And I tell her, “And why?” and she tells me, “Because I know that they are going to take you, mommy, I know that the police is going to take you and I don’t want it,” she says, “I don’t want it,” she says, “and if we go, don’t leave me here, don’t leave me here. I want to go with you.” (Chaudry et al, 49-50)

Perhaps undocumented folks reached a critical mass of fear, isolation, and depression that amounted to an unparalleled movement, one that was “willing to risk its future, because the present felt unbearable” (Matos in interview at the onset of the Trail of DREAMs with Preston, 2010: 1).

2010: Almost 400,000 Deportations

December 2009: Gutierrez (D-IL) introduces Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation in the House of Representatives

March 10, 2010: Chicago's Coming Out: Undocumented & Unafraid in front of Immigration & Custom Enforcement Offices.

April, 2010: Durbin & Lugar ask for an end to the deportation of DREAMers

May 1, 2010: End of Trail of DREAMs in Washington, D.C. after 1500 mi. 500,000 rally nation wide; 35 immigration advocates arrested

May 29, 2010: Severely Anti-Immigrant SB 1070 signed into law in AZ

June 2010: Obama and Democrats approve \$600 million towards border enforcement.

July 21: 21 Dreamers Arrested in Washington, D.C. after 3 weeks of teach-ins in front of the White House

September 2010 DREAM Act amendment to the Department of Defense Budget failed by 56:43 votes.

December, 2010: The Congressional Budget Office announces that the DREAM Act will reduce the federal deficit by \$1.4 Billion

January 1, 2010: Start of Trail of Dreams; Miami, FL.

March 21, 2010: 250,000 – 500,000 people March for America and Immigration Reform

April, 2010: Schumer & Graham present Comprehensive Immigration Reform Blueprint

May 17, 2010: Phoenix 5 Sit-in at McCain's office; 56th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Ed.

Summer of Hunger Strikes

65 Hours: Kentucky, Bunning (R-KY)
7 days: Michigan, Stabenow (D-MI),
10 days: Schumer (D-NY)
13 days, 1 hospitalization: Kagan (D- NC)
15 days: Feinstein (D-CA)
37 days: Hutchinson (R-TX)

July 29: SB 1070 partially enforced in AZ

October, 2010: Menendez (NJ-D) introduces Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation in the Senate after Republicans abandon collaborative talks.

Intensified lobbying by DREAM Act advocates leads up to the **December 18th** vote on the measure as a stand-alone bill resulting in a **55-41** vote which is unable to overcome a Republican filibuster.

January 2011: DREAM Act students mentioned in the State of the Union Address, President Obama favors a renewed grassroots effort for the measure. Student groups shift their focus to state legislatures as the new Republican controlled House and increased numbers in the Senate makes any favorable federal legislation unlikely.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come (Hugo quoted by King: 1964)

At the completion of the first decade in the 21st century the outlook was increasingly grim for immigrants in America. Mass deportations not only continued under the Obama administration, but actually increased, at a rate of approximately 1,100 deportations per day during the 2010 fiscal year;²⁴ resulting in overriding wave of depression felt especially violently within immigrant youth (Avebdano, 2010).

On **January 1** four immigrant students began the 1,500 mile Trail of DREAMs from Miami-Dade to DC - in spite of possible arrest and deportation due to the publicity of their event - knowing full well that “courage faces fear and thereby masters it” (Dr. King as quoted by Anonymous, 2010). The Trail harkened, in name, to the forceful removal of Native Americans through the Trail of Tears and to the Underground Railroad as these youths were dependent on the hospitality of communities along the way to ensure their success. The walkers include: Gaby Pacheco who has witnessed the deportation of family members since she began speaking up for immigrants; she has two educational degrees that would allow her pursue her passion to work with special-needs children; Carlos Roa who joined the movement after losing his mother to cancer and failing to enlist in the military, he is pursuing undergraduate studies in architecture; Juan Rodriguez is the only student on the journey with legal status, but joins his partner, Felipe Matos

²⁴ “The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) says they expect to remove around 400,000 people from the U.S. in 2010. This is 10 percent more than the number of people that was deported under the Bush administration in 2008, and 25 percent more than the number of deportations in 2007. According to President Obama, the increased number of deportations is part of a plan to [reform](#) immigration laws” (US Immigration News, 2010)

who carries with him his mother's words: "if you want to help the world you must work until your hands bleed."²⁵

On **March 10**²⁶ five undocumented youth pronounced before national media, in front of and Immigration and Customs Headquarters at Federal Plaza in Chicago Illinois, that they were "undocumented and unafraid."²⁷ Quoting the words of Harvey Milk, Tania Unzueta read:

Brothers and sisters! We must come out,²⁸ come out to your relatives, to your friends – if indeed they are your friends – to your neighbors, to your fellow workers, to the people who work where you eat and shop, but once and for all let's break down the myths, destroy all the lies and distortions (Unzueta, 2010),

Hugo retold stories of his youth growing up in a neighborhood of predominately Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants in which he would daily gather his siblings to pray that their mother not be detained in a raid. David spoke of memories of Mexico which were so distant that they no

²⁵ Current immigration laws allow for spouses to petition one another. Unfortunately, since gay marriage is not recognized, and without the Uniting American Families Act queer individuals can not petition for a loved one.

²⁶ March 15-21st 2010 marked the first nationally coordinated coming out week. The first DREAMer I ever heard share his coming-out story was Matias Ramos, 25, who having fought and won his deportation case in January 2010 still had pending visits with immigration officials leaving his future completely uncertain – he has been granted a working permit in the meantime. Matias spoke about his experiences at a DC premier of the "Papers: Stories of undocumented youth" a film which portrays the effects of our current immigration system on minors. Originally from Argentina, Matias graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science.

²⁷ **Unafraid:** Often felt as the mantra of the movement, is the liberation that occurs through unfeeling all the sentiments of fear one is socialized into having growing up undocumented. This notion is coupled with and contextualized within story-sharing to undergird the movement and further promote the cause. If feeling unafraid marks the turning-point of a dreamer decided on becoming political, then coming-out through story sharing is the evolving action that corresponds.

²⁸ **Coming Out:** "means telling a friend, a loved one, a classmate, a teacher something that otherwise you would've kept private; it's using our lives and stories as a political tool for change. For us it is being undocumented and we are inspired by a legacy of other movements from past immigrant rights marches, to civil rights, to gay liberation" (Unzueta, 2010)

longer seemed his. Uriel spoke of all his work being stripped from his hands as he was continually denied financial aid from each college that granted him acceptance. Another David spoke about lacking the ability to even possess a library card due to being undocumented since the age of one, and ended with a call that asked all who were in his position to be activists, and all allies to become advocates. Irreri Unzueta (sister of Tania) spoke of hating to live between the life she wants to have and the condition she is forced into, resolving that she will have both her family and her dreams in her future. The most memorable words came at the end of Reyna Wences deliberation, crying: “I’m doing this for you – for all of my people - I will not hide in the shadows any longer; I’m a human being, I deserve to be happy” (Wences: 2010).

On **March 21** two student immigrant leaders spoke at “March for America” the largest single mobilization in the US since the Obama Inauguration in 2009 (Dinan, 2010: 1). Over a quarter million people heard Carlos Saavedra (leader in the Student Immigrant Movement in Boston prior to becoming national organizer for United We Dream) tell about early community action with the immigrant community incited by a raid of over 361 people in 2007. Tania Unzueta (founder of the Immigrant Youth & Justice Leaguer) spoke about her organizing in Chicago begun after immigrant youth discovered their power following the successful campaign to free one of theirs, Rigo Padilla, from detention. Carlos related a story of a seven year old in New Bedford, MA who speaking for his undocumented father stood up to a police officer and said “my father is an honest man, he has committed no crime, don’t break my family apart!” (Saavedra, 2010).

On **April** the New York State Youth Leadership Council began its version of the Trail of Dreams to be completed at the same time as the Miami contingent. Their journey from New York City to Washington DC would yield a number of co-sponsors within the House of

Representatives. Additionally the students stopped at college campuses (including Princeton and Swarthmore) to raise awareness on the issue and similarly depended on the hospitality of strangers to ensure their safe passage. Gabe Martinez has been waiting and working for the DREAM Act for the past 10 years. Marisol Ramos was born in the Bronx, NY but is the child of undocumented parents surrounded by undocumented immigrants as both her parents and partner reside in the US without legal status. Martin Lopez is the son of naturalized immigrants who having heard of the plight of dreamers while studying at Columbia University was moved to serve as the youth organizer for the New York State Leadership Council; and Jose Luis, 30, who has aged-out of eligibility for the DREAM Act but still aspires to become a guidance counselor, so that other's receive the encouragement he was deprived of.

On **May 1** the Trail of Dreams completed its journey; speaking at immigrant communities along the way, informing immigrants of their rights, and speaking up to local agencies wrongfully enforcing immigration law, or unfairly detaining immigrants, or failing to protect immigrant communities. In Georgia the Dreamers, in solidarity with the NAACP, counter-protested a KKK rally denouncing: immigrants, sex offenders, and asking for prayers to be reinstated in schools. Upon arriving in DC the walkers were joined by hundreds who completed the last leg of the journey into the city. Standing before the White House the dreamers left their shoes behind, signifying the end of the journey. After the youth-led rally, at mid-afternoon, 35 individuals including, community leaders, clergy, union workers, citizen students, immigrant leaders and Congressman Gutierrez conducted civil disobedience in front of the White House leading to their arrest. The protesters read shirts reading: "arrest me not my friends." On this day nearly half a million pro-immigrant demonstrators rallied in support of humane immigration legislation around the nation (Reform Immigration FOR America, 2010).

However, there were little advancements on the legislative front,²⁹ so dreamers decided to escalate their actions, implementing unprecedented methodologies. On **May 17** five undocumented youth conducted a sit-in inside of Senator John McCain's Phoenix's office to urge the senator to co-sponsor the bill, as he had done in 2007. This was the first time that undocumented youth had conducted civil disobedience – placing their selves in peril of being deported. One, Mohammad Abdollahi a queer immigrant from Iran and cofounder of DreamActivist.org and OneMichigan risked exile to his native country making him subject to the death penalty. Abdollahi, was joined by Lizbeth Mateo (DREAM Team LA cofounder) who has aspirations of law school but following her graduation from CSU Northridge has only been able to obtain employment as a waitress and has placed her ineffectual college degree in a shoe box; Yahaira Carrillo (Kansas-Missouri Dream Alliance, co-founder), who has had to subsidize her education at Rockhurst University by working, as a result it has taken her over seven years to complete her undergraduate degree, Tania Unzueta (Immigrant Youth and Justice League, co-founder) who despite her intelligence demurred six years to apply to graduate school and has continually had to lie about the limitations her lack of status proscribes her to, and Raul Alcaraz (Phoenix native, and the only protester with legal status) (Preston, 2010: 1).³⁰

²⁹ It was during the summer of 2010 that Arizona's SB 1070 bill went into effect deputizing local police to serve as federal immigration agents and criminalizing persons for being in the United States unlawfully. On the day the bill was to go an effect Judge Bolton issued a partial injunction, limiting the bill's effect. However, Arizona remains the epi-center of the immigrant right's battle accounting for approximately half of all deportations. Additionally congress, without hesitation, approved \$600 million for border enforcement without any advancement on a bipartisan Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR) bill, which eventually lost its sole Republican representative – Lindsay Graham – thereby demurring any hopes of a CIR bill in the near future.

³⁰ Raul Alcaraz would ultimately withdraw his support for the DREAM ACT. In an open letter to the DREAM movement entitled: "My Painful Withdrawal of Support for the DREAM Act" released on September 17, 2010, Alcaraz criticizes the Democratic Party's approach of

On **May 14**, 21 Kentucky residents begin a 65 hour fast to place pressure on Senator Bunny (R-KY) to co-sponsor the DREAM Act. On **May 19** seven students enlisted a seven day hunger strike to pressure Stabenow (D-MI) to cosponsor the DREAM Act (The Dream is Coming, 2010). On **May 20** Dream Team LA successfully blocks off Wilshire Avenue, one of the busiest intersection in Los Angeles leading to the arrest of nine citizen allies (Sapinoso). On **June 1** students begin a 10 day hunger-strike in New York City outside of Senator Schumer's midtown Manhattan office to pressure the Senator to champion the Dream Act as a standalone measure outside of Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation which increasingly looked less feasible without any Republican collaboration (NYSYLC: 2010). Concluding the fast one student stated: "for a long time I had felt fear and shame; fear of being deported, ashamed of being undocumented, but no more" (Huff-Hannon, 2010). On June 15, 2010 three members from the North Carolina DREAM Team begin a 13 day hunger strike outside of Kay Hagan's office (D-NC); the strike unexpectedly ended once one of the participants fainted. Another stiker, Rosario Lopez is a graduate of the University North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a single mother and aspires to continue her graduate studies in science research.

The summer of 2010 showed the ever increasing organization that these students possessed. For the first three weeks of July the Dreamers established their own university, DREAM University outside of the White House; conducting teach-ins and other public events to inform the public (Dream University, 2010). On **July 21** twenty one immigrant youth risked arrest and deportation following sit-ins of civil disobedience in the Hart Senatorial Building. Prior to their arrests, students Senators visited Menendez (D-NJ), Reid (D-NV), Schumer (D-

attaching the DREAM Act to the Department of Defense Spending Bill, in, what to him seemed, a cheap political move that ultimately furthers American imperialism.

NY) and McCain (R-AZ) seeking commitment from them so that the DREAM Act be brought up as a stand-alone measure – charges were eventually dropped for most, others received light restrictions; none were placed in deportation proceedings.³¹ To this day the small but persistent chant of a group of young marchers ring in my ears:

*One, two, three, four:
We don't want to mop the floor!*

*Five, six, seven, eight:
I just want to graduate!*

Table 3. Chart of Immigrant Youth who performed Civil Disobedience on July 21, 2010 placing them at risk of arrest and deportation.

³¹ During the sit-ins DREAMers receive heavy criticism from mainstream immigrant groups who remain strong advocates for the ever elusive comprehensive immigration reform instead of gradual changes. Ultimately both factions were proved wrong as no favorable federal legislation resulted in 2010, however the continual bickering and fracturing could not have helped a people and movement already at the margins (Gutierrez: 2010).

Name	Education	Regional Group	Reason
Diana Martinez	North Kansas City High School/Kansas City Community College	KS-MO Dream Alliance	Dreams of being a PhD in anthropology.
Laura Lopez	Graduate of UC - Santa Cruz	CA DREAM Team	Arrived to the US on the 4 th of July.
Sonia Guinasaca	Hunter College (CUNY)	NYSYLC:	“Fighting for her right to use her degree” after being told that immigrants don’t belong in college, she is a semester away from completed BA degree in Latin@ and Gender Studies.
Jose Franco	Western International High School	1Michigan, cofounder	Has been waiting since the age of 2 and most recently successfully organized a campaign that won Ivan Nikolov (a fellow Dreamer) deferral on his deportation.
Nico Gonzalez	Benito Juarez Academy High School	IYJL	Came to the United States at the age of 6 following his mother. On January, 2009 Nico’s mother passed away due to years of working in factories under unsanitary conditions. Since that moment Nico decided to stand up and speak out, not wanting to face the same end his mother had, and hoping to fully enact his dreams of guidance counseling. He is done waiting.
Reyna Wences	University of Illinois	IYJL	Once consider suicide as a coffin would be cheaper than college without access to in-state tuition.
Erika Andiola	ASU graduate (psychology)	AZ DREAM Team	Stood up at a time of anti-immigrant sentiments due in part to growing nativism disgruntled with the inability of government to alleviate the hurt incurred by the economic crisis. Has spoken to the chief sponsor of SB 1020, Russell Peirce and to Diane Sawyer on the law’s effect on immigrants in AZ.
Dulce Matuz	ASU	AZ DREAM Team	Has a degree in electrical engineering and is a licensed realtor: “These are my dreams. I cannot live in political limbo for the rest of my life.”
Jose Torres	?	Immigrant Families and Students in the Struggle (TX)	Needs freedom to work to alleviate mother’s ailing kidneys.
Lulu Martinez	City Colleges of Chicago	IYJL	Wants to travel the world and still see her family again.
Uriel Sanchez	DePaul	IYJL	Speaking on freedom states :“When we fail to speak up, when we fail to criticize, when we fail to stand up for our ideals, and when we fail to improve the lives of those around us; it is a far greater blow to the freedom, the decency, and to the justice which truly represents this nation we call home.”

Jesus Morales	Benito Juarez Academy High School	IYJL	Whose “pursuit of dreams and goals in school and society” has been prevented by a social security number.
David Morales	City Colleges of Chicago	IYJL	Is exiled in the land he calls home & whose memories of Mexico no longer seem his.
Ricardo Quinones	Raymore-Peculiar Senior High	KSMODA	Whose parents sacrificed everything for: “First they brought him to this country to save his life (he was declared a probable dead infant in Mexico). Then, in the U.S., when Ricardo was having trouble trying to get into college and afford it, his parents told him ‘it does not matter if we break every bone in our body, or if our muscle ache everyday from pain, what matters is that we get you an education. We will scrape up enough money any way we can to pay for your college.’”
Isabel Castillo	Graduate of Easter Mennonite University	founder of DreamActivist Virginia	Once asked: “wouldn’t you do anything for the well-being of your child? even if it required crossing a border?”
Myrna Orozco	?	KSMODA	Whose teacher’s want to clone
Ileri Unzueta	?	IYJL	Wishes to no longer continually ask “will I see my family again” and therefore: will “break laws that are breaking her” in order that she and others can “be the person they want to become.”
Edy Dominguez	?	IYJL	Serves as a mentor in his community: “has been involved in Back of the Yards Neighborhood, Holy Cross/Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, the Marimba Ensemble of Holy Cross, and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Fraternity. His little brothers and dozens of young people in Chicago look up to Edy.”
Tania Unzueta		co-founder IYJL	Original poster child for the dream act 10 years ago when it was known as the CARE Act and is done: “lying about the limitations” (March 10).
Rosario Lopez	UNC	NC DREAM Team	National Phone Banking coordinator for United We Dream and survived a thirteen day hunger-strike
Antonia-		Midwest	Whose dream is coming

(Compiled by De la Fuente, 2010)

On **July 22, following the arrest of 21 immigrant youth**, a 10 day hunger strike begins to put pressure on Diane Feinstein (D - CA) to take personal initiative and champion the bill.

On **September 21**, the DREAM Act fails to receive cloture as an amendment to the Department of Defense spending bill; the measure fails to achieve cloture by a 56-43 vote.

Throughout actions students are adamant in calling solely for the DREAM Act, in opposition to longer established immigrant advocates. It is through their persistent action that the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Reform Immigration for America, Fair Immigration Reform Movement all agree to support the bill as a stand-alone measure.

On **November 9**, students at the University of Texas begin a hunger strike that lasts 37 days, includes civil disobedience, lobbying and press conferences; the strike ends on December 19, one day after the latest DREAM Act vote. **November 17** six undocumented students perform a sit-in at Senator McCain's office, because what was once promised cannot be delayed further. One young participant summed up their boldness in his words: "I am queer, undocumented, and unafraid" (Gutierrez, 2010)

During a month-long escalation (from mid-November until mid-December), which included an increased presence in Washington DC (mimicking their summer campaign), the Dreamers were optimistic about the bill being brought up as a stand-alone measure during the 2010 lame-duck session (before the new, more conservative, legislature was sworn in). During this month the formation of a Dream Army (focused on Dreamers willing to enroll in the Armed forces) took effect. Lobbying by students increased, as the United WE Dream network (headquartered in Washington DC) implored students to drop everything to come to join the action in DC.

On **December 8** the House of Representatives voted in favor of the DREAM Act: 216-198. The vote is historic as the bill had never been voted in the House of Representatives before the Senate. The historic nature of this vote is amplified due to the fact that it was the first time an immigration bill championed by immigrants passed either legislative chamber.

Closing in on the December vote the CBO announces that the DREAM Act would cut the federal deficit by \$1.4 Billion.³² During the week preceding the Senate's vote a daily march around the legislative offices would take place. Each day the numbers increased. On the day of the final march (Friday, **December 17**) Dreamers were joined by a large Interfaith religious contingent that walked, lobbied, prayed and conducted a press conference along their side.

On **December 18, 2010** the cloture vote scheduled in the Senate, measure failed by a vote of 55-41. But the dreams continue.

Deferred Dreams:

Responding to the most recent failure of the DREAM Act Reyna Wences wrote:

I am undocumented, unafraid, & unapologetic: If you ever talked down to us, if you ever said [the] DREAM Act was not what we need, if you ever used us, if you criticized it, let me tell you are just as responsible as the Republicans and Democrats for what happened. And you're are just as bad as anti-immigrants. And you better know I'm coming after you" (2010).

October 25, 2010: On a weekend with hundreds of peers interested in promoting interfaith work through service at our respective campuses I was denied entry into the White House due to a number. I was denied, and as such, my humanity was denied. This particular incident highlights the denial my self has experienced for the past twenty years of waiting. Waiting for the tides to change, waiting for more amenable circumstances – to no avail. I was the only person on that tour that was turned away – exiled from the administrative seat of power to which I had pledged allegiance in my youth. And with some resignation, but greater resolve I ventured into the city. Observed it from the tower of the old post office, continued onto Columbia Heights and ended in Meridian Hill Park or Malcolm X Park, depending on your political leanings. I discovered one

³² “DREAM Act would reduce the deficit by \$1.4 billion over the next 10 years. As mentioned earlier, deporting the 1.1 million youths whom the Congressional Budget Office has concluded would qualify for benefits under the bill would cost taxpayers about \$25.5 billion over five years” (Congressional Budget Office, 2010: 1)

friend's leaving the city, exhausted by the sinusoidal fluctuations of politics and of a teenager who – despite the limitations of being undocumented - was taking courses at a Latino youth center and will hopefully enroll at local community college at the start of next year – truly the dreamers count their gains in inches while the world measures our lag in miles. And at the conclusion of my walking I came across Whitman's words carved in Du Pont circle:

*Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals,
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad.*

(1865: 228)

January 2011: Recently I heard of a cousin and a peer, both in the seventh grade, who, both being qualified for the Columbia Presbyterian Early Medical School program, applied. My cousin was denied on the grounds that in her interview she expressed no real desire to develop herself in the medical profession. Her friend was accepted, but later denied on account that she was born in El Salvador – fled – and could not demonstrate a social security number; Denied, at the age of thirteen, for circumstances and decisions outside of her control; Denied because she was born on unfortunate and damned longitudinal and latitudinal points; Denied and now must:

*possess the courage and the grace
To bear [her] anger proudly and unbent.*

And hopefully, dreamfully:

*keep [her] heart inviolate
Against the potent poison of [our] hate!*

(McKay, 1937: 109)

Conclusion:

Why do we have illegal people?³³ Can people be illegal? Or, are the systems that attach such identities and proscribe corresponding realities to such folks illegal? When did we find it in ourselves to legitimize and bureaucratize this particular means of oppression? When did we find it right to interrupt, criminalize and stigmatize the flow of human travel which is old as the “flow of human blood in human veins” (Hughes: 1994).

Why must we now “legalize them”? Would this legalization process further perpetuate and condone the system without condemning? Are there losses suffered by asking to be a part of the system? Must one mitigate critical insight gained by years living in the shadows? Must one be and articulate being more American in order to be accepted into the sinews of this country? Why must one present oneself so? – Extremely apologetic for phenomena not entirely within one’s control? Why does blame need to be appointed when we collectively as a people agreed to be a part of the present political reality? And most importantly what can be done now? What shall we do? where do we go?

And the meek but definite and defiant response from the dreamers is: Whether this life is worthy or not, was - and remains - the incorrect question; rather, one must ask: “if this be the only life we get to live,” let it not be in vain! If this be the world we inherited, let us not be slaves (Unzueta: 2010). Though, our poverty has granted us a plethora of dreams, let them not solely be dreams, but, rather, both by night and day, let our life-activity be realized within the present reality and let us become, as Gandhi put it: “that change we wish to see.”

Though we, like Rilke: “love[d] the questions” let us, then, “live the questions,” now: In this here earth utilizing our dogged determinism, availing hope, and well-intentioned dreams to

³³ Especially at an age where the law grants individual rights to corporations and treats money as a form of speech (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*).

the betterment of us all . Though we be treated as sub-human, less than persons, let us not fall into that contemporary normative malaise. “We are people, and as such it is beneath us to demand what is inherently ours:” the freedom to live, to work, to love, to study, to aspire, and be legitimately welcomed and accepted in our home (Ward: 1994).

And thus we praise and pray, for we exist because of and within Love's grasp and Love's loving embrace. Knowing that someday every tear will be wiped from our face (Revelation 21:4).

And it is knowing this that we reveal our selves.
It is knowing this that we chose the life we want and need and have to live.
Knowing this, we will walk in the light and love of truth.
And will knowingly and lovingly walk with you.

This, then, is the answer: that spirit within each of us, immortal and mass-less, that soothes and connects our suffering and promotes our wholeness. Yes, therein lie an answer approached only by prayer and patience. But if the dreamers, be the only visionaries that can guide us there, then where is the political hand that will make manifest the prophetic vision? Or, how might this truth be revealed?

And yet we beat, toil,³⁴ study,³⁵ keep on.³⁶ Knowing, trusting and praying that truth will become; that righteousness will reign. That someday Rimbaud's words will ring true and, “armed with a burning patience we shall enter the splendid cit[y].”

³⁴ **Article 23:** Everyone has the right to **work**, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 1948)

³⁵ **Article 26:** Everyone has the right to **education**. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 1948)

³⁶ **Article 13 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**

Thus the personal is political and ever must be. What's more, the poetic and prophetic power of personal narratives (etched so deeply into the DREAM Act movement) serve to transform the political and social reality towards greater humanity. Last, if we heed their call, and walk with them, we too may Dream, and live in peace: together.

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- **Everyone** has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
 - **Everyone** has the right to **leave any country**, including [their] own, and to **return to [their] country** (1948).

Appendix: Scenes from the Movement.

March



Trail of Dreams 2010: 1,500 mi.: "We are risking our future because the present is unbearable" (Matos).

NY Trail of Dreams 2010: 250 mi.



Nebraska DREAM Walk (195 mi. in five days): "My feet are tired and sore but I'm feeling good" (Gutierrez)

Hunger-Strikes



Schumer (D-NY): 10 Days, June 2010



Feinstein (D-CA): 10 Days, July 2010



Hagan (D-NC): 13 Days, June 2010



Hutchinson (R-TX): 37 Days; November - December

Hunger-Strikes



Schumer (D-NY): 10 Days, June 2010



Feinstein (D-CA): 10 Days, July 2010



Hagan (D-NC): 13 Days, June 2010



Hutchinson (R-TX): 29+ Days; Current

Civil Disobedience



Phoenix Five: May
17, 2010

DREAM 21: July 21,
2010



McCain Six: Nov 17,
2010

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Student Immigrant Movement (www.simforus.com/dream-act)

The Trail of Dreams (trail2010.org)

United We Dream (www.unitedwedream.org/)

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