

## Undocumented Immigrants and the Path to Productive Members of Society

California has a long line of history, which has become a state with a wide range of nationalities. California became U.S. territory in 1847. It has become a land full of opportunities yet, who would not want to be a part of it? California has over 37.3 million residents, where Latinos have a 37.6 percent of the state's population. Statistics show that Latinos will become the state's largest ethnic group by mid-decade. (Thomas Billitteri) It is safe to say that the majority of the state of California consists of millions of Latinos. Recently, there has been a huge legal dispute on whether California should fund financial aid and access to public universities and colleges to undocumented immigrants. I strongly defend this concept due to the fact that our founding fathers under the declaration of independence; the duty of the government is to secure our rights, such as those being violated by most politicians who disagree.

This act is only being granted to those students who have been in the U.S. for quite some time. Harry Binswagon, an American Philosopher and writer and a board member, mentions that, "To be a foreigner is not to be a criminal" (Binswagon). Politicians argue that they are committing a crime that can no longer be tolerated. In fact, these students are residents who have been living here and attending grade school since they were kids. Our founding fathers stated that life, liberty, and property should be guaranteed to any individual. Students who try to attend college without the residency are convicted as criminals. These students should be granted residency acts. Undocumented residents come to the United States in search for a better life.

Any individual who strives to become a productive member of the society should receive some support for their education costs. In 2001, the AB 540 law was approved by lawmakers. This law offers in-state tuition to those who graduate from a California high school after attending at least three years. This law was given into effect not because undocumented immigrants reside in California, but because they attended and graduated from a California high school. Ethan Schulman, a lawyer representing the University of California system states, "...undocumented immigrants who were brought to this country by their parents as minors... gone to high school in California...excelled in high school...been admitted to the University or state community college system." (Schulman) Students, who have the ability to succeed in high school, have the courage and desire to further their education in college, should be granted benefits. These students are individuals who as children had no choice in their destination. It is certain that they tend to become productive members of society, but to do so they must gain knowledge and understanding.

California has had the wide range of Latinos which will become the majority of the population. Many are what they seem to call "criminals." Indeed, I beg to differ. Many Latinos that have come to California illegally have made an effort to succeed due to the fact that they have come from countries full of poverty. These students realize the hard work it takes to achieve a goal, which is why they value their education and have decided to fight for their right of freedom and the pursuit of happiness. They will not take for granted their education. Latinos will strive for their goals to be met. Jerry Brown, governor of California signed the Dream Act. The Dream Act allows students who have attended at least three years of high school in California and have graduated eligible for in state tuition at public schools. Brown states in his recent interview with LA Times that, "going to college is a dream that promises intellectual

excitement and creative thinking...the dream act benefits us all by giving top students a chance to improve their lives and the lives of all of us.” (LA Times) Brown clearly states that education is the foundation to a successful life, regardless of someone’s residency.

Education is a fundamental element that leads to success. Education is a focus of both “creative thinking” as Jerry Brown stated and “Critical thinking” as Kristen Olsen states. Kristen has a true passion for the businesses, committees and people of California’s Central Valley and foothill communities. Olsen was the assistant Vice President for Communication and Public Affairs at California State University, Stanislaus. She believes that it is important to learn critical thinking. It allows people to become good members of society and allows different points of views, as she states, “not everything is black and white”. Olsen believes that an education is the way to go and believes that if we want to get out of this recession that not only California is suffering but all of America, we must find the way to fund education. Olsen did not in fact support the Dream Act, due to the fact that the money that will be granted to undocumented immigrants which takes away from students who are already citizens. She believes that there is another form in which the state of California would be able to fund education for undocumented students. In her recent interview, she stated that so many people have stopped dreaming of that American Dream. Olsen’s goal is to find ways for many to achieve that dream regardless of their residency and to find other ways to fund undocumented immigrant’s money for state tuition. She truly believes in the power of an education and the right for anyone to have it. Both Brown and Olsen illustrate strategies of creative and critical thinking, which in their opinion will allow for intellectual education.

Brown and Olsen have a clear view of what an education can do. The value of a college degree is necessary for any individual who would like to succeed. Lerman of American

University, states that people who earn a college degree tend to do better, so they have a wide range of opportunities granted in their hands. Statistics show that in obtaining a bachelor's degree on average earn about \$57,181, eighty-three percent more than those with only a high school diploma.(Billitteri) Without a doubt those who obtain a four-year college education are an investment.

Speculating the idea that an education guarantees a promising future, politicians still deride that the state of California should not fund aid and access to public universities and colleges to undocumented immigrants. Politicians have a strong judgment of undocumented immigrants taking away from those who have not broken the law: who have the right to be here as citizens. I agree allowing undocumented immigrants to receive financial aid will take away money from students who already have the right as Americans. As a California State University student, I know how difficult it is to obtain the money for an education let alone pay for tuition. I as a college student am willing to give a little in order to make this state prosper and have undocumented immigrants to become productive members of society. These are students in search for a better life and laws such as the Dream Act and the AB 540 will grant them an opportunity for a better education. The Los Angeles Daily News records in a recent California study that immigrants contribute more than they take. Manuel Pastor, director of USC Center for the study of Immigration Integration which conducted the study comments that, "there's always a sense that immigrants are a drain on the economy rather than contributing." (Kevin Modesti) This thought maintains the reason why politicians defend the rights of those who are citizens here. I concur with politicians, that money that would be taken away from me will indeed enrage me. But it is stated that immigrants contribute thirty-two percent of California's gross domestic product. They also represent twenty-seven percent of the population. Immigrant children, who

strive to obtain a better education, are likely to represent twenty-nine percent of potential voters by 2012. (Modesti) The indicated proves that undocumented immigrants prove that they will become tomorrow's future as any other who furthers their education. This statistic shows that they will adapt to this county's tradition of democracy, by voting and becoming well-rounded citizens. Granting undocumented immigrants the right to receive financial aid in the state of California will contribute to a great benefit.

In California, studies revealed that immigrants tend to improve their financial situation over time through hard work. Many undocumented immigrants are known for coming to this country and not contributing as tax payers. This should diminish complains about immigrants taking away money and not putting of their own input. I strongly suggest that politicians should reconsider their views on undocumented immigrants receiving financial aid in the state of California. As a California State University student, I urge the right for undocumented immigrants to be granted the right for financial aid. Although this would leave many citizens with less money for their tuition, it is an opportunity that can benefit California economy and allow many to become productive members of society. It is proven that immigrants strive and work hard in order to succeed. They have taken jobs that no American would work for. They are field workers that require strength and hard work. Who knows maybe in the future students who were once immigrants may make this state prosper into one of the nation's most productive economic resources. That is if we can all come into agreement with our opinions regarding the right for undocumented immigrants to be granted an opportunity to an education in the land of the American dream.