

California Dream Act

There should be state funded financial aid and access to California's colleges available to illegal immigrants. Most people would never know the true meaning of education, and as to some, they've dreamed of having better knowledge their whole life. Undocumented immigrants that have been in some states are denied the right to attend any public college or university due to their status. Governor Jerry Brown presents to us that, "Going to college is a dream that promises intellectual excitement and creative thinking" (1). Going to college is a chance to show your true potential knowledge and also being creative in your own way. In fact, according to Kimberly Mehlman-Orozco, she claims that "states that allow illegal immigrants to pay cheaper, in-state tuition have seen a thirty-one percent jump in that population's college-going rate and a fourteen percent decline in high-school dropouts among undocumented students" (1). When given the opportunity to attend college, most undocumented students do try harder in high school knowing that they can still further on their education after graduating. This does help the population of drop outs from high school from declining. If given the opportunity of the government providing them with financial aid and other scholarships, many would take the advantage of trying to achieve a higher and better education. They'd also like to have an opportunity just as everyone else to know that college is an option instead of a desire. Even more, knowing that they've been given a chance of bettering their lives gives them more hope and will increase their morale towards education.

Many of us try our best when it comes to having good grades or just the fact of trying to pass a class with a C or better because we'd all like to be accepted into the colleges and

universities that we want and are applying for. Imagine graduating high school at the top of your class with the highest recognition but is being restricted to attend college due to being charged with an out-of-state tuition for being an undocumented student. As Juan B. Garcia , the Director of Admission and Records at Blinn College, presents to us in his article “In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students and the DREAM Act: Implications for Higher Education” that “all undocumented students will be unable to afford college because they are charged out-of-state tuition, which can run two or three times higher than in-state tuition” (1) . Even though they tried their best in high school, these undocumented students will never have the opportunity to prove to others their capability and their determination because of one limitation. Mr. Garcia also tells us of undocumented students who were over achievers but weren’t able to afford their college tuition such as “Nancy, who learned English, stayed in school, stayed away from drugs, did everything she was told, and graduated as her high school's valedictorian” (1). After spending most of their lives here, it's hard for them to think of themselves as anything other than American and pursuing the educational dream of higher education.

Have we all taken the time to differentiate the true meaning of the words legal and illegal? We all overlook the importance of these words because we tend to judge at the broad meaning instead of using our conscience and doing some careful thinking. We’ve never thought about how much education is worthy to all of us and how much it is of significance to some undocumented immigrants. We should consider the fact that most of these illegal immigrants are attending school and are willing to further on their education and are doing whatever they can to go to college whether it be community college or not. In the article, “Immigrant Students Ask for a Chance at College” by Eric Hoover, he describes that a valedictorian and outgoing person like Marie Nazareth Gonzalez had to face deportation back to Costa Rica because her family’s

visas had expired but “she was lucky because under the Dream Act, she would have an opportunity to remain in the United States, graduate from college, and become a permanent resident” (1). Because everyone wants to better their lives, they come to the U.S. for education and job opportunities of achieving their dreams. Who are really the legal citizens when we’ve all roamed from different places to the same country? We must reflect about what the word illegal means because we were all immigrants who have also come from somewhere else.

We are unaware of knowing who illegal immigrants are so why should we deny their education rights. They could have been your best friend in high school or the person who sat behind you in English senior year; but overall, if they decided to finish high school and get their high school diploma, shouldn’t we consider that they want to better themselves and attend a good college too? Besides that fact, many religious leaders, labor unions, and school counselors are supporting the in-state tuition but some are still opposed to the idea such as the anti-immigration group American Resistance. According to the American Resistance, “they oppose giving illegal immigrants benefits not given to American citizens in other states” (1). This statement clearly expresses why should we help fund immigrants when our own Americans are not receiving any help which would make it unfair. In fact, not only organizations are opposing this idea, North Carolina was known to be restricting undocumented immigrants from attending public colleges at all. State officials announced that they would seek from the federal government a policy that will no longer admit illegal immigrants into the North Carolina’s fifty-eight community colleges and sixteen public colleges.

Many people are afraid of the advantages that the immigrants would take from Americans such as the availability to attend college with help provided from the federal government because they feel obligated that they should help their own citizens before trying to

help others. Kimberly Mehlman-Orozco, director of the policy institute, claims in an interview that “they don't consider the long-term benefits of educating someone and the economic contribution college graduates give back to the community” (1). She is explaining that people don't often look at the greater outcome of what these immigrants going to college can provide for the future. Further studies that she's done on in-state tuition policies show that it appears that there is no cost to states, and there might even be a financial benefit.

People should sometimes consider if anyone should be penalized due to their parents' illegal immigration status because it may prohibit them from receiving any financial help from the federal government. Should these illegal immigrants have to be punished for their parents because they came here to the U.S. to better their lives? We must self-reflect on how everyone views America. In “This I Believe”, an essay titled “The America I Believe In” by Colin Powell, he tells us that his family was also immigrants who came from Jamaica to New York. He believes that America's greatest strength in dealing with the world is “the openness our society and the welcoming nature of our people” (185). Besides that, he also believes in an America that “has a big, open, and charitable heart that reaches out to people in need around the world” (186). Illegal immigrants choose to finish high school for a reason; they want to have the opportunity of becoming a legal citizen and attending college just like everyone else living here. They should be able to get the help they need to fulfill their dreams and desires of achieving a higher education and they shouldn't have to feel that they don't have a chance of proving their true potential. We do not know all of the positive outcomes of helping an illegal immigrant getting their higher education and the possibilities they can help provide for us in the future, so we should give them a chance of bettering their lives.