

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/documented-are-still-vulnerable-and-the-fight-must-continue>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The Supreme Court's decision to block the Trump administration from ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program gave us reason to celebrate last week. It means that an estimated three-quarters of a million people who came here as children can continue to live their lives free from the fear and anxiety of being subject to deportation.

The ruling on DACA was set against nationwide mass demonstrations against police brutality and anti-Black racism and in support of divesting from the police and redirecting resources toward the creation of healthy, vibrant communities.

On the day of the ruling and the days immediately following, some of us working on issues of justice have expressed a level of optimism about the direction we are heading as a nation, noting that momentum seems to be growing toward an America in which all people can feel safe and respected. But we also recognize that the battle is far from over.

The Court's decision did not validate DACA *per se*; it simply said that the manner in which the Trump administration ended the program was inadequate and that it needed to provide a more reasoned explanation for termination. Not long after the ruling was issued, President Trump wrote a series of angry [tweets](#) accusing the court of political bias. A day later, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services issued a [press release](#) stating that the fact remains that under DACA, hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens continue to remain in our country in violation of the laws passed by Congress and to take jobs Americans need now more than ever. Many experts predict that the administration will continue the fight to rescind DACA.

To provide permanent protection for DREAMers, Congress must create a path to citizenship for these young people and their families. More than a year ago, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Dream and Promise Act, HR 6, which provides critical permanent legal protection to DACA recipients and others in need of protection.

This bill matches the values of the American people. Polls show that a majority of Americans support citizenship for DACA recipients and believe it is wrong to deport people who have lived in the United States since childhood to countries where they have no connections. The Senate should immediately bring HR 6 up for a vote and work to ensure its passage.

And while we fight for a more humane immigration policy, let us also continue to advocate for the dismantling of the current culture of policing and work toward solutions that divest from police and shift power to communities. The truth is that the immigration and criminal justice systems work together far too often to disrupt the lives of millions of people, particularly people of color. The worst inequities and abuses of the criminal legal system—those that overpolice, over-charge, and over-prosecute communities of color—also place Black and brown immigrants at higher risk of deportation.

Immigrants, especially immigrants of color, feel the double oppression that comes from overpolicing by traditional law enforcement and that of immigration enforcement. The stakes are high: an immigrant of color who is racially profiled and criminalized is then funneled into the detention and deportation machinery. The same violence, oppression, and militarization that can be found in the current culture of policing is also embedded in immigration enforcement, which is why both immigration and criminal justice advocates are calling for structural change.

Changing these systems will not be easy, and recent victories show how hard we must fight for our most basic rights. It took a Supreme Court battle to determine that hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients, who are American in all but paperwork, should not be torn from their families and sent to countries they may barely remember. It took weeks of nationwide protests after centuries of police violence against Black people to elevate the urgent need for divestment from police.

Although we are seeing the winds of change sweeping across our nation, our task is far from over. Change, Dr. King once said, does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle.

It is therefore up to those of us who care deeply about justice and believe in our democracy to ensure that our struggles transform this country into a place where all people can enjoy freedom, dignity, and respect.

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