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DREAM Act: Student Biographies

Manuel Bartsch

Manuel Bartsch was originally brought to the U.S. in 1997 by Toby Deal, his step-grandfather, when the boy was in the fourth grade. Over the next eight years, Bartsch was sure Deal had completed the paperwork, and considered himself a U.S. citizen. He felt that way up until right before Christmas 2005, when ICE officially challenged his visa status. Deal, an American citizen, had gone back to Germany by then, and was unaware of Manuel's immigration issue. Bartsch couldn't find proof of visa paperwork or U.S. citizenship, so ICE had him arrested and locked away on December 21, 2005. He was in detention for 16 days before being released.

In August 2007, Rep. Paul Gillmor introduced a bill to grant Manuel Bartsch lawful permanent resident status and stay his deportation. Heidelberg College, a premier college with German roots in the Fifth Congressional District offered Manuel a full scholarship. In addition, it was announced that two donors had come forward to pay for textbooks as well as room and board. He began classes at Heidelberg on August 27th and is majoring in business management.

Marie Gonzalez

Marie Gonzalez is a 21-year old junior and political science major at Westminster College in Missouri. Gonzalez has lived in Missouri since she was 5. She learned in 2002 she wasn't here legally when an anonymous tipster reported her father to immigration officials. At the time, he was working as a courier in the office of then-Missouri Gov. Bob Holden, a Democrat. Gonzalez was a sophomore in high school. Her parents were deported to Costa Rica in 2005. The Department of Homeland Security has twice deferred Gonzalez's deportation. However, she says that DHS officials have warned her that if the DREAM Act doesn't pass, she will be deported to Costa Rica in June of 2008.

“Julie.”

Julie, 28, was born in Mexico City, and arrived in the U.S. at age 11. Julie received a nursing degree from the University of Texas – Austin, but because she does not have legal status, she can not pursue her passion even with the shortage of nurses that currently exists in the U.S. Julie is currently a graduate student studying public health and will graduate in May, 2008. Julie is active in an organized campaign to mobilize and pass the DREAM Act.

“J.”

Born in Venezuela, J., his sister, and his mother came in 1999 when he was 14 years old. J. graduated from high school with honors (top 5%) and is currently attending the University of Houston where he is in his 2nd year studying electrical engineering. J. is active in the Houston *Jovenes Inmigrantes para un Futuro Mejor* and *Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en*

la Lucha. The DREAM Act's passage would mean that J. would be able to work in his chosen field. He would eventually like to start his own business working on improving communication devices such as cell phones and PDAs.

“Mary”

Mary is a community college student, born in Mexico. She is a board member of *Somos Un Pueblo Unido*, a Santa Fe-based immigrants' rights organization and she is active in an organized campaign which brings together organizations nationwide to advocate on the DREAM Act. She is an active student leader who mobilized her peers to campaign for SB 582, which allows undocumented students who have been in New Mexico since childhood the opportunity to receive resident tuition at New Mexico state colleges.

“James”

James arrived to the United States when he was 4 years old and comes from an agricultural family. Every summer while not in school, James worked in the fields to help support his family. He recently graduated from high school in Oregon where he obtained a 3.7 GPA, played sports, and was consistently on the honor roll. In addition to his studies, James also served as the president of his high school chapter of *Latinos Unidos Siempre*. James received a presidential scholarship from Western University but could not benefit from that scholarship due to his status. James is working and hopes to complete school soon but must also be the main financial provider for his family. James would eventually like to be a college math professor.

“Al”

Al, born in Venezuela, arrived at a young age, graduated with special honors from a high school in Miami, Florida. A gifted tennis player, Al had hopes of utilizing a scholarship he received to play in college but was unable to accept the scholarship due to his status. Al currently attends Miami-Dade College where he hopes to pursue his career dreams of becoming a lawyer upon the passage of the DREAM Act. Al has been active in the *Students Working for Equal Rights Campaign* fighting for all Florida students who share his same circumstances.

Edgar Francisco Vela

Edgar was born in El Salvador and came to New Orleans, Louisiana when he was 11 years old. He is a sophomore in Junior College and is a gifted wrestler. He received a private wrestling scholarship due to his extraordinary athletic abilities. Edgar currently has temporary protected status but could pursue his dreams of being a permanent resident only if the DREAM Act passes.