

Immigration Policy Center (IPC)

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in the United States.

PRESS RELEASE

June 19, 2008

Dead-Ends and Deportation for America's Youth 2 Million Reasons to Find a Solution

As the school year ends, millions of children throughout the United States are looking forward to summer vacations. Many will soon be packing their bags as they head off to summer camp or to their first year of college. But others are not so lucky. Some children are packing all of their belongings and preparing to leave what may be the only home they have ever known, as the U.S. government prepares to expel them to countries they may not even remember. Others with the potential for higher education and a professional career are resigned to a life that's underachieving and underground.

- Arthur Mkoyan was due to be deported by the end of this month, just after graduating from Bullard High School in Fresno, California. The 17-year-old valedictorian was to take his 4.0 grade point average, his acceptance letter to the University of California at Davis, and his talent back to Armenia—a country he has not seen since the age of two. His deportation was delayed after Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) introduced a private bill on his behalf in Congress on June 10. But whether or not he will be allowed to remain in the United States, and for how long, remains unknown ([“Senator tries to keep valedictorian from deportation,” CNN.com](#), June 11, 2008).
- Santiago Cordero graduated from Postville High School in Iowa on May 25, 2008. In addition to starting the school's first soccer team, his participation in varsity football and volunteer programs was applauded by the Superintendent. Despite an immigration raid that tore his mother from their family, Cordero graduated in the top ten of his class. But because Santiago is undocumented, he faces an uncertain future ([“Raid mars future for 3 graduating today from Postville,” Des Moines Register](#), May 25, 2008).
- Laura just graduated from high school in Charlotte, North Carolina, with a 4.0 grade point average and dreams of becoming an engineer. But then she learned that Central Piedmont Community College, which she planned to attend for two years before switching to a four-year college, is no longer admitting undocumented students such as herself. Now Laura's plans for college and a career are in limbo ([“Yearning to learn, but rule says no,” Charlotte Observer](#), June 17, 2008).

As lawmakers keep trying to “deport their way out” of a dysfunctional immigration system that has fueled a growing undocumented population, they would do well to consider the cases of Arthur, Santiago, Laura, and approximately 1.8 million others, whose deportation would be traumatic not only for the students themselves, but for the American workforce as a whole. An IPC fact sheet, [Dreams Deferred: The Cost of Ignoring Undocumented Students](#), details the financial and emotional costs of deporting these students and wasting human resources that are vital to our nation's future. The fact sheet outlines a larger report from the Immigration Policy

Center, [*Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students*](#), by Roberto Gonzalez.

Lost Potential: Children account for 1.8 million (15 percent) of the roughly 12 million undocumented immigrants currently in the United States. Though born abroad, these children primarily identify with this country. Many were brought at such a young age that they have attended most of their K-12 education here. Roughly 65,000 undocumented students—who have lived in the United States for at least five years—graduate from high school each year, but only an estimated 5-10 percent go on to college, which means that the potential of these honor students, valedictorians, aspiring teachers, and engineers goes unrealized.

Lost Tax Dollars: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), workers with a bachelor's degree earned an average of \$962 per week in 2006 (as opposed to \$419 per week for workers without a degree). The Department of Labor found that the wages of immigrants who legalized their status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) increased by about 15 percent after only five years. Given the opportunity, undocumented students will improve their education, work in higher-paying jobs, and pay more in taxes.

Lost Workers: The BLS identified 15 occupations expected to grow at least twice as fast as the national average between 2004 and 2014, nine of which require at least an Associate's degree, and four of which, in 2005, had a significantly greater share of immigrant workers than native-born workers; 46 percent of medical scientists, 35 percent of computer engineers, and 20 percent of postsecondary teachers are immigrants.

States Step In: So far, ten states have passed laws permitting undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition if they attended and graduated from in-state high schools. New Mexico and Texas also allow undocumented students to compete for financial aid. The experience of these states reveals that the number of undocumented students is far too small to deprive their native-born counterparts of college admission slots or financial aid.

Contact:

Angela Kelley, Director
202.507.7511 (office)
202.441.5589 (cell)
akelley@ailf.org

Michele Waslin, Senior Policy Analyst
202.507.7521 (office)
mwaslin@ailf.org

*IPC is a division of the American Immigration Law Foundation.
Visit our website at www.immigrationpolicy.org*