

SNCC Legacy Project Statement on the Rescinding of DACA

September 13, 2017

As young SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) activists who organized for voting rights and social justice in the Deep South in the 1960's, we strongly support DACA and the Dream Act.



The “Dreamers” have organized their way out of the shadows in the 21st century. Some engaged in face to face lobbying of both sides of the congressional aisle to pass the DREAM act. Others produced large crowds at immigration hearings and street protests. Still others risked deportation by civil disobedience resulting in arrests. Others sunk themselves into solid research creating briefs about the legality of an executive order’s authority on immigration to provide administrative relief without congressional action.

Credit: Amin El Gamel

The decade-long organizing campaign worked. In 2012 The Obama administration issued the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals executive order providing protection from deportation to those brought to the US under the age of 16. DACA recipients could live and work legally in the U.S. for renewable two-year periods.

Climbing out from the shadows for many of them meant taking minimum wage jobs...sometimes working full time...while finishing high school. Their families relied on their earnings to survive. Many of them, still working part to full time, took several years to earn associate or bachelor degrees...and often post-graduate degrees, while still contributing earnings to their families. On top of these obligations, some young undocumented leaders took on responsibilities of organizing for immigrant justice. They carry on the SNCC tradition of grass roots organizing, collaborative leadership development and taking risks to achieve justice. In fact, many have told us that by studying the history of SNCC they found deep parallels to the ways they wanted to shape their movements.

With the rescinding of DACA by President Trump, these young people, 800,000 strong, are now threatened with being viciously yanked out of the only country they have known and cruelly tossed into countries they do not know. As nearly 40% of them have siblings that are US citizens, their families will be torn apart in a trauma that will last at least into the next generation. Their economic contributions do not stop at their family’s doorstep...it also would

result, over a 10-year period, in the loss of nearly half a trillion dollars to the US Gross Domestic Product not to mention the annual losses of billions of dollars in state and national tax revenues.

How appropriate that Attorney General Jeff Sessions is the white sheriff organizing this anti-immigrant posse. He framed the rationale for the reversal of DACA with intentional lies demeaning immigrants including:

- **DACA recipients are adult illegal aliens**, implying they broke the law in entering this country. DACA recipients were children when brought to this country and have no responsibility for the decision to immigrate.
- **DACA recipients are over-burdening benefit programs for US citizens:** DACA recipients are ineligible for Medicaid, food stamps or cash assistance. Furthermore, they cannot vote, nor are they eligible for federal grants, aid or student loans for college.
- **Dreamers take jobs from hundreds of thousands of US Citizens.** Economic studies of this assertion have been unable to turn up a correlation between immigrant employment and citizen employment. In fact, many economists say that immigrant employment broadens the job base.
- **President Obama's executive order was an illegal and unconstitutional usurping of congressional authority.** Both (Republican) Presidents Reagan (1987) and H. W. Bush (1990) issued executive orders providing protection for hundreds of thousands of family members not covered by the immigration act of 1986 and therefore subject to deportation.

Racism needs no facts. Racism thrives on generating fear, hatred and the false promises of a safe white nation with people of color removed, disempowered and/or marginalized. It is clear that Sheriff Sessions carries the flag for the "make America white again" movement.

There is nothing more radicalizing than when your country betrays you. Do anti-immigrant forces in this country really want 800,000 young people plus hundreds of thousands of their relatives -- combined with hundreds of thousands of allies, young and old -- up in arms about this unjust and immoral rescinding of DACA? This may well be the kind of watershed moment that radicalized so many of us in the 1960's and 1970's when we felt the US had turned its back on its values and moral principles when it came to civil rights and the Vietnam war.

The SNCC Legacy Project calls upon all movements for justice and their allies to stand behind the efforts to codify DACA and the DREAM ACT into law without conditions such as border walls, decreased immigration quotas, religious bans or increased deportations. Then we can proceed to a just system of immigration with pathways to citizenship for all.