

**DREAM SABBATH 2011  
TOOLKIT**

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The Interfaith Immigration Coalition is a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform. **Together we invite you to participate in DREAM Sabbath 2011, a time for education, reflection, action and solidarity in diverse faith communities across the country.** During DREAM Sabbath 2011, September 16th–October 9<sup>th</sup>, communities of faith will lift up the lives of DREAM students in the prayers, readings, reflection and education during at least one Sabbath service as a way to increase understanding of the circumstances DREAM students face, and their hopes and contributions to our communities, and to build support for the DREAM Act.

### Why now?

In December of 2010, we were just 5 votes short of passing the DREAM Act and ensuring that millions of immigrant children can stay in the United States, where they call home. Faith communities around the country were deeply disappointed when the Senate failed to invoke cloture on the DREAM Act, but we have remained committed to the issue.

This year, on June 28th, the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration Refugees, and Border Security held a hearing on the DREAM Act, chaired by Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) who has championed this legislation from the beginning. For the first time in years, public support for positive immigration reform surpassed opposition. **In many ways, momentum is building! We invite you to participate in DREAM Sabbath 2011 to help us keep moving forward, building more and more support for the DREAM Act until it passes.**

**At the same time, this is a time of crisis for DREAM students and their families, and we are called to respond.** Deportations, including deportations of DREAM-eligible youth and young adults, are continuing in unprecedented numbers. We encourage communities who participate in DREAM Sabbath 2011 to join our call to the Obama administration to grant deferred action to DREAM students.

### How to Get Involved

Visit the IIC website, [InterfaithImmigration.org](http://InterfaithImmigration.org), and sign up to participate in DREAM Sabbath 2011, September 16-October 9. **Let us know the dates of your faith community's DREAM Sabbath celebration so we can include your event as we spread the word that faith communities are fighting for the DREAM Act.**

This packet includes planning resources, sacred readings, reflections and more to help you plan your DREAM Sabbath event. Please feel free to adapt what you find here and share it with others! As you think about your DREAM Sabbath celebration, consider inviting a DREAM student or DREAM student ally to tell their own story or the story of a friend (with their permission, of course) in order to ground your reflection and prayers in the real hardship, suffering and gifts in DREAMers lives. **Let us know if you need help contacting a DREAM student in your area—we will do everything we can to make those connections!**

Every community's DREAM Sabbath celebration will look different, but whatever form your event takes, your prayers and actions will be joined with other people of faith around the country, and your participation will help spread understanding of the DREAM Act and build broad support for DREAM students!

**Thanks for your good work—we're excited to know many voices from diverse faith communities will be raised up this fall in a vibrant show of support for the DREAM Act! For more information please send an email to: [interfaith.immigration.coalition@gmail.com](mailto:interfaith.immigration.coalition@gmail.com)**

# DREAM SABBATH EVENT PLANNING



## Sample Press Release

### The DREAM Sabbath

Your organization Holds Event/Vigil/Mass, Date in Support of the DREAM Act and to ask President Obama to stop deporting innocent youth

*Your organization, a member of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, will hold a candlelight vigil/press conference/holy mass etc in support of our immigrant youth working towards the American dream and to urge President Obama to stop detaining and deporting DREAM Act eligible youth*

**WHO:** Students, families and faith leaders with your city/organization, a member or the Interfaith Immigration Coalition. Students, families and clergy from \_\_\_\_ who are (insert their involvement), including:

Insert names, brief bios of local spokespersons and clergy leaders

**WHAT:** “The DREAM Sabbath”: Your organization’s families, youth and clergy across the country will host candlelight vigils/events/masses etc in support of our immigrant youth and to pray for the deliberations of President Obama and the administration, that they will show moral leadership and vision by protecting vulnerable populations including DREAM Act eligible youth from detention and deportation

**WHEN:** Time and Date

**WHERE:** Location

**VISUALS:** Clergy, students and families with candles and signs saying “ready to serve,” “I want to be a teacher, nurse, doctor,” “Please don’t deport me to a country I’ve never known,” etc.

**More Information:** Thousands of hard working young people who were brought to the United States as infants or children can be locked up in federal detention centers and deported to a country they’ve never known. The DREAM Act would stop the injustice by giving students who have grown up and graduated high school in the United States the opportunity to earn legal status through college or military service. Meanwhile, President Obama and the administration has the executive authority to protect DREAM Act eligible students and undocumented parents of citizen children from the threat of detention and deportation. As people of faith, we support the DREAM Act because we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, allowing everyone their God given potential.

### BACKGROUND ON PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Background on your organization  
Background on the IIC

## Sample Letter to Faith Leader

Dear Monsignor/**Father/Pastor/Rev./Rabbi**,

This letter is being written to elicit your participation in a “DREAM Sabbath” on **(insert date and time here)** which is being promoted by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) in support of our DREAM Act eligible students and youth. It is the hope of the IIC that congregations across the country will plan events and/or masses, prayers and homilies in support of the DREAM Act and to urge President Obama to stop deporting innocent DREAM Act eligible students and youth.

We aspire to put a human face on an otherwise political issue through personal stories and testimonies and to educate our parishioners about this critical issue while continuing the call for the DREAM Act and pressuring the President to do more to protect DREAM youth from deportation. It is critical to ensure that our faith values are an essential component of the on-going dialogue surrounding the issue immigration reform in our nation and the moral call to support innocent and hardworking youth that are eligible for the DREAM Act. We are a country of immigrants seeking a way of life that is highlighted in our constitution and supported by our longstanding faith traditions here in the United States.

In that light, I ask for your help in making our “DREAM Sabbath” **Friday/Saturday/Sunday** a success that will help raise awareness about the DREAM Act while moving our country towards more humane and just immigration policies. The involvement of the faithful is essential for the success of this endeavor and could be a valuable tool in the process of inviting your constituents to understand, embrace and live out the Gospel tenets of this campaign.

Please go to <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org> for more information about the DREAM act and go to <http://bit.ly/fGgW8j> to sign a petition asking President Obama to stop deporting our DREAM Act eligible youth.

I thank you, once again, for your support.

Sincerely,

## Sample Invitation to Member of Congress

[DATE]

Dear Honored Member of Congress,

We would like to invite you to attend [NAME OF CONGREGATION or ORGANIZATION]'s worship service on [DATE] at [LOCATION]. During this service we will [hear testimony from a DREAM student and will remember DREAM students in our prayers] as part of DREAM Sabbath, a national project with hundreds diverse communities of faith from around the country participating to increase understanding of DREAM students' lives, and their hopes to attain full recognition of their contributions to our communities.

As you know, the DREAM Act was just 5 votes short of passage in the US Senate in December 2010. Communities of faith had joined DREAM students in fighting for the DREAM Act, and we shared their disappointment when the act failed to win cloture. But the success in building a majority of support inspired us to continue educating, organizing, praying and speaking out for the DREAM Act.

More importantly, we understand the crisis facing immigrant communities at this time, and we stand in solidarity with DREAM students and their families. President Obama has repeatedly stated that it "makes no sense" to deport responsible people who "could be further enriching out nation," and yet the Obama Administration continues to execute deportations at record levels, deporting thousands of young people who know no country other than the U.S. as their home, and who want nothing more than to contribute to this country's well-being as citizens.

DREAM students live with the understanding that they could be deported away from their families and their homes on any given day. They have every reason to live in fear, withdrawing from their community and the world, and yet they have proven themselves to be people of profound faith, modeling for us what it means to trust God and live in the spirit of the Psalmist's confession:

*In God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?  
(Psalm 56:4)*

We hope you will join us on [DATE] to learn more about the reality of DREAM students' lives, and to pray with them for our country and for moral courage for our elected leaders, including President Obama and Congress, to address the immigration crisis through just, humane and courageous leadership.

[TITLE/DESCRIPTION OF EVENT]

[DATE]

[LOCATION]

[ORGANIZING SPONSORS]

## **DREAM Sabbath Events**

### **Sample Agenda and Elements of a Powerful Event**

**There are several key components you may want to include in your agenda that can help ensure your event is meaningful and powerful including:**

1. **An opening and closing prayer and/or reflection** that deeply connects to the moral call to support immigrants and our DREAM Act eligible youth. Make sure that this prayer and/or reflection brings significance, values and the prophetic voice to the work we are doing to support our immigrant brothers and sisters.
2. **Credential & Purpose** – Who you are (your congregation, group or committee), what you are doing (working in partnership with the IIC) and why (in support of the DREAM Act and to protect DREAM Act eligible students from detention and deportation etc.)
3. **Testimonies/ Stories** – Find at least 2 or 3 DREAM Act eligible youth or friends and allies (teachers, pastors, social workers etc) who can publically share their personal stories about how this issue affects them at your event. Make sure they are prepared, that their testimonies will be brief (preferably under 2 minutes long) but will be heartfelt and will clearly depict the injustices that undermine core faith values. Connecting an otherwise political issue to a human face and a personal story can truly change hearts and minds. The human face of suffering may be some of the best education our parishioners can receive. However, we must make sure to protect people and let them know the risks that they may be taking if they choose to share their stories. It is important to give people options so they know they can change their names, speak behind a screen or have friends or family members share their stories on their behalf depending on what kinds of risks they want to take. The testimonies of our DREAM students and youth are often the most compelling for those that are on the fence regarding the immigration issue.
4. **Research, Messaging and Values** – Spend at least 3 to 5 minutes sharing the research and values that support why the DREAM Act will be good for families, communities, and our nation. Please click on the attached link to find a great deal of research and resources in support of the DREAM Act from why it will be good for the economy to faith values messaging: <http://www.piconetwork.org/page?id=0052>
5. **PINS (stands for what?)**– This is when you ask people with power if they will take a specific action to support your cause. It is always important to invite public officials, representatives and others that you want to support your cause to your event who have the power to help make the changes you are seeking. In this case, it will be optimal to invite you Members of Congress so that you can publically ask them if they will support the DREAM Act. It will also be fantastic if you could turn out some White House officials to ask them if they will work with you to stop the deportation of DREAM Act eligible students. However, there are also many local and state targets that can do more to support the DREAM Act or administrative relief as well. For example, you could ask your city council members, university presidents and/or state representatives to pass proclamations or resolutions in support of the DREAM Act and/or to send a letter to the President and the Administration urging them to stop deporting DREAM eligible youth. If they agree, those types of actions will produce more media and will also further the public education and support for this issue. Be creative, think outside the box, and decide what pins make the most sense for your organization given your environment and your relationships.

6. **Call to Action** – It is always fantastic when you can get all the participants at the event to commit to taking action in support of the work you are doing. The simplest asks might include asking everyone go to sign onto a letter or a petition in support of the DREAM Act; or urging the President to protect DREAM students from deportation. A step beyond this might include asking participants to call, write letters or even visit with their representatives to garner more support for our DREAM youth. A more committed call to action might include asking everyone to sign up to join an immigration committee that will meet on a monthly basis in support of Immigrants (If this is something your group or organization could commit to facilitating).

7. **Closing Prayer and/or Reflection** as described in #1

\*Do not hesitate to be creative and include music, poetry, skits and all ages and backgrounds into the planning and pieces of your agenda.

To encourage leadership development and to truly engage the community, we often have several different people take different pieces of the agenda, while one person is the main chair or sometimes we have co-chairs that open and close the event. This creates ownership, unity, inclusivity and teaches ordinary people how to be powerful in a public way within their communities. It is also much more exciting to see real people from the community take these roles and show their leadership. The small mistakes and imperfections are what make us human and special. However, with practice and preparation (make sure to practice the entire agenda at least once or twice with everyone that is participating), this will not take away from the power of what is being presented, but will make it real, genuine, more meaningful and even sacred. Thank you for your participation in the DREAM Sabbath events!

## DREAM Sabbath Sample Vigil Program

The purpose of a vigil is to engage participants in communal prayer and action around specific concerns. A vigil can be as simple as a circle of ten people gathered to hold candles and pray for 20 minutes, or may be a more formal program with speakers and music. Below is one example of how a vigil might be ordered, but your program may look very different—consider the resources within your community or core planning group (an exceptional church choir or cantor, local poet, sign language translator, artist, etc.), and use them to plan your vigil program.

- I. **Welcome**—a few words about the focus and purpose of your vigil. Why now? What’s the concern? Who’s affected? What values shape your faith traditions’ response to these concerns?
  - a. This may take the form of brief comments from one of your speakers or the “emcee” of your vigil, or may consist of a few words of welcome, then an opening prayer that lifts up the central concerns of your vigil.
- II. **Song**—You might invite a church choir or an instrumentalist to provide appropriate music, or simply recruit a few strong singers to lead participants in singing.
- III. **Reading**—*for ideas see suggested readings below.*
- IV. **Speaker**—a DREAM student or ally; pastor, rabbi, imam or lay leader
- V. **Prayer**—One person may lead the prayers, or you might invite several faith leaders to pray according to their traditions. Involve vigil participants in praying a refrain throughout your prayer time. Consider offering prayers in multiple languages.
- VI. **Song**
- VII. **Speaker**—a DREAM student or ally; pastor, rabbi, imam or lay leader
- VIII. **Closing**—reiterate the focus and purpose of your vigil. At this time you might also invite vigil participants to join your group at a future event.

## DREAM Sabbath Press Conference Article



## DREAM Act Sabbath

<http://bit.ly/osnG74>

*Faith leaders join Sen. Durbin to announce fall campaign*

*By Wayne Rhodes, Editor, Faith in Action*



**Sen. Richard Durbin (far left) listens as United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño discusses the importance of passing the DREAM Act during a press conference at the U.S. Capitol.**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño was among a coalition of interfaith leaders from across the country that joined Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin, D-Ill., in the U.S. Capitol to announce a DREAM Act Sabbath.

The observance, Sept. 16 to Oct. 9, will enlist churches, synagogues and mosques across the country to dedicate time during or around their regular weekly worship service to a conversation about the DREAM Act.

**The observance, Sept. 18 to Oct. 9, will enlist churches, synagogues and mosques ... to a conversation about the DREAM Act.**

The bill, “Development, Relief & Education for Alien Minors (DREAM),” gives undocumented students a chance to earn legal status if they came here as children, are long-term U.S. residents, have good moral character, and complete two years of college or military service in good standing.

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition is organizing the campaign with support from United We Dream. The organizations hope to have many DREAM students speak to congregations throughout the campaign. The Interfaith Immigration Coalition will prepare a DREAM Act Sabbath packet, including a video, to assist faith leaders in educating and mobilizing their congregations.

## **10 years**

Durbin introduced the DREAM Act 10 years ago. He has been relentlessly pursuing its passage ever since. He said DREAM Act students have “a passion and commitment crucial to the future of America.”

### **It’s wrong to punish children for acts of their parents.**

The act is based on a fundamental moral principle, according to Durbin. “It’s wrong to punish children for acts of their parents,” he explained, adding that every faith tradition recognizes a moral right to protect the vulnerable.

“These young people deserve a chance to become legal residents of the country they know as home,” said Bishop Carcaño, one of 12 religious leaders who joined Durbin and Sen. Michael Bennett, D-Colo., to announce the campaign. She chairs the United Methodist Council of Bishops committee on immigration and heads an interagency task force of the denomination.

She is episcopal leader of the Desert Southwest Conference, headquartered in Phoenix, Ariz.

### **Harsh immigration laws**

“Because these young people were brought to this country as young children and never received legal documentation,” Carcaño said, “at every turn they face the harshness of this country’s immigration laws that make no room for the compassionate care of children and young people like them.”

### **Why would we not want to embrace ... characteristics that have made our nation great?**

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington, said it would be to the United States’ detriment to forsake DREAM Act students. “Why would we not want to embrace their dedication, energy, talents and courage, characteristics that have made our nation great?” he asked. McCarrick emphasized that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports the DREAM Act.

The National Assn. of Evangelicals also stands strongly behind the DREAM Act, according to the Rev. Derrick Harkins, senior pastor, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, and a member of the association’s board of directors. “No matter what side of the aisle [our elected officials] occupy,” he said, “it is an opportunity for them to do what is right morally.”

The president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, the largest Latino Christian organization in America, said that “without a doubt,” Christ stood committed to the care of the most vulnerable, especially children. “To continue to punish these children is nothing less than anti-Christian, anti-American and morally reprehensible,” said the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez.

### **Saved a whole society**

Rabbi Lisa Grushcow, associate rabbi at Congregation Rodeph Sholom in New York City, is from Canada and in the process of earning her U.S. citizenship. She and other faith leaders held up Joseph as an immigrant who made a difference. “Not only did Joseph help his family,” she pointed out, “but he saved a whole society [Egypt].”

Other faith leaders participating in the press conference included Sister Simone Campbell, executive director, NETWORK; the Rev. Richard Graham, bishop, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rabbi Doug Heifetz, Oseh Shalom Congregation, Laurel, Md; the Rt. Rev. David Jones, bishop, Diocese of Virginia, The Episcopal Church; Dr. Fred Kniss, provost, Eastern Mennonite University; Imam Mohamed Magid,

president, Islamic Society of North America; and Father Jack Orzechowski, OFM, Franciscan Friar, the Holy Name Province.

Gabby Pacheco, a DREAM Act student who saw her parents and sisters taken away from her home in an Immigration & Customs Enforcement van, participated in the press conference also. She described the arrest as the scariest experience of her life.

Sen. Bennett, former superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, said the DREAM Act is a bipartisan issue, and a “common sense way to adjust the law.”

Durbin said supporters of the DREAM Act Sabbath will do their best to build a movement across America. He said the religious leaders will decide what’s appropriate for their own faith community.

“I support comprehensive immigration reform,” Durbin stressed. He acknowledged that the DREAM Act is part of a larger discussion, and described it as “an accepted starting point.”

**DREAM Act and General Immigration Education Materials**



## Background on the DREAM Act

Each year, approximately 65,000 high school graduates are prevented from attending college or working legally due to their undocumented immigration status. Our immigration law currently has no mechanism to consider their special circumstances, and even if they leave the U.S. in an effort to enter legally, they are barred from re-entry for up to 10 years since they have been here in an undocumented status. The DREAM Act would correct this inequity by allowing upstanding high school graduates who were brought to the United States as children years ago to obtain a temporary visa so they could attend school, travel, and work legally. After 10 years, they could apply for a green card (lawful permanent residency), and eventually apply for citizenship. To qualify for the temporary visa, students would have to prove they are under 30 years old; were brought to the United States before they were 16; have been here for at least five years; have graduated from High School; and have a criminal-free record and good moral conduct. Then, they would have to complete two years of college, trade school, or military service to then adjust their status to lawful permanent residency and pursue a pathway to citizenship.

- Across ideological and partisan lines, we can agree that punishing children for their parents' actions violates our most deeply held moral values. The DREAM Act has received significant bipartisan support in the past, and today we're calling on both Democrats and Republicans to step up and give these young people the opportunity to pursue the American dream.
- We ought to give talented, upstanding, hardworking youth the opportunity to serve their country in the military or contribute to their country through higher education. It's not right to deport children who haven't done anything wrong to a country they've never known.
- The status quo is not tenable... our nation is losing precious talent every year, as young people face insurmountable barriers to education and employment.

### Myths

- The DREAM Act would not force states to provide in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants.
- The DREAM Act is not 'amnesty', since these children did not choose to come here illegally. It merely allows them to correct their status with a law that they had no say in breaking.
- The DREAM Act does not facilitate 'chain migration'. Students who qualify would have to wait a minimum of 13 years before even applying for their parents to join them in the United States. Even then, parents would have to wait 4-7 years, plus a 10-year bar for illegal presence.
- The DREAM Act would not jeopardize more comprehensive immigration reform.

More information at <http://1.usa.gov/iPUARJ>

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## MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN THE U.S.A

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### ***Myth # 1: Immigrants Come Here to Take Jobs Away From Americans***

Immigrants work in niche occupations; including many areas U.S. workers don't choose to work in. A recent study showed NO correlation between high unemployment in areas with many immigrants. Most undocumented immigrants are here to escape poverty, oppression, domestic violence and other unlivable circumstances. Many refugees are actually undocumented immigrants because the laws for who "counts" as a legal refugee are extremely restricted.

### ***Myth # 2 Immigrants Increase Crime***

New immigrants are *less* likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. While immigration has increased since 1994, including doubling undocumented populations, violent crime rates fell by 34.2%.

### ***Myth # 3 Immigrants Don't Pay Taxes***

All immigrants pay taxes (income, property, sales, etc.). Immigrants pay \$90-\$140 *billion* a year in federal, state, and local income taxes. Undocumented immigrants also pay income taxes, evidenced by the Social Security Administration's "suspense file" (taxes that cannot be matched to workers' names and social security numbers). In 2002, this suspense file grew by \$56 billion in reported earnings, with \$7 billion in Social Security taxes and \$1.5 billion in Medicare taxes largely paid by immigrants who will *never* enjoy these programs. Immigrants contribute \$611 billion to our Social Security system; **a moratorium on legal immigration would raise the deficit 31% over 50 yrs.**

### ***Myth # 4 Immigrants Don't Contribute Economically to Society***

The immigrant community is not a drain on the U.S. economy but, in fact, is a net benefit. Research reported by the CATO Institute and the President's Council of Economic Advisors reveals that the average immigrant pays a net \$80,000 more in taxes than they collect in government services. For immigrants with college degrees the net fiscal return is \$198,000. Furthermore, The American Farm Bureau asserts that without guest workers the U.S. economy would lose as much as \$9 billion a year in agricultural production and 20 percent of current production would go overseas. Immigrants have a high rate of entrepreneurship, opening businesses and creating jobs.

### ***Myth # 5 Immigrants Don't Want to Learn English***

Immigrants learn English today at the same rate as Italian, German, and E. Europeans who emigrated in the 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are not enough English classes to accommodate all the immigrants who want to learn.

### ***Myth # 6 Immigrants Have a Way to Immigrate Legally; They Just Need to Wait Their Turn***

There are no legal possibilities for many immigrants. Visa caps, complex laws including 1996 changes in the law means if an immigrant leaves and tries to apply to re-enter, they could be separated from their family for 10 years or more. There are virtually no permanent employment visas for unskilled immigrants; the wait is 8 years and no employer will hold a job open that long. **Immigrants can't wait in line, because there is no line.**

## **Background on administrative relief**

Under current law, President Obama and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano possess a variety of tools which they can use to not only stop the detention and deportation of DREAMers, but to provide them a pathway to legal status. The president has the discretion, granted him by Congress, to provide deferred action, deferred enforced departure, parole in place, temporary protected status, etc. to individuals or groups who are not security threats to the United States.

More information on this authority and resources asking for President Obama to use this authority can be found at: <http://bit.ly/kIU2Oh> and <http://bit.ly/n9YaWo>

## Be Not Afraid – Resources for Congregations and Immigrant Families (English and Spanish)

### Be Equipped –

Be Equipped is one of four modules in LIRS's Be Not Afraid project (<http://bit.ly/p9UHso>). The project is a set of tools designed to assist congregations serving immigrants as they seek to reduce fear and create welcoming communities through education and advocacy. The tools in the Be Equipped module help congregations foster discussion of immigration issues and faithful responses.

LIRS would love to hear how you have used the Be Not Afraid materials in your community. Please contact us at [benotafraid@lirs.org](mailto:benotafraid@lirs.org) to share your stories or request further information about the project.

Download Be Equipped resources (all resources are PDFs unless otherwise noted):

- Mythbuster (<http://bit.ly/mWyDni>) debunks common misunderstandings
- Three-Sunday Series (<http://bit.ly/r98r27>) worship planning tips, children's sermons, bulletin inserts, three-part Bible study
- Bible Study Only (<http://bit.ly/pJuaig>)
- Cultural Competency Tips (<http://bit.ly/pk4Ydf>)

### Estén Equipados

Estén Equipados es uno de cuatro módulos del proyecto No Temas (<http://bit.ly/oa4Xwk>) de LIRS. El proyecto es un conjunto de herramientas diseñadas para ayudar a las congregaciones que atienden a inmigrantes en un momento en que intentan, mediante la educación y la propugnación, reducir el temor y crear comunidades que los acojan. Las herramientas del módulo Estén Equipados ayudan a las congregaciones a fomentar las conversaciones sobre problemas y temas de inmigración y respuestas dignas de fe.

En Servicios Luteranos de Inmigración y para Refugiados (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; LIRS) nos encantaría saber cómo ha usado los materiales de No Temas en su comunidad. Por favor comuníquese con nosotros a [benotafraid@lirs.org](mailto:benotafraid@lirs.org) para obtener más información.

Descargue los recursos de Estén Informados (todos los recursos están en formato PDF, a menos que se indique lo contrario):

- Destruye-Mitos (<http://bit.ly/mQQH12>) desacredita malos entendidos comunes
- Serie de Tres Domingos (<http://bit.ly/mUZM03>) consejos para planear la adoración, sermones infantiles, suplementos de boletines, estudio de la Biblia en tres partes)
- Estudio de la Biblia en Línea Únicamente (<http://bit.ly/obx5bD>)
- Consejos sobre Habilidades Interculturales (<http://bit.ly/oxBZVu>)

# THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS



*A Christmas DREAM for Students Around the Country*

**Author: Andrea Pascual**

**December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010**

As the holidays draws near, bright lights decorate the streets of the District of Columbia, carols are sung, cookies are baked by the dozen and stores fill up with anxious shoppers hoping to find the perfect gift. All this excitement is driven by the magic of Christmas and, more importantly, the anticipation of traveling home to be reunited with family members and celebrate the birth of the son of God.

However, this perfect Christmas picture is distorted as I remember that many families will not be reunited this Christmas. Hard-working, honest people of faith are left to celebrate in fear and isolation because of our immigration policies.

On Tuesday, December, 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 I joined with faith leaders and DREAM Act students from around the nation, as well as our DC based faith advocates to urge the Senate to adopt the DREAM Act. Together we prayerfully marched around the three Senate buildings replicating what Joshua had done in the Hebrew Scriptures to bring down the walls of Jericho. Our group was attempting to bring down the walls that some conservative Senators have put up against the DREAM Act.

When the march ended, the DREAM students gathered in a circle as the rest of us surrounded them and prayed that the Senate would open their hearts and grant new opportunities to these students. At one point I looked up to see one of the students with tears rolling down her cheeks and her eyes squeezed shut. Her hands gripped tightly to the students next to her and I could feel the passion in her prayers. The anger I've had at the lack of concern towards our immigration policies intensified at the moment.

How can a majority of Senators who are people of faith too, not support a piece of legislation that displays one of the core values of our faith - love? Particularly with the Christmas spirit all around, where love and compassion permeate our lives, how can people exclude the DREAM students from the opportunities that the American dream promises?

“The command to love the stranger is a consistent theme throughout Scripture and occurs nearly three dozen times in the first five books of the Bible. In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is surpassed in its frequency only by the command to adore, love and revere God and God alone” (Cardinal Roger Mahoney, October 1993 Sermon)

One of Catholic social teaching's basic principles is the affirmation of life and human dignity, which extends to all people. People have the right to migrate to maintain a certain quality of life for themselves and for their families. Biblical Christian teaching has encouraged the acceptance and sharing of love for all people, from all circumstances. In fact, the spirit of Christmas is one of inclusion and generosity and it is during this time that the importance of the DREAM Act is most evident. We need to make sure that we have room in the Inn.

I pray and continue to advocate so that the Senate will reform our immigration system and help to reunite families, not tear them apart.

*DREAM Act only hope for college for local immigrant*

**Author: PICO**

**July 9<sup>th</sup> 2010**

Walking down North High Street in West Chester, she doesn't appear to be different than any other 21-year-old. However, what separates her from others walking down the street is not her appearance.

Sophia, who requested that her real name not be used due to her status, is one of over 11 million undocumented immigrants living in America.

Her father was already working in the U.S. when he decided he wanted to bring his family here when she was 3. However, the immigration process takes between eight to 12 years to complete and there is no guarantee of obtaining legal residency after this period.

For Sophia's father, it wasn't worth sacrificing his children's childhood to wait for the immigration process. He decided to rely on coyotes, who are paid thousands per person to smuggle people into the U.S. from Mexico, to reunite his family.

The coyotes bought the family across the border. From there, they made their way from Las Vegas to Chicago before being united with family in West Chester.

"First, we lived with family that was already here legally," Sophia said. "We tried to save money for a place of our own."

Settling in American culture, her mother was hired at Parkway Cleaners. After several months, her family saved enough to rent their own apartment. Sophia lived just like any other legal resident but her world would be flip upside down a few years later.

When Sophia was seven, officers from the Immigration Customs and Enforcement Agency raided her mother's workplace and took her to a prison facility outside of Philadelphia.

Sophia's mother told her that "if you did speak back to them [the officers] or try to argue with you, at that time, they did hit you."

"My aunt back-talked to them. She asked them 'Why are you taking us? I have children, they need us,' At that point, one of the ICE officers punched her and pushed her to the floor." Sophia said. "She fell to the floor, she was scraped and beaten."

After the incident happened to her, Sophia's aunt took the case to court and was able to obtain her citizenship.

"I had no idea what was going on. All I knew was that she wasn't there," Sophia said. "I remember going to school and I just felt so sad. I wanted to cry right there."

Without any contact from Sophia's mother for months, her father slipped into a deep depression and began drinking daily. Members of her extended family began to take care of his children. With finances now tightened, Sophia and her sister would often do odd jobs like cleaning houses for just \$20 a day.

Yet within a few weeks, her mother re-entered the United States undocumented.

"When she came back we were all sleeping. She walked in through the door and my sister ran down and started crying," Sophia said. "My mother said 'I'm back, but you have to get up and get ready for school. You have to go.' My sister then said, 'But if I go to school you won't come back again.'"

Her mother decided not to return to work due to the threat of deportation. Soon afterwards, Sophia and her siblings were able to obtain a sponsorship from her uncle for legal residency. Sophia went on to graduate high school with honors.

She applied to become a citizen, but for years her application was unaddressed. When she turned 21, it expired.

“I’m out of that application and there’s nothing I can do. The only hope that I would have is the DREAM Act,” Sophia said.

Under the DREAM Act, students who have lived in the United States for at least five years and have demonstrated good moral behavior would be able apply for six years of conditional status.

During this six year period, a person must complete two years of a four-year degree or serve in the military for two years. After this period, depending on the moral conduct of the applicant, legal residency would be granted.

Without conditional status, Sophia cannot pursue post-secondary education.

“Something that I think would really help people is if I would be able to do communications with Spanish and be an official translator,” Sophia said. “But it feels horrible, it’s like I’m lying here to my teachers telling them I don’t want to go to college. But I do, I still do.”

Sophia is not the only one. 65,000 students who graduate high school and have been in the U.S. more than five years face limited prospects for completing their education or working legally in the United States due to lack of documentation, according to the National Immigration Law Center.

While 118 representatives and 36 senators have co-sponsored the bill it still has not been brought to the floor for debate.

“Not everyone is here as a criminal or, you know, to steal anyone’s job. People just want to come here for a better future for themselves, for their families, for their kids,” Sophia said. “I think that a lot of students and people here are proving to this country that they are an asset and that they want to belong here, they learn English wanting to belong here.”

Despite her hardships, Sophia does not regret her family’s decision to come here undocumented.

“I said to my mom, ‘I’m glad you guys made the decision to be here, otherwise we wouldn’t have had the future we have now,’” Sophia said. “I feel very lucky. I feel so blessed. Obviously someone wants me here. Obviously I’m here for a reason.”

*Update – At the end of 2010 the DREAM Act was approved in the House but ultimately lost because it was a few votes short of the 60 needed votes in the Senate. Students are still hoping to reintroduce the Dream Act in the years ahead.*

## ***What Would the "Deserving" Affluent Look Like?***

**Author: Bill Mefford**

**December 2010**

As Congress finally put the finishing touches on an unpredictably busy lame duck session on this past Wednesday, and as President Obama took his victory lap, gloating not only over the last few weeks but over the last two years in what is being called one of the most accomplished Congressional sessions in history, I still feel very let down this Christmas.

Why dare I stray from the liberal talking point of boasting of the legislative accomplishments of the Obama administration? Because even with the flurry of activity, this administration and this Congress has often failed to bring necessary relief for the most vulnerable and defenseless in our society.

In Jefferson Cowie's excellent book, "Stayin' Alive: the 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class" Cowie asserts that in the 1970s there was a dramatic shift in the political focus that helped bring the Republicans into power under Ronald Reagan, and caused the Democrats to shift their focus as well under Clinton that continues under Obama. And that shift, to be brief, occurred with a focus away from the poor and marginalized groups and toward the welfare of the middle class.

Democrats, in their efforts to regain power from the Republicans (who had shifted themselves in the 1970s to cultural issues as they recognized their views on the economy did not benefit most of the middle class), began to talk less about poverty and about those on society's margins, and instead, focused on the "needs" of the middle class. In other words, the Republicans established the playing field of the debates between the two parties and the Democrats have happily followed along (as has the Church, but that is another posting).

And so who is the loser in the power plays between the current two-party competition for attention to the middle class? The poor and marginalized.

In addition, when talk about the poor and marginalized does occasionally spring up, it is a discussion trapped in the framework of "deserving" vs. "undeserving" poor.

One perfect example of this is the debate around the DREAM Act. During the debate in both the House and Senate, numerous members of Congress (as well as those of us who advocated for its passage) who spoke in favor of the bill, often said that DREAM Act students were brought into this country "through no fault of their own." In other words, they were "deserving" poor and were inherently distinct from the "non-deserving" poor, i.e. all other undocumented immigrants.

The Church will do well to avoid these frameworks and put forward our vision that all undocumented immigrants are made in the image of God and many of them were forced to cross the border illegally, or stay past the legal time on their visas, due to economic and foreign policies of the United States. In other words, the distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" immigrants is blurred, if not entirely invisible.

I find it utterly hypocritical that the public, and even more so, the Church, harshly insists on separating the "deserving" vulnerable from the "undeserving." And let us not ignore the fact that the requirements

placed on the "deserving" poor are quite strenuous. In fact, I think a better framework would be "perfect" poor vs. "imperfect" poor.

Funny how these requirements are not made on the middle class. We do not talk about the "deserving" affluent vs. "undeserving" affluent.

But perhaps we should use these terms. What if, in the insane extension of tax cuts for the affluent (and yes, if you make even in the neighborhood of \$250,000, you are affluent!), we also established some stringent requirements so that we can distinguish between the "deserving" affluent and the "undeserving" affluent. What if, in order to receive the extended tax cuts, "deserving" affluent were those who had a member of their immediate families serving in the military. In doing so, they could receive 50% of their tax cuts. The rest of the tax cuts could be earned through a combination of:

- maintaining either a one-parent household or a stable marriage;
- holding stable employment (and changing jobs would prevent tax cuts from being received until the current job had been maintained for at least 6 consecutive months);
- those who receive tax cuts would be subject to surprise visits by social workers employed by the newly created government bureaucracy, the Earned Tax-Cut Incentive Agency (ETCIA). ETCIA workers would verify that the recipients' marriage was stable, that they were being responsible on their job and were not committing any infractions identified by their employer which would immediately stop payments on any tax-cuts, that they were not using any alcohol or non-prescription drugs, that they were participating in their community and could provide several references to support their citizenship in good standing.

We would dare not apply these standards to the affluent in this country because we assume that all affluent people are "deserving!" But yet, if you are poor, or on the margins, you are mandated to not be "deserving," but "perfect." Hypocrisy.

So, while President Obama and others celebrate the number of achievements made by the 111th Congress, I must continue to lament the frameworks used that preference the affluent and condemn the poor and marginalized. My prayer for the new year is that the Church lead the way in seeing the poor and affluent as all children of God, while joining with God's Kingdom preference for the poor.

Until then, I pray we all have a Merry Christmas.

*Undocumented, Unafraid: God's Messengers in Our Time*

**Author: Yvette Schock**

**March 21<sup>st</sup> 2011**

One day in Tucson last summer, as I wove a path through the crowds at a demonstration against SB1070, a young woman approached and held out to me a sign from the stack she had clasped under her arm. On the front was a brightly colored image of another young woman holding a sign that read in bold, block letters, “UNDOCUMENTED, UNAFRAID: NO TENEMOS MIEDO.” I stopped walking, seized by a moment of indecision—I am not an undocumented immigrant, and I do not have to fear the things an undocumented immigrant might, so, I wondered, what did it mean for me to carry this image and these words? Could it be a declaration of solidarity and support for families and students refusing to live in the shadows, and a denunciation of an economic system that requires the existence of an underclass and of a society and political leaders who accept it? Did it honor the courage of immigrant advocates, or was it just a shadow gesture made by someone who risked very little by showing up at a demonstration, in contrast to those who risked a great deal? My moment of indecision didn't last long; I decided not to overthink it (I'm often guilty of this), held the sign high, and joined in the chanting and singing of the crowd.

But the sign came home from Tucson with me; it sits propped against the wall opposite my desk, and I have had months to reflect on the significance of its message—how it speaks within the context of these times, and what it demands of me in particular. I have begun to read its words as the kind of defiant, hopeful, confident, David-confronting-Goliath statement of faith we hear again and again in the Psalms. In the face of all kinds of dangers and anxieties, the Psalmists often declared their trust in God and their defiance of any human who might harm them using these words, or something very like them:

***In God I trust and am not afraid.***

***What can mere mortals do to me?***

(Psalm 56:4)

It's not just the Psalmists: very, very often in Scripture, when messengers from God arrive to bring comfort, hope and challenge to people in all kinds of precarious situations, they usually begin the same way: “Do not be afraid.” Maybe it's because coming face-to-face all of a sudden with a messenger from God is a startling experience, or maybe it's because God's messengers so often appear to people with plenty of reason to be afraid, but I think it might also be because of what fear does to us. Fear causes us to shrink, to turn inward, to turn away from God and from others. When God's messengers arrive, it's usually not only to comfort and reassure, but also to challenge and move us to action. People who are shrinking in fear are in no state to hear God's promises, to joyfully dive into the powerful current of God's vision of life and abundance for our world and allow that current to redirect their lives, to answer God's call to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

And so, when God's messengers appear in the stories of our faith, they send up a flare for us: they prepare their listeners (and us, the readers) to hear and receive the promise and challenge that is coming next by reminding them (and us): Do not be afraid. God appears to Abram, elderly and childless, and declares: “Do not be afraid...Look up at the sky and count the stars...so shall your offspring be” (Genesis 15). When Abram's wife, Sarai, sends her slave, Hagar and her son (by Abram) into the desert to die, God hears their cries and promises: “Hagar, do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” (Genesis 21) God speaks through the prophet Isaiah, saying to the Hebrew people in exile,

“Do not be **afraid**, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west” (Isaiah 43:5). The angel Gabriel appears to Mary to declare, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” (Luke 1:30-32)

Fear, it seems, has no part in God’s vision of justice and wholeness for our world, nor in God’s way of working in the world. But fear has it uses for those who would wield it as their tool—human history is littered with far too many stories about political leaders stirring up fear of a particular group of people to distract from a problem the leader may not be able to address, to disguise their own shortcomings or corruption, to maintain their positions of power. Perhaps this is another reason why “Do not be afraid” is the refrain that begins each telling of God’s promises—to point out the universe of difference between God’s order and the order of empires.

Our society is no exception. It is crowded with voices that aim to stir up fear in immigrant and non-immigrant communities alike—candidates for public office, governors, state representatives, county sheriffs and Members of Congress who do not hesitate to paint immigrants in our communities as enemies, criminals, threats to our country’s security and to our families’ well-being; sponsors of state legislation that aims to make life difficult for undocumented immigrants. ICE agents waiting outside of apartment buildings or trolling in grocery store parking lots, increasing numbers of deportations that begin with a routine traffic stop, the threat of immigrant parents being separated from U.S. citizen children—all of these policies and practices are stirring up fear within immigrant communities, and for some, stirring up fear is the point. Though I don’t think the Obama administration would admit this, current immigration enforcement policy, in the absence of immigration reform, is, in effect, a program of attrition through enforcement—a strategy that banks on creating fear and suffering in immigration communities.

And yet some in those very communities are refusing to turn inward, to shrink in fear. I don’t know when the phrase “Undocumented and unafraid” first came into use in the movement for just immigration reform, but one account points to youth leaders working to pass the DREAM Act as the source, which wouldn’t surprise me. A number of DREAM students walked from Florida to Washington, DC early last year, declaring all the way that they were undocumented and unafraid. I imagine them walking through counties with 287g agreements in operation, and meeting with unsympathetic law enforcement officials or Members of Congress, living the words of the Psalmists:

***In God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?***

They refused to give power to fear, refused to be turned inward, away from their families, their communities, or God.

Perhaps these are messengers from God in our time—they do not come to us encouraging us “Do not be afraid”, but challenge us through their example, their declaration that *they are unafraid*.

I haven’t answered all of my own questions about the poster from the Tucson demonstration, but I have come to see it as a kind of icon—a living image that reaches out of its frame, grabs my hand, and points me to pay attention to these messengers of our time, to follow the path of the migrant Christ: the One who walks with DREAM students on the way to Washington, D.C., who lives inside apartment buildings where ICE agents wait outside, who sits with school children as they wait for their parents to

come home from work, half afraid that they might not arrive; the One who calls us to reject a life shadowed by fear and to seek justice for all people

***Out of the Shadows and Into the Light: Dream Movement Declares We are “Undocumented, Unafraid, and Unapologetic!”***

**Author: Stephen Pavey**

*“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.”*

– Cesar Chavez

What do the teachings of Jesus have to say “to those who stand with their backs against the wall?” asked Howard Thurman when addressing the African American experience of racism and violence of the 1940s. His answer and challenge, in his *Jesus and the Disinherited*, shaped the civil rights movement. The good news revealed in the teachings and life of Jesus is “that fear, deception, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.” Jesus reveals the power of love, for self and others, that enables us to overcome relations of inequality that are perpetuated by fear, deception, and hate.

Fast forward 60 years to today’s growing nativism, xenophobia, and violence surrounding the presence of immigrants in the United States, and Thurman’s analysis of the lives of the disinherited is equally compelling here and now to those who have their backs against the wall. The experience of inequality and violence among immigrants is exacerbated for the 11.8 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Nearly 20 years ago anthropologist Leo Chavez described the “shadowed lives” of undocumented immigrants. With the growing public antipathy and the media construction of the “Latino threat,” living in the shadows remains an apt description and continues to be marked by the same fears and survival techniques of deception described by Thurman.

A segment of this vulnerable undocumented population has been called the “1.5 generation” because they immigrated to the US as children, usually brought by their parents. An estimated 2.1 million undocumented students are enrolled in the nation’s public school system, and over 65,000 graduate from American high schools each year. Although guaranteed free public primary and secondary education by the Supreme Court decision *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982, these students today face the contradiction of limited opportunities for tertiary education and social mobility in a country that for all intents and purposes is the only home they know. It is not surprising that most feel what Paulo Freire described as “hope pulverized in the immobility of the crushing present, some sort of final stop beyond which nothing is possible.”

In the face of uncertain futures, of dreams deferred, and of the shame carried by living in the shadows, undocumented youth are coming out of the shadows and publicly announcing, “My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I’m undocumented, unafraid, and unapologetic.” The undocumented immigrant youth-led movement is gaining momentum by bringing their personal stories out into the light through grassroots organizing and activism, including sit-ins, vigils, hunger strikes, marches, rallies, and acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. Hope is alive, but the numbers reveal that many more undocumented students still remain in the shadows. These numbers are growing every year.

What can be done? We must insist that the federal government get to work on humane comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path toward citizenship for these dreamers. In response to the federal government’s inability to work on immigration reform, states are introducing a record number of largely punitive and anti-immigrant bills, including 1070 copycats, student bans, and challenges to the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment’s birthright citizenship. We must insist that both state and federal governments end their punitive, enforcement-only approach to immigration reform.

In the meantime, the growing anti-immigrant culture and corresponding public policies continue to damage and divide our communities as well tear apart families.

We should be reminded of the example of Saul, in Acts chapter nine, who was brought to his knees by a great light on the road to Damascus. Out of the light he heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” We need a similar conversion moment. Paul’s radical conversion embodied a transformation from the persecutor to the persecuted, from siding with the powerful to walking with the oppressed. This radical conversion from hate to love for us, the privileged and powerful, will find Jesus among the disinherited undocumented immigrant in our midst. We must repent of our anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy and seek a conversion of our broken immigration system that persecutes Jesus in the midst of the vulnerable undocumented immigrant community. Only the great light of love can convert the powerful and privileged from hate and oppression while at the same time that we walk with our marginalized brothers and sisters who experience the same light in their conversion from fear and deception to love. Let us repent, for The Kingdom of God is near!

*Stephen Pavey, Ph.D., is an applied anthropologist, artist, and activist at the One Horizon Institute in Lexington, Kentucky. (<http://stevepavey.wordpress.com/>)*

## *Connecticut Dreamers – A Reflection*

**Author: Right Reverend James E. Curry Bishop Suffragan of Connecticut**

Last week I attended the signing ceremony for Connecticut's new In-State Tuition bill. This bill gives every young adult who has attended a Connecticut high school for four years and has graduated access to in-state tuition for all Connecticut public colleges and universities regardless of immigration status. In Connecticut that can mean a savings of up to \$17,000 a year. Even as the Lieutenant Governor welcomed people to the ceremony she commented that this was a controversial law. Debate had been lengthy and contentious in both the House and the Senate. Even as the vote was taken, it was unclear that the bill would pass.

Surrounding Governor Dan Malloy, as he signed the bill into law, were a group of young adults, the Connecticut Dreamers, who deserve much of the credit for the passage of the bill. These young adults began to organize themselves through Facebook about a year ago. They had three things in common. They had lived in Connecticut most of their lives, they wanted to be active and productive members of society, and they were undocumented. Together they began to tell their stories. They began to speak out knowing that as they identified themselves they risked deportation. They are people of great courage, conviction, and a desire to make life better.

Maria Praeli is a Dreamer. She has just turned eighteen and is a rising senior at New Milford High School. Maria came to the United States with her parents from Peru when she was five and has attended New Milford schools for 11 years. She is a student leader, a successful student, and an articulate speaker. I first heard her speak five months ago. She told her story at a rally in support of the In State Tuition Bill. She told how she only learned that she was undocumented when her parents told her she couldn't get a driver's license. Until then she was just like every one of her classmates – a teenager dreaming about her future and doing her best to succeed. But her immigration status has changed her possibilities. As her friends began to look at colleges, she began to know that her horizons were limited by her immigration status. She couldn't afford college at out of state rates and she couldn't work without a Green Card. She decided to speak out for her own future and for the future of other undocumented kids in Connecticut. Her testimony and the testimony of other dreamers had a huge impact on the passage of the bill. Last Thursday at the signing ceremony, she spoke on behalf of all the Dreamers as she thanked the Governor and legislative leaders for their support and began to look beyond high school to college and her future with new hope.

A member of the press asked me why the Episcopal Church supported the Dreamers. I responded with some thoughts about how we stand for hospitality to the stranger, that we seek to break down barriers between people, that our faith calls us to offer hope to the oppressed and to strive for justice. But even as I said those good words, I realized that they were somewhat lifeless. We support the Dreamers because they have a claim on our humanity. Their situation is unfair and it can be changed. When I think about Maria and other undocumented kids, I know this: the Dreamers are our children. It is as simple as that. They are part of our churches and members of our society. They have dreams and fears, hopes and frustrations, skills and weaknesses the same as my own biological children do. They are part of my present and my future. With the passage of the Connecticut legislation they have one less obstacle in their pathway.

The Connecticut legislation which puts documented and undocumented students on an equal footing for affordable public higher education is a tremendously important accomplishment, but it is only a first step. The Dream Act can do what no one state by itself can do: provide a process by which young adults can seek US citizenship. Maria and her friends have spoken out boldly and articulately. They already are bringing their energy to our national debate. As we seek to organize the churches for advocacy for the Dream Act, they can be our leaders and we can be their allies.

*Would I Risk as Much as the Dreamers?*

**Author: Lonnie Ellis**

**June 30, 2011**

<http://bit.ly/pmvT3r>

The youngest person in a crowd of teenagers and young adults at the Dream Act Senate Judiciary Subcommittee hearing on Tuesday was an 8-year-old girl. She was adorable with a huge grin on her face as she stood next to Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) at a reception after the hearing.

The Dream Act, first introduced 10 years ago, would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented young people who meet very specific criteria. In order to be eligible, these young immigrants must have arrived in the United States as minors, graduate from U.S. high schools, fulfill good moral character requirements, and complete two years in the military or at a four-year college. The Dream Act passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in December, 2010, but fell to a filibuster in the Senate and has now been reintroduced and given a committee hearing by Sen. Durbin.

In our current immigration system, children and young adults just like the 8-year-old smiling Latina are often denied an affordable education and sent on a path of marginalized work, social isolation, or even deportation. The Dream Act presents a chance for them to realize a full life here in the American community.

Ola Kaso, an 18-year-old born in Albania who has lived in the U.S. since she was 5, spoke very eloquently about her love of America and her energetic volunteerism. She said that although her family has done everything according to the law, there is no way under current law for her to obtain citizenship, and she is set to be deported in less than one year. Ola just graduated from high school with a 4.4 GPA and has enrolled at the University of Michigan on a scholarship to study pre-med. Asked about her career goals she said she wanted to be a surgical oncologist.

“I want to remove cancer tumors,” she said, “especially for those who cannot afford good care.” What reasoning would demand that we deport this young woman? (You can watch Ola’s testimony here beginning at the 122:24 mark.) Imagine the reaction of young people facing deportation from their families to a country they might not even remember: “Why do they want to send me away? And where? Where do they want to send me?”

The witness of these young people shows us what we ought to do politically, and challenges us to re-envision ourselves as a nation. And beyond that bigger picture, they inspire me personally and spiritually. As I watched these bold testifiers who risk deportation, I found myself asking: What is the biggest risk that I have taken for justice? No analyst thinks the Dream Act will pass anytime soon, and yet these kids are witnessing with their lives to inspire change. How can I surrender more fully to God in order to risk more of myself?

The 8-year-old girl stood smiling at the podium at the side of a U.S. senator, knowing that she was a part of something big. I too want to risk myself, with a smile on my face, and fully trust that I am a part of God’s plan for justice.

*How Friends, Facebook, and Prayer Stopped the Deportation of Bernard Pastor*

**Author: Jeannie Choi**

**July 6, 2011**

<http://bit.ly/grGik4>

In November 2009, Bernard Pastor, an 18-year-old undocumented student in Ohio, was stopped by police for a minor traffic violation and detained. ICE held Pastor in federal detention with plans to deport him to his native Guatemala, though his parents had left Guatemala with Pastor when he was 3 years old. When Pastor's friends discovered that he was in detention, they created a Facebook page titled "Free Bernard Pastor."

"That page became a catalyst for information, and the local media started getting involved as that Facebook page blew up," says Troy Jackson, senior pastor at University Christian Church in Cincinnati and a local community organizer. As soon as Jackson heard Pastor's story, he also created a simple website, PrayForBernard.com. The local faith community and Pastor's classmates added to the content on both sites, and eventually Pastor's story was picked up by local and national media.

In December, friends and community members gathered in support at the Morrow County jail, where Pastor was being held, joined by the media, and soon Pastor was released from jail. While he still has a pending deportation order, Pastor's case was "moved to the bottom of the stack," Jackson says. Though the online campaign was small, with only a few hundred supporters, Jackson believes that the Facebook page and website changed the narrative in Pastor's favor. "The reality is that online social networks become a tool for organizers that help them to further the real relationships and organizing they are already doing," Jackson explains. "Bernard's classmates are 17, 18, 19 years old, but they were able to create a site that was very significant, and while the power of social change is always going to demand more than a 'like' button, I look at the Dreamers, and I see folks who are incredibly committed and use social media to grow their base, to stay connected, and to encourage one another."

Learn more about how organizers can use social media tools to motivate thousands of people to take action for justice, and watch the video about Bernard Pastor below.

*An Undocumented Student's Message to Obama*

**Author: Gaby Pacheco**

**May 13, 2011**

<http://bit.ly/r1hy9f>

We want actions, not words.

For nearly two decades I've called the United States of America my home. I emigrated from Ecuador with my family, grew up in Miami and attended public schools, where I was a high-achieving student who eventually made it to college. I am also an undocumented immigrant.

It was at Miami Dade College — the same institution of higher learning that President Barack Obama mentioned several times in his El Paso, Texas speech on immigration — that I gave a commencement speech to my class back in 2006. At Miami Dade, I was active not only as student government president at one of its eight campuses, but also as the Student Body Association president of the entire community college system in Florida.

I would have never been able to achieve positions of leadership were it not for the brave decision my parents made one day to come to the United States. It was an incredibly hard decision for them, as it is for anyone to leave family, language and everything they know, to take a chance at the American dream.

President Obama was correct to say the issue of immigration “often elicits strong emotions.” It's hard to understand why a family would risk so much to obtain so little. And while it's important to practice compassion, too often the rhetoric becomes hateful, as we have witnessed with the recent SB 1070 law in Arizona and its copycats in other states. Sometimes it provokes violence.

In the middle of this divisiveness, there can be hope. But only when politicians, who talk about the broken immigration system and their attempts to reform it, follow their words with actions.

Last year was a year of incomplete actions. When the DREAM Act was finally brought to debate in Congress, it fell five votes short of the 60 needed to end a Republican filibuster. The act would allow people brought into the United States as children to earn legal status by attending college or serving in the military.

We are a nation of immigrants, a nation that dreams, a nation that elects one person out of the many, the president, to guide Congress toward the changes he promised. President Obama has the executive power to stop deportations.

Today, it's a real threat to our democracy when police officials start acting like immigration officers, pushing 11 million people who already live in the shadows into greater fear. To use our resources to deport talented youth, and separate mothers and fathers from their citizen children is simply un-American.

Given the harsh political climate, immigration reform and the DREAM Act will be difficult to discuss, but we are ready to organize again.

We know President Obama supports immigration reform. We know he supports the DREAM Act. That's not in question. We need him to use his executive power to stop deportations of youths eligible for the DREAM Act, keeping families together until Congress is able to put its differences aside and acknowledge that we are part of the future of our great country.

Youth like myself are not alone in this plea. Last month, 22 Democratic senators sent a letter asking the president to use executive power to stop deportation of DREAM Act students. Just two weeks ago, the American Immigration Council released a memo by two former general counsels for the Immigration and Naturalization Service that outlined the president's authority to grant administrative relief.

He should listen, and act. We need so many people to understand our struggle and to see that we are just caught in a political limbo. We love God above all, but we also love our friends, communities, and this country.

***My Hardest Working Students are Undocumented***

**Author: Robert Chao Romero**

**January 5, 2011**

<http://bit.ly/nCLabW>

I am greatly saddened and angered by Congress' failure to pass the DREAM Act before Christmas last year. It is a tragic moment in the United States when justice for immigrant children is railroaded by partisan politics on the eve of Christmas. God have mercy on our country for so blatantly disregarding God's heart of compassion for immigrants in the midst of a holy season in which we are supposed to be celebrating the birth of Jesus who came to "preach the good news to the poor ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

It is immoral to deny a university education to the children of undocumented immigrants. Although this may be a popular position within some political circles, such denial of educational opportunity is utterly unbiblical and unjust. A fundamental biblical principle is that no one should be punished for an action for which they had no control (Deuteronomy 24:16). To use a biblical analogy, if the parents eat sour grapes the children's teeth should not be set on edge (Jeremiah 31:29).

In the same way, undocumented youth should not be punished for crossing a border when they had no decision in the matter. Most undocumented youth were brought to the United States when they were just small children or infants. In fact, 65,000 such undocumented youth graduate from high school each year in the United States. Many of them are valedictorians and at the top of their class. Tragically, thousands of these students are denied a college education because of state laws which bar them from universities. Even in the few states which allow undocumented students to attend college, it is tremendously challenging for them because they are forced to pay exorbitant international student fees or refused access to public financial aid.

As a professor of ethnic studies at UCLA, I have found that some of my best students are undocumented. Although they are legally entitled to attend the university, and are able to pay in-state tuition fees (which, in California, is still a lot of money because of our sky-rocketing tuition increases), they are not allowed to receive public financial aid in the form of loans, grants, or scholarships. As a result, they often work 30 to 40 hours a week, commute 100 miles a day on public transportation, experience quasi-homelessness, sleep in their cars, and skip meals so that they can pay for their education. Moreover, for those who graduate from UCLA, their professional choices and opportunities to attend graduate school are extremely limited because of their legal status. If the DREAM Act had passed, it would have changed the lives of my students and the tens of thousands of DREAMers in the United States. They would have become entitled to receive financial aid and would have been provided with a path to citizenship and expanded professional opportunities which they so much deserve.

At this moment of personal sadness and grief over the failure of the DREAM Act to be passed, I am comforted by one thing — I know that God will bring justice for my students and the thousands of DREAMers in the United States. Jesus loves them and he promises to do this: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory." (Matthew 12:20)

***The DREAM Act is Not Amnesty***  
**Author: Andrew Simpson**  
**December, 13, 2010**

<http://bit.ly/qcluc2>

As members of Congress debate the DREAM Act once again, opponents of the act are again attacking the legislation as “backdoor amnesty.” Instead of allowing ourselves to be caught up in such broad rhetoric, we must understand that the DREAM Act is neither backdoor, nor is it amnesty.

Amnesty is defined as “a general pardon for offenses, esp. political offenses, against a government.” The Greek root of the word, *amnestia*, refers to the process of forgetting. An alternative definition of amnesty may, therefore, be “a forgetting and forgiveness of sins.” By such a definition, we can see the message of the gospel as one that grants us amnesty by Christ.

Regardless of where we differ on the benefits or demerits of amnesty, let us be thoughtful and discern enough to realize that the DREAM Act is not amnesty. Rather, it is an extension of grace to a very specific group of people who did not knowingly commit a crime against the United States.

If the DREAM Act passes this year, it would only provide a path to citizenship for those immigrants who meet a very strict set of requirements. The only immigrants who would be eligible would be those who came to the United States at the age of 15 or younger; have lived continuously in the United States since before 2005; were under the age of 30 on the date of enactment; demonstrate good moral character (i.e. prove they have not committed any crimes that would make them inadmissible to the country as determined by existing immigration law); and have graduated from high school, obtained a GED certificate, served in the military, or have been admitted to an institution of higher education in the United States.

We see from these rigorous preconditions that any person eligible for the benefits of the DREAM Act was brought the U.S. at a young age and has been living here for years. Can we honestly, with wholehearted conviction, claim that these individuals are criminals for following their parents into the country as children? Can we look into the face of our brothers and sisters in Christ, like Gaby Pacheco, and tell them that they will be accountable for the infractions of their parents? Such an accusation is not consistent with American or Christian values.

We read in the book of Romans that we all fall short and are in need of grace in our own lives. We are offered that grace through redemption that came from Christ. How can we then turn to our neighbors who are being charged with a crime that they did not knowingly commit and refuse to extend grace? Such a judgment will render them second-class citizens for the rest of their lives.

We understand that a vote on this bill will be coming up in the Senate this week. Please call your Senator and ask them to support the DREAM Act — even if you have done so many, many times before. They need to know that you are watching and care.

## ***My Personal Story: Parent's Migration to the United From Ireland in 1950***

**Author: Patrick Carolan**

In 1950 my mother and father Rita and Tom Carolan stepped off the boat at Ellis Island as immigrants to America from Ireland. My mother grew up in Belfast Ireland, the oldest of eight children. Her family had very little. Her father was an alcoholic and abusive. At thirteen she had to leave school to stay home and take care of her seven younger siblings, so her mother could go to work. At 18 she went to work in a cigarette factory. She had to give most of her meager earnings to her mother to help support her brothers and sisters. My father grew up on a farm in County Cavan Ireland. He was a middle child of eight. They lived in a three room farmhouse with no electricity or plumbing. He could barely read or write. Like my mother's father my father was also an alcoholic. My mother would love to tell the story of how she stepped off the boat with one baby in her arms another in her belly and not two nickels to rub together. Sometimes I would ask my mother what possessed her to leave her siblings, her mother, her home, her friends and venture off to an unknown place with one baby and being pregnant with another and no money. She would tell me that she had hope and faith in God and a dream that her children would have a better life.

My mother had six children. Two of her children have PhD's; one has a sixth year degree and is a Director and Principal of a Magnet school. One of her children served in the Navy during the Vietnam War. One of her children is a nurse and was Supervisor of Nursing for a Hospital Cardiac unit, helping heart patients recover from surgery and lead normal lives. One of her children is an Art Therapist working with autistic children, another is a systems analyst. One of her children ran for public office and has been involved in social justice and advocacy. All of her children attended college. Three of her children have adopted other children.

My mother also had 18 grandchildren. One of whom served in the army in Afghanistan another spent two years in the Peace Corp in Peru. Four of her grandchildren were adopted, one from Pakistan and two who were previously in foster care. One of her grandchildren is a musician and performed at the Acropolis in Greece. Another is a swimmer, at fifteen she and a friend helped organize and coach a swim team for young adults with special needs. For two years they took the team to the Special Olympics. Eight of her grandchildren have graduated from college.

My mother would be one of the first to welcome new families to our neighborhood, regardless of their nationality, skin color or ethnic background. She would tell us that this is Gods land and we are all just visitors and immigrants. If we wanted God to welcome us then we had better make sure we welcomed all his children.

My mother died a few years ago. The line of people who came to pay their respects, because my mother had touched them either directly or through one of her children and grandchildren seemed to extend endlessly. Hundreds attended her funeral and many more sent their respects but due to circumstances could not attend.

I often wonder what would have happened if in 1950 when that small Irish catholic woman with barely a sixth grade education, a thick Irish accent, and without a nickel, stepped off the boat if this great nation said no you are not welcome go back to where you came from. How many lives would not have been touched? My mother was a very humble woman with a love for God and all of God's creation and a dream for her children. As a result of this one humble woman countless lives have been touched and enriched. How many Rita Carolan's are we turning away today, how many Rita Carolan's are we saying you are not welcome here, go back to where you come from.

***Experiencing Captivity Reflections on Psalm 137***  
**Author: Jeanne Roe Smith (Campus Minister)**

<sup>1</sup> By the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat down and wept,  
When we remembered Zion.

<sup>2</sup> Upon the willows in the midst of it  
We hung our harps.

<sup>3</sup> For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
And our tormentors mirth, *saying*,  
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

<sup>4</sup> How can we sing the LORD’S song  
In a foreign land?

What does it mean to be captive today? Do we recognize those who may be captives within our communities, schools, churches? Surely in our lives, in a country built on freedom and the pursuit of dreams, this kind of torment and soul rending experience of the psalmist no longer exists. Yet, there are among us, people who sit and weep on the banks of success, remembering their country of origin, and longing for acceptance in their country of residence. The children of captivity live in the shadows of fear of deportation, separation from family, and yet are expected to attend school, do well and become more like those around them, than their own family.

What do we do with the children of captivity who excel in school, against all odds and sensibilities, knock on the door of higher education and find admittance? Only to find that once again they are captive to a system that will educate them, take their money, stimulate their dreams and capacities, but in a cruel twist, ask them to sing a song of hope, yet close the door to possibilities because they do not possess the proper documents to utilize their education, intelligence and skill.

DREAMers are not asking for special treatment or access. They seek to sing their songs of Zion, pursue their dreams of hope and justice freely, in a land that they have come to know as home. As people of faith, we must seek to release the captives from the bonds that restrain them, to open the door to citizenship, to rejoice in the possibilities that these young people offer. The federal DREAM Act is one step toward creating this pathway out of captivity and into freedom to dream God’s dream for all people.

## Links to Online Videos from Faith Leaders on the DREAM Act

1. Lutheran Leaders discussing the importance of DREAM Act  
<http://vimeo.com/17928977>
2. What does the Bible have to say about dreamers and their fight to pass the DREAM Act?  
<http://vimeo.com/17853164>
3. The Rev. Mark Junkans, Executive Director, LINC Houston speaks about the DREAM Act  
<http://vimeo.com/17938288>

## The DREAM Act Presented in Different Faiths



## Lectionary Texts for Protestant and Catholic Texts and Summary

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2011**

*Reading I: Exodus 16:2-15 or Jonah 3:10 – 4:11*

### Summary

\**Exodus*: God listens when the Israelites complain against Him, and gives them food in a miracle in the middle of the desert.

\**Jonah*: God's mercy is not just for Israelites alone. Jonah hated the Ninevites, simply for being from a country he despised, but God's mercy is not limited by tribal rivalries or human conflict. Jonah responds to God's compassion toward his (Jonah's) enemies by pouting, and God scolds Jonah for his failure to understand and give thanks for the wideness of God's mercy.

-Roman Catholic: **Isaiah 55:6-9**

-United Methodist & ELCIC: **Exodus 16:2-15**

*Reading II: Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 or Psalm 145:1-8*

### Summary

\*"O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples." (Psalm 105:1)

\*"The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made." (Psalm 145:8-9)

-Roman Catholic: **Psalm 145:2-18**

-United Methodist: **Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 or Psalm 78**

*Reading III: Philippians 1:21-30*

### Summary

\* "Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents." (vv 27-28a)

-Roman Catholic: **Philippians 1:20-24, 27**

*Gospel Reading: Matthew 20:1-16*

\**The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard*. "Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

## **DREAM Sabbath Themes**

\*The stories we hear in Exodus, Jonah, and the Gospel reading for this day all point to a kind of justice that ranges far outside our understandings of retributive justice. God's justice does not merely consist of deserved compensation—either “deserved” punishment or reward—but is shaped by mercy and generosity, and is not limited by human tribal or national boundaries. Our sense of fairness and justice, in turn, should not be colored by envy or feelings of entitlement, but will be shaped by mercy and generosity, if it is of God.

\*”The last shall be first and the first shall be last” (Matthew 20:16). The alienated immigrant, the hungry stranger, the parentless child – all these are considered “last” to the world and “first” to Christ. We should treat them according to these truths.

\*In light of these readings, what kind of justice do you think God desires for DREAM students and their families?

## **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2011**

### ***Reading I: Exodus 17:1-7 or Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32***

\**Exodus*: The Israelites complained and tested God by grumbling against God's prophet, Moses. God then had Moses strike a rock, and water came from it.

\**Ezekiel*: “Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.” (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

-Roman Catholic: **Ezekiel 18:25-28**

-United Methodist & ELCIC: **Exodus 17:1-7**

### ***Reading II: Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16 or Psalm 25:1-9***

#### **Summary**

\**Psalm 78*: “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth... We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” (vv1, 4)

\**Psalm 25*:

“Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.” (vv. 8-10)

-Roman Catholic: **Psalm 25:9-14**

-United Methodist & ELCIC: **Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16**

### ***Reading III: Philippians 2:1-13***

#### **Summary**

\*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...” (vv. 3-5)

-Roman Catholic: **Philippians 2:1-11** or **Philippians 2:1-5**

*Gospel Reading: Matthew 21:23-32*

### Summary

\*“[Jesus said to them,] ‘What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I go, sir”; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’” (vv. 28-31a)

\*Jesus commends tax collectors and prostitutes, those viewed as mere sinners and criminals, as those who are most able to understand and accept God’s mercy.

-Roman Catholic: **Matthew 21:28-32**

### DREAM Sabbath Themes

\*The reading from Philippians reminds us what is central to Christian faith and life: to think and act in the mind of Christ, looking not to our own interests, but to the interests of others. How might we hear the stories of immigrants in our country differently if we listened “in the mind of Christ”? How can our questions and conversations about immigration policy reflect the mind of Christ?

\*Throughout Scripture we hear stories of God’s particular care for those who are deemed unworthy, unclean, or transgressors by their own communities or broader society. DREAM students are often told they are transgressors who do not belong in the U.S., and they sometimes feel they do not belong *anywhere*. The Gospel reading for this day suggests that those on the margins of society, those who “do not belong”, may understand and know God’s grace better than others. What do we learn of God’s grace from the stories of DREAMers?

## **SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2011**

*Reading I: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 or Isaiah 5:1-7*

### Summary

\**Exodus*: The Ten Commandments are given to the Israelites so that they would know how to live while they wandered throughout the world.

\**Isaiah: The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard*. “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!” (v. 7)

-Roman Catholic: **Isaiah 5:1-7**

-United Methodist & ELCIC: **Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20**

*Reading II: Psalm 19 or Psalm 80:7-15*

### Summary

\**Psalm 19*: “...The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” (vv. 8-9)

\**Psalm 80*: “Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.” (v. 7)

-Roman Catholic: **Psalm 80:9-20**

-United Methodist & ELCIC: **Psalm 19**

*Reading III: Philippians 3:4b-14*

### Summary

\*“Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.” (vv. 7-9)

\*Paul reminds the church at Philippi that righteousness comes to us not by anything we do, but by God’s grace.

-Roman Catholic: **Philippians 4:6-9** (for notes on this text, see October 9 Summary for Reading III and DREAM Sabbath reflections, below)

Gospel Reading: **Matthew 21:33-46**

### Summary

\*God’s beloved vineyard is exploited by the tenants who have leased it, who kill God’s son in order to claim some right to the vineyard.

\*“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?”’” (v. 42)

-Roman Catholic: **Matthew 21:33-43**

### DREAM Sabbath Themes

\*We are not our own. We are, like the vine of the Hebrew people, planted and cared for in a new and strange land. We are all strangers on this earth, and all belong to God alone

\*The readings for today present a tension present throughout Scripture: Paul is clear that his righteousness (and ours) comes not from adherence to any law, but as a gift from God through faith in Christ. But the readings from Exodus, Isaiah, the Psalms and Matthew remind us that God “expects justice”—that our actions *do matter*. How might we hear the stories of immigrants in our country differently if we hold to both of these points?

\*God gave the Commandments to the Hebrew people to shape and order their lives in the desert. They were commanded first to have no other gods before God; they owed their first loyalty to God and God’s law above all others. Every law that comes after these commandments is secondary.

\*Some view the problem of illegal immigration as a simple problem of individuals choosing not to obey the law. But if we accept, as our faith teaches us, that there are laws to which we owe higher loyalty, how might that change our understanding of the varied decisions people make about migrating? What about children or youth who honor their father and mother by accepting their decision to migrate?

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2011**

Reading I: **Exodus 32:1-14** or **Isaiah 25:1-9**

### Summary

\**Exodus*: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.’ But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, ‘O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?’...And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.” (vv. 9-11, 14)

*\*Isaiah:*

O Lord, you are my God;

I will exalt you...

For you have been a refuge to the poor,

a refuge to the needy in their distress,

a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat....

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples

a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,

of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain

the shroud that is cast over all peoples,

the sheet that is spread over all nations;

he will swallow up death for ever.

(vv. 1, 4, 6-8a)

-Roman Catholic reading: **Isaiah 25:6-10**

-United Methodist & ELCIC reading: **Exodus 32:1-14**

*Reading II: Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 or Psalm 23*

Summary

\*Psalm 106: Praise for God's mercy and goodness, and a confession of sins: "Both we and our ancestors have sinned; we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly." (v. 6)

\*Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." (vv 4-5)

-Roman Catholic reading: Psalm 23:1-6

-United Methodist & ELCIC reading: Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23, Psalm 19 or Psalm 80:7-15

*Reading III: Philippians 4:1-9*

Summary

\*"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (v. 8)

\*"I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through [God] who strengthens me." (vv 12-13)

-Roman Catholic reading: **Philippians 4:12-20**

*Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:1-14*

## Summary

*\*The Parable of the Wedding Banquet.*

-Roman Catholic reading: **Matthew 22:1-14** or **Matthew 22:1-10**

## **DREAM Sabbath Themes**

\* DREAM students live with the understanding that they could be deported away from their families and their homes on any given day. They have every reason to live in fear, withdrawing from their community and the world, and yet they have proven themselves to be people of profound faith, modeling for us what it means to trust God even in the midst of those who want to do harm. They model for us what it is to live with confidence like Paul's that God is sovereign, and in the spirit of assurance of Psalm 23. How can the leadership in faith of DREAMers instruct us in our lives and faith journeys? How can we live with faith in the midst of uncertainty and danger, trusting in God's goodness and power?

## **Jewish mini-service for Justice and Peace**

*God created us in His own image; in the image of God He created us; male and female He created us.*

Our tradition says that God created us through one human being to teach us that whoever destroys a single human soul has destroyed an entire world.

*And whoever sustains a single human soul has sustained an entire world.*

And a single human being was created for the sake of peace, that none might say: my lineage is greater than yours.

*I call heaven and earth to witness: Gentile or Jew, man or woman, manservant or maidservant -- all according to our deeds does the spirit of God rest upon us.*

Speak to the whole community of Israel, and say to them: "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy."

*As God is merciful and gracious, so shall you be merciful and gracious.*

When we oppress the poor, we offend their maker.

*But we honor their maker when we are kind to the needy.*

Let your neighbor's property be as dear to you as your own.

*And let your neighbor's honor be as dear to you as your own.*

You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

*You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling-block before the blind.*

You shall not rejoice when your enemy falls.

*You shall not exult when your enemy stumbles.*

Never say: I will do to them as they have done to me; I will repay them according to their deeds.

*You shall not hate another in your heart; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

O God, You have called us to peace, for You are Peace itself. May we have the vision to see that each of us, in some measure, can help to realize these aims;

Where there are ignorance and superstition,

*Let there be enlightenment and knowledge.*

Where there are prejudice and hatred,  
*Let there be acceptance and love.*

Where there are fear and suspicion,  
*Let there be confidence and trust.*

Where there are tyranny and oppression,  
*Let there be freedom and justice.*

Where there are poverty and disease,  
*Let there be prosperity and health.*

Where there are strife and discord,  
*Let there be harmony and peace.*

Our God and Creator, we thank You for the sense of justice You have implanted within us, and which always seeks, though at times haltingly, to express itself in daily life.

*Make us, O God, more steadfast in our desire to do Your will. Teach us that the men and women around us are brothers and sisters, and fill us with such love for our fellow creatures that we will never wrong them, or exploit them, or take advantage of their weakness or ignorance.*

Kindle in us a passion for righteousness. Grant us the vision to see that only justice can endure, and that only in being just to one another can we make our lives acceptable to You.

*May we by our thoughts and our deeds hasten the time when wrong and violence shall cease, and justice be established in all the earth.*

Let Justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like a mighty stream.

וַיִּגַּל כְּמַיִם מְשָׁפֵט,  
וַצְדִּיקָה כְּנַחַל אֵיתָן.

## **Hinei Ma Tov**

Henei ma tov umanaim Shevet  
achim gam yachad Sinei ma tov  
umanaim Shevet achim gam  
yachad

Behold how good and  
How pleasant it is  
For brothers to dwell together  
Behold how good and  
How pleasant it is  
For brothers to dwell together

## **Mi Shebeirach**

~Debbie Friedman

Mi shebeirach avoteinu M'kor  
hab'racha l'imoteinu May the  
source of strength,  
Who blessed the ones before us,  
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing, and  
let us say, Amen.

Mi shebeirach imoteinu  
M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu

Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah, The  
renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,  
And let us say, Amen

## The DREAM Act and Islamic Values

### *The DREAM Act and Islamic Social Justice*

Our nation was founded on a set of principles that seeks to uphold justice, liberty and dignity of the human being. Our laws are meant to embody those principles. In working “toward a more perfect union” there are times and cases where laws and the legal system fall short of these fundamental principles. Sadly these shortcomings are nowhere more apparent than in our nation’s current immigration system.

While the issue of immigration reform may not always be thought of as directly connected to Islamic teachings, surprisingly it has a strong link to Islamic values. At its most basic level immigration reform crosses paths with Islam’s strong sense of justice.

In the Qur’an, Islam’s holy book, God calls upon believers to stand firm in support of justice in Chapter 4, Verse 35:

*O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that ye do."*

He repeats this theme later in Chapter 5, Verse 8:

*O you who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity...Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty.*

However justice is not the only Islamic value that comes into play when it comes to immigration reform and especially the DREAM Act.

### *Individual Responsibility and Accountability*

One of the issues that set the DREAM Act apart from most others is that it focuses almost exclusively on undocumented youth. Many, if not most of the youth eligible under the DREAM Act were brought here as children and had no say in the decision of the parents to arrive undocumented or overstay their visas.

Punishing these children who, for all intents and purposes are Americans, because of the decisions of their parents, runs contrary to Islamic values. The Qur’an is absolutely explicitly clear about individual responsibility and accountability.

In chapter 35, verse 18, it states:

*And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And if a heavily laden soul calls [another] to [carry some of] its load, nothing of it will be carried, even if he should be a close relative.*

The Qur'an reiterates this point earlier in chapter 2, verse 286:

*On no soul does God place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns.*

The fact that talented youth who grew up in this country as Americans, but are being punished with possible deportation because of the decisions of their parents runs completely contrary to this bedrock Qur'anic principle.

### ***Dignity of the Human Being***

Far too often, in heated debates about public policy issues, including immigration reform, there is a tendency to forget about the people such policies affect. Worse is when individuals are dehumanized, given derogatory labels and treated poorly. The Qur'an makes it clear that this is unacceptable.

Each human being is seen as a vicegerent of God, as stated in chapter 2, verse 30 of the Qur'an: *Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth."*

As God's vicegerents, human beings are endowed by the Creator with an inherent dignity that cannot be violated (17:70):

*NOW, INDEED, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favored them far above most of Our creation.*

As Islamic values show, people are entitled to be treated with dignity regardless of their legal status.

### ***Compassion and Hospitality***

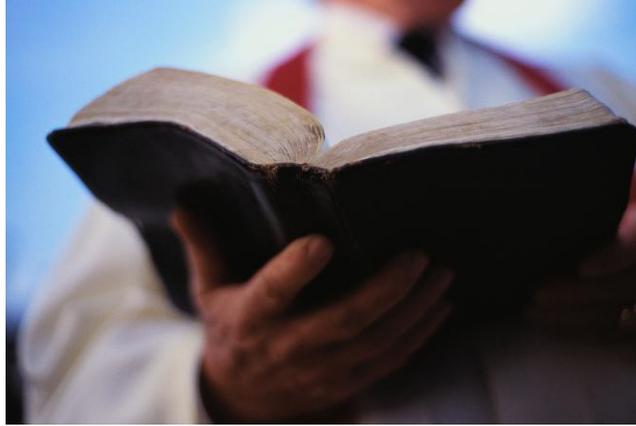
Having an open door and an open heart for those in need is also a fundamental Islamic value. This is especially applicable in an immigration justice context like the DREAM Act.

In early Islamic history, we can see how the values of compassion and hospitality were applied between the local Muslim communities in the city of Medina (the "Ansar"), those who were emigrating from the city of Mecca (muhajireen). The muhajireen were tired and made the trek to Medina under harsh desert conditions. However upon their arrival, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) told each Ansar to pair himself or herself up with an emigrant and take care of them in order to establish bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood.

Once the Ansar were able to establish themselves, the Prophet ensured the emigrant muhajireen have opportunities to work and contribute to the general welfare of their society. According to a narrated saying of the Prophet:

*The Ansar said to the Prophet, "Divide our date-palms between us and our emigrant brothers." The Prophet said, "No." The Ansar said to the emigrants, "You may do the labor (in our gardens) and we will share the fruits with you." The emigrants said, "We hear and obey." (Citing Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 3, Book 50, No. 880)*

# SERMON STARTERS



## Herta Llusho



### The Power of Community

Herta Llusho came to the United States from Albania when she was 11. She and her mother settled in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. Herta and her mother came to the United States legally. Shortly after arriving, Herta's mother filed an application to stay in the United States.

Herta quickly thrived in school. She graduated from Grosse Pointe South High School with a 4.05 grade point average. In high school, she was a member of the varsity track team, won an Advanced Placement Scholar Award, and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Herta is currently a junior at the University of Detroit Mercy, where she is an honors student. Herta is studying to be an electrical engineer. She has a grade point average of 3.98 and has completed two internships at engineering companies.

In addition, Herta is also very involved in her community, volunteering at homeless shelters, tutoring programs, and as well as her church, where she spends hours tutoring kids and volunteering with the junior high Sunday school class. It's a joy to watch so many children run up to her at church because of the love they receive when they are with her.

Despite Herta's success in school, her community and her church, in 2009, after nine years of legal proceedings, the government placed Herta and her mother in deportation proceedings. Herta said:

"I was shocked. My friends are here, my education is here, my community is here. All of a sudden, I was asked to leave behind everything I know and go back to a country I barely know. When I lived there, I was little, so I don't remember it much and I barely speak Albanian anymore."

Herta's community has risen to support and even defend her. Thousands of people signed an online petition to stop her deportation. Due to their perseverance, last year, the Department of Homeland Security granted Herta a one year stay of deportation. There are thousands of more students like Herta waiting for thousands of communities to come along side to support and defend.

As Herta recently said, "I'm a typical story. There's thousands of stories out there just like mine. Please support the DREAM Act so students like me don't have to leave. We are worth it. This is the country we have come to love."

*Suggested texts: Joshua 2; Acts 2:37-47; Acts 4:32-37*

## Juan Gomez

### The Power of Friendship



Juan Gomez came to the United States from Colombia in 1990, when he was 2 years old. Juan is an academic star. At Killian Senior High School in Miami, he earned close to two years of college credit with high scores on 13 Advanced Placement exams. He scored a 1410 out of 1600 on the SAT, and he finished in the top 20 of his class. His economics teacher nicknamed him “President Gomez” and said he is “one of the best students ever to graduate from Killian.”

Despite his success, in 2007, during Juan’s senior year in high school, he was placed in deportation proceedings. What happened next was American democracy at work. Scott Elfenbein was the student body president at Juan’s high school and Juan’s best friend. Scott started a Facebook page devoted to stopping Juan’s deportation. On the Facebook page, he wrote, “We need your help in saving Juan from being sent to Colombia – a country he doesn’t even remember. For those of you who know Juan, he is the smartest and most dedicated kid you ever met. He deserves more than to just be deported. Many of us owe him. I know he helped everyone one way or another in school. It’s the least we can do for him.”

Within one week, over 2000 people joined Juan’s Facebook page. Then, Juan’s friends came to Capitol Hill to lobby on his behalf. They persuaded Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and then Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) to introduce a bill to stop Juan’s deportation. Rep. Diaz Balart is a Republican and he is a lead cosponsor of the DREAM Act in the House of Representatives. Former Senator Chris Dodd is a Democrat.

After his deportation was stayed, Juan was admitted to Georgetown University on a full scholarship. Juan is going to graduate from Georgetown in May. He has been offered a job at a top financial services firm in New York City. Although his deportation order is stayed, only the DREAM Act will give Juan a permanent solution. It would give Juan, and thousands like him, a chance to contribute their skills to the country they love. It would also give thousands of friends, like the ones Juan has, the opportunity to know someone like Juan in their high school and college.

*Suggested Texts: John 15:12-17*

## Ola Kaso

### Blessed to be a Blessing



Ola Kaso came to the United States from Albania in 1998, when she was 5. Ola has excelled in school in Warren, Michigan where she took every Advanced Placement class offered, graduated with a 4.4 grade point average, was on the varsity cross country and tennis teams, was a Treasurer of the Student Council and National Honor Society, and even tutored other students who learning English for the first time.

Thankfully, though she was scheduled to be deported the Department of Homeland Security granted a year long stay of deportation to Ola. This will give her a chance to continue her education.

Ola was recently accepted into the honors program at the University of Michigan, where she will be a pre-med student. She aspires to ultimately become a surgical oncologist, but more importantly, she intends to work for patients that cannot afford the astronomical fees accompanying life saving surgeries, patients that are denied the medical treatment they deserve. Her goal is not to increase use her opportunity to increase her bank account; her goal is to decrease preventable deaths. She wants to remain in this country to make a difference. She has been blessed and wants to remain and be a blessing to others.

*Suggested texts: Genesis 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15*

## Elier Lara

### Dream Big



Elier Lara's parents came to the United States in 1994, when he was four.

Elier is a computer whiz. In high school, he won awards for outstanding achievement in science and information technology. He graduated in the top 5% of his high school class and was named Tech Prep Student of the Year in Cincinnati. He even started a computer repair business.

Now, Elier is a 19-year-old honors student at the University of Cincinnati. He is majoring in Information Technology and has a 3.8 GPA. One of his professors said, "I have worked with thousands of students over the past 30 years, and Elier Lara is that student who comes along every 10 years or so who makes your heart sing."

For Elier, technology and computers is where he wants to spend the rest of his life. He wants to be at the forefront of the technological frontier, implementing and discovering the new technologies of the future. He has said, "I am dreaming big and will continue to do so."

Elier is waiting to utilize his gifts to benefit the country he loves. Throughout U.S. history, immigrants have founded ground-breaking technological companies like Google, Yahoo, Intel, and E-Bay. That could be Elier's and America's future.

*Suggested texts: Genesis 28:10-22; Matthew 1:20-25*

## Gaby Pacheco

### Overcoming Fear; Reaching Out in Love



Gaby Pacheco's parents came to this country from Ecuador when she was 7. Gaby witnessed her parents and her sisters taken away from her during a raid in her home by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. It was the most frightening moment in her life.

Despite this tragedy, Gaby has excelled, particularly in positions of leadership. She was the highest ranked Junior R.O.T.C. student in her high school, and she received the highest score on the military's aptitude test. The Air Force tried to recruit Gaby but she was unable to enlist because she did not have legal status.

Since then, Gaby has earned two associates degrees in education and a BA in special education. Gaby has also served as the president of her student government and the president of Florida's Junior Community College Student Government Association. Gaby's dream is to teach autistic children.

Gaby is also one of four students who walked all the way from Miami, Florida, to Washington, D.C. – 1,500 miles – in order to build support for the DREAM Act in 2010. Along the way, these four students were joined by hundreds of supporters. They called their trip the Trail of Dreams. Along the Trail the four walkers encountered some people who treated them with hatred and disrespect, but they never retreated in fear, and were clear that the work they are doing, while sometimes confrontational, is all about love. When the students met with Sherriff Joe Arpaio, notorious for the ways he has criminalized and targeted immigrants as Sherriff of Maricopa County in Arizona, Gaby ended their meeting with a hug. When asked why she did it, Gaby said:

*I hugged him because I wanted him to feel the pain that our community has been feeling. But also to tell him that as a human being I don't fear him. I told him with tears coming down that in his heart he has good, and that he has the ability to come back, you know. He was astray and doing these horrible things to our community, but he has the power in his heart to come back and fight with us against these unjust laws.*

*Suggested texts: Ruth, Philemon, Ephesians 3:14-19, Romans 8:12-17*

## Pedro Pedroza

### Perseverance



Pedro Pedroza came to Chicago from Mexico when he was 5.

Pedro graduated from St. Agnes Catholic School in Little Village and was an honors student at St. Ignatius College Prep. He is now a student at Cornell University, a prestigious college in Ithaca, New York where Pedro is studying to be a teacher.

Unfortunately, Pedro is in deportation proceedings. He was riding a bus from Chicago back to school in Ithaca New York when Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested him. If deported, he will be forced to return to a country he doesn't know anymore, and leaving the U.S. means leaving everything and everyone he knows. But even if he is forced to leave he has promised to do all he can to adjust his status and return to the only place he considers home – the United States of America.

*Suggested texts: Romans 5:1-5, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 1:2-4*

## Minchul Suk

### Second Chances



Minchul Suk came to the U.S. from South Korea with his parents in 1991, when he was 9. Minchul graduated from high school with a 4.2 GPA. He graduated from UCLA with a degree in Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics. With the support of the Korean-American community, Minchul was able to graduate from dental school. He has passed the national boards and licensure exam but cannot obtain a license and fulfill his dream of becoming a dentist because he is undocumented.

He says that he is “willing to accept whatever punishment is deemed fitting for that crime” of being brought here as a child without paper. The one request he makes is for a second chance without having to go back to his country of origin that he barely remembers.

“I am begging for a chance to prove to everyone that I am not a waste of a human being, that I am not a criminal set on leeching off taxpayers' money. Please give me the chance to serve my community as a dentist, to be a giver rather than a receiver, to be able to become someone who would be able to shine light and help those around me like people have done for me when I was down in my darkest hours.”

*Suggested texts: Matthew 15:21-28; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 9:10-21*

## Oscar Vazquez

### Risk



Oscar Vazquez was brought to Phoenix, Arizona, by his parents when he was a child.

He spent his high school years in Junior R.O.T.C. He dreamed of enlisting in the military. However, at the end of his junior year, a recruiting officer told Oscar that he was ineligible for military service because he was undocumented.

Oscar found another outlet for his talent. He entered a college-level robot competition sponsored by NASA. Oscar and three other DREAM Act students worked for months in a storage room in their high school. They were competing against students from MIT and other top universities, but Oscar's team won first place.

In 2009, Oscar graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was one of the top three students in his class.

Following his graduation, Oscar took a brave step. He voluntarily returned to Mexico, a country where he hadn't lived since he was a child. Oscar said, "I decided to take a gamble and do the right thing."

Last year, the Obama Administration granted Oscar a waiver to reenter the United States. Without this waiver, Oscar would have been barred from returning to the United States for at least ten years. He would have been separated from his wife Karla and their two-year-old daughter Samantha, who are both American citizens.

When Oscar returned to the United States last year, he did two things. First, he applied for citizenship. Then, he enlisted in the Army. Oscar is in basic training now. His goal is to pilot an Apache helicopter. In June, Oscar will complete basic training, and he will be sworn in as an American citizen.

*Suggested texts: Matthew 13:44-46*

## Additional Sermon Resources

Sermon Resources on Immigration, A Project by Sojourners:

[http://faithandimmigration.org/sites/default/files/tmp/080402\\_Serman\\_Booklet.pdf](http://faithandimmigration.org/sites/default/files/tmp/080402_Serman_Booklet.pdf)

Rabbi Charles Feinberg

July 20<sup>th</sup> 2010

DREAM Act Mock Graduation

Washington, DC

*Friends:*

*As we gather together to give our support the Development, Relief, and Education For Minors Act, otherwise known as the Dream Act, I ask you to recall a young man who was a dreamer in a strange land. This young man was the favorite of his father, a very capable young man with big dreams for himself and his family. Yet, this young man fell on hard times. His brothers sold him into slavery and he*

*became an illegal in a strange land. Because God had blessed with insight and intuition, he was able not only to dream but also he was capable of interpreting dreams. Because he was so adept at dream interpretation, he became the second most powerful man in his adopted land. This young man's genius, his capability, his great skill, along with God's watchful care, helped him to realize his dreams. With*

*God's help, this young man's ability and character overcame the prejudice and hostility that people in his adopted land had for the people of his native land. Ultimately, he became a source of blessing for his family and for the people he served.*

*Friends, let the memory of the biblical Joseph inspire us to help the thousands of young people in our midst who have become trapped and who are on the verge of exile because of fear and prejudice. Let us remember how "the illegal" Joseph helped save ancient Egypt from years of disastrous famine. Let us realize how much these young people love our country and want to be productive and responsible*

*citizens in our country. We must make for them a path that will lead to citizenship and allow them to live and create without fear of deportation to a land they do not know.*

*O God, please help our elected leaders to attain the insight and muster the courage to help the thousands of young people who want to become loyal citizens of these United States of America. Help us to overcome the fear that grips so many in our country. Give them the insight to realize that by extending a welcoming hand to young people raised in this country, we can only help ourselves. Amen.*

## ACTION STEPS



## **PRESIDENT OBAMA YOU CAN END OUR PAIN**

Dear President Obama,

Please stop playing with the lives of children, youth and their families. The Department of Homeland Security practices towards DREAMers and families are inhumane and un-American.

With the stroke of a pen you have the power to grant an increase in the use of deferred actions and give temporary relief to those that have U.S. citizen children and are DREAM Act eligible.

I, the undersigned, urge President Obama to take a stand and use his Executive power to grant deferred action to families with U.S. citizen children and DREAM Act eligible youth.

Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Zip/Postal Code:

To sign the petition follow this link: <http://bit.ly/fGgW8j>

## 365 Day Fast in Solidarity with the DREAMers

- Join a spiritual fast to support DREAM Act students and their call for federal and state legislation addressing needs of migrant youth in the US.
- Express your faith through this act of personal commitment and public advocacy for migrant rights
- Speak out and act to make visible the crisis situation of thousands of migrant youth across the country, and to pressure for immediate Administrative Relief by President Obama and Secretary Janet Napolitano, and federal legislation offering migrant students options for legalization.

In December, 2010, as the fate of the DREAM act was debated by Congress, a group of United Methodists began a 365 Day Fast in Solidarity with DREAM students. [See Facebook Page “365 Day Fast in Solidarity with the DREAMers; <http://on.fb.me/ouQCIO>. *This fast continues and you can join in by selecting at least ONE DAY you will pray and fast for the rights of migrant youth and make your action public through Facebook.* Some have chosen to fast the same day every month. Please help make the fast visible nationally: join the fast; post to social media networks; enlist the participation of others; and advocate for action for the rights of migrant youth.

### Why a Fast?

Prayer and fasting is a religious act in many faith traditions. It recognizes the power of prayer and self-sacrifice linked to action for justice in bringing about a just world. It recognizes that for societal change to take place we need change to happen both internally, through personal acts of prayer, reflection and witness, and systemically, by addressing policy and systemic practices. Thus, as people of faith we come together across faith traditions to make a personal witness through prayer and fasting; and a public witness through advocacy.

### What are We Calling For?

1. Administrative Relief: The Obama Administration can act NOW, without legislation, to change enforcement policies as they apply to migrant youth and all detainees. They can cease detaining and deporting migrants based on immigration status.
2. Pass the federal DREAM Act. This has been reintroduced by Senator Dick Durbin [D-IL] in the Senate and by Rep. Howard Berman [D-CA] in the House. This bi-partisan bill would enable a path to legalization for migrant youth without documents, brought into the U.S. as children, if they enroll as students or serve in the military for two years.
3. Pass state bills that would enable migrant youth to attend college with in-state tuition, health care, transportation and other support that citizen youth have in a given state.

### How the Fast Started

In November, 2010, a group of University of Texas students in San Antonio fasted for more than 20 days in support of the DREAM Act, then being debated by Congress. On November 29, 12 students, a professor, a pastor and a former city councilwoman did civil disobedience, sitting in

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison's San Antonio office, urging the Senator to support the DREAM Act. When the protestors ultimately left the site, the Rev. Lorenza Andrade-Smith, a United Methodist Pastor, opted to go to jail instead of leaving voluntarily. She spent a week in jail, where she fasted, prayed, and provided pastoral support for many inmates. On leaving jail, she agreed to end her own hunger strike as others offered to participate in an ongoing fast for the DREAMers, to keep their issues visible and to build pressure for policy changes. The Facebook page was created, and United Methodist Women and United Methodist Deaconesses were the first to respond, with many others joining the fast. The fast is now expanding nationwide, with the support of many faith groups and DREAM student organizations across the country. Though the fast was initiated by DREAM students in San Antonio, it has been continued by faith groups across the country. It is a Faith-based initiative, and is open to all. Please post on your Facebook page if your organization would like to endorse the fast. The fast will continue until the DREAM Act is passed and detention and deportation of DREAM Act students has ended.

### **What Can We Do?**

- 1. Join the Facebook group "365 Day Fast in Solidarity with the DREAMers". Share with friends. Post on your organizational website.***
2. Have your organization, church, synagogue or mosque endorse the Fast. Post to your organizational website.
3. Participate in the fast and enlist others to participate. Tell people what you are doing and why you are doing it. Use this as an opportunity to talk about the stories of migrant youth affected by current immigration policy and to advocate for policy changes.
4. Sign the on-line pledge at "United We DREAM" calling on President Obama to take administrative action to end detentions and deportations of migrant youth:  
[http://wfc2.wiredforchange.com/o/8496/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=365](http://wfc2.wiredforchange.com/o/8496/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=365)
5. Advocate for state and federal legislation in support of DREAM students. Let your elected officials know of your views. Tell them you have joined the fast and will continue to pray and act on behalf of DREAM students.

## DREAMers' Stories

DREAM Act Class of 2010-2011:

<http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/student-profiles-PP-2010-12-17.pdf>

DREAM Stories from Senator Durbin:

[http://durbin.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hot-topics?ContentRecord\\_id=40025f91-0f0f-450f-b5c0-a6196ff2c252](http://durbin.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hot-topics?ContentRecord_id=40025f91-0f0f-450f-b5c0-a6196ff2c252)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCpLyBf7NC4&feature=list\\_related&playnext=1&list=SPDC955D6693457B71](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCpLyBf7NC4&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=SPDC955D6693457B71)



## Peter

Peter\* arrived in the United States with his parents and siblings when Peter was four. His parents were farmworkers. Peter studied hard in school and made a commitment to community service volunteering up to twenty hours a week in the community. During the summer Peter would work in a summer day camp for underserved children. Peter was also concerned about the plight of farmworkers, who worked so hard to provide food for the rest of society. He wanted them to be honored for their hard work, and treated with equality.

Meanwhile Peter kept studying hard. He was especially adept in science and math. He decided he wanted to go to college and eventually graduate school. Peter wanted to be researcher and an inventor of technology that would help eliminate cancer. He graduated from high school and got a full scholarship to college, where he majored in physics.

One day as Peter was walking down the street in his home-town, a car, filled with people, drove by. People within the car started shouting: “Go back to Mexico where you belong!”

Peter graduated from college with honors in Physics, in four years. His dream of graduate school and helping people with cancer is on hold. He cannot act on his dream as he hangs sheet rock, unable to get into graduate school because of his legal status.

Why do children have to bear the burden of a broken system that penalizes them for doing the right thing by working hard?

\* Not his real name

## Herta Llusho



Herta Llusho came to the United States from Albania when she was 11. She and her mother settled in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit.

Herta and her mother came to the United States legally. Shortly after arriving, Herta’s mother filed an application to stay in the United States.

Herta quickly learned English and became an academic star. She graduated from Grosse Pointe South High School with a 4.05 grade point average. In high school, she was a member of the varsity track team, won an Advanced Placement Scholar Award, and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Herta is currently a junior at the University of Detroit Mercy, where she is an honors student. Herta is studying to be an electrical engineer. She has a grade point average of 3.98 and has completed two internships at engineering companies.

Herta is also very involved in her community, volunteering at homeless shelters, tutoring programs, and her church. One of Herta’s friends said:

“I am humbled by Herta’s willingness and desire to serve. I have had the privilege of going to the same church at which she faithfully serves. She spends hours tutoring kids and volunteering

with the junior high Sunday school class. It's a joy to watch so many children run up to her at church because of the love they receive when they are with her."

In 2009, after nine years of legal proceedings, the government placed Herta and her mother in deportation proceedings. Herta said:

"I was shocked. My friends are here, my education is here, my community is here. All of a sudden, I was asked to leave behind everything I know and go back to a country I barely know. When I lived there, I was little, so I don't remember it much and I barely speak Albanian anymore."

Herta's community rose to her defense. Thousands of people signed an online petition to stop her deportation. Last year, the Department of Homeland Security granted Herta a one year stay of deportation.

Herta came to Capitol Hill to speak at a briefing on the DREAM Act. She said:

"I'm a typical story. There's thousands of stories out there just like mine. Please support the DREAM Act so students like me don't have to leave. We are worth it. This is the country we have come to love."

### **Tam Tran**



Tam Tran was born in Germany and came to the United States with her parents when she was six years old. Tam's parents are refugees who fled Vietnam to Germany as boat people at the end of the Vietnamese war. They could not return to Vietnam because they were persecuted by the Communist government in Vietnam and the German government refuses to accept them. Tam graduated from UCLA with honors with a degree in American Literature and Culture. She was studying for a Ph.D. at Brown University when she was tragically killed in a car accident. On May 18, 2007, Tam [testified](#) in the House Judiciary Committee:

"I was born in Germany, my parents are Vietnamese, but I have been American raised and educated for the past 18 years... Without the DREAM Act, I have no prospect of overcoming my state of immigration limbo; I'll forever be a perpetual foreigner in a country where I've always considered myself an American."

### **Isabel Castillo**



Isabel Castillo graduated from high school with a 4.0 grade point average. She worked her way through college and, in three and a half years, graduated magna cum laude from Eastern Mennonite University with a degree in social work.

At a town hall meeting in her home state of Virginia last year, she recounted these facts to governor Bob McDonnell. The crowd applauded her success and the governor remarked that Virginia needed more people like her. Then, she said she was an undocumented immigrant. Though polite, the governor declined to support the DREAM Act. He went on to say that those in the country illegally should be arrested and deported.

Castillo's parents brought her to the U.S. when she was six years old. Without documentation, she is unable to work as a social worker. Now 26, Castillo knows the clock is ticking. Her chance to benefit from the DREAM Act will likely end when she turns 30.

A tireless advocate, Castillo started the Harrisonburg-based DREAM Activist-Virginia advocacy group. Though she used to keep her identity carefully guarded, last year, Castillo participated in a DREAM Act demonstration outside a U.S. Senate office. Castillo and four others were arrested.

A recent New York Times article (17 May 2011) described her process of coming out in the open:

“At first, I’d only allow the media to shoot my face turned away and only my first name. And then it just progressed. I said, ‘O.K., use my face and you can say I went to a local university.’ Then it was, ‘I graduated from Eastern Mennonite University and I’m Isabel Castillo.’ ”

### David Cho



David Cho’s parents came to the United States from South Korea when he was 9.

Since then, David has been a model American. He had a 3.9 GPA in high school. David is now a senior at UCLA, where he is majoring in International Finance and has a 3.6 GPA. David is also the leader of the UCLA marching band.

David wants to serve in the Air Force. If the DREAM Act doesn’t pass, David won’t be able to serve his country.

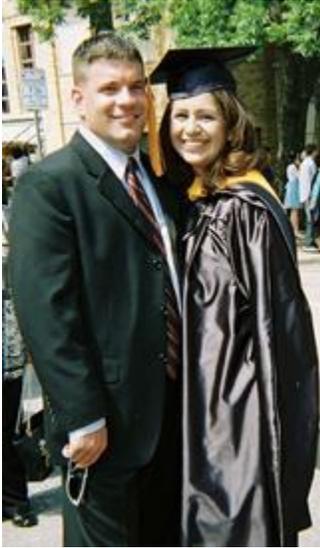
### Mayra Garcia



Mayra Garcia came to the U.S. from Mexico with her parents in 1994, when she was 2. Mayra, is now 18. She is a member of the National Honor Society and she graduated from high school in the Spring of 2010 with a 3.98 GPA. She is the President of the Cottonwood Youth Advisory Commission in her hometown of Cottonwood Arizona. Mayra was awarded a scholarship to attend a prestigious university in California. In an essay about the DREAM Act, Mayra wrote:

"From the time I was intellectually capable of understanding its significance, my dream was to be the first college graduate in my immediate and extended family. ... College means more to me than just a four-year degree. It means the breaking of a family cycle. It means progression and fulfillment of an obligation." "According to my mother, I cried every day in preschool because of the language barrier. By kindergarten, though, I was fluent in English. ... English became my way of understanding the world and myself. I used it to prove myself to a society that expected nothing more from me than a pregnant belly or a criminal record."

## Julieta Garibay



Julieta Garibay came to the United States in 1992, when she was 11. Julieta graduated from the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in nursing. She was on the Dean's list and the President's Honor Roll and volunteered more than 500 hours at hospitals in Dallas and Austin. Julieta went on to earn a master's degree at the University of Texas in public health nursing. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honor Society of Nursing.

Julieta has been a Registered Nurse since 2004, but she is undocumented, so she cannot work legally in America.

Julieta is married to Staff Sergeant Armen Weinrick, who serves in the U.S. Air Force Reserves. Staff Sergeant Weinrick is currently awaiting deployment. He will go overseas to defend our country, but his wife could be deported while he is gone.

In a letter to Senator Durbin, Julieta said:

"I desperately need the DREAM Act to pass so I can practice my beloved profession – Nursing. I have been dreaming of being a nurse for the past 7 years since I earned my nursing license. Once the DREAM Act passes, I will join the military in hopes of making up the lost time and serve the country I call home as a nurse."

The DREAM Act would give Julieta a chance to serve the country she loves.

## Yves Gomes



Yves Gomes came to the U.S. from India by his parents in 1994, when he was 14 months old. Yves is now 17. He is a member of the National Honor Society and he graduated from high school in the Spring of 2010 with a 3.8 GPA.

## Juan Gomez



Juan Gomez came to the United States from Colombia in 1990, when he was 2. Juan is an academic star. At Killian Senior High School in Miami, he earned close to two years of college credit with high scores on 13 Advanced Placement exams. He scored a 1410 out of 1600 on the SAT, and he finished in the top 20 of his class. His economics teacher nicknamed him “President Gomez” and said he is “one of the best students ever to graduate from Killian.”

In 2007, during Juan’s senior year in high school, he was placed in deportation proceedings. What happened next was American democracy at work. Scott Elfenbein was the student body president at Juan’s high school. He was also Juan’s best friend. Scott started a Facebook page devoted to stopping Juan’s deportation. On the Facebook page, he wrote, “We need your help in saving Juan from being sent to Colombia – a country he doesn’t even remember. For those of you who know Juan, he is the smartest and most dedicated kid you ever met. He deserves more than to just be deported. Many of us owe him. I know he helped everyone one way or another in school. It’s the least we can do for him.”

Within one week, over 2000 people joined Juan’s Facebook page. Then, Juan’s friends came to Capitol Hill to lobby on his behalf. They persuaded Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and then Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) to introduce a bill to stop Juan’s deportation. Rep. Diaz Balart is a Republican and he is a lead cosponsor of the DREAM Act in the House of Representatives. Former Senator Chris Dodd is a Democrat.

After his deportation was stayed, Juan was admitted to Georgetown University on a full scholarship. Juan is going to graduate from Georgetown in May. He has been offered a job at a top financial services firm in New York City. The DREAM Act would give Juan, and thousands like him, a chance to contribute their skills to the country they love.

## Marie Gonzalez-Deel



Marie Gonzalez came to the U.S. from Costa Rica with her parents when she was 5. In 2008, she graduated from Westminster College in Missouri with a double major in political science and international business. Marie, one of the first Dreamers to speak out about her situation, [testified](#) in the House Judiciary Committee on May 18, 2007:

"No matter what, I will always consider the United States of America my home. I love this country. Only in America would a person like me have the opportunity to tell my story to people like you. Many may argue that because I have a Costa Rican birth certificate I am Costa Rican and should be sent back to that country. If I am sent back there, sure I'd be with my Mom and Dad, but I'd be torn away from loved ones that are my family here, and from everything I have known since I was a child."

## Ola Kaso



Ola Kaso came to the United States from Albania in 1998, when she was 5.

Ola recently graduated from a high school in Warren, Michigan. She was a valedictorian of her class. She took every Advanced Placement class offered by her school and has a 4.4 grade point average. Ola is on the varsity cross country and tennis teams. She was treasurer of the student council and treasurer of the National Honor Society at her school. She tutors students who are learning English.

Ola was accepted into the honors program at the University of Michigan, where she will be a pre-med student. In a letter to Senator Durbin, Ola wrote, "I aspire to ultimately become a surgical oncologist, but more importantly, I intend to work for patients that cannot afford the astronomical fees accompanying life saving surgeries, patients that are denied the medical treatment they deserve. My goal is not to increase my bank account; my goal is to decrease preventable deaths. I wish to remain in this country to make a difference."

The Department of Homeland Security granted a stay of deportation to Ola, to give her a chance to continue her education. That was the right thing to do. It makes no sense to send someone like Ola, who has so much to contribute, to a country she barely remembers.

## Elier Lara



Elier Lara's parents came to the United States in 1994, when he was four.

Elier is a computer whiz. In high school, he won awards for outstanding achievement in science and information technology. He graduated in the top 5% of his high school class and was named Tech Prep Student of the Year in Cincinnati. He even started a computer repair business.

Now, Elier is a 19-year-old honors student at the University of Cincinnati. He is majoring in Information Technology and has a 3.8 GPA. One of his professors said, "I have worked with thousands of students over the past 30 years, and Elier Lara is that student who comes along every 10 years or so who makes your heart sing."

In a letter to Senator Durbin, Elier wrote, "Technology and computers is where I want to spend the rest of my life. I'm sure I'll find my place on the forefront of the technological frontier, implementing and discovering the new technologies of the future. I am dreaming big and will continue to do so."

America would benefit from someone with Elier's talents. Immigrants founded leading American technology companies like Google, Yahoo, Intel, and E-Bay. That could be Elier's and America's future.

## Steve Li



Steve Li's parents brought him to the United States when he was 11. Steve is a student at the City College of San Francisco, where he is majoring in nursing and is a leader in student government.

In a letter to Senator Durbin, Steve wrote:

“My dream is to become a registered nurse at San Francisco General Hospital and to be a public health advocate. I want to be able to give back to my community by raising awareness about preventive care and other healthcare issues. I'm well on my way to achieving my dream. By passing the DREAM Act, I will be able to achieve these goals and contribute to the growing health care industry.”

America needs more nurses with the talent of Steve Li. In fact, the United States imports thousands of foreign nurses every year because we have such a large nursing shortage.

Unfortunately, Steve is in deportation proceedings. His case is especially complicated because – while his parents are Chinese – he was born in Peru. So he would be deported back to Peru, where he knows no one and has no family members.

## Magdaleno Brothers



Nelson and Jhon Magdaleno came to the United States from Venezuela when Nelson was 11 and Jhon was 9.

They were both honors students at Lakeside High School in Atlanta, Georgia. Jhon served with distinction in the Air Force Junior Officer Reserve Corps. He was the 4th highest ranking officer in a 175 officer cadet unit and Commander of the Air Honor Society in his unit.

They are now honors students at Georgia Tech University, one of the most selective engineering schools in America. Nelson, who is now 21, is a junior. He is a computer engineering major with a 3.6 GPA. Jhon, who is now 18, is a freshman. He is a biomedical engineering major with a 4.0 GPA.

America needs more talented young engineers like Nelson and Jhon but, unfortunately, they were placed in deportation proceedings and could be sent back to Venezuela, a country where they have not lived since they were children.

In a letter to Senator Durbin, John David Bunting, Nelson and Jhon's uncle, said:

“They will be able to give back so much to our country if allowed to stay. I am overwhelmed by my pride in them, and how they have managed to persevere and even flourish under their circumstances. ... I also have two young sons and I teach them about the incredible history of the United States, and the way that our country can address wrongs committed in its name, and come out of the process even stronger. Please help us.”

### **Gaby Pacheco**



Gaby Pacheco's parents came to this country from Ecuador when she was 7.

Gaby was the highest ranked Junior R.O.T.C. student in her high school, and she received the highest score on the military's aptitude test. The Air Force tried to recruit Gaby but she was unable to enlist because she did not have legal status.

Since then, Gaby has earned two associates degrees in education and a BA in special education. Gaby has also served as the president of her student government and the president of Florida's Junior Community College Student Government Association. Gaby's dream is to teach autistic children.

Gaby is one of four students who walked all the way from Miami, Florida, to Washington, D.C. – 1,500 miles – in order to build support for the DREAM Act. Along the way, these four students were joined by hundreds of supporters. They called their trip the Trail of Dreams.

### **Pedro Pedroza**



Pedro Pedroza came to Chicago from Mexico when he was 5.

Pedro graduated from St. Agnes Catholic School in Little Village and was an honors student at St. Ignatius College Prep.

He is now a student at Cornell University, a prestigious college in Ithaca, New York. Pedro wants to be a teacher.

America needs more teachers with the talent of Pedro Pedroza.

Unfortunately, Pedro is in deportation proceedings. He was riding a bus from Chicago back to school in Ithaca New York when immigration agents arrested him. It makes no sense to send someone like Pedro, who has so much to contribute, to a country he barely remembers.

In a letter to Senator Durbin, Pedro wrote:

“Mexico is not only unfamiliar to me, but leaving the U.S. means leaving everything and

everyone I know. ... I only hope I can earn a future in the U.S. for as long as I am here. Even if I am left no choice but to leave for Mexico, I would still strive to adjust my status and return to the place I consider home – the United States of America.”

### Dan-el Padilla Peralta



Dan-el Padilla Peralta came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic at the age of 4. He rose from homelessness to become the salutatorian of his class at Princeton University, where his professors hailed him as the likely "classicist of his generation."

Dan-el is currently in graduate student at Stanford University.

### Minchul Suk



Minchul Suk came to the U.S. from South Korea with his parents in 1991, when he was 9. Minchul graduated from high school with a 4.2 GPA. He graduated from UCLA with a degree in Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics. With the support of the Korean-American community, Minchul was able to graduate from dental school. He has passed the national boards and licensure exam but cannot obtain a license and fulfill his dream of becoming a dentist because he is undocumented. In a letter to Senator Durbin, Minchul wrote:

"After spending the majority of my life here, with all my friends and family here, and with my college acceptance at UCLA, I could not simply pack my things and go to a country I barely remember. I am willing to accept whatever punishment is deemed fitting for that crime; let me just stay and pay for it. People say that everyone deserves a second

chance. I am just asking for that one. I am begging for a chance to prove to everyone that I am not a waste of a human being, that I am not a criminal set on leeching off taxpayers' money. Please give me the chance to serve my community as a dentist, to be a giver rather than a receiver, to be able to become someone who would be able to shine light and help those around me like people have done for me when I was down in my darkest hours."

## Cesar Vargas



Cesar Vargas came to the U.S. from Mexico with his parents when he was 5. He recently graduated from the City University of New York School of Law, where he founded the Prosecutor Law Students Association. Cesar recently interned at the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office. Cesar's dream is to serve as a military lawyer in the Judge Advocate General's Corp, and, following his military service, to become a prosecutor.

## Oscar Vazquez



Oscar Vazquez was brought to Phoenix, Arizona, by his parents when he was a child.

He spent his high school years in Junior R.O.T.C. He dreamed of enlisting in the military. However, at the end of his junior year, a recruiting officer told Oscar that he was ineligible for military service because he was undocumented.

Oscar found another outlet for his talent. He entered a college-level robot competition sponsored by NASA. Oscar and three other DREAM Act students worked for months in a storage room in their high school. They were competing against students from MIT and other top universities, but Oscar's team won first place.

In 2009, Oscar graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was one of the top three students in his class.

Following his graduation, Oscar took a brave step. He voluntarily returned to Mexico, a country where he hadn't lived since he was a child. Oscar said, "I decided to take a gamble and do the right thing."

Last year, the Obama Administration granted Oscar a waiver to reenter the United States. Without this waiver, Oscar would have been barred from returning to the United States for at least ten years. He would have been separated from his wife Karla and their two-year-old daughter Samantha, who are both American citizens.

When Oscar returned to the United States last year, he did two things. First, he applied for citizenship. Then, he enlisted in the Army. Oscar is in basic training now. His goal is to pilot an Apache helicopter. In June, Oscar will complete basic training, and he will be sworn in as an American citizen.

## Benita Veliz



Benita Veliz came to the U.S. from Mexico with her parents in 1993, when she was 8. Benita graduated as the valedictorian of her high school class at the age of 16. She received a full scholarship to St. Mary's University, where she graduated from the Honors program with a double major in biology and sociology. Benita's honors thesis was on the DREAM Act. She dreams of becoming an attorney. In a letter to Senator Durbin, Benita wrote:

"I can't wait to be able to give back to the community that has given me so much. I was recently asked to sign the national anthems for both the U.S. and Mexico at a Cinco de Mayo community assembly. Without missing a beat, I quickly belted out the Star Spangled Banner. To my embarrassment, I then realized that I had no idea how to sing the Mexican national anthem. I am American. My dream is American. It's time to make our dreams a reality. It's time to pass the DREAM Act."

## DREAM Act Faith Lessons



## Immigration and Faith Lessons

See also: **Six-week immigration study from the Unitarian Universalist Association**  
[www.uua.org/justice/issues/process/currentissues/immigration/studyguide/](http://www.uua.org/justice/issues/process/currentissues/immigration/studyguide/)

Religious teachings ask us to help the stranger, to welcome and protect the sojourner, and to treat him/her with love.

**Read the religious quotes from different faiths and discuss the questions below the quotes.**

### **I. A Stranger in a Strange Land**

*"No stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler."*  
(Job 31:32)

*Israelites experienced being perpetual travelers and strangers from the beginning:  
God said to Abraham "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)*

*Jesus "will say... I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me in." (Matthew 25: 34-35)*

*"You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know how it feels to be a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)*

- **If you were forced to leave this country, where would you go? Who would take you in?**
  - o How would it affect your spirit and well-being?
  - o If you had to leave quickly what would you bring?

### **II. In God's Image**

*"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the Lord am your God." (Leviticus 19: 34)*

*"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrew 13: 1-2)*

*"All God's creatures are His family; and he or she is the most beloved of God who tries to do most good to God's creatures." (Prophet Muhammad)*

*"God created humanity in God's image, in the image of God, God created them." (Genesis 1:27)*

- **How do we honor the divinity within each person, especially those who we are taught to dislike?**
- **On the Myths and Facts sheet (page 18 and below) read Myths and Facts #1, 2, 3 and 6. Then read the following paragraph and discuss the questions:**
  - o We are taught to dislike undocumented immigrants and we hear them called “illegals” and “criminal aliens.” How have words been used to hurt you or people you love? What can you do to be aware of your own speaking and those you spend time with so that your words reflect the idea that each human being was created in God’s image?

### **III. Love Your Neighbor**

**Read the short article (page 23 and below), and then read the two quotes below and conclude by discussing the questions below.**

*“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” (Rumi, i.e. Muhammad Jalal ud Din Balkhi)*

*“And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.” (Bahá'u'lláh – Bahai scripture)*

*“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18)*

- What feelings could you relate to in the story? What surprised you?
- What does it look like to be of service to equals who have a different life experience than you, rather than to do “charity work for those you pity”? How can you do community service for those who are less fortunate than you in such a way that honors the dignity and divinity of each person who you are serving?

### **IV. What’s Next**

**If you would like to stay up to date on these issues and get involved you can go to:**

- Interfaith Immigration Coalition at <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/>
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society’s (HIAS) website at [hias.org](http://hias.org) and to HIAS’s Welcome the Stranger listserv sign-up at <http://capwiz.com/hias>

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## MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN THE U.S.A

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### ***Myth # 1: Immigrants Come Here to Take Jobs Away From Americans***

Immigrants work in niche occupations; including many areas U.S. workers don't choose to work in. A recent study showed NO correlation between high unemployment in areas with many immigrants. Most undocumented immigrants are here to escape poverty, oppression, domestic violence and other unlivable circumstances. Many refugees are actually undocumented immigrants because the laws for who "counts" as a legal refugee are extremely restricted.

### ***Myth # 2 Immigrants Increase Crime***

New immigrants are *less* likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. While immigration has increased since 1994, including doubling undocumented populations, violent crime rates fell by 34.2%.

### ***Myth # 3 Immigrants Don't Pay Taxes***

All immigrants pay taxes (income, property, sales, etc.). Immigrants pay \$90-\$140 *billion* a year in federal, state, and local income taxes. Undocumented immigrants also pay income taxes, evidenced by the Social Security Administration's "suspense file" (taxes that cannot be matched to workers' names and social security numbers). In 2002, this suspense file grew by \$56 billion in reported earnings, with \$7 billion in Social Security taxes and \$1.5 billion in Medicare taxes largely paid by immigrants who will *never* enjoy these programs. Immigrants contribute \$611 billion to our Social Security system; **a moratorium on legal immigration would raise the deficit 31% over 50 yrs.**

### ***Myth # 4 Immigrants Don't Contribute Economically to Society***

The immigrant community is not a drain on the U.S. economy but, in fact, is a net benefit. Research reported by the CATO Institute and the President's Council of Economic Advisors reveals that the average immigrant pays a net \$80,000 more in taxes than they collect in government services. For immigrants with college degrees the net fiscal return is \$198,000. Furthermore, The American Farm Bureau asserts that without guest workers the U.S. economy would lose as much as \$9 billion a year in agricultural production and 20 percent of current production would go overseas. Immigrants have a high rate of entrepreneurship, opening businesses and creating jobs.

### ***Myth # 5 Immigrants Don't Want to Learn English***

Immigrants learn English today at the same rate as Italian, German, and E. Europeans who emigrated in the 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are not enough English classes to accommodate all the immigrants who want to learn.

### ***Myth # 6 Immigrants Have a Way to Immigrate Legally; They Just Need to Wait Their Turn***

There are no legal possibilities for many immigrants. Visa caps, complex laws including 1996 changes in the law means if an immigrant leaves and tries to apply to re-enter, they could be separated from their family for 10 years or more. There are virtually no permanent employment visas for unskilled immigrants; the wait is 8 years and no employer will hold a job open that long. **Immigrants can't wait in line, because there is no line.**

*DREAM Act only hope for college for local immigrant*

**Author: PICO**

**July 9<sup>th</sup> 2010**

Walking down North High Street in West Chester, she doesn't appear to be different than any other 21-year-old. However, what separates her from others walking down the street is not her appearance.

Sophia, who requested that her real name not be used due to her status, is one of over 11 million undocumented immigrants living in America.

Her father was already working in the U.S. when he decided he wanted to bring his family here when she was 3. However, the immigration process takes between eight to 12 years to complete and there is no guarantee of obtaining legal residency after this period.

For Sophia's father, it wasn't worth sacrificing his children's childhood to wait for the immigration process. He decided to rely on coyotes, who are paid thousands per person to smuggle people into the U.S. from Mexico, to reunite his family.

The coyotes bought the family across the border. From there, they made their way from Las Vegas to Chicago before being united with family in West Chester.

"First, we lived with family that was already here legally," Sophia said. "We tried to save money for a place of our own."

Settling in American culture, her mother was hired at Parkway Cleaners. After several months, her family saved enough to rent their own apartment. Sophia lived just like any other legal resident but her world would be flip upside down a few years later.

When Sophia was seven, officers from the Immigration Customs and Enforcement Agency raided her mother's workplace and took her to a prison facility outside of Philadelphia.

Sophia's mother told her that "if you did speak back to them [the officers] or try to argue with you, at that time, they did hit you."

"My aunt back-talked to them. She asked them 'Why are you taking us? I have children, they need us,' At that point, one of the ICE officers punched her and pushed her to the floor." Sophia said. "She fell to the floor, she was scraped and beaten."

After the incident happened to her, Sophia's aunt took the case to court and was able to obtain her citizenship.

"I had no idea what was going on. All I knew was that she wasn't there," Sophia said. "I remember going to school and I just felt so sad. I wanted to cry right there."

Without any contact from Sophia's mother for months, her father slipped into a deep depression and began drinking daily. Members of her extended family began to take care of his children. With finances now tightened, Sophia and her sister would often do odd jobs like cleaning houses for just \$20 a day.

Yet within a few weeks, her mother re-entered the United States undocumented.

"When she came back we were all sleeping. She walked in through the door and my sister ran down and started crying," Sophia said. "My mother said 'I'm back, but you have to get up and get ready for school. You have to go.' My sister then said, 'But if I go to school you won't come back again.'"

Her mother decided not to return to work due to the threat of deportation. Soon afterwards, Sophia and her siblings were able to obtain a sponsorship from her uncle for legal residency. Sophia went on to graduate high school with honors.

She applied to become a citizen, but for years her application was unaddressed. When she turned 21, it expired.

“I’m out of that application and there’s nothing I can do. The only hope that I would have is the DREAM Act,” Sophia said.

Under the DREAM Act, students who have lived in the United States for at least five years and have demonstrated good moral behavior would be able apply for six years of conditional status.

During this six year period, a person must complete two years of a four-year degree or serve in the military for two years. After this period, depending on the moral conduct of the applicant, legal residency would be granted.

Without conditional status, Sophia cannot pursue post-secondary education.

“Something that I think would really help people is if I would be able to do communications with Spanish and be an official translator,” Sophia said. “But it feels horrible, it’s like I’m lying here to my teachers telling them I don’t want to go to college. But I do, I still do.”

Sophia is not the only one. 65,000 students who graduate high school and have been in the U.S. more than five years face limited prospects for completing their education or working legally in the United States due to lack of documentation, according to the National Immigration Law Center.

While 118 representatives and 36 senators have co-sponsored the bill it still has not been brought to the floor for debate.

“Not everyone is here as a criminal or, you know, to steal anyone’s job. People just want to come here for a better future for themselves, for their families, for their kids,” Sophia said. “I think that a lot of students and people here are proving to this country that they are an asset and that they want to belong here, they learn English wanting to belong here.”

Despite her hardships, Sophia does not regret her family’s decision to come here undocumented.

“I said to my mom, ‘I’m glad you guys made the decision to be here, otherwise we wouldn’t have had the future we have now,’” Sophia said. “I feel very lucky. I feel so blessed. Obviously someone wants me here. Obviously I’m here for a reason.”

*Update – At the end of 2010 the DREAM Act was approved in the House but ultimately lost because it was a few votes short of the 60 needed votes in the Senate. Students are still hoping to reintroduce the Dream Act in the years ahead.*

# Bulletin Insert

# PRAY FOR THE DREAM

***Thousands of hard working young people who were brought to the United States as infants or children can now be locked up in federal detention centers and deported to a country they've never known.***

**The DREAM Act** would stop the injustice by giving students who have grown up and graduated high school in the United States the opportunity to earn legal status through higher education or military service.

**President Obama** also has the executive authority to protect vulnerable populations including DREAM Act eligible students from unwarranted detention and deportation.

## Take Part in DREAM Sabbath Events on Sunday September 25th!

Put your faith into action to support our DREAMers!

- Plan a vigil or public event in support of our DREAM students and youth
- Incorporate prayers, homilies, and testimonies in support of our DREAMers into your congregation's masses on Sunday September 25<sup>th</sup>
- Call, write or e-mail President Obama and ask him to protect innocent DREAM Act eligible students and youth from detention and deportation

***All they want to do is serve our country and live the American dream. As people of faith, we support the DREAM Act because we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, allowing everyone to reach their God given potential***

