

EDITOR'S
NOTE: THIS PIECE
WAS WRITTEN BY A WSU
STUDENT WHO WISHES TO REMAIN
ANONYMOUS. IT HAS BEEN EDITED FOR
LENGTH AND CLARITY.

The first time I've ever seen my father cry in front of me was at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Being an 8-year-old, I was very perplexed of the situation that was occurring.

A few nights before, Fernanda, my oldest sister, announced to my family and I that she was returning back to Chile, our home country.

I remember as if it was yesterday night, sitting on her lap, crying and begging her not to leave. I couldn't understand why this decision was made; I couldn't understand why this was happening to my family.

I felt like a piece of our family was cut off that day and that void is still within me today.

Fernanda was banned from re-entering the U.S. for 10 years due to her illegal presence in the country after she turned the legal age.

My family has been trying to cope with this gap in our hearts for more than nine years. Not being able to hear her laugh, see her smile or even feel her embrace has impacted us tremendously.

Unfortunately, we are not the only ones who have been separated from our loved ones. As of 2012, there are 11 million undocumented immigrants who reside in the U.S.

Most of these immigrants have experienced a loved one getting deported or banned from re-entry, while others are separated from their loved ones back in their home country since they cannot go back.

It's a brutal reality that we all share in the undocumented immigrant community.

Many of these immigrants sacrifice everything they have and say good-bye to the only town they've grown up in. Leaving family members and friends whom they won't see for a long time because they want their children to have a better life with opportunities that were not accessible to them in their home country.

Opportunities such as employment, education, healthcare and the like are extremely limited in developing nations.

Now imagine if you were among those who are so unfortunate to be living in one of these destabilized countries and had a family to provide for. What drastic measures would you take? What would you sacrifice for the betterment of your children's lives?

In 2012, former President Barack Obama issued an executive order granting children who entered the country illegally with their parents a two-year work permit, a social security number and exemption from deportation.

DACA or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, has benefited the lives of 800,000 young individuals by giving them the opportunity to work under a work authorization card and seek higher education.

Under DACA, these individuals can work legally, obtain a driver's license, pursue higher education, purchase homes and cars — essentially the basic tools for the American Dream.

However,
this American
Dream has been turning into
an American Nightmare. With
our current president, Donald
Trump, there has been an increase
in anti-immigrant rhetoric and he

attempted to terminate DACA last year. This type of environment only further perpetuates us to go back in the shadows.

DACA is beneficial to DREAMers who have come across many socioeconomic barriers in this country trying to achieve the American Dream. Unfortunately, DACA doesn't extend to our parents so we still have to carry fear in our hearts that every day is not promised.

Our parents are the real DREAMers because they are the ones who have dreamt this dream for their children.

They have sacrificed everything so we can get an opportunity to succeed in life. Personally, the main reason why my parents made the decision to move to the U.S. was because of free K-12 public education.

In Chile, where I was born and where my parents grew up, the only form of getting an actual "education" is by seeking private education, which costs thousands of dollars.

My parents gave up everything so that my sisters and I could have a fair education without paying the ludicrous tuition fees.

Even though DACA allows us to go to college, we still don't receive any federal financial aid. Additionally, my immigration lawyer told me that only 13 out of the 50 states allow DACA recipients to pay in-state tuition if they can prove they've been in that state for a certain period of time.

Many of these students have to jump through obstacles to get private scholarships in order to seek higher education.

At the age of 16, I got my work authorization card; I remember staring at it for hours and thinking to myself "How in the hell did this happen?" I remember job searching for weeks and feeling warm comfort in my heart when I was able to write down my social security number on every application.

I worked as a restaurant hostess for a summer during my junior year of high school. I got paid approximately \$4,000 — it wouldn't have been that great if I didn't have my work permit.

Without DACA, I would've been working the same type of jobs as my own mother. To clarify, it is extremely difficult to receive a work visa or green card unless you have a professional career such as being a doctor, lawyer or engineer.

My mother, an undocumented immigrant, doesn't have any sort of professional skill, which means she can't work a high-paying job due to her immigration status. In fact, she works in factories with bad working conditions, works 12+ hour shifts six days a week and isn't allowed to sit down unless it's her 30 minute lunch break.

My mom is never clocked out. Her job requires more time-consuming work at home. She only has about two hours of free time before she gets rest for the next day to repeat it all over again.

DACA has not only given these 800,000 young individuals a work permit, but far more than that.

DACA has given us a different and optimistic view for our future, since many of us were convinced that we were going to follow the same footsteps as our parents in working poor-quality jobs.

Nonetheless, there is only one limitation that causes panic and fear in these communities: deportation. I know of many families that are suffering right now because a loved one was deported back to their home country.

As stated before, my family and I have been struggling to cope with the agonizing pain of the hole in our broken family. As each day goes by, the hole in my heart gets bigger and bigger. At times I wonder to myself if I actually know anything about my sister since the only memories I have of us was

when we were younger.

I also feel like I'm living a double life because whenever I attend school or work, I have to pretend that everything is OK because no one has any clue what's going on behind the scenes.

When I arrive home, I get hit in the face by the cruel reality that I can't live a normal life, I can't do what other teenagers get to do, I can't drive without having the fear of getting pulled over, I can't get social benefits from the government, I can't even see my family back in Chile, I can't even see my own sister.

Unfortunately, I am not the only who has experienced these types of feelings or situations. In fact, millions of undocumented immigrants have probably gone through the same or even worse situations.

Although most Americans are in favor of DACA, there are others that agree with the idea of deporting DACA recipients and their parents. There are a few who started to have deep animosity for us because they believe we don't pay taxes and that we receive aid from the government.

However, this is completely inaccurate. Most undocumented immigrants who get a paycheck must pay taxes. And since we are not considered citizens or permanent residents, we don't receive certain social benefits from the taxes that we contribute.

Also, many disagree with "illegal" immigration because these parents broke the law by coming in illegally or overstaying their visas with their families. But a majority of these immigrants didn't have any other choice but to escape the socioeconomic hardships in their country in order to save themselves and their family.

We need to applaud them for their courage, not dehumanize and demonize them.