



DACA Repeal Is Harmful for Immigrant Mental Health

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NEW YORK: The Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) strongly condemns the repeal of Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals. With this recent decision, 800,000 DREAMers, who arrived to the U.S. as children, will no longer be protected under federal law and may be deported after 6 months. It is estimated that 16,000 young Asian Americans are currently DACA recipients, and that only about a quarter of eligible [Korean \(24%\), Filipino \(26%\), and Asian Indians \(28%\)](#) even applied for the program in the first two years. Thus, there are thousands of other undocumented Asian Americans who could have benefitted from this program.

AAPA recognizes that Asian Americans have experienced many discriminatory immigration laws throughout history- including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (which was the [first ban](#) of immigrants from any country and had permanently prevented all Chinese people from entering the US); the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 (which limited the number of immigrants to 2% of the total number of people from that country already in the US); the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 (which set a [quota](#) of 50 Filipinos per year); and the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 (which set an annual quota of 100 for Asian Indians and Filipinos). Due to anti-Asian sentiment, the Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935 provided government funding for transportation to Filipino who promised to [never return](#) to the US. However, the majority stayed because they wanted the chance to fulfill their American dreams, and the Supreme Court found the legislation to be unconstitutional.

While the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 put an end to immigration quotas, we must remember the history of immigration for Asian Americans - in order to contextualize, and empathize with, DACA recipients and other DREAMers today. Like these earlier immigrants from Asia and other countries who came without documentation, DREAMers merely want the opportunity to thrive in the land of opportunity. DACA recipients are teachers, attorneys, community organizers, health care workers, students, and more. They came to this country as children; they are just as American as those who are born in the US. While there is no logical reason to repeal this program, there are dozens of reasons of why it would be bad for our country

- economic loss, dismantled families, mental health consequences for all involved, and more. These Americans should not be criminalized. They did nothing wrong. They cannot be "sent home"; the US is their home.

AAPA calls on our U.S. Congress to stop the repeal of DACA, as it threatens the mental health of undocumented families and of all immigrants in general. In his recent essay, Dr. E.J. David, an Associate Professor at the University of Alaska describes the detrimental impact of [discrimination on the mental health of immigrants](#). He urges: "The U.S. Congress has the power to relieve at least 800,000 people and their families the burden of carrying unnecessary stress. Our elected representatives have the power to stop the stress and its many negative consequences. They have the power to stop the oppression."

Finally to all DREAMers and other undocumented Americans, AAPA pledges to support you; stand with you; and fight with you. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently stated, "No one is free until we are all free."

The mission of the Asian American Psychological Association is to advance the mental health and well-being of Asian American communities through research, professional practice, education, and policy.

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