

Reprint from Washington Times Oct. 9th, 2017

A ‘Dreamer’ solution based on the rule of law

DACA recipients can satisfy justice by paying a penalty

By Shalabh Kumar, Chairman of Republican Hindu Coalition, 10/9/17



ANALYSIS/OPINION:

After faith and family, my country is most important. I am an American by choice, arriving here in 1969, \$5,000 in debt. India was my motherland; America became my Karma-land, the provider of opportunity and systems that sustained me through the rigors of higher education, career, raising a family and serving the community. I love them both, but in the end I am an American.

These feelings and the memories of the journey to citizenship and success in America have stirred more deeply than normal these past few months, as our culture clashes from the streets of Charlottesville to the campus of Berkeley. Now, the decision by President Trump to send the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) back to Congress for a legislative remedy has further inflamed accusations of racism, not only against the president, but all well-intended Americans who simply desire the discipline of legal order.

Every one of the 800,000 DACA “Dreamers” is a precious life with a unique story. And yes, they did not break the law knowingly. Yet there are hundreds of thousands of children of highly skilled immigrants whose green cards have been approved but who have to wait in line for as long as 25 years to get permanent residency. During that wait, these children age out. But they follow the law and self-deport if necessary, even though just like Dreamers, America is the only country they have ever known. Why should any new law discriminate against them as compared to those who came here illegally?

I was not the recipient of white privilege. I was not even born into the middle or upper classes but had to work 100-hour weeks to pursue my American dream. In the 1970s, I spent five years in Addison, Ill., in a community of recent Italian immigrants. I am reminded of my neighbor John Neri, a white Catholic, who worked three jobs — 18 hours a day — every day for years before he started his own company and became a citizen.

In keeping with the American experience, every successful legal immigrant from the nation's founding has had to work hard and pay a price to enjoy the benefits of being a citizen of the greatest nation on earth. Why should DACA Dreamers be any different? Dreamers are here in violation of the law and within the law, both mercy and justice must be satisfied. As an immigrant, I know the mental agony of having the sword of possible deportation hanging over my head, even for a brief period due to status change.

This, I believe, could be the answer to DACA as well as to so many other vexing pathologies that seem to be dominating the headlines. America has far less a race problem than it has a responsibility problem. At a time when it seems to be more politically expedient to sell entitlement, victimization and the narcissism of all other -isms, the loudest voices in the room seem to have forgotten that without responsibility there can be no rights.

DACA's long-term solution will be found in the same calculus that has provided every solution to America's most difficult dilemmas since its Founding: the application of commitment, work and sacrifice. DACA recipients — and perhaps any other alien needing to bring permanent closure to his tenuous immigration status — can pay a penalty to satisfy justice. Congress can decide what, who and how. Perhaps it could be monetary, violation-dependent, and means-tested. All DACAs and others in similar situations want is to remove the sword from their neck, and they are willing to pay for it. They do not need amnesty. They do not need citizenship.

Restitution within such a viable system would not only result in just outcomes that could be embraced by people on both sides of the political divide, but it could provide a windfall to the federal Treasury — all while reinforcing the values that must be sustained if America is to endure. A creative solution to DACA and other such situations could raise billions for the Treasury, funds which could be used to secure America's borders including the wall, and rebuild badly needed infrastructure. Perhaps most importantly, such a program would go a long way toward calming the acrid air of hostility that is mislabeled as racism by restoring order through a shared culture based on the rule of law.

- *Shalabh Kumar is chairman of the Republican Hindu Coalition.*

Copyright © 2017 The Washington Times, LLC.