



# The DREAM Act and Immigration Reform 2010: Should Immigrant Children Be Given The Opportunity To Become Permanent Residents?

Some opponents of immigration reform believe that all undocumented immigrants, including children, are undeserving of pathways to legalization.

They never met Omar and Anthony.

## All-American Immigrants

I first met the two brothers a few months ago, when they visited my office with their parents. Omar, a high school senior, was getting ready for graduation. Anthony was a junior. Their parents sought direction about their children's future.

Omar and Anthony were All American kids.

Almost.

Both were "A" students. Both had won several scholastic and good behavior awards throughout elementary, middle, and high school. Both played sports. Omar was the school's best swimmer. Anthony played tennis.

A year before, Omar had won third place in a regional essay writing contest. Omar was senior class president. Omar hoped to go to college and then earn an advanced degree from a divinity school.

Anthony was junior class president and planned to run for ASB president. Anthony was a math whiz. Since he had gained enough credits to graduate by mid-year, he had decided to enroll in a local junior college the following spring. He wanted to get a head start on higher level calculus classes. Anthony's goal was to become a research scientist.

As complete as their resumes looked, a major item was missing - legal documents to live in the United States.

They were brought here at an early age when their parents entered the country without permission. Omar was 5 years old; Anthony was only 3. They believed that hard work, good behavior, and good grades would open doors of opportunity.

Instead, with graduation nearing, Omar had nowhere to turn. And Anthony was right behind him. Their dreams of going to college and becoming contributing members of society were not possible.



Their situation reflects the reality of immigration law today.

Instead of being the brightest day of their lives, Graduation Day is like a dark cloud hanging over their heads.

### **The DREAM Act Debate**

Janet Napolitano, the head of the Department of Homeland Security, has said that immigration reform will be on the nation's agenda in 2010.

The plight of immigrant children, like Omar and Anthony, will be high on the list of issues. The DREAM Act, a proposal to create a path to permanent residence for these children, will be a topic of intense political debate.

For several years, as an immigration attorney, I have watched immigrant youth suffer in quiet. They are trapped between a rock and hard place.

Many of them were brought here at an early age. They were too young to have any input in their parents' decision. Most have no memories of their birth place.

All have limited prospects for the future. They are foreigners in their home country. They are illegally present in the country they call home.

When the DREAM Act debate begins, it will be up to all Americans to decide whether they deserve an opportunity to become lawful residents or not. The debate will be heated and controversial.

CARLOS BATARA