

# Immigration policy essay example

[Sociology](#), [Immigration](#)



Illegal immigration has been a contentious issue for at least 130 years, the time of the “ Great Wave” of European immigrants during the late 1800’s. Neither side of the political fence has been able to craft a solution that fits the best interest of the nation, shows compassion to the plight of immigrants desperately trying to escape the abject poverty of third-world countries and is acceptable to the other political faction. In an effort to accomplish this difficult task, at least in a small yet meaningful way, last week in a Rose Garden announcement President Obama said federal law enforcement agencies will not deport illegal immigrants under age 30 who have been in the country since childhood and meet other reasonable requirements. Political opponents claim this is an election year stunt to court Hispanic voters. Two Sacramento youths, among millions of others across the country, are no longer facing eminent deportation. However, their parents still do. This issue of dividing immigrant families is also dividing legal citizens and is a no-win topic for politicians. Some maintain it’s the immigrants who are the real losers in this nearly century and a half standoff while others say the American workers are the ones being hurt the most by the inaction. According to Janet Napolitano, Homeland Security Secretary, the Obama administration’s new policy guidelines allow persons under age 30 who entered the country before they turned 16, either served in the military or were successful students, pose no security or criminal threat can receive a two-year deferral from deportation. They also must show evidence of being in the country for five consecutive years. This policy shift is a part of the Dream Act Obama tried to have passed in 2010 but the bill was blocked by Senate Republicans. The announcement was instantly praised by Hispanic

leaders who have condemned Congress and the White House in the past for inaction on the important issue. Republicans responded by angrily saying the move amounted to amnesty, a hot-button word among political conservatives, was politically motivated and exceeded the authority of the president. Obama said the executive order changing the enforcement policy was “ more fair, more efficient and more just.” He answered his critics by saying “ This is not amnesty. This is not immunity. This is not a path to citizenship. It’s not a permanent fix. This is a temporary stopgap measure.” (Cohen. 2012).

Of the 800, 000 undocumented young persons in the country to benefit from this announcement are Chie Yee Yang, 19, and Kawah Yee Yang, 16, from Sacramento. These young men faced deportation back to Columbia but both meet the requirements of the new policy. However, the teen’s parents are still going to be deported back to Columbia or their native China even though they have lived in the U. S. with their sons for 18 years. They don’t want their family to be slit up and worry about the fate of the boys without parental guidance. It’s a very sad situation and one that has occurred to families all over the country. At least the boys will be allowed to stay. Prior to the executive order, many thousands of families whose children were born in the U. S. have been divided by a harsh immigration policy and in the case, such as the Yang brothers, children have been deported to countries they do not remember. They are lost, not knowing the language or culture. This change will stop a portion of a policy many people would characterize as tragically unfair. Obama said of children of illegal immigrants, “ they study in our schools, play in our neighborhoods, befriend our kids, pledge allegiance

to our flag. It makes no sense to expel talented young people who are, for all intents and purposes, Americans.” (Magagnini, 2012).

The opposition party is, as expected, expressed outrage following the Rose Garden announcement. Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican from South Carolina called the decision “ a classic Barack Obama move of choosing politics over leadership” and Representative Lamar Smith, Republican from Texas said the change was a “ decision to grant amnesty to potentially millions of illegal immigrants.” (Cohen. 2012). Republicans complain that this move will be a signal to others wanting to enter the country illegally that amnesty is possible if they can just stay in the country a few years which will cause a flood of immigrants to cascade over the borders resulting in more economic and social problems. Smith suggests illegal immigrants will falsify documents, as they have been known to do, which will cause a large problem to become larger still. “ Many illegal immigrants will falsely claim they came here as children and the federal government has no way to check whether their claims are true,” Smith said. “ And once these illegal immigrants are granted deferred action, they can then apply for a work permit, which the administration routinely grants 90 percent of the time.” (Cohen. 2012).

The father of the Sacramento teens spared from eminent deportation, Yanshan Yu, escaped from China and a life of poverty in 1984. He started a restaurant in Colombia then six years later was able to bring his wife to that country. With her help they were able to open another restaurant and, again wither help, the couple had two sons. Though they were doing well financially, the area where they lived and worked was growing increasingly

violent. Following several gang-related incidents the family was forced to flee to the U. S. in January 2002. Yu became a butcher at a local grocery store and bought a house in the Creekside neighborhood of Sacramento. The couple petitioned the U. S. immigration department for asylum. They claimed that due to their ethnicity they had been the victims of gang violence in Columbia and could not return nor could they go back China because they would face forced sterilization and heavy fines for disobeying the one-child policy. Unfortunately for the family, an immigration judge did not find their reasons for asylum compelling enough to allow them to stay. Though the family has been productive members of society and the sons are as “Americanized” as any child born in the country, they face being split apart. (Magagnini, 2012).

The main reason for the amount of immigration across the southern border, the immigrants most vilified by legal citizens, is due to the Mexican economy collapsing which was predominantly a result of free-trade strategies utilized by NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Mexico’s economic output fell by one-third because of oppressive and unfair IMF policies regarding Mexico. In addition, the unbridled corruption that pervades through all levels of government in Mexico has contributed considerably as well. During the last two decades alone its foreign debt has risen more than 350 percent due to extensive looting of government monies on a national scale. These factors caused the “collapse of all areas of productive economic activity and employment, is the primary driver of the flood of emigrants desperate to leave Mexico, to find some livelihood for themselves and their families in the United States”

(Small, 2005). Those fleeing from oppression and desperate living conditions from the south have recently been outnumbered by those coming from Asia. The action taken by Obama is small but important first step in inserting fairness and compassion into the illegal immigration discussion. Some insist it is simply a political ploy during an election year and that may be true but doing what is right is always welcome no matter the motive. Those accusing the President of “ playing politics” with this emotion-filled issue have used it to their political advantage as well. That’s where the anti-immigrant fever has come from, not from actual facts but from fear-based rhetoric. Some say illegal immigration harms the economy of the U. S. but the real harm is the affect on immigrants who likely wouldn’t be in the country if they were not escaping horrors of some description. As a nation, we must decide if we’re going to take the sensible, compassionate route or the fear-based selfish, emotion-driven path to immigrant’s eligibility for citizenship.

## **References**

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