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TALKING POINTS

Immigration, DACA students, and continuous debate: 5 key points

United States citizens are blitzed with hot-button immigration issues after years of contentious debate surrounding the topic. Controversy surrounds Immigration and Customs Enforcement, DACA students, and immigration caravans from Central America. Changing the way immigration and immigrant's statuses is discussed can lead to a better future for all.

1. Immigrants are people too

Immigration is a complex issue. One factor that is not complex is immigrants are the same genus as documented citizens. There will always be Republican and Democrat debates on legislature, but party affiliation should not impact the well-being of immigrants.

Many immigrants have gone through an enormous adventure to make it to the United States. They often leave behind family and belongings in their home country, spend a significant amount of money and/or trek through uncertain terrains to make it to the "Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave." The United States is a land of opportunity and we must continue to share treasured opportunities with newcomers.

2. Not all immigrants are illegal

Instead of jumping to the conclusion that people who look different than you are illegal aliens, take a minute to step back. Immigrants come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Though some do not have citizenship, they are not necessarily illegal. Farmers and other labor-oriented occupations often struggle to find staff to work in the fields during summer months.

Immigrants often arrive in the United States on work visas to work the produce fields and do not leave after their stay. Complex immigration laws confuse these workers, giving them illegal status when their stay is over. They develop relationships with those around them and face difficulties leaving their new life behind. We must foster a welcoming environment for those of any status.

3. DACA student cannot be blamed for their status

Students under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for work permits and education opportunities in the United States. Students under this status were illegally brought to the United States by their parents or did not leave when their visa expired.

These are often the brightest students. They strive to do well and prove the stereotypes that people have of them wrong. These are future doctors, educators and pilots. These students face difficulties because their status, often questioning their worth. Please welcome these students with open arms and make them feel valued. It is our duty at NICE to educate about DACA.

4. There are fallacies created about immigrants due to a smattering of immigrants causing problems

Politicians like to stir controversy by saying illegal immigrants are rapists, murderers, and drug lords. There are instances when immigrants have made poor choices affecting the lives of people around them, but that the mistakes of others cannot generalize an entire demographic.

The media do not accurately portray the working-class immigrants who better our lives. The mechanic who fixed a faulty car may be an illegal immigrant. The favorite kindergarten teacher at the school may be an illegal citizen. The old saying "Don't judge a book by its cover" is a perfect saying for the immigration. We must not treat these individuals differently.

5. Take action now

What better time to become educated on immigration than during these intense political times? Do not listen to everyone else's opinion to determine your own opinion. Read articles, look at the history of immigration and complete this sentence....

We encourage involvement in local and national politics as a great way to craft a better future for immigrants. Immigration reform can start with talking to local and state representatives. Being an ally is the most important step you can make on the path to immigration reform. Involvement and voicing opinions can lead to change. Living in fear of deportation and getting separated from family members is a fear no individual should ever have to face.

About NICE

The National Immigration Center for Education aims to educate United States citizens on immigration issues. NICE works with community groups, schools, and politicians to increase awareness and diffuse real facts. Every January, NICE travels to U.S. and Mexico border towns to meet with people to address concerns and goals for immigration reform in the new year. NICE is the only organization that educates communities on immigration, but partners with larger groups like the American Civil Liberties Union for conferences and events.