

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2015*

**Remarks Following a Meeting With Beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy**

*February 4, 2015*

Well, I've just had a chance to meet with these six wonderful young people who represent the very best that this country has to offer. What sets them apart is that they all came here—were brought here by their parents—and, up until recently, have had a very difficult situation because of their immigration status.

The stories you hear from these young people are parents who aspired for a better life for their children; these folks coming here at the age of 4 months or 7 months or 9-year-olds or 10-year-olds, oftentimes not realizing that their status was any different than their classmates and their friends and their neighbors. In some cases, they didn't discover until they were about to go to college that there was a difference that might prevent them from giving back to their community and their country.

And because of the executive actions that we took with respect to DREAM Act kids, and because of the executive actions that I announced late last year with respect to many of their parents, what I've heard is lives transformed. Young people who didn't think it would be possible for themselves to go to college suddenly are going to college. Young people who didn't think that it might be possible to start a business suddenly find themselves in a position to look at starting a business. Young people who have memories of their mothers weeping because they couldn't go to the funeral of their parent now are seeing the prospect, the hope, that their lives can stabilize and normalize in some way.

I don't think there's anybody in America who's had a chance to talk to these six young people or the young DREAMers all across the country who wouldn't find it in their heart to say these kids are American just like us and they belong here and we want to do right by them.

And so often in this immigration debate, it's an abstraction, and we don't really think about the human consequences of our positions. And part of the reason that I wanted to hear from these young people today, and part of the reason why I've heard from young DREAMers in the past, is because it's a constant reminder to me of why this is important.

Now, the House of Representatives recently passed a bill that would have these six young people deported. I think that's wrong. And I think most Americans would think it was wrong if they had a chance to meet these young people. And legislation is going to be going to the Senate that again tries to block these executive actions. I want to be as clear as possible: I will veto any legislation that got to my desk that took away the chance of these young people, who grew up here and who are prepared to contribute to this country, that would prevent them from doing so. And I am confident that I can uphold that veto.

So as we move forward in this debate over the next several months, the next year, the next year and a half, I would call on Members of Congress to think about all the talent that is already in this country, that is already working in many cases, is already making contributions—in some cases, are joining up in our military or are already starting businesses, are already attending school—and let's be true to our tradition as a nation of immigrants and as a nation of laws.

My strong preference is going to be to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And I know that there are Republicans out there who want to pass comprehensive immigration reform. In the Senate, they've shown that they are prepared to do the right thing. And rather than continue trying to go back to a system that everybody acknowledges was broken, let's move forward with the incredible promise that these young people represent.

Last point I'll make: There have been suggestions that we will not fund the Department of Homeland Security—which is responsible for patrolling our borders, as well as keeping our air travel safe, as well as patrolling our coasts—there's been talk about not funding that Department because of the disagreement around immigration reform. There's no logic to that position. Particularly for Republicans who claim that they are interested in strong border security, why would you cut off your nose to spite your face by defunding the very operations that are involved in making sure that we've got strong border security, particularly at a time when we've got real concerns about countering terrorism?

So my strong suggestion would be that Congress go ahead, fund the Department of Homeland Security. We're doing a tremendous amount of work at the borders. The concerns that people had about unaccompanied children tragically traveling from Central America, that spike has now diminished. We are below the levels that we were 2 years ago. We are working diligently with the Central American countries to make sure that young people there have hope and that their parents are getting a clear message of not sending them on this extraordinarily dangerous journey.

Let's make sure the Department of Homeland Security is properly funded, we're doing the right things at the borders, we're doing the right things with respect to our airports. And then let's get back to first principles and remind ourselves that each of these young people here are going to be doing incredible things on behalf of this country.

And to all the DREAMers who are out there and all those who qualified for my executive action, moving forward, I want you to know that I am confident in my ability to implement this program over the next 2 years, and I'm confident that the next President and the next Congress and the American people will ultimately recognize why this is the right thing to do. So I'm going to want all of you to get information so you can sign up if you qualify as well. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. And thank you, guys, for sharing your incredible stories.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the discussion were Jean Yannick Diouf, student, University of Maryland; Bati-amgalan Tsogtsaikhan, student, George Mason University; Maria Praeli, student, Quinnipiac University; Rishi Singh, educational justice organizer, DRUM—South Asian Organizing Center; Las Vegas, NV, resident Blanca Gamez; and Steven Arteaga Rodriguez, student, University of Houston. He also referred to H.R. 5759.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Deferred action for childhood arrivals policy beneficiaries, meeting with President.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Arteaga Rodriguez, Steven; Diouf, Jean Yannick; Gamez, Blanca; Praeli, Maria; Singh, Rishi; Tsogtsaikhan, Bati-amgalan.

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