

Immigrant community braces for Trump's decision on DACA

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President Trump is expected to announce today his decision on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the government program that offers limited citizenship rights to immigrants brought to the US as children.

Many media sources are reporting that the White House plans to end the program with the caveat that the enforcement of the decision would be held for six months, giving Congress a window to “fix” the program.

Ending the DACA program was one of Trump's many anti-immigrant campaign promises. After he dodged the issue in the first few months of his presidency, Republican leaders from 10 states, led by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, gave Trump a deadline of September 5 to end the program and threatening to sue the federal government if he failed to act.

Rescinding the DACA program will have devastating, and in some cases life-threatening, consequences for millions of people throughout the country. Likewise, any amendments or “fixes” offered by Congress will lead to an implementation of even more limitations on the rights of immigrants enrolled in the program at best, and the total collapse of the program altogether at worst.

The DACA program was implemented by the Obama administration in June 2012, largely as part of a cynical maneuver to court the Latino vote for the 2012 election. Under DACA, undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children were allowed to work or continue their education without fear of deportation so long as they avoided any run-ins with the law, including misdemeanors.

Implementation of the initiative—done under the pretenses of a turn toward a more “humane” immigration policy—was in fact used in part to accumulate lists of youth living in the US without documentation.

The thousands of children who lined up for the chance at the limited rights offered by the program gave their

names, addresses, countries of origin and their personal histories, and signed a document admitting to being in the country illegally. The cost of this program was paid for by the immigrants themselves at \$465 apiece.

All of the personal information needed to carry out deportations of these children and their families is now conveniently in the hands of the Trump administration's Department of Homeland Security.

Jacqueline Ramos, who works as Intake Coordinator at San Diego, California's Immigration Center for Women and Children spoke to the WSWs about the nature of the DACA program and the dangers confronting recipients.

“Most alarming for these individuals is that they voluntarily gave up their information to the federal government in hopes of some future immigration reform,” Ramos noted.

“DACA applications are processed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the DHS, meaning that they are not the department responsible for apprehensions or deportations, and while it is against USCIS policy to share information between departments, there are no federal or state laws in place which would criminalize this practice. Particularly since DHS head, Elaine Duke, is so clearly just another pawn of the Trump administration.”

Now, the fate of the nearly 800,000 youth enrolled in the program hangs in the air. These young adults and children could overnight become targets for ICE detention and possibly deportation to countries of which many have no memory. Some of these youth, having been raised almost their entire lives in the United States, do not even speak the language used in their “home” countries.

With over seventy percent of those in the DACA program enrolled in higher education programs, hundreds of thousands of students will be returning to school, expected to carry on with their studies while Congress debates their fate, and ICE officials who may be their

future detention guards patrol their neighborhoods.

The ending of DACA will have catastrophic consequences for millions of people far beyond those directly enrolled in the program. By obtaining the information on undocumented youth, DHS consequently was also obtaining information on at least two more undocumented immigrants: the parents of every individual enrolled.

Since eligibility for DACA requires that the participant must have arrived in the US before turning 16 and have lived in the US since June 15, 2007, the immigrants being targeted through this program have lived in the US for at least over a decade. In all likelihood, the majority of these immigrants have jobs and deep ties to their communities, as well as a network of friends, classmates, colleagues, and neighbors, all of whom will be affected by this mass persecution.

The tactics and tools of repression that are being forged through Trump's war on immigrants will more and more be turned against the working class as a whole. The mass roundup, detention and deportation of those covered by DACA would be an immense and horrific undertaking, requiring a vast expansion of the Gestapo-like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, an expansion of an already bloated prison system, and the further militarization and integration of local, state and federal law enforcement to carry it all out.

The Democratic Party has proven to be not only completely incapable and unwilling to defend the rights of immigrants but rather, just as ruthless as the Republican Party in their persecution of immigrants.

Former president Barack Obama earned the moniker, "Deporter-in-Chief," overseeing the deportations of more than 2.5 million people between 2009 and 2017, an average of more than 1,000 per day. This is roughly double the rate under Republican president George W. Bush, and more than any other president in US history.

Obama vastly expanded a program begun under Bush called Secure Communities. The program united federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies with ICE in an effort to deport immigrants who were already living in the United States, as opposed to intercepting those attempting to cross the border. It was also under this program that the practice of collecting and sharing biometric data on suspected undocumented immigrants, currently being implemented in the Republican-sponsored SB4 bill in Texas, was first introduced.

On track to outdo Obama's anti-immigrant legacy, Trump has received no substantial opposition from the

Democratic Party. Those Democrats who have spoken out against Trump's policies do so out of economic considerations for their cities, or fear of not being reelected by constituents who overwhelmingly oppose the attack on immigrants.

Since Trump took office in January, there has been a massive outpouring of support from workers and students for immigrant rights. The issue has become a lightning rod around which hundreds and thousands of people have protested against the Trump administration. Trump's hesitation on the decision comes not from any concern over the fate of the 800,00 youth whose lives would be destroyed but rather from a fear of sparking mass popular opposition and further destabilizing the government which is already viewed by many is illegitimate.

Trump's incessant declarations that he will make the decision on DACA with a "big heart" are made even more contemptible considering that it will come on the heels of an escalation of the attack on immigrants from all sides.

In the past week alone, ICE has sought permission to routinely destroy records of immigrant deaths and assaults on inmates while in their custody; Trump pardoned notorious anti-immigrant former Arizona sheriff, Joe Arpaio; and the wildly antidemocratic SB4 law went into effect. Most harrowing of all, the largest immigrant population in the United States, located in Houston, suffered catastrophic flooding from Hurricane Harvey, for which the Trump administration has made clear they would receive no long-term federal disaster benefits.



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