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Untitled

Grand Valley State University Undocumented Students

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highest education



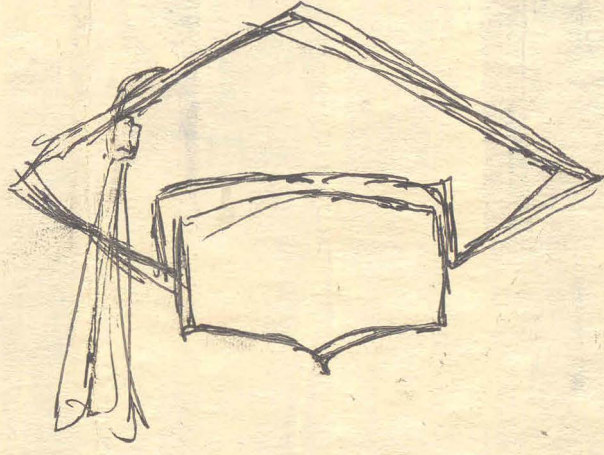
deposited
invisible



occasional
stagnant



habitual



flourish



isolated

mental health



scarce



hope



culture

WIO:

HUNGRY
ROOT

Dedicated to the DACA and Undocumented students in these stories, to the students with mixed status family members. To my immigrant family and the sacrifices they made for me to have a better life.

It was at a young age of 7 that I started to understand the meaning behind having papers meant in this country. At age 7 I remember studying with my mom for her citizenship test. She was studying the meaning of the flag and what the stars and stripes meant. I would tell me mom "cincuenta estreallas son de cincuenta estados y trece lineas para trece colonias" I had no idea if that was the exact translation but that was my childhood. Translating the best I could with both English and Spanish trying to help my parents.

My mom came to this country undocumented at the age of 17 fleeing domestic abuse in her home country in Mexico. Where she swore to herself, she would never return. My

father along with my grandparents came in the 70's working in the fields of the U.S. My abuelito had a history of being in the U.S. as a Bracero through the Bracero Program, post WWII. My mom received her green card upon marrying my father who had become a resident in the 80's. After my mom received her residency, she studied for her citizenship test and was a sworn citizen in the 90's.

Flash forward to me and growing up in a migrant settler's town... after seeing the hardships of non-citizens, working summers in migrant fields, hearing of deportations, the initiation of the DACA program I was fueled to get involved with fighting for people to have the right of an education. My higher education gave me so much and in return I wanted to fight and advocate for others to have

the same experience too. I was never a marcher, or protester, I knew that the best way for me to advocate for students was in higher education, in the system. I received my master's degree in higher education and I remember wanting to work with Latinos and DACA and Undocumented students upon graduation. But living in Michigan and wanting to stay in Michigan, meant I wouldn't have many options to work with that demographic. When DACA's executive order was passed I remember thinking "wow, all of these students now have access, and can go to college!" but I didn't think of all that they would encounter once they got there. While DACA has only been around for 10 years it does not seem to be going anywhere and I always ask the question what happens if we

achieve a pathway to citizenship, what happens if we reach a million of Dreamers? Programs and offices that serve our DACA and Undocumented students are going to be needed.

Working at various institutions, I would hear of students expressing their difficulties of navigating college, work, their family, and their status, as if being a college student wasn't already hard. The stories I am about to share are of students that I have worked with, stories I overheard, and how institutions reacted to these situations.

Story C:

C was a friend of mine in college. C wanted to be a Spanish teacher and was undocumented. C went to school on a full ride local scholarship. Knowing she

was undocumented and not knowing if she would be able to be a full-time teacher, she continued her path to be an educator. After the 2012 DACA program initiation she was able to apply and receive DACA status. C was able to graduate and receive a teaching degree, but her success was then clouded by a tragic accident. C's family worked on a farm and C's mom had been tragically injured and passed away. Because of C's mom status, the farm owner did not pay any benefits or workman's compensation. C was left to pay for all of the funeral expenses. She then did all she could to honor her mom's wishes of being buried in their home town in Mexico. If you don't know about DACA, DACA recipients have to ask for permission to leave the country. So, C put herself at risk by

petitioning to ask for permission to leave the country to bury her parent. C's story is similar to many DACA and Undocumented students. They are unable to leave this country if and when a relative of theirs has an emergency or a death. C was able to go to Mexico and bury her mom but many people do not get the chance of going to see their family members.

Story S:

I always try to help students as best as I can, but I know that I have limitations. Limitations in funding, time constraints, social boundaries, etc. Student S came to me to meet with me about extra resources and assistance. S was struggling in their academics but not because they couldn't understand the material. They were struggling in class because of

the fact that they could not get to class on time.

The place where they lived to campus was a one-hour bus ride and that was on a good day. Student S was a good student but because of this barrier they couldn't reach their fullest potential in school.

S did not do so good their fall semester but in working with me and establishing bi-weekly meetings we were able to get them on track. S did really well their winter semester. Retook the two classes they failed and now on track to getting about a 3.5 this semester.

Student M:

Student M had a different story. While not DACA or Undocumented, M had parents who were undocumented. M was such an amazing student someone who when they talked everyone in the

room kept quiet. But as a professional in the field, I could tell something was being hidden. After time I developed a relationship with M and I started to understand why at times their light would star to dim. Living with undocumented parents meant you needed to grow up at a faster pace. Not just translating but also figuring paperwork, making appointments, filling out paper work for them etc. M would have to drive to their parents around when it was needed, even if that meant they had to miss class or a meeting or an opportunity.

Everything that M had planned in their lives was put on whole because of how much their family relied on them. While M knew their role in their family, I could tell how much the weight of caring for their parents hurt them.

Story A:

A was such a great student! A had so much potential but like many who live in mix households they were left with the responsibility to care for others. A worked night shifts to work a good paying job. A would work nights to then be able to go to class and study. While many students do that, it's never easy to be fully focused in class when you are sleep deprived. I tried my best to help them balance their well-being, I helped them by advising them, listening to their hardships, and sometimes just allowing them the space to cry and sit in silence. Students like A often hit a wall and have no escape or outlet except to deal with what they are delt.

Story R:

The Trump administration brought much fear to our DACA and Undocumented populations. It instilled the fear of mass deportations and the reversal of the DACA program. At a time where our students needed to be affirmed that we were with them. Institutions were hesitant to make statements to show support to our students. Which still to this day we see the lack of "outness" at institutions who don't want to openly publicize that DACA and Undocumented students are welcome here! In higher education there are many politics and donors and some institutions that have donors who are not in support of immigration reform or a pathway to citizenship for Dreamer's.

It was early on in my career that I learned that I couldn't just ask a student to do something

as basic as drive to a certain place because I couldn't assume that they had a license. I also learned that couldn't promote a job without stating if it was status specific or not. I became more mindful of my own status and I started to see myself as with "status privilege". I didn't need to worry about applying for a job, I didn't need to drive around family members at the risk of them getting pulled over, I didn't need to think that some people can't go out of the country for vacation. I started being mindful of the institution of higher education and the policies that we have in place.

Almost every day that I come home from work, I am exhausted. I am exhausted mentally from trying to navigate how to best help my

students. I am mentally exhausted of trying to figure out paths for students to have the right connections and resources in order for them to be successful. I am exhausted from hearing the stories that my students share to me. I am exhausted of not being able to help. I am exhausted because their stories are forever engrained in my head and in my heart. I am reminded that there is a reason of why I do what I do. While I am exhausted, I know that each student DACA or Undocumented has their own stories and barriers and if I don't help, I don't know who will. There are days that I come home and I feel physically exhausted by the amount of emotion that hits me when I have to tell a student there isn't much I can do.

If you are a student, teacher, administrator,
friend, ally, fellow DACA, or undocumented
person... I encourage you to educate yourselves.

Learn about what is going on with new movements
and legislature. If you know of someone who is in a
mixed status household, talk to them. Ask them
how you can support them. Let them vent to you.

The isolation they feel is very real and very hurtful
to their mental health. I hope this project shines
some light on the daily obstacles that students
face.

4

this side up



A simple line drawing of a tulip flower. The flower has a single, slightly cupped petal. The stem is long and slender, with two long, narrow leaves extending from the base. The drawing is done in a dark ink or paint on a light-colored, textured background.



A simple line drawing of a tulip flower. The flower is at the top, with a single petal visible. It has a long, straight stem that curves slightly to the right. Two long, narrow leaves are attached to the stem, one on the left and one on the right, both pointing downwards. The drawing is done in a simple, sketchy style with dark lines on a light background.

unfolds