

It Is Immoral to Grant Illegal Immigrant Children Legal Status

Illegal Immigration, 2015
From Opposing Viewpoints in Context

"There is a fundamental principle that parents are responsible for the consequences that their actions and choices have on their kids."

In the following viewpoint, Ira Mehlman argues that there are several moral arguments against passing legislation that grants the children of illegal [immigrants](#) any kind of legal status. Mehlman claims that the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act rewards parents for illegal behavior and encourages more foreign parents to bring their children to the [United States](#) illegally. Mehlman claims that the situation is unfortunate for [illegal immigrant children](#), but it is not the responsibility of the United States to fix. Mehlman is media director for the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR).

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to Mehlman, what is the fundamental premise driving the moral argument in favor of the DREAM Act?
2. For what reason does Mehlman claim that the [amnesty](#) created by legislation such as the DREAM Act would have to be repeated?
3. The author claims that not giving illegal [immigrant children](#) legal residence does not amount to punishment for what reason?

It's back. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) is once again pushing the DREAM [Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors] Act amnesty. Before a packed room (mostly of illegal [aliens](#)), the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing earlier this week [in June of 2011] stacked with witnesses who favor granting amnesty to millions of illegal aliens.

Leaving aside all of the deceitful provisions that have been built into the bill that makes it a much broader amnesty than proponents let on, it is important to address the fundamental premise that passing the bill is a moral imperative because the people who would benefit are blameless for being here illegally.

Five Moral Arguments Against the DREAM Act

The DREAM Act fulfills the parents' principle reason for breaking the law in the first place. Ask the typical illegal alien why he or she came to the United States illegally and invariably the answer is, "I wanted to do better for my family." This is a perfectly rational and understandable response, but not a justification for violating the law. In essence, what the DREAM Act does is provide the parents precisely what they sought when they brought their kids illegally to the United States: a green card and all of the benefits that America has to offer. Even if the bill were to include a provision that DREAM Act beneficiaries could never sponsor the parents who brought them to the country illegally, it would still fulfill the parents' primary objective for bringing them here.

The DREAM Act would touch off an even greater wave of illegal immigration. Because the DREAM Act is being marketed as a moral imperative—as opposed to a more general amnesty, which is sold as bowing to reality—it comes with an absolute assurance that it will be repeated. If we have a moral imperative to provide amnesty to the current population of people who were brought here as kids, won't we have the same moral imperative for the next generation of people who arrive under similar circumstances? The unmistakable message to people all around the world is: Get over here and bring your kids. America will feel morally obligated to give them [green cards](#) too.

The DREAM Act absolves illegal aliens of their fundamental responsibilities as parents. There is a fundamental principle that parents are responsible for the consequences that their actions and choices have on their kids. Unfortunately, children inevitably pay a price when parents make bad decisions or break laws. The DREAM Act carves out a single exception to this universal tenet of the social contract. The message it sends is that if you violate U.S. [immigration law](#), American society is responsible for fixing the mess you created for your kids.

The absence of a reward or benefit is not the same as a punishment. DREAM Act proponents repeatedly argue that by not granting legal status to targeted beneficiaries we are, essentially, punishing children for the sins of their parents. This is an absolutely specious claim. By no stretch of the imagination are the children of illegal aliens being punished. Not rewarding them with legal residence and expensive college [tuition](#) subsidies is simply withholding benefits to which they never had any entitlement in the first place.

Adults have the obligation to do the right thing, even if their parents have done the wrong thing. Society glorifies people who do what is right, especially when doing what is right comes at some significant cost. Yes, many would-be DREAM Act beneficiaries have been dealt a bad hand (by their parents). As difficult (even unfair) as it may be, upon reaching adulthood they have the responsibility to obey the law. When, for example, Jose Antonio Vargas proclaims on the pages of the *New York Times Magazine* that he knowingly engaged in illegal activities in order to remain and work in the United States illegally, he became culpable in his own right. While he, and others like him, may be more sympathetic than the people who committed the predicate offense, their situation does not excuse their own illegal acts.

Further Readings

Books

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