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Anchored in El Sueno Americano

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Anchored in El Sueno Americano

Abstract

“Give me your tired, give me your poor.” With these words carved into the Statue of Liberty, we should never forget that the United States of America is the home of those fleeing oppression, of those who are brave, and of those who are willing to give their best. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Mexican-American, The American Dream, anchor baby, deportation, family reunification, Gettysburg College YAF

Disciplines

Latina/o Studies | Race and Ethnicity | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Sociology of Culture

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

ANCHORED IN EL SUEÑO AMERICANO

October 1, 2015

“Give me your tired, give me your poor.” With these words carved into the Statue of Liberty, we should never forget that the United States of America is the home of those fleeing oppression, of those who are brave, and of those who are willing to give their best.



My parents left their country, Mexico, penniless, in order to pursue a life with opportunities. Tired of the corruption they faced and hunger they felt, they came to the United States, or “El Norte” as they often refer to it, with just a few cents in their pockets and their hearts full of hope. They came to “El Norte” with the notion of being able to live “el Sueño Americano,” the American Dream. After all, America is the place that accepts “your tired, your poor...yearning to breathe free.” My parents were tired of being hungry, as they

so humorously tell me when I ask them why they are here in a place where they are mistreated and discriminated: “Hija, es mejor que sólo tener un frijol en bailando en el estómago por días.” In English, “It is better than only having one bean dancing in our stomach for days.”

It seems simple to just say they moved to a place that would provide them with more opportunities. But there are so many hidden costs to this move. By leaving their home, they also left their comfort zone and loved ones. As my mother says, “These past twenty-five years have been full of uncertainty. Never knowing if we will be kicked out, living paycheck to paycheck and treated like ‘aliens.’” This move came with a significant sacrifice that continues to this day; my parents work long shifts in unsafe work environments, face financial instability because their undocumented status has made it difficult for them to find stable jobs, and are squeezed for all they are worth. I have never heard my mother or father complain. In their twenty-five years living here, they have worked day in and day out to give this country their best and to raise conscientious citizens.

I am proud of the sacrifices my parents made for me, proud of the contributions they have made to their community, and proud of the values and traditions they have so heavily nourished within me. They

instilled in me from an early age the importance of education, compassion, and resilience. So today, I sit in a cushioned chair and an air-conditioned room of a highly selective private school, knowing my life is brimming with opportunity. They have given me the strength I need to overcome any barriers. Seeing my parents work tirelessly and never give up has been a vital part of my life and is the reason why I wake up every morning with the drive to make this world a better place.

That is my parents' story. This is my story. And there is absolutely nothing about the definitions of the term "anchor baby" that describes me or my family.

The term "anchor baby" implies that undocumented immigrants have children purposefully to prevent deportation and that they utilize their children as anchors to stay in the United States and eventually gain citizenship. People have this erroneous notion that there are lines of Mexican women waiting to come into the country to have children with the sole hope of gaining citizenship. To believe this is to willfully dishonor the stories of people like my parents. When people leave their respective countries, it is because their necessities outweigh everything else.

My parents had me because they wanted to have a child and start a family, not because they saw me as a vehicle for citizenship. I was a baby, just like any other baby. And when people use the term anchor baby, it's hurtful because they are simultaneously questioning my parents' love for me. What makes it worse, is that the idea the term attempts to espouse is a complete myth. In fact, for undocumented people, having a child with U.S. citizenship almost never provides adequate defense in an immigration court. Just ask [Andrés](#), [Christopher](#) or one of the other 72,410 U.S. born children who [lost a parent to deportation](#) in 2013 alone.

The only way having a child with U.S. citizenship could help a parent remain in the U.S. is if they wait until that child is 21, return to their home country, apply for [family reunification](#), wait the 3-10 year penalty for living in the U.S. unlawfully and then clear consular interviews and U.S. State Department checks. Sounds to me like a pretty ridiculous way to drop anchor.

This is what makes "anchor babies" a derogatory, offensive slur. My first semester, a classmate shared how much she disliked immigrants and "anchor babies." I promised myself to never take a political science class again. This sentiment continued in YAF's posters.

I feel unwelcome on campus and in this country. A place that is supposed to be my home makes me feel excluded for the sin of being born from hard working parents who fled their country to be able to survive.

I used to think I belonged to a more advanced and thoughtful generation. I'm no longer so convinced.

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