Shared by St. Mark’s Parishioner Kathryn Marmion

**The power of face-to-face communication**

Along with most adults in the USA, I’ve been hearing about the proposed Dream Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) for about 20 years, and the DACA program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) since 2012 when former President Obama signed its formation with an executive order. The Dream Act is meant to provide a path to citizenship but is still not law. DACA’s purpose is to protect the young children of undocumented immigrants from deportation. Neither of these related programs was anything I spent too much time pondering, beyond a furrowed brow and some comments about how unfair life can be when contemplating the plight of undocumented immigrants.

In 2017, at the time when the previous administration was attempting to veto the DACA program, our former church (in NJ) invited a couple of local DACA recipients to a Sunday forum hour. Suddenly my awareness changed. I listened aghast to their plight. If DACA was vetoed, they would face immediate deportation. Since then, my ears have perked up every time DACA is mentioned. I can visualize these high school and college students, and now, almost four years on, wonder where they are and what they’re doing. DACA became real that day, something that directly affected the lives of young people and their families living just a few blocks from the church and attending high school with some of the church families. From that day, DACA affected young people whom I had actually **met**.

The current administration has now restored DACA to the pre-2017 standards. It once again protects these young people from sudden deportation to a country they have never known since leaving as young children. It gives them a chance to apply for college and jobs legally. It gives them a chance to live their lives free from constant fear.

The power of meeting with just a couple of these brave young people, face to face, and hearing their stories has completely changed my perception, awareness, and empathy.



Links to info on the Dream Act and DACA if interested in further reading:

The Dream Act: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/dream-act-overview>

DACA: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-overview>