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**What More do they Need than What they Already Have?**

I believe that undocumented immigrants should have the same civil rights and employment rights as anyone else in the United States. Or do I? For years immigrants have been in this country earlier than the 1900s, even earlier than the 1800s. That is right, ever since these soils were made to be on their way to becoming the United States, there was immigration since 1783. However, nowadays the depth of law and attention to immigration has been on the rise since the 1980s ever and the mass amount of immigrants has increased in America since the 1950s. Ever since then with other major events, immigration has never been the same. Especially for the undocumented ones.

Before going any further, a quick definition of what immigration and undocumented means would be needed. By definition from Merriam-Webster, immigration is a noun of an act where a person or family from another country “travel into a country for the purpose of permanent residence there”(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immigration>). Now as anyone can come in for whatever their reasons, the process of entering a country for permanent residency could be long. What that may look like is a person or a family entering the country with either a VISA which is had for to work. A green card; is attainable after paying for your VISA and applying for it, which may take up to 90 days. Once the green card is held, that immigrant is now a legal one. As Homeland Security explains, “green card” holders, are non-citizens who are lawfully authorized to live permanently within the United States.”. ([https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/lawful-permanent-residents#:~:text=Lawful%20permanent%20residents%20\(LPRs\)%2C,permanently%20within%20the%20United%20States.](https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/lawful-permanent-residents#:~:text=Lawful%20permanent%20residents%20(LPRs)%2C,permanently%20within%20the%20United%20States.))

Now with all that knowledge ingrained let us talk about the target group within this topic: undocumented Immigrants. With the understanding of the previous section, the opposite applies

to the undocumented. Meaning the immigrant as they come over to stay are illegally doing so due to overstaying with the expired VISA or not having a green card in the country. Or by illegally arriving by whatever methods. Now is this all bad? As in what is the big deal of whether to have a card or not? It is not like the undocumented are not paying taxes, working, and living in the country where they can call home. So what is the big deal?

Immigrants have always come to this country. The country that has been proud to call itself the greatest and most diverse country there is. To have its doors open to all who wish to come and live by the American Dream. Hispanics from around the world, Africans, Asians, as far from West to the East, all had come to this great nation called the United States of America. So besides having white folks and the natives, everyone else has all humbly started as immigrants. But to just simply stop there as just an immigrant is no good when living and working here for years now. The country that is home. So the obvious route is to become a step up, a citizen. To become so, simply pay your taxes, be a great model to society, and to your pay your taxes even more without missing a beat for the next 10 years you will then get Citizenship! Of course, there are other routes to being a citizen. Either by a relative who is already a citizen, married to a citizen, or by your employer (who is an American). All while getting the green card first of course to then have 10 years and pass a test to prove your American knowledge.

Now, what's all that work for? To get your social welfare benefits but also to be able to vote, have the right to run for office, and to work at federalized jobs. Yet if for those who simply did not want to do all that work, or perhaps have just arrived, it was okay. No one had to become a citizen as all was good for immigrants. They were getting welfare benefits such as food stamps, public assistance, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). "Why do the extra and time-consuming work, right? Well first need to loop back to the undocumented immigrants, all of

these benefits, they will not get even a hint of these. Even when paying taxes as they work. Which could be somewhat cruel but perhaps fair. Or not. Either way, it didn't matter at the end of 1996.

In the year 1996, congress passed a bill called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). What is this? To quote from the textbook called American Social Welfare Policy, "Specifically, the bill disentitled most legal immigrants (including many who had been living in the United States for years but were not citizens) from food stamps, public assistance, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)." (Karger; Stoesz, 2018, p.70). If the idea is that the undocumented immigrants were treated poorly due to illegalization, then now all that changes as no one that is not a citizen will gain any of the previously mentioned benefits.

This was a huge turn in the country for the immigrants as there were millions in the U.S. All to say, the punishment for having citizenship and having committed crimes before can cause you to have jail time. Even when married, employed, or with a family background is there, a noncitizen who is legally allowed can go to jail for 10 years due to crimes from the past. It is like Cancel Culture. If ever asked why this all occurred, the same discrimination stigma that even till today certain people believe in is that these immigrants who are legalized or not, are stealing jobs and are just taking up space; ruining the economy of the country. With this belief and what came next on September 11th, 2001, there was a bad name put on those who were foreign. Even as citizens.

So now the question has shifted, can non-citizens that immigrants who may not be documented even the same federal benefits? For me to answer, it is a question that is tricky to answer as I wouldn't tax-paid money to go to those who just got here in America. As in those

who just got here in this country. Some programs and agencies may. Why should they deserve these rights? If anything, it is not like they can not work. Some programs and agencies may even be funded by the government to help non-documented immigrants to be documented. To help them pick up the English language or even have the workers helping out speak in the immigrant's native tongue. Meaning there are good folks that are doing good deeds to make things possible. So as the title says, "What More do they Need than What they Already Have?"? Well, what they have is not enough.

It is extremely difficult for social workers alone to consistently help non-documented immigrants when they don't have their papers either from their country or likewise. It is difficult when they don't have a Highschool degree. Or worse part, don't even have the money nor a home, or a family to help them. A social worker can only do so much until the clear sign of "No can do" is presented to them. Point is, there are a lot of warriors that aren't talked about. Now it is true that there are folks who are lazy or may not even work. But statistics have shown that plenty has been working and are improving the economy as they do the low unthankful jobs that other citizens wouldn't do.

No food stamps, no retirement security, and to have to be in the country, trying to survive for the next 10 years to do a test is tough. As tough as it is, I also believe it is not impossible. Even though there is systemic control over this dynamic, as long as there is no systemic discrimination and the want for real change for illegal immigrants to become legal to become a citizen. They want where the country proves the put money where the mouth is. Then yes I believe the U.S. can help make things right besides just deporting people away. That is because I can understand the reason why we should all be citizens, then give us the resources that make

that possible as does those who were born elsewhere but call this place home, let us have the decency to keep that way out of love.

Sources:

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