

Nor here, nor there: The Impact of Trump's Citizenship Bans
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There is a funny saying my family raised me on, “Dios le da pan al que no tiene diente,” - “God gives bread to those who have no teeth.” The paradoxical expression means a person has something they cannot, or will not, appreciate. Immigrants: a group of people who have contributed to the success, development, wealth, recognition, and evolution of this nation. I aspire for personal narratives and photos to captivate stories, identity, and American society before and after these policies.

I am one of those immigrants—the daughter of Colombian immigrants, a first-generation college student, and a victim of systemic barriers. My parents left Colombia at a young age, seeking opportunity and rewriting their destiny. They didn't know each other then but grew up near one another in El Barrio Boston, Pereira, Colombia.

As the drug trade surged in the 1980s, my parents witnessed their friends, family, and community lose their lives, either physically or metaphorically. Drug lords converted young men into assassins (sicarios), manipulated young women into escorts (prepagos), and wreaked havoc on innocent lives.

The push to abolish birthright citizenship poses significant challenges. It would undermine long-standing constitutional law and create immense administrative and legal complications. Without the guarantee of jus soli (right of the soil), children born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrant parents could face immediate questions over their status. Worse, their citizenship could remain undetermined, potentially rendering them stateless.

The human cost of these policies, though often invisible, is deeply felt by individuals attending DePaul University amongst others: Parveen Mundi, a senior studying political science, Samantha Ortiz, a sophomore studying political science, and Rodolfo Zagal, a senior studying journalism. All three, children of immigrants, embody the struggles these policies impose.

“To hear birthright citizenship can be taken away, is very scary. As much as I critique this country, this is all I know. My whole life, my family, connections, habits,” Zagal shared.

The United States has long been a beacon of hope and a symbol of human rights worldwide, and its upholding of birthright citizenship is indeed a model of the principles of democracy.

“I don’t think this country could be what it is without immigrants, my parents are both immigrants,” Mundi expressed.

A nation that views immigrants as objects, meaningless beings, and notions of coercion. These same immigrants built lives here, foundations resistant to cracks and crumbles: our children, new integrations of society, of a multicultural, double-nationality, and foreign language.

Under President Trump’s administration, is symbolic of dictatorial nationalism and an unwarranted divide between kids and their parents, sisters and brothers, people and their partners. Trump’s relentless efforts to end birthright citizenship, DACA, deportation, denaturalization of citizens, and more.

“It affects your identity, the way you think about yourself, the way your dreams are placed for you,” Ortiz stated.

Immigration and its complexities were a focal point of his campaign, emblematic of his broad disregard for constitutional rights. Along with the unconstitutional, fascist ideologies, his monopolistic, miscreant pushes and approvals of these appeals.

“I am still trying to identify my home,” Zagal said. “I am a U.S. citizen, first-generation American, born to Mexican immigrants.”

Statelessness is a global crisis, with the United Nations estimating over 4.2 million individuals stripped of legal nationality. Certain conditions act as barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and employment, leading to poverty and disenfranchisement in a vicious cycle. In the United States, immense bureaucratic ineptitude plagues the immigration processes.

“All I’ve ever known is Mexican-American culture,” Zagal expressed. Stripping automatic citizenship could burden the already overwhelmed system. The implementation of this new policy could result in an increase in contested cases and a higher number of appeals being filed—worsening conditions for communities of color and increasing systemic inequalities.

Immigrants and their children are the foundation of this nation—resilient, resistant to racism and discrimination, and deserving of a home both here and there. We blossom like the beauty of flowers we import, the aroma of your daily coffee, the dance classes you practice, and the countless individuals you overlook.

Aside from the political discourse, children of immigrants are equally justified in our citizenship as any other. Our placement on stolen land was a rewritten destiny, a figurative time capsule, placing the future generations of our ancestral lineage in perpetuity.

“Coming from a background that experiences the 2nd-most religious motivated hate crime incidents, affects me.” Mundi outlined.

Somos de aqui y de alla, una combinacion de diferentes costumbres, culturas, tradiciones, y ambiciones. We are architects of a new, evolving identity that bridges diverse cultures, traditions, and ambitions—both immigrants and citizens in a country still learning to fully embrace diversity and identity.