

# **DACA AND THE DEPORTATION OF DREAMERS: A FRANCISCAN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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## **Introduction**

I have been asked to discuss the moral and ethical implications of President Trump's decision to rescind DACA, the "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals," which was an executive order developed by the Obama administration in 2012 that delayed the deportation of upwards of 800,000 young adults, imposing strict criteria for this deferral on a case by case basis. At the time of its initiation, it was hoped that this act would do two things: (1) reduce the fear and anxiety of a generation of young people brought to this country as children and (2) give Congress time to find a permanent solution to our sorry immigration status. The intent was to protect the future of young people while Congress went about constructing a more permanent solution to our immigrant mess.

In this presentation, I wish to look at the ethical consequences of Trump's order to put these young adults on notice that they will indeed be deported within six months. The question we deal with is direct: How do we think ethically about a decision that will affect approximately 800,000 young people and their families, one that will substantively change the course of their lives? How do we make moral sense of a decision that will disrupt the lives and futures of millions of people living and working successfully in our country?

We begin with the recognition that there is a difference between political decisions that are legal and those that are ethical. Some decisions may be legal but may go so far beyond the social norms of goodness that citizens expect from their government and society, that they may rightly be considered immoral and unethical.

Moral problems erupt quickly in complex societies like ours. Ethical challenges come to us rapidly and, for that reason, we need to have strong principles and core convictions if we are to meet them well. Ethical decisions require solid anthropological footings and good theological and philosophical reasoning.

We do not have the luxury to decide which moral problems will emerge, what sufferings will erupt, what kind of problems will surface in our complicated society. However, we can come to them with the equipment of social integrity. DACA erupted unexpectedly last week and asks us some profound questions:

- What kind of society do we really want to be?
- Do we truly want to be an inclusive society after all? Or are we at a point where we want to restrict those to be considered American? Who decides?

- Do we intend to continue to see ourselves as a highly racialized society that judges people by their skin tones and determines their level of deservedness for health care, education, and a job by the shade of their complexion?
- What attitude should we take toward 800,000 young people in the middle of their most important formative years, during the days that will be critical and indeed definitive for the general success or failure of their lives? Do we want to promote their possibilities and potentials? Or do we intend to make their lives anxious and insecure?
- What is the level of our compassion as a people? What kind of nation are we becoming? These are the questions that are before us as a result of the decision of the Trump administration to rescind the previous administration's DACA initiative. We can't run away and ignore what the Trump administration is proposing. Each of us must take a stand and have moral reasons for how we proceed.

I would like to do three things in this presentation:

1. First, I would like to describe what DACA actually is and what it is not. What are its goals and what are its obligations? I would like to take it outside its political hype to describe it as objectively as possible. There is no use fighting over political ghosts and made up straw men that do not reflect the reality of what we are facing.
2. Second, I would like to share with you the perspective of the Catholic Church with regard to this decision. As a church, our concern is for people, not politics. The Catholic Church, throughout its long history, has had to deal with politics. However, its primary concern is always the quality of people's lives, from a truly holistic point of view. We are not interested in scoring political points or posturing for any short-term gain. This change in politics directly affects our children, our brothers and sisters, and our families. We are the community in America who know these individuals the best. They come to our churches in significant numbers. We pray with them. They come to our Catholic hospitals and work there. They send their children to our schools and they are teachers in those schools. We want to tell the truth about who they are and what they want to be. An ethic that prizes integrity must have a ring of familiarity, knowing what it is talking about. Our Catholic morality and ethics has the truth of familiarity. Because we live, work and serve in and with the largely Latino population that is in the eye of this storm, we know what we are talking about. We know their needs and issues. We know their hopes and dreams.
3. Third, I would like to spend some time thinking through DACA from the uniquely Franciscan perspective. St. Francis had a special love and developed a specific attention to the needs of those rejected, marginalized and displaced in his society. In his day, he built a powerful ethics and economics of inclusion that was meant to disrupt a politics of polarization and division in his time. I would like to help you see how a uniquely Franciscan perspective provides a different lens on the present politics and economics that are driving this situation. Yes, I would like to compare Trump's principles to those of Francis of Assisi.

Let us then begin with an understanding of DACA itself.

## DACA – The Fundamentals

What is DACA?. Simply put, DACA or the “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” is an American immigration policy established by the Obama administration in June 2012. DACA allows certain “illegal” immigrants who entered the country as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and provide access to eligibility for a work permit.

Deferred action is a kind of administrative relief from deportation that has been around a long time. It is not amnesty; it does not provide legal status. It is simply a decision by an administration to defer deportation, while the country determines what it wants to do with its immigration policy. Through it, the Department of Homeland Securities (DHS) authorizes a non-U.S. citizen to remain in the U.S. temporarily. Because of this determination, the person may apply for an employment authorization document (a work permit) for the period during which he or she has deferred action.

Deferred action is granted on a case-by-case basis. Even if one meets the requirements outlined below, DHS will still have to decide whether to grant a deferred action. Deferred action granted under DAPA and the expanded DACA is valid for three years and is renewable.

A grant of deferred action is temporary. It is not a general amnesty and it does not accord legal citizenship status. However, a person granted deferred action is considered by the federal government to be *lawfully present* in the U.S. for as long as the grant of deferred action status.

DACA is not automatic. There are strict requirements for eligibility and they are:

- Under 31 years old as of June 15, 2012;
- Came to the United States before 16<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- Continuous residence since June 15, 2007, up to the present;
- Physical presence in the US on June 15, 2012 and on date of application;
- No lawful status on June 15, 2012;
- Currently in school or graduated; and
- Not convicted of a
  - Felony
  - Significant misdemeanor, or
  - 3+ other misdemeanors.

It is important to note that recipients of a “deferred action” are not criminals. To be considered for this deferred action, an individual cannot have been convicted of a felony or a “significant misdemeanor.” DHS considers the following to be “significant misdemeanors”: an offense of domestic violence; sexual abuse or exploitation; burglary; unlawful possession or use of a firearm; drug distribution or trafficking; driving under the influence (these offenses are considered “significant misdemeanors” regardless of the

length of the sentence that is imposed). For offenses not listed above, a “significant misdemeanor” is one for which an individual was sentenced to more than 90 days in custody.

DACA allows an individual who is undocumented to:

- Apply for work authorization.
- Receive a social security number.
- Receive healthcare.
- Get a driver’s license (in some states).
- To live in the US without fear.

The “relief” provided by DACA has the benefit of reestablishing trust in the community between police officers and undocumented immigrants, as individuals can come “out of the shadows” as “legally present” in the United States.

DACA is not a free or easy ride. It allows an individual to get a work permit and a driver’s license, except in the State of Nebraska. One can receive a Social Security number, get in state tuition and have the joy of paying taxes. It does not allow an individual to receive SNAP (the food program), SSI (supplemental security income), CHIP (Children’s Insurance Program), Medicaid or Obamacare.

DACA is not a permanent solution to our immigration problems. It is a program of temporary relief for young people in the prime of their educational lives. As Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso Texas has said of our immigration system:

No one can deny the terrible human impacts of a system that divides families, permits some to detain human beings for profit and compromises our nation’s historic commitment to the refugee and asylum seeker. The burning sands of our desert are an unmarked grave for too migrants who have died attempting to cross. Increased militarization and more walls will only make this journey even more dangerous.<sup>1</sup>

### **DACA and the Moral Analysis of the Catholic Bishops**

There is no doubt that we have a terribly broken immigration system. It is also true that many people, legislators, industries and companies included, have been complicit in the maintenance and sustenance of this unfair and unhelpful structure. Catholic bishops have been clear that the system needs to be reformed and that

Building walls, deploying mass deportation forces, militarizing our borders are not long-term solutions to the challenges of migration. Only comprehensive reform will bring lasting solutions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Joseph Seitz, *Sorrow and Mourning Flee: Pastoral Letter on Migration to the People of God in the Diocese of El Paso* (July 18, 2017), accessed at: <http://www.bordermigrant.org/border-migrant-english.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 13.

When the Trump administration announced last week that it would rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, the US Catholic leadership responded immediately with an exceptional degree of fury that, honestly, is rare in tone from Cardinals and Bishops in the United States.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Newark, Joseph Tobin, for example, was particularly strong in his moral umbrage. He condemned the policy decision as “malicious” because it appeared to be a political act with extremely dangerous and harmful consequences. He said:

The decision to phase out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals executive order is malicious.

It is plainly and clearly wrong for this Administration to use as a political tool the lives, futures and security of some 800,000 young people whose only crime, if you ever could call it that, was that they lovingly and obediently accompanied their parents in pursuit of the dream of freedom and opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

The Cardinal, unlike the Administration, imposes no fault on the young people who were brought here by their parents, since most of them were between the ages of three and six when they were brought to the United States. He provides two reasons for his condemnation. The first is that the decision appears unnecessary and cruel, imposing a forced and false veneer of criminality on people who are not only innocent, but also positively contributing to the common good of our society.

Whether or not the previous administration had authority to institute DACA does not matter. The 800,000 Dreamers affected by the rescission are people. They live in our neighborhoods, attend our schools, fight for our country, and contribute actively in our workplaces. They are contributing to this nation’s future and prosperity. They have followed the rules that have been in place, always praying that Congress would step up to the plate and craft intelligent, heartfelt long-term solutions to a broken immigration system.<sup>4</sup>

His second reason for condemnation is more pointed. The Cardinal calls the action “an abandoning of humanity.” He excoriates the Administration for hiding behind the rule of law and reminds the Administration of the ultimate purpose and ethical scope of the rule of law. He suggests:

One can’t hide behind the term “legality” in rescinding DACA. That is an abandonment of humanity, and abandonment of talented and hopeful young people who are as American as you and I.

The rule of law, first, last and always, must provide a humane, moral code to organize, protect and advance society based on the best ideals and beliefs in our hearts and minds. Catholic teaching calls all people to make a commitment to uphold the dignity of every

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<sup>3</sup> Statement of Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin on the Rescission of DACA Executive Order, September 5, 2017, accessed at: <http://www.rcan.org/statement-cardinal-joseph-w-tobin-rescission-daca-executive-order>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

person and to work for the common good of our nation. Rescinding DACA without having in place through Congress an equivalent and permanent protection for these Americans does not advance society or exemplify our best ideals and beliefs. It is, rather, an abandoning of humanity.<sup>5</sup>

Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta, Georgia, calls the rescinding of the DACA Executive Order as “profoundly regrettable” and echoes the sentiment of Cardinal Tobin that the move is unnecessarily cruel. He repeats the sentiment that dreamers “are blessings for our country in pursuing their educations, serving in our military, boosting our economy and making important contributions to this nation through the work they do, the volunteer service they pursue, and the perspectives and ideas they offer.”<sup>6</sup> And the Archbishop comes to his moral point that “(s)imple justice should compel our nation to honor these contributions by providing legal protection until a permanent resolution can be attained.” There is no reason to leave these young adults vulnerable, because the government cannot get its act together and pass the legislation necessary to solve our immigration problem.

Archbishop Gregory points to the protracted failure of Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration solution that would preserve our country’s heritage of being a generous, compassionate and welcoming nation. He faults Congress for acrimonious political differences that are keeping members from passing immigration reform. Young people are being made the scapegoats and the fall guys for this congressional impotence. DACA protected young people, during their most important and critical formational moment, the time in their lives where they must build the secure foundations for their future careers and families. It is unimaginable from a moral point of view that an administration would cavalierly and inexplicably throw these young people back into a fog of uncertainty and fear, after they have complied with the laws and government procedures of getting an education, finding jobs, serving in our military and making a positive difference in our communities.

Of all the statements that emerged from the American bishops, the strongest came from the President and Vice President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Houston and Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles. Their statement is so morally direct (the bishops call it “reprehensible”) that people should read it in its entirety:

The cancellation of the DACA program is reprehensible. It causes unnecessary fear for DACA youth and their families. These youth entered the U.S. as minors and often know America as their only home. The Catholic Church has long watched with pride and admiration as DACA youth live out their daily lives with hope and a determination to flourish and contribute to society: continuing to work and provide for their families, continuing to serve in the military, and continuing to receive an education. Now, after months of anxiety and fear about their futures, these brave young people face deportation. This decision is unacceptable and does not reflect who we are as Americans.

The Church has recognized and proclaimed the need to welcome young people: ‘Whoever

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Archbishop Wilton Gregory’s Statement on the Ending of the DACA Program,” (September 5, 2017) accessed at: <https://georgiabulletin.org/news/2017/09/archbishop-wilton-d-gregorys-statement-ending-daca-program/>

welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me' (Mark 9:37). Today, our nation has done the opposite of how Scripture calls us to respond. It is a step back from the progress that we need to make as a country. Today's actions represent a heartbreaking moment in our history that shows the absence of mercy and good will, and a short-sighted vision for the future. DACA youth are woven into the fabric of our country and of our Church, and are, by every social and human measure, American youth.

We strongly urge Congress to act and immediately resume work toward a legislative solution. We pledge our support to work on finding an expeditious means of protection for DACA youth.

As people of faith, we say to DACA youth – regardless of your immigration status, you are children of God and welcome in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church supports you and will advocate for you.<sup>7</sup>

Let us repeat the moral language that the bishops use to describe the rescinding of DACA: “malicious,” an “abandoning of humanity,” “profoundly regrettable,” a failure of “simple justice” “reprehensible” and an “absence of mercy and good will.” Bishops rarely speak this way and with such force and fury.

The condemnation of the bishops is particularly harsh. The rescinding of DACA appears to sanction the government going after almost a million young people who are working hard, doing well, and contributing much to our society. It is punishing young people because of actions their parents took years ago and because the Congress will not solve the complexities and the complicities involved in our twisted immigration situation. These young people have lived their lives as Americans, more often than not unaware of any illegal status. They simply went ahead with their childhood and lived it like every other American child, until the Administration injected severe and damaging levels of anxiety and fear for what appear to be political reasons of satisfying a spirit of merciless revenge that the Administration’s base requires.

The bishops are trying to train the Administration’s attention on the right and moral thing to do and that is to set about the work of a fair, just and comprehensive immigration reform. Everyone knows that our immigration system is broken. It has a long history of lies and disappointments, abuses and mistakes on all sides. All sides have been complicit over scores of years in the construction of an immigration situation that enriched companies and whole industries on the labor of migrants and the undocumented.

We have heard Congress promise a fix for the past sixteen years. Nothing has changed, except that our rhetoric has become uglier. Segments of our society are increasing the use of dangerous and demeaning racial language that would pit us against each other because of the color of our skin and the various resonances of our accents.

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<sup>7</sup> USCCB President, Vice President And Committee Chairmen Denounce Administration’s Decision To End DACA And Strongly Urge Congress To Find Legislative Solution (September 5, 2017) accessed at: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2017/17-157.cfm>

This kind of political gamesmanship on the backs of dreamers is dangerous and cruel. An article in Sunday's NY Times suggests that it is also psychologically threatening. The rescinding of DACA has engendered higher levels of anxiety attacks, panic, depression, and thoughts of suicide, with a cruelty that is unnecessary and unhelpful.

Karla Cornejo Villavicencio is writing her doctoral dissertation on the psychic toll of our uncertain immigration situation. Her article in last Friday's *NY Times* studies the psychic toll, the mental health fall out, that Trump's DACA decision is having not only on older generations of immigrants but more tellingly on young people. One vignette of a 16-year-old boy reveals the emotional cruelty of the moment in which we live:

William is a 16-year-old Dominican martial arts star who loves math and science but also struggles with anxiety and depression. "After the election, I thought I was lower than everyone in society, that I had no voice or role or place here — an alien, like people say," he told me. He began to fear ICE was following him at all times and he had a nervous breakdown. "But then I got to a point where I didn't care because I knew I was going to commit suicide and nothing would bother me after death," he says. He was put on Zoloft and hospitalized for a week.<sup>8</sup>

Our bishops have read the situation as needlessly cruel, producing unnecessary anxiety and fear. They read the declaration and the process as a political stunt that targets individuals who should be encouraged by adults and not drowned in anxiety. These are not criminals. These young adults have gone through background checks. They have come out of the shadows and they are abiding by the rules set before them, going to school and getting a job. These are good kids who simply want a chance to live good and productive lives as the Americans they feel and have known themselves to be.

### **The Biblical Dimension of DACA**

As Catholics and as Christians, we cannot help but read this situation morally and from a biblical point of view. There is something profoundly primitive about this situation that goes to the very roots and origins of our spirituality and our religious view of life. If there is one command that comes through the whole of Scripture with absolute consistency and striking intensity, it is the obligation that we in the Judeo-Christian tradition have to take care of the stranger, refugees, the undocumented and the immigrant. The fact is that we have no religion outside of the stories of immigrants and refugees.

Our religion begins at the very moment when God hears the cry of the refugees, the vulnerable Jews in the brickyards of Egypt. The story of Moses and the Jews confronting Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, with God's command, "Let my people go!" is the first evidence of a moral voice stronger than political and economic policy.

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<sup>8</sup> Karla Cornejo Villavicencio, "The Psychic Toll of Trump's DACA Decision," *NY Times* (September 8, 2017), accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/08/opinion/sunday/mental-health-daca.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-left-region&region=opinion-c-col-left-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-left-region&r=0>

The Jews had come to Egypt as refugees to avoid an international famine and ended up as unpaid slaves to Pharaoh's campaign of wealth extraction, taking the work and money of the vulnerable to privilege the powerful and the rich. However, it was the Jews, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, who built the economy for Pharaoh in the fields and in the brickyards of Egypt. Their work, like the work of every generation of enslaved and undocumented peoples, was essential for productivity. However, like the work of migrants time after time and generation to generation, it goes unrecognized, unappreciated and unrewarded. History turns finally on the plight of migrants and refugees, when God had seen enough and heard enough.

The shocking development that changes morality for all time is that God hears the cry of the poor and notices the suffering of the vulnerable, the undocumented labor force in Pharaoh's program of food monopoly. The world is put on notice. God will no longer hear the excuses of the privileged. God knows their hardened hearts; God knows how they turn all things to their own advantage. From here on in, God will take the side of the poor. It starts in the Book of Exodus when God liberates the undocumented and leads them to their own land and to their own homes, now with names of their own and futures of their own choosing.

God freed the Jews under one condition – that they would never forget what God had done for them. They were not to forget their experience as refugees, as slaves, as strangers in an alien land, the conditions under which God had found them. God's central command to Israel was to create a radical hospitality in the Promised Land. Strangers would be welcomed; foreigners would be treated as neighbors; those undocumented and fleeing the brutalities of pagan regimes, whenever and wherever they erupted, were to find religious refuge and protection among the Jews.

This is true of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is equally true of the New Testament. Often lost in the Christmas stories is one of the most salient ones of all – the fact that Jesus was himself forced into the status of the alien and undocumented, when his family fled to Egypt when Herod turned into a crazed and brutal predator of children.

We read these stories in wintertime and we spiritualize and, unfortunately, neutralize them. We put them on Christmas cards and get a warm fuzzy feeling when we see the silhouette of the Holy Family in the shadow of the Pyramids of Egypt. However, there is nothing sentimental about the story. The stories are part of a tragic story of oppression and Yahweh's ethic of liberation. The infancy narrative are a challenge to the economic and political domination of Rome. They revolve around a promise that Mary boldly makes in her *Magnificat* prayer that God is about to cast the mighty from their thrones and God is going to raise the lowly to high places (Luke 1: 46-55). You've got to read politics here and understand these texts historically and critically.

These experiences and texts are foundational for the ethical denunciation you are hearing from Catholics in this situation. There is nothing more central to the Jewish and Christian consciousness than the need to protect the undocumented, those vulnerable to state-sponsored revenge and manipulation. And so, when we see an administration (any administration) target the undocumented, the migrant worker, individuals in our schools, working in our factories and on our farms, serving faithfully in our military suddenly (and

unnecessarily) targeted for deportation, we have a religious need to respond with clear heads and a long memory. God is watching these developments!

### **Francis and the Values of Inclusion in a post-DACA Moment**

There is one further set of moral principles and ethical perspectives we need to add, those coming from our Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. Because we are St. Bonaventure University, a Catholic and Franciscan University, we have a whole other layer of ethical insight at our disposal that can help guide us through difficult political decisions. They help us question what is going on, so that we do not fall for actions that may have short-term political benefits but long-term tragic consequences.

When Francis stood naked in the public square, at the age of 25, and handed back his clothes to his father, he was declaring that he wanted off the social grid. He wanted out of a system constructed as it was on the economics of extraction, putting the vulnerable at the service of the privileged, and damning society to endless spasms of violence in the service of greed.

When he kissed the leper on the roadside, he began to construct a new ethic and spirituality of inclusion. He no longer wanted to participate in a society that divided itself between the *majores*, the privileged few, over the *minores*, the destitute many. He no longer wanted to protect this brutal arrangement of economic and spiritual exclusion with weapons and the force of law. He retreated from the social boundaries of his culture, and he cast his lot and his future with the rejected, serving lepers in the crude hospices, deep within the forests of the Umbrian Valley. Francis would have stayed nothing more than a solitary charitable but unknown figure in history, if it were not for another conversion beyond his embrace of the leper. Francis tells us of his second conversion. He calls it the one “when the Lord gave me brothers.” (Testament, 14)

Soon enough young men (and eventually young women) came to embrace his radical life form off the social grid, away from the normative greed and violence of the day. Because of this, Francis realized that God was calling him to create a new form of life, a new social experiment called “fraternity.”

The new form of life would have no superiors, only servants. There would be no divisions whatsoever, no traces of *majores and minores*, those who have and those who don't, those who are privileged and those who are impoverished. This radical lifestyle was characterized by an attitude of radical humility, hospitality and a determination to stop scratching mindlessly and unethically for position and power and an intention to take the last place in everything. Free from a fatal possessiveness, one could be appreciative of all that God gives freely and abundantly.

What Francis began to construct was an economy and a society of inclusion. I believe that people have grossly misunderstood Francis of Assisi by characterizing his spirituality as a “love of poverty.” Poverty was not Francis' (primary) thing. Community was. Francis was interested in the *common* good, the *social* bond, the experience of love, and the ability to include everyone in the embrace of a God that Francis came to recognize as absolute self-diffusive love. The way to protect this experience of shared divine abundance was through an attitude of dispossession. In Latin, we call this “*sine proprio*,” living without owning anything of one's own. *Sine proprio* is a radical disposition against possessing anything or

anyone. Francis' logic was as simple as it was direct. If we own, we must protect and we will protect to the point of violence anything we own. It was this brutal protective violence, which undergirded this social and cultural arrangement, that Francis rejected most of all.

Francis had seen too much violence in his youth. He had seen how far the citizens of Assisi would go to protect the wealth of the privileged few. They would send their sons to war and death on the bloody fields of the Umbrian and Spoleto Valleys. He had witnessed the butchering of the friends he loved and the friends he used to party with, when he was the happy-go-lucky minstrel on the streets of Assisi.

What, then, are the values of a transformative Franciscan social ethos? How do they apply in our post-DACA world? Let me focus on three Franciscan values.

a) **Inclusion.** We have already hinted at this one as central to Francis' movement. Francis of Assisi believed in community and was fiercely egalitarian. The social classes of his youth were severely divided. People were assigned their social standing and their economic space by the cultural customs and conventions of the time and they were bound to stick to them. Opportunity was dictated by one's social position and inheritance. Francis rejected these social barriers and created a community of inclusion. Any man could come into the Franciscan "way of life," as long as he was willing to be non-possessive, i.e. give up all he had and give it to the poor, and be willing to serve and not be served. Francis' spirit of inclusion was divinely driven. One of the great revolutions in Francis' spirituality was his exchange of a majestic God for a humble one. The God that he had grown up with was a royal divinity, enthroned for a final judgment of humankind. Instead, Francis revered the humble Christ, the naked figure in the manger and on the cross. He fell in love with the Christ who owned nothing and gave up everything to save humankind in His passion and death.

Thus, a Franciscan ethos is radically inclusive. It seeks a social and ethical space for every man, woman and child. Its privileges are not for the few. God's gifts are "for the many." The Franciscan ethos with its "fraternal economy" is not based on limits and deficiencies.<sup>9</sup> Francis' God is an abundant God, a self-diffusive God of generosity, that calls humankind to a similar attitude of dispossession and generosity. The God of Adam Smith, by contrast, is a quite stingy God and the world elaborated by the Enlightenment is a creation bounded by limits, a zero sum game of inevitable winners and losers. Not so for the Franciscan movement. The abundant and loving God is creative and generous and God's world is lush with possibility and ingenuity. God's creation is a vast and interdependent network, a communion of social beings with an inestimable potential for service and goodness.

What does this mean for a post- DACA moment? Simply put, the rescinding of DACA puts before us one of the most challenging and searing cultural questions we must face as Americans: do we or do we not want to be an inclusive society? Do we want to be a society of multiple complexions and skin tones, various religions and cultural expressions? Do we respect diversity and unity, simultaneously and with equal vigor? It is no accident that we are seeing a resurgence of hate groups and white supremacy movements at this time. We have returned to a highly racialized discourse once again. We seem to be

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<sup>9</sup>David B. Couturier, *Franciscans and their Finances, Economics in a Disenchanted World* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2015).

debating on the backs of Dreamers the creed as to whether America is indeed the land of the free and the home of the brave, one that has open arms for anyone who “yearns to breathe free.”

The rescinding of DACA is fundamentally about a choice between two economies: an economy of inclusion that invites everyone into a common good and a social bond that benefits the many and not just the few or an economy of extraction that systematically extracts wealth from the vulnerable to support the desires of the protected and privileged.<sup>10</sup> It is an historic choice.

b) **Dignity.** The second value is dignity. Do we believe in the dignity of Dreamers and their families? Do we respect it as an a priori gift to the American enterprise? Spiritual writers have always stressed the dignity that Francis bestowed on the leper when he kissed and embraced this rejected man on the roadside. Actually, I think there is more to this story than that. I believe that it was Francis who remained ever grateful to the leper for accepting Francis, while he (Francis) was still steeped in his sins. It was the leper who accepted Francis fully and completely. The leper’s wounds were only skin-deep. Francis’ vulnerabilities, his deep disgust, was deep in his soul. Francis had to come to grips with his disgust against “the other,” “the different” and the “disabled” before him. His embrace with the leper was pivotal. Francis was grateful that the leper saw a dignity in him that Francis could not see in himself or own at the time. What Francis learned in this encounter was the inestimable dignity of every human person no matter their physical challenges, emotional problems or social inheritance. Every human being has a rightful place and an inalienable dignity that are neither earned nor worked for.

We live in a time where people’s worth is calibrated by their careers. Their standing is determined by their ability to produce and serve the insatiable needs of a consumerist society. Increasingly, one must earn one’s health care. One has to afford their education and the chance to succeed. Tragically, one has to have the right skin tone to be a true American in our still highly racialized economy.

The Franciscan movement recognizes rights that are still only partial or highly limited in our competitive and aggressive social compact. A Franciscan fraternal economy recognizes the right to life, health care, work, education, a living wage, as a well as the right to contribute from the wellsprings of one’s talents, creativity, vision and hopes without the obstacles artificially imposed by cultural conventions or social bias.

Our Dreamers confront us with their inherent dignity of language, culture, experience and dreams that can enrich and lift all of us to become an ever greater society and a more empathetic people. They challenge us to withdraw from the “disgust” that has characterized our politics of polarization and division for far too long. We need to let go of the disgust we have for diversity and difference. It’s time to let go of our ideals for a monochromatic America. We do this by respecting the inviolable dignity and the human rights of Dreamers. Scapegoating them and criminalizing them to maintain and further an economy of extraction ignores their human dignity and the rights that come with it. They cannot be legally deemed invisible, replaceable and just the collateral damage that accrues from a failed politics of polarization.

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Brueggemann describes this “economy of extraction” in his book, *Money and Possessions* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 66-70.

c) **Beauty.** The third Franciscan value I'd like to emphasize is beauty.<sup>11</sup> Our consumer society is eminently practical but it is constraining us to produce only those things that can be bought and sold, consumed, destroyed and recast for further profit. Those of us who teach in liberal arts colleges and universities know how strong the temptation there is today to reduce the ideal of learning only to career goals, those courses and those topics that can get one a job and produce a paycheck and an immediate payback. Our educational vision, wrapped tightly around the logic of developing one's profession and establishing one's career, is losing sight of the intuitions and insights for building a character and liberating us from the hazards of consumption. The Franciscan movement, on the other hand, re-establishes the biblical insight that God made humanity and all of creation for the way or journey of beauty. In the Franciscan tradition, God is Beautiful and creates a world, which is immensely and gloriously beautiful. The natural stance of the human person is one of awe in the face of a world steeped in wondrous colors and exquisite sounds. We need a holistic pedagogy and an ethos that engages us in the beautiful. As Mary Beth Ingham reminds us, "Beauty is the foundational human experience that unites mind and heart, spirit and body, activity and passivity, embracing and transcending time, culture, and point of view. Creation of beauty in art, literature, poetry and music is a distinguishing characteristic of the human person and every human culture."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, a transformative Franciscan ethos, as Ingham notes, creates a space for beauty and engages individuals and communities openly and fully (not begrudgingly) in music, literature, poetry, in the full range of the arts, along with experiences with and for nature, in a conscious and loving solidarity and communion with creation. Unfortunately, the arts, we are told, have become a luxury we can ill afford in our consumerist society. Young people, especially in our minority communities, are systematically deprived of their right to beauty and an engagement with the literature, the visual and performing arts. The Franciscan fraternal economy, on the other hand, reverses priorities and re-establishes our communion with God and God's good earth.

The rescinding of DACA signals that we are depriving Dreamers and ourselves of the Beauty that is essential to our humanity by sending Dreamers and their families back into the shadows, where creativity is limited, where hopes are darkened, where fears and anxiety are increased. We are removing a generation of young people from the sciences they can study, the arts they can perform, the music they can sing, and the beautiful they can express in multiple languages and across various cultures that can enrich and lift us all. We are limiting the lives of 800,000 young people and we are constricting our own country, making it less diverse and less beautiful.

We must change the equation of our social compact from a logic of limit and reduction to an ethic of abundance and addition. Dreamers are here to create, to build, to express, to dance, to sing and to lift the human spirit with all its lush diversity. To see them otherwise is to abide by an anthropology of deficiency and to live by a theology of deficit that is foreign to the Franciscan imagination.

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<sup>11</sup> Mary Beth Ingham, *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Mary Beth Ingham, "Framing a Transformative Franciscan Ethos: The Challenge of Excellence at St. Bonaventure University," *Franciscan Connections* 67:3 (Fall 2017), 24-28. I thank Mary Beth for her insights throughout this section.

## Conclusion

There are times when a moment of politics is so outside a society's norm of common goodness that it helps to reveal the great and worthy challenges before us. This is one of them.

The decision to rescind DACA and send upwards of 800,000 American children to countries they have never known reveals a much deeper threat and more searing question, one that I have mentioned several times. Do we really want to be an inclusive society or not? Do we have a place, an equal place and a shared space, for diversity and a common good that calls all of us to become better as we still proclaim *e pluribus unum*?

Dreamers challenge us to take a stand not just for them but for ourselves, our history and our heritage, our future and our faith in a God that Francis knew was good, all good, supremely good, all the time and to everyone. God teaches us to remember that we too were once undocumented and vulnerable in the brickyards of Egypt and God commands us to a radical hospitality and an ethic of inclusion so that, in every time and season, dreamers can dream in the great freedom and abundant love of God.

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