Misconceptions of undocumented immigrants and misguided public policies

Abstract

Illegal immigrants take jobs away from American citizens, illegal immigrants contribute to the increase in crimes, and illegal immigrants do not pay taxes but take advantage of healthcare, education and welfare. These are some of the misconceptions prevalent among many Americans citizens about the impact of million of undocumented workers in the United States. This project will examine the impact of undocumented workers on employment, taxation, criminal justice, education and healthcare in order to demonstrate that most of the negative ideas about undocumented workers are indeed misconceptions. The project will further argue that the fears and misconceptions about the role of undocumented workers have led to misguided pubic policies that do more damage than good.

Introduction

 My professor asked, “raise your hand if you think it is justified for immigrants to come to the United States illegally?” To my surprise, I was the only one to raise my hand. He then said, “Now raise your hand if you would come to the United States illegally to support your family” and everyone raised their hand. The classroom had about twenty-five students and I was the only one that believed it was justified to come to the United States without documents in order to support one’s family. Why was I the only one to raise my hand? There are many possible reasons on why this happened. American citizens might be uninformed about the impact of undocumented workers in the United States or for most of them the possibility to move to another country to make a living in order to support one’s family is unimaginable.

 As a Latina whose parents immigrated to the United States in search of a better life, I can relate to undocumented immigrants. It is not easy to constantly hear people questioning why they are here or say that they come here to take advantage of education, healthcare and welfare. Europeans migrated to the United States to live the “American dream,” to have their own home and work hard. Today the reasons why immigrants come to United States have not changed. Immigrants come to work hard and contribute to the economy. United States as a country of immigrants have welcomed millions of mostly Europeans immigrants, so why is it that we now have millions of undocumented immigrants making immigration reform one of the most divisive issues in American politics? What changed?

 Aviva Chomsky, author of, *How Immigration Became Illegal,* says that many people claim that immigrants should come to the United States legally, but what exactly does that mean? According to Chomsky, most of the citizens that brag that their ancestors came here “the right way” are not informed about the historical process of immigration. They assume that their ancestors “went through the process.” However most of them came here, “before the concept of “illegality” existed,” says Chomsky. The term came into existence in 1965. The term illegality has not existed for long and while people may argue that undocumented immigrants should come to the United States legally, it is important to understand that people from Latin America have to go through a very complicated process. There are only a certain number of visas that can be given; therefore their options are limited. For majority of the poor or working class people there is no hope of gaining a legal entry to the United States because of the high visa fees and the fact that people who do not have property or high-paying jobs in their own countries are almost never given a tourist or work visa for the United States.

 It was during the 1980’s and 1990’s when the there was a growing size of illegal immigrant population and the reaction to that was a surge of anti-illegal immigrant opposition. The response from the Congress was to pass the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Under this policy those who hired undocumented immigrants were punished. That same year, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and Illegal Immigration Responsibility Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which essentially, “cut millions of legal and illegal immigrants off from federal benefits programs” (Lee, 3). During this period many cases were presented in the Supreme Court and to determine the rights of undocumented immigrants.

 The 1982 landmark case, Plyler v. Doe, for the first time, ‘addressed the level of scrutiny applicable to state classifications of illegal immigrants under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment” according to Jason H. Lee. The Supreme Court demonstrated a sympathetic stance towards immigrants' children by saying that they were at no fault for the decisions their parents made. However, it took on a more negative position on adult immigrants. The case essentially declared that a person’s unlawful status is relevant to court cases. Today many discriminatory laws refer back to the Plyler v. Doe case. However, there are also cases that conclude that unlawful status is irrelevant. For example, Graham v. Richardson in 1971 declared that immigrants are a suspect class, meaning that their rights are violated more easily than others, and this case has, “been applauded by several immigration and constitutional law scholars, not just because it protects the rights of a politically weak and historically abused group, but also because it recognizes the fact that legal immigrants contribute much to American society” (Lee, 7). Furthermore, in Moreau v. Oppenheim the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals had to make a decision. The defendant argued that, “as illegal aliens [plaintiffs] had no right to come into federal court and demand damages for ‘what (they) could have earned by entering into and performing illegal employment in violation of the regulations and laws of the United States.”’ (Lee, 13). The Fifth Circuit of Appeals disagreed and the case is important because it suggested that being here illegally does not make someone an outlaw for all purposes thus depriving them of all legal protections. Another case where unlawful status was irrelevant was Montoya v. Gateway Inc. The plaintiff was injured and pursued the personal-injury-protection from his insurance plan to recover the medical costs, however, the insurance company refused to pay because the plaintiff was an illegal immigrant. The appellate courts decided that the plaintiff’s status was not relevant and was not enough reason to deny him injury-protection from his insurance. This case was important in establishing the fact that the immigrants are here whether they are legal or illegal they are worthy of basic rights.

What changed in the United States? The demographic change with increasing number of Latinos has produced an anti-illegal immigrant sentiment. This may explain why my classmates did not raise their hand when the professor asked if they thought it was justified for immigrants to come to the United States illegally. However, cases in the Supreme Court and Appellate Court have revealed numerous times that undocumented immigrants are just that, undocumented, and that fact does not deprive them of human rights and legal protection. They contribute to the economy, pay taxes and are consumers. Under the Equal Protections Clause all persons enjoy rights. It does not say citizens but persons. The anti- illegal sentiment sometimes makes people forget that they are humans also. It is wrong for people to think that because they are undocumented immigrants they can be taken advantage of. Not protecting the rights of undocumented immigrants would only cause more problems.

Undocumented Immigrants and Jobs

One of the many misconceptions among American citizens is that undocumented immigrants are taking their jobs. The labour market theory, however, divides the labour market into two sectors; the primary and secondary. According to Ramanujuan Nadadur, the primary consists of, “skilled work, employment stability, the presence of job ladders, effective trade unions and efficient management,” while the secondary sector consists of, “low or unskilled work or service jobs, linked by the fact that they are characterized by low earnings, job impermanence, and low returns on education.” About four percent of the entire labour force are undocumented workers and the low wage jobs that they work in are 20 percent farming occupations, 17 percent of cleaning, 12 percent of construction, and 11 percent of food preparation. (Nadadur, 1043). The conclusion of the labour market theory is that Americans typically seek for jobs in the primary sector, while undocumented immigrants seek for jobs in the secondary sector, therefore most Americans and immigrants do not directly compete for jobs.

 Although the labour market theory concludes that Americans and immigrants do not compete for jobs directly, there is evidence that demonstrates that there are also unskilled Americans who do seek for jobs in the secondary sector and might have to compete with immigrants. The Center of Immigration Studies analyzed the argument that immigrants take jobs Americans don’t want. Some of the findings were that, “of the 472 civilian occupations only six are majority immigrant (legal and illegal). These six occupations account for 1 percent of the total U.S workforce. Moreover, native-born Americans still comprise 46 percent of workers even in these occupations” (cis.org). This evidence demonstrates that unskilled Americans do in fact compete for jobs in the secondary sector with immigrants and even the jobs that are known to be majority immigrant workers are made up of Americans. However, this is a great competition because this leads to more American citizens going to college and getting better jobs than the immigrant population. Because today it is harder for Americans to find a job and the recession has led to undocumented immigrants and Americans to compete for low wage jobs, more Americans are seeking higher education.

Adam Davidson from *The New York Times Magazine* asserts that the immigration issue will continue to be a topic of debate, especially in the upcoming presidential election. The Republican candidate, Jeb Bush has stated his pro-immigration views along with Tea Party Republicans, Democrats and economists. According to a recent poll of leading economists they, “could not find a single one who rejected the proposition” that immigration benefits American society. One of the most significant study to show that immigrants do not take away economic opportunities from native-born Americans was conducted by David Card on the famous Mariel boatlift that 125,000 Cubans to Miami in the 1980’s. “45,000 of them were of working age and moved to Miami; in four months, the city’s labor supply increased by 7 percent.” (NYT Times, 3). The main argument on why people think immigrants working in the United States has a negative effect, is that the wages of American citizens decrease. However, David Card’s research on the Cuban immigration in the 1980’s, demonstrated that there wasn’t any measurable impact on wages or employment. According to David Card, “whenever an immigrant enters the United States, the world becomes a bit richer” and this is something people cannot understand. Immigrants come to the United States, usually from a poor country, work hard, and spend that money in the Untied States. There are long-term and short-term benefits on immigrants choosing to come to this country.

Francine J. Lipman, from the American Bar Association, says that there are about seven million undocumented immigrants currently working in the United States because of the economic problems in the rest of the world. Undocumented immigrants represent 1 out of every 20 workers in the labor force. There are 50% of undocumented women in the labor force and 90% of men. Because the majority of immigrants that come to the United States are likely to be young, they are, “less likely to be disabled, retired, or in school, but are most likely to be married and parents of young children” (Lipman, 827). The immigrants that are coming to the United States are younger hard working people willing to work in anything, which makes them an asset not a burden

According to David Becerra, “immigrants do not take jobs away from citizens; instead they stimulate the state and local economies and complement the workers by providing a necessary pool of unskilled labor”(122). The high rate of immigrants in the United States supports specialization and increases the wages for American citizen workers. From the economic perspective, economist Giovanni Perri, says international migration is seen as having a, “formidable ability of increasing total world income and productivity, generating huge global economic opportunities”(Peri, 37). Many economist have done research on the impact of immigration in the United States and the findings come to the same conclusion. Immigration increases productivity and income gains; it also benefits the native workers. Therefore, undocumented immigrants are contributing to the economy in a positive way. Also according to Giovanni Perri, “the inflow of immigrant as new workers in the U.S labor market will continue to produce the right incentive for natives” (50). Today more and more Americans are going to college to work in the primary sector, while immigrants continue working in the secondary sector.

There are arguments on both sides; however there is not much evidence for the argument that undocumented immigrants are taking jobs away. On the other hand, from an economic standpoint many economists, such as George Borjas and Giovanni Perri, have supported the argument that immigrants working has a positive impact on the United States economy. American citizens wages do not decrease, therefore this is another common misconception.

Education

Education is probably the most valuable possession someone could have. It is something no one can take away from you and it is something that will remain with you forever. Education makes the difference between having a good job and being unemployed. It plays an important role in determining everyone’s future. Some politicians go as far as saying that education is a right that everyone deserves. However, some American citizens think that undocumented children are taking advantage of the education system in the United States.

In the United States of America all children have the right to education regardless their citizenship status. According to David Becerra, “the average amount spent by all states during 2009-2010 academic year was $10,585 per student.” There are an estimated 1.6 million undocumented children living in the United States. Therefore, the amount required to educate undocumented children would just be $17 billion per year. However, if we were to compare the total amount of government spending in education, the education of undocumented children represents only 3.3 percent of the total cost. The total costs of education all the children is between $520-$535 billion, annually. The evidence demonstrates that the undocumented children’s education is not heavy burden to the United States like many people assert, but how does educated undocumented immigrants benefit the United States? While many politicians have adopted policies to stop immigrants from pursuing an education, there is little evidence that these policies are doing any good to the country as a whole. Today, federal law discourages States from authorizing higher education benefits to undocumented immigrants.

700,000 is too big of a number to ignore. From those 700,000 children and adolescents some will become lawyers, doctors, teachers, architects, scientists, astronauts, engineers; others will become owners of businesses. Students who are U.S citizens have open doors to success. They receive federal benefits through FAFSA and get more financial aid through scholarships and grants. However, not all children have the same luck. There are many undocumented children in the United States that cannot even dream of accomplishing their goals of pursuing a career. Many of those undocumented children have only known the Untied States as their home because they were brought here when they were young. Providing access to higher education to the children of undocumented workers is a very smart investment in America’s future. President Barack Obama has opened that future for children of undocumented workers because many qualify for the deferred action and they can continue going to school. According to the U.S News, “an estimated 700,000 K-12 students, including 150,000 currently enrolled in high school, could benefit” from the changes on education President Barack Obama provided. The saying, “children are the future of tomorrow” doesn’t only apply to American children; all the children of today are the future of tomorrow. Undocumented students have dreams and goals too, and they are ager to pursue a career and become part of the American dream.

Taxes

There are many ways undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy; one of those ways is by paying taxes. The idea that immigrants do not pay taxes is not true. Undocumented immigrants, “pay income taxes through the use of Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITINs) or though false social security numbers…As a result, undocumented immigrants contribute over $7 billion annually to Social Security and over $1.5 billion to Medicare” (Becerra, 121). The majority of immigrants are not able to receive benefits; therefore the government keeps this money. It is projected that immigrant pay an average of $1,800 per family, per year more to Social Security and Medicare than they utilize in services.

Immigrants also contribute to the economy as consumers in the United States, According to Nadadur, “Hinojasa estimates that 90 percent of the wages that the undocumented population earns are currently spent inside the U.S. As a result, he holds that the total consumptive capacity of illegal immigrants remaining in the U.S is around $450 billion” (1046). Therefore, immigrants contribute by spending most of their money in the country, which stimulates thousands of businesses. As mentioned previously, the majority of immigrants that come to the United States are young people, which tend to spend more money. Businesses from all over the country see the 11 million undocumented immigrants as a market of potential customers that is too big to ignore. Immigrants buy cars, food, electronics, and most importantly, some immigrants are homeowners. There are an estimated of 11 million undocumented immigrants currently in the United States and businesses should see them as possible customers not a threat. These young families are spending most of their money in the country.

Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for a Social Security number; therefore they are not allowed to work legally in the United States. However, every taxpayer received an ITIN. There is a contradiction in this process because the ITIN cannot be used for employment purposes, yet the ITIN’s were made to make the process of immigrants paying taxes much easier. This contradiction insinuates that the Internal Tax Revenue is aware of the people working illegally. According to the American Bar Association, “each year hundreds of thousands of tax returns are filed with ITIN’s and W-2 Forms are attached with invalid Social Security number. In 2000, 353,000 resident aliens were not authorized to work in the United States filed tax return with ITIN’s, and 75% of there returns included W-2 Forms with invalid SSN’s (Lipman 836). The government is aware that there is a mismatch of Social Security numbers and knows that undocumented immigrants cannot work in the U.S legally, yet each year they take the immigrants money towards Social Security knowing that they cannot benefit from that money. There are about 130 million individual tax return filed each year, and from those tax returns undocumented workers file 6 million. Immigrants are paying for taxes, spending their money in the Untied States and contributing to the economy.

According to Craig Frazier, about 50 percent of undocumented immigrants pay taxes. The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy has estimated that, “$11.2 billion was paid in state and local taxes: $1.2 billion in personal income taxes, $1.6 billion in property taxes and $8.4 billion in sales taxes. California, Texas, Illinois, New York and Florida received the most tax revenue from immigrant household, California receiving $2.7 billion. We want their money but we don’t want them here that is basically what is happening with immigrants and the American perspective.

Immigration and Criminal Rates

Immigrants and criminality are often related in the American public’s perception. However, according to the Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare. “Existing evidence on the incarceration of undocumented immigrants, as well as the costs associated with incarcerating undocumented immigrants in local, state, and federal penal institutions, does not reflect the popular stereotype” (Becerra, 115). Communities where immigrants concentrate do not necessarily have a higher crime rate than communities that don’t have immigrants. Immigrants actually reduce crime rates in urban areas.

Furthermore, David M. Ramney says that the social disorganization theory is applied when examining neighborhood crime rates in cities. The results where that, “although neighborhoods with large immigration population have higher than average rates of economic disadvantage and residential instability, they have relatively low crime rates” (Ramney, 598). The immigrant revitalization is also mentioned in the findings. This term explains the paradox of unexpected benefits linked with immigration. Immigrant revitalization is a perspective that demonstrates that the U.S can actually benefit socially and economically by immigrant neighborhoods. It is hard to imagine undocumented immigrants actually benefiting our country, but the studies have found that criminal rates in many cases decrease in immigrant communities rather than increase.

 According to John M. MacDonald, “an emerging body of research supports the contention that immigrant settlement pattern either reduces or does not effect crime rates at the city level” (195). The segmented theory also indicates that immigrants that settle in distraught poverty may reduce the net reductions in neighborhood crime rates. Poor communities tend to be the ones with higher crime rates, however, when those communities become immigrant concentrates, those crime rate decrease. According to Robert Sampson, “not only immigrants not increased crime rate, but they may be partly responsible for one of the most precipitous declines in crime that the United States has ever experiences” (Wadsworth, 550). Though it may be hard to prove, immigration may lead to fewer crime rates because undocumented immigrants might not want to engage in criminal activity because any mistake can lead to deportation. Most of the undocumented immigrants in the United States have families and they need to work to support them, not engage in criminal activities and get deported. This is one of the major reason why immigrants decide to cross the border.

An example of the decrease in crime rates can be seen in the 1990s when immigrant population in the United States nearly doubled. During this time, “the rates of violence and poverty crimes decreased 34% and 26% respectively” (Becerra, 115). Furthermore, evidence has demonstrated that immigrant growth really protects against delinquency and violent crimes. (Ramney, 600). Therefore, the idea that undocumented immigrants increase the criminal rates in the United States is also a misconception. Evidence has established that the growth of immigrant population, in particularly the disadvantage communities, has a positive impact in the crime rates. Looking back at the history of the United States when the immigrant rates increased, there is no link between crime rates and undocumented immigrants. Even when the growth of immigrants coming into the United States were tremendously high, the crime rates did not appear to be any different than when the cities were not predominately immigrant. All this supports the idea that the link between immigrants and criminal rates is also a misconception that the American public has.

Health Care and Policymaking

There has been a strong debate on whether health care is a right or not. Some people think “pursuit of happiness” can be interpreted as the right to have access to health care, while others disagree with this idea. Whether you think that health care is a right or not, having access to health care is essential to living. People need to be healthy in order to work and contribute to our country. American citizens take access to health care for granted, however not everyone has that privilege. Undocumented immigrants today are being denied health care in the United States. Over the past years there have been many laws implemented to restrict immigrants from using the little health care they do use.

Kari White conducted a research to examine the effects of Alabama HB 56 and how it has affected the dimensions of access. She conducted this research by interviewing Latina immigrants in Jefferson County, Alabama. First of all, the Alabama HB 56 is one of the strictest anti-immigrant laws ever made. It makes it a crime for immigrants to apply for a job and racial profiling is in full effect. The findings from the research were that, “immigrants have indeed changed their health seeking behavior,” and the conclusions of the research were that, “state level immigration laws are primarily focused on deterring the settlement of unauthorized immigrants adversely affect health care access and have consequences beyond those originally intended,” (White, 404). The consequences of policies like the Alabama HB 56, is that undocumented pregnant are not seeking the necessary health care, which puts in danger the health of the fetus that would become a U.S citizen. Not only are these kind of policies causing immigrants to not seek health care even when they are pregnant, but they are also pushing undocumented immigrants to leave the state. According to the Huffington Post, the first day of the Alabama HB 56 was in effect, “80% of Latino children absent in school” and. “25% of construction workers thought to have left the state since HB 56.”

The fears of American citizens have steered politicians to make policies that are not only hurting undocumented immigrants but also the well being of the rest of society. For example, during the 1990s the government was cutting immigrants’ access to health care and in response Pete Wilson, governor of California, eliminated funded prenatal care for undocumented immigrants. Prenatal care is very important because it can detect and treat sexually transmitted diseases. It also, “provides a wide range of services including, monitoring a fetal growth and development; hypertension and diabetes management; smoking cessation” (Kuiper, 39). This poses a great problem to American citizens because it increases the spread of diseases in the community. There are many complications if undocumented immigrants are not receiving the appropriate prenatal care. Some of the complications are, “hospitalization and can lead to primary ad secondary infertility and even death” (Kuiper, 40). Having public funding for undocumented immigrants can prevent all these problems. Policies like the one in California, enacted in 1996, are putting American citizens in danger. In order to have a healthy society, everyone must have access to health care whether they are citizens, legal immigrants or undocumented immigrants. Undocumented immigrants are in the United States already; we are in contact with them, we work with them, they are our customers, and they might be our neighbors, therefore it is key for them to be able to seek health care because it can affect us.

The immigration reform has polarized Congress in the United States, the conservatives, “argue that people living in the United States illegally have no right to health care benefits financed by taxpayers,” as if undocumented immigrants did not pay taxes. (Garg, 25). People also argue that if states provided health insurance to immigrants, more immigrants would come to the United States to benefit from health care. However, “judging by the history of free public education, which has been provided to undocumented immigrants since a 1982 U.S Supreme Court ruling, these indirect incentives seem to have little effect of immigration rates” (Garg, 25). Furthermore, one argument to include undocumented immigrants in the health care reform is that according to Megha Garg, “children of immigrants are less likely to get immunized, which decreases group immunity against childhood infectious diseases.” Children are constantly in contact with other children that may be undocumented and not immunized, therefore immigrants should have access to health care. Moreover, since immigrants cannot access clinics for regular check ups, they are forced to go to the emergency rooms. Therefore, the second argument to include undocumented immigrants in the health care reform is that it would lower the hospital costs and insurance premiums for Americans. According to a recent research by the American Journal of Public Health. “Insured immigrants are estimated to be undocumented- use only one-sixth to one-half of the medical expenditures of U.S citizens” (Garg, 27). This means that including undocumented immigrants would help lower health care costs to the whole country. Immigrants tend to be young and are in the work force; therefore they don’t seek health care as much. The United States not only has a broken immigration system, but also a broken health care system. The easiest thing to do is to ignore the problem, but that would not fix anything and the problem will certainly remain.

Health care amongst undocumented immigrants is an issue of concern to United States citizens as well. According to studies done by UCLA, “Latinos have fewer physicians visits, lower utilization of emergency services, and a lower likelihood of having regular source of care than non-Latino groups” (Rodriguez, S508). Although undocumented immigrants pay taxes and contribute to the economy, they cannot receive medical benefits. Instead, there are many policies that restrict services to undocumented immigrants. However the question is, at what cost? According to the American Journal of Public Health, “the 300,000 to 500,000 undocumented immigrants that enter the United States each year arrive bearing disproportionate burden of undiagnosed illness-including communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV” (Kullgren, 1630). Therefore, all the policies that intend to restrict medical benefits of undocumented immigrants can be jeopardizing the public health of American citizens. The American Journal of Public Health says that, “prohibiting the provision of discounted health care endanger access to services among undocumented immigrant’s children many of whom are born in the United States and therefore eligible for publicly funded health care programs” (Kullgren, 1631).

Looking at the pros and cons of including undocumented immigrants to the health care reform there appears to be more good than bad. It doesn’t make sense for undocumented immigrants to have access to the emergency rooms, which are very expensive, but not medical care for regular check-ups to prevent them from going to emergency rooms. There are instances where immigrant parents are being held back from taking their children to the hospital or clinic, even when those children are U.S citizens. Therefore these laws are putting Latino citizens at risk.

Patrick Glen demonstrates the constitutional principals and how they relate to the health care and undocumented immigrants. According to Glen, undocumented immigrants outside the Untied States are not entitled to constitutional protections, but those that are physically present in the country enjoy limited protection because the Due Process Clause refers to all persons not only citizens. Immigrants are physically present in the United States and have rights under the law. Patrick Glen reiterates the fact that, “small consumptions of resources can be traced back to illegal immigrants usage trends: they require fewer hospitalizations, visit the doctor less, and generally seek less health care than residents and citizens” (Glen, 232). This serves to demonstrate that although people argue that immigrants are taking advantage of health care, the are actually not a burden on the system and do not overuse benefits.

Evidence has revealed that undocumented immigrants do not seek healthcare to begin with, compared to Americans. They are unable to benefit from many of the current health programs; therefore they can’t take advantage of them. Lastly, all the policies that have been made based on fear and misconceptions are hurting our country more than they are helping. Therefore, the healthcare policies that exclude immigrants is having a negative effect. Illness, diseases and viruses do not spread only to Americans, immigrants, blacks, browns or white, but to everyone. Every single person in our country is exposed to the diseases and can spread them to other people. Thus, excluding immigrants will have dangerous effects to the rest of society. The public should demand that our government protects everyone equally, because excluding immigrants from health care is putting our own health in danger.

Conclusion

Immigrants will continue to be an issue of importance in the United States. Today the United States is one of the most powerful countries and most likely than not, people from poor countries will continue to want to immigrate for opportunities. The American public will also continue to have a variety of attitudes towards immigration. However, it is important to recognize that securing the border is costing United States billions of taxpayer’s money and the results aren’t very convincing.

The United States immigration system is broken and something has to be done. People continue to oppose immigration because they believe that immigrants are not contributing positively to Untied States economy. The public believes that immigrants are just taking jobs away from Americans, that they come to take advantage of healthcare and education, and that they increase crime rates. Yet, evidence has demonstrated that immigrants do contribute to the economy; they are consumers and spend about 90 percent of their money in the Untied States. They do not increase crime rates and evidence shows that communities that have higher number of immigrants do not have higher crime rates than the communities without a large immigrant population. In fact, immigrants in some cases decrease crime rates. Undocumented children are going to school, but evidence has demonstrated that they are not a heavy burden because they constitute only 3.3 percent of the total cost government spends in education. Immigrants cannot benefit from welfare and most healthcare programs; therefore they have no choice other than to go to the emergency room. Nonetheless, the various healthcare policies that have been made to exclude undocumented immigrants from healthcare benefits are doing more damage to the country and the American citizens. Immigrants having access to healthcare would benefit everyone.

It’s time to fix the broken immigration system and help the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants already present in United States because these people are risking their lives every single day to simply come and work hard. They do not come to United States and take advantage of the government; they come to get what they were not able to get in their home country. It might be unimaginable for people that are born into a country as rich as United States to even think about worrying about what they will eat tomorrow. To have to stop yourself from dreaming of becoming successful, because it will not happen. This is something that undocumented immigrants have to think about every day. I know for a fact, that parents would do anything and I mean anything for their children, even if it means going to a country where they don’t understand the language and where they will constantly be humiliated.

The immigration system is not easy to fix, but President Barack Obama’s executive order definitely put us one step closer to fixing the broken system. It is an unrealistic solution to want to deport the 11 million undocumented immigrants already present in the Untied States. It is not only impossible, but it would also hurt our economy. Our country is so diverse, which makes it difficult to spot all the undocumented immigrants. Many of those immigrants came here when they were just a few years old, and they are fluent in English and they are culturally assimilated. Yes, there are millions of undocumented immigrants in the U.S and it is completely understandable for Americans to think that they are a threat, but it is important for those fears to not be based on misconceptions. Furthermore, it is also very important to stop those fears from leading our government from making policies that are doing more damage than good to our country.

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