
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Reframing the Dreamer Narrative: U.S. Immigrant Metaphors and the Apparatus of Legitimacy

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Abstract: This paper explores the binary narrative surrounding undocumented immigrants in the U.S., specifically focusing on the "Dreamer" archetype established by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy and its relationship with other pervasive media metaphors. The paper investigates several key metaphors, including the immigrant as animal, commodity, alien, line-cutter, wave/flood, and virus, and demonstrates how they function as structural tools to legitimize the exclusion of immigrants. By utilizing these conceptual instruments, citizens control the terms of the debate, reinforcing the illusion of procedural fairness that ultimately undermines the immigrant cause. Critically, both anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant rhetoric (such as the need for immigrants as economic "commodity") often share the capacity to objectify and de-humanize. The Dreamer Narrative itself is a metaphor that, while granting a precarious legitimacy to some, perpetually reinforces the "good immigrant/bad immigrant" binary, compelling migrants to perpetually perform American ideals and obscuring the systemic violence and historical context of immigration restrictions.

Keywords: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Dreamer narrative, Immigration metaphors, Good immigrant/ bad immigrant binary, Legitimacy and procedural fairness

The aspiring American narrative came into fruition alongside of the idea of the Dream Act itself in 2001. The narrative construction of the dreamer for immigrant children in the U.S. protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has undoubtedly done much to help immigrant cause. In that it presents a new version of the immigrant, one who take part in the American Dream, and has also made it possible for the immigrant to share in something that is quintessentially perceived as part of the American experience. The Dreamer Narrative creates the expectation, that students need to

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“Complete a four-year degree in communities where the system historically has been set up for just a few to succeed” (Perez, 2015) It paints the Dreamer as Aspirational-y American a state of continuously becoming but not a state of being. Dreamers can consider themselves American in every way with the exception of papers, they entered the country at a young age, maintaining good grades or otherwise have a high achieving career and participate in capitalism and the illusive idea of the American meritocracy. Despite the necessity of the dreamer narrative and the benefits that it provides to selective migrants the construct of the dreamer is a double-edged sword. DACA pacify dreamers, as unlike other subgroups of immigrants they have the capacity and support to make claims against the state. However, the caricature of the dreamer itself is problematic, as it presupposes that only such migrants who meet age, economic, and social conditions have the right to protection. And that by extension all those who do not meet those criteria are by definition criminals. My paper aims to explore this binary narrative of the Dreamer.

One method of understanding the binary is through Narrative depiction of the undocumented immigrants in contemporary news media in the U.S. is through the metaphors that are used. As metaphors are meaning making competitions in which in many ways the metaphor necessitates a certain solution. Metaphors are tools that can be used to exclude, because of their perception as being part of objective discourse, and because they render the immigrant exclusion from this discourse as a given. Metaphors are such that we not only think about them, but also think on their terms. Their role seemingly minor, is structurally important as it not only serve as a means of legitimizing violence against immigrants, but rendering this violence a necessary conclusion.

The making of metaphors around the immigrant, only those who have the power and prestige of citizenship control the terms of the debate on procedure fairness surrounding immigration. Addressing these metaphors, and their perceived fairness, plays a crucial role in understanding the treatment of undocumented immigrants. In many cases, metaphors serve to create the appearance of legitimacy of discourse, not its actuality an act which arguably further denigrates the migrant cause because it prevents steps from being taken to clarify or rectify the process.

Both Otto Santa Ana in “Empirical analysis of anti-immigrant metaphor in political discourse” and Joel Sati in his research “Other: Borders the Illegal as Normative Metaphor” focuses on the element of procedural fairness, that the kind of regulatory impulse is of non-US

Citizens is inherently different. In that it is a matter of procedural fairness rather than a fairness in outcome. Metaphors play a central role in shaping the illusion of procedural fairness precisely this procedural fairness which undermines the immigrant cause. Sati claims that we think about legitimacy in terms of metaphors, and metaphors shape the ways in which we think about policy, I want to expand on this argument that metaphors serve an additional function as a performative utterance that they not only create the immigrant but also shape what it means to be performing American and how these metaphors undermine and commodify the immigrant. To explore immigrant metaphors as speech acts, I will be looking at popular metaphors used to describe US. immigrants include: *immigrants as animals, commodities, aliens, illegals, terrorist, the immigrant as a virus, and the nation as a body, immigration as a line, immigration as a wave/flood, immigrants as dreamers.*

In order to understand how metaphors of immigration shape our understanding of immigration narratives we must first understand how Metaphors help us shape our understanding. A metaphor, simply described, is a figure of speech that contains an inferred parallel. Words or phrases that are normally associated with one type of item or thought are applied to something that is not typically linked with. In communication, metaphors are used to demonstrate or explain something by comparing it to something else. Metaphors serve a variety of purposes, however the most interesting of these purposes for us, is to pair the intangible with the literal, that it to say they attempt to simplify concepts we find difficult to understand. Metaphors shape and define how we think about something. They allow us to express or emphasize more complex notions about something and emphasize particular things about a subject. But at a perhaps even greater level they provide a framework of understanding for things that are too complex. Metaphors in a political domain function in a similar fashion. In these functions' metaphors are conceptual instruments that embody otherwise amorphous or remote concepts in ways that the public can readily understand.

According to linguist Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* a metaphor is not just a rhetorical flourish; it is fundamental to how we think, reason, and understand the world. They argue that we comprehend abstract concepts (like time or argument) in terms of more concrete concepts (like money or war). The power of a metaphor, as they explain, is that it highlights certain features of the abstract idea while simultaneously hiding or ignoring others, thus structuring our understanding and actions. For instance, the metaphor

"ARGUMENT IS WAR" highlights winning and losing, but hides the potential for collaboration or compromise. (Lakoff and Johnson 10)

In order to understand how metaphors of immigration are performative utterances and their influence on Immigrant Narratives, we must first understand what performative utterance are. In Austin's book, *How to Do Things with Words*, he introduces the concept of the performative utterance and the broader framework of Speech Act Theory. Speech Act Theory is the smallest unit of expression or communication is not a sentence, but rather the performance of some form of an act. Among these being making a statement, asking a question, or giving an order all of these can be done through writing. Austin recognized in his Philosophical Papers of 1961 that legal documents were a perfect example of this. For instance, in the creation of firstly the preamble which gives indication of the circumstances in which the procedures shall take place and the operative element of the document which preforms the act itself. In the case of a will the operative part might be "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" However, Austin decided against the word operative in favor of another word, performative utterance, because the term operative had already gained to many implications. Examples of performative utterances that Austin gave included "I bet you sixpence", 'I pronounce you guilty', or 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth'. (Austin 6)

As Judith Butler explains in her seminal work *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, "Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which its names," (Bodies 13). Butler uses the theory of performativity (originally from J.L. Austin) to argue that gender and sex are not natural givens, but are produced and materialized through repeated, constraining discursive practices, like being named and categorized. The quote helps explain how calling an immigrant "illegal" or "dreamer" actively constitutes their identity and social status. The illegality of the immigrant body, becomes illegal through its inherent complexity it becomes illegal through its name. In that the act of naming the illegal is a way of reimagining immigrant as a threatening entity. The same way as in the terms inspiring the immigrant reimagines the immigrant.

Two implied metaphors regarding the immigrant are the *immigrant as a financial commodity* and the *immigrant as animal*. This view of Immigrants as a commodity, as financial burden or gain, reimagines the immigrant as sub human existing strictly for the benefit of the nation. To exemplify, O'Brien (2003) focuses on the degrading use of organism, object, natural catastrophe/war, and animal

metaphors in the 1990s in the U.S. immigration restriction debate that both dehumanized migrants and portrayed them as a threat to social functioning. Likewise, Santa Ana's (1999, 2002) study into the dehumanizing use of metaphor in the Los Angeles Times in the 1990s discusses how political policies and electorate's responses are shaped by public discourse and the *Immigrants Are Animals* metaphor.

Frequent immigrants are presented as a commodity that is played out in the dichotomy of either the useful immigrant, or the useless immigrant. The metaphorically used verbs such as "process," "take," "redistribute," and "pack," or nouns such as "share," "burden," "net," and "masses" share the same semantic property of "objectification"; that is, their basic meaning involved the concept of inanimate thing or object that undergoes an action. Immigrants lose not only their humanity, but are treated as mercenary commodities. Simply inverting the description of migrants from negative to the positive does nothing to change the status of the immigrant as a commodity. Even though the far right and the liberal centrist have different messages about immigrant, that are reflected in their rhetoric, they share in their capacity to commodify the immigrant. Both "Immigrants are stealing our jobs" and "our economy needs immigrants" treats immigrants as a commodity whose value or worth is inherently monetary. Burdening, and supporting the economy are both attempting to determine the monetary worth of migrant.

One example of a metaphor that is in the *immigrant as alien* metaphor. The term alien has been used interchangeably with its science fiction counterpart that of extraterrestrial non-human beings, a view which proliferates the notion of the migrant as inherently foreign and other. This conflation of terms, alien and the migrant also make it easier to think of immigrants as non-human. A view which further "others" them and presents them as outside of the polity. The alien is in this case viewed as being by definition different from the naturalized individual, in that they are not accustomed to the structural norms of the country. Thereby the possibility of inclusion is unachievable through the metaphor. It is the structure of the metaphor that makes possible the exclusion. This kind of approach allows there two sense of the term "alien" a cultural one and a legal one. The term 'alien' has done a good job of being both. Popular constructions of aliens in fictional media are frequently call into question whether or not aliens can experience human emotion. The alien metaphor directly calls into question their humanity. A humanity which is called into question, and demands performativity. Being human is not enough; they must perform the "American" a particular set of structural and cognitive norms.

This is rather seen as a direct threat 'the alien among us' either as a form of terrorism

The impacts of the immigrant as alien metaphor are further worsened by the depiction of certain foreign countries being depicted as more primitive than is structurally true. Which causes the average viewer to embrace a predisposed often racialized metaphor. This is further supported by the depiction the notion of alien with something foreign that though not green skinned is ie (not white). In such a way the immigrant (alien) is viewed as being identifiably or faulty identifiable in a crowd, resulting in a type of racial profiling.

True emerging the cultural also becomes impossible as does returning home. The isolated contradictory position of being neither this/ nor that. The incapability of shedding the pre-existing identity is clear in not only physical features which prevent them from properly merging, but also based on a set ideology, beliefs, religious views or any sense of previous cultural heritage. They will always be presented as a less realized version American a hyphenated American African-American, Chinese-American, Mexican-American.

In the attempt to perform the American, they are in fact creating or caricaturing a perceived Americanness. An act which functions as form of dreaming the American into being.

Nation as Body metaphor further emphasizes this issue, if the nation is presented as a human body, then undocumented immigrants are presented as a threat to the health and wellbeing of this body. However, this metaphor presupposes that the nation is structurally healthy without the presence of the migrant and that the labor of the migrant is not necessary for the sustaining the nation.

This metaphor also allows lends itself to the interpretation of the narrative of the *immigrant as a virus* polluting this body. In order for the body to be fully healthy, the desire has to be rooted out at its source through the removal of the virus. A virus which arguably should not be removed because of its significant not only to the economic wellbeing of the nation, but also important to the cultural identity of the U.S. and its invasions. This invasion itself to be a land of opportunity, a land of equality but ultimately, but the realities of the nation fall short of the actuality. The metaphor of the *nation as body* also calls into question the body itself: whose body? If the nation was a body what would the body look like? Would it be tall or short? Would it be male or female, would it be young or old? What would its race be? The answer provides us with one vision of America. But does it provide us with a faulty homogenate view of American. The bodily identity of the U.S. national further calls into question the identity of the immigrant? When we talk

of the immigrant what sort of body do we see? This *imaginary migrant* and who are they? What is their race, what are their identifying features? Our answers to these questions draw attention to U.S. identity. It raises the question if the illusive group identity is worth more than an individual life? Is it worth more than 7,000 lives? What about the group's identity is highlighted by the metaphor that is intrinsically more important. The idea of the nation—a collective representation—symbolizes many bodies fused to create one body. However, there is a large difference between Hobbs construction of the body of the nation and our own. The body politic as a whole has come to be a symbol of nationalistic identity. The pathogen and virus notion of the nation as body is largely undermined by question the body's structural autonomy independent of the immigrant or whether immigrants make up a vital part of this body.

The *immigrant as pathogens*, is another popular version, that has as it center the idea of the body. It is difficult to ignore the literal impact of metaphor as Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy have often been framed by an explicitly medical language. Americans have a propensity to falsely blame outsiders for the spread of dangerous pathogens. That is that critical points in American history immigrants have been stigmatized as the direct cause etiology of a wide variety of physical and societal ills one of which is disease. The Persistent Association of Immigrants and Disease in American Society, in that medically immigrants have been the source of disease. However, as Howard Markel and Alexandra Minna Stern in all case the social perception of the threat of the infected immigrant was typically far greater than the actual danger, furthermore, Americans tended to view any pre-existing disease as being a foreign import. More recently, this has manifested itself in violence against Asian Americans during the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak in the United States. It should also be noted that in the 21st century when diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV become more drug resistant, the desire to blame outside must be curbed.

Somewhat related to the Nation as body metaphor, is the *Nation as home* metaphor provides a complete structural metaphor, in which different areas can be mapped out as parts of a home, complete with doors, corridors, bedroom. The Nation as a home metaphor is only one of the examples of territoriality in metaphors. But shows the ways in which become possessive and territorial over something as abstract and ambiguous as a nation.

We grant privileges to “the home” as oppose to the abstract mass that lies outside of its confines. The home is personal, human, whereas

the world outside is not. And the immigrant is presented as this external threat to the home. In this interpretation any outsider is not only a trespasser but also a threat, and potential terrorist or “home invader”. The metaphor also shows our general mistrust of those of lower economic station and the houseless. In that it illustrates an immense fear of theft and burglary because we feel a sense of ownership of our homes. Treating the nation as home blurs the line between the person and the inter-personal. Not only this, but the house metaphor grants agency to the Anglo-American citizen it is their home, they own it, this is in stark contrast to the description of the abstract invader the faceless immigrant. And also explains the reaction response that some Anglo-American citizen have to “guard their homes”. This notion extends to those who have provisional citizenship i.e. borrowed citizenship in that they have been granted some form of a privilege and overstaying that privilege is not welcome. This idea of the Nation as home likewise provides unique problems in light of land ownership being a largely colonial construct and many Native Americans.

In the *immigration as a line* metaphor, one of the key issues is that citizens do not have to stand in that line. The line does not apply to citizens, rather the line is a way for citizens to create a hierarchy, in which they will never be standing in the metaphorical line. It further emphasizes the illusion of justice. Preforming the idea of justice not is actuality.

Furthermore, the immigration as a line metaphor implies that the line is inherently fair. The metaphor of the line ignores that some countries have greater access to the line than others. The metaphor of line also chooses to ignore that many have passed away standing in that metaphorical line. As well as that for many countries there is no line. With respects to most types of green cards this means that “a single country can account for no more than 7% of all green cards issued annually” which means that China, Mexico and India are subject to the same numerical cap as small countries. Immigrants who migrated and are able to be naturalized can claiming that they did things the right way. In this way maintaining the preexisting hierarchy. Undocumented immigrants themselves are unable to receive citizenship due to the accrued unlawful presence that will be held against them. The metaphor of the line also fails to consider what caused the displacement in the first place proposing that there is a “right way to about it”, causing not only an erasure in history but also an erasure of violence done against large populations of the United States. The Johnson Reed Immigration Act in 1924, drastically limited especially

Jewish and Slavic immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The act also extended prohibition of all and also excluded those from other Non-European countries on the basis of racial undesirability. Immigration restrictions are described by Iyoko Day as "Jim crow in a transnational context" in which "Immigration policy not only determined entry into the nation but could legally bar an immigrant from naturalizing, voting, owning property, and working." Many of the laws and militias regulating and punishing black movement developed from anti-black practices interested only in restraining and hurting. Lovato for example views the federal ICE agreement of cooperation in communities to enhance safety and security (ACCESS) program, supposedly aimed at facilitates cooperation by offering various programs and tools to assist these agencies in identifying and removing high-risk criminal alien but really. is based on the Fugitive Slave Act. (Lovato) Likewise, Philip Kretsedemas argues that socioeconomic order of white rule established through state-level Jim crow laws was eventually duplicated in the emulation of law enforcement policy to the state level and systematically which disproportionately impacts black immigrants. (Walia 29) The immigration as a line metaphor deliberately misconstrues notions of justice by presenting a fair world a meritocracy that does not exist that prevents systematic changes to this system from taking place.

Migrants themselves have been equivocated to animals, but the process of migration has been explained through the use of water metaphors. Take for instance the metaphor of the *immigration as a wave*, here the individual migrant is completely lost instead the emphasis is placed on the physical threat of the wave. The metaphor of the wave, makes ideas such as the building of a wall seem like a rational strategy. It seems absurd to deal with a wave at the molecular level, and thus responding to it with a wall seems under the conditions created by this metaphor as a rational strategy. Often the metaphor of immigration as a wave draws on the presence is volume the sheer number of migrants. This often take on tones of racial discrimination, a "brown flood" that is seen as "threatening" the Anglo-American dominance. (Santa Ana 321). The idea of what these metaphorical waters are washing away is significant a perceived pure white America.

However, not all metaphors have strictly negative connotation, some have positive or more ambiguous connotations. Floods are a perfect metaphor to inspire fear and dread, the single immigrant and their dream is completely washed away instead what the metaphor levels is the foreboding sense of a physical threat. For example, the

metaphor immigration is a flood utilizes certain characteristics of "flood" (the source domain), while underutilizing others. Thus, the metaphor emphasizes the flood's destructive qualities, while ignoring the fact that floods often recede and leave fertile soil in their wake. The metaphor of *immigration as waters* had a positive narrative of the same course of events. Even though it might seem at first glance that right wingers are making the populist appeals that "foreigners are stealing our jobs, ruining our environment, and infecting our neighborhoods, and tainting our values." At the core level, underlying systems blame "foreigners" a convenient target incapable of adequately defending itself. Such discourse focuses on good immigrants and good refugees who are paying for their citizenship through buying power, assimilation, respectability, and nationhood (Santa Ana 328)

Instead the metaphor of an immigrant flood has introduced far more ludicrous solutions, to the deal with this metaphorical flood of immigrants. Perhaps amongst the most humorous of which is the millionaire Jason Buzi who proposed that the idea of "refuge nation" where aims to relocate the worlds displaced people to a single island. A gesture which he frames a humanitarian. Buzi ideas include building a new island on international waters or buying island states like Dominica. But one thing is clear for Buzi, there will be no government handouts. There are many other such terrifying ideas in the works. (Walia 15)

Another metaphor is the idea of the immigrant as *dreamer*. The idea of the *dreamer* has undoubtedly done much to help migrant cause. In that it presents a new version of the migrant, one who take part in the American Dream, and has also made it possible for the immigrant to share in something that is quintessentially perceived as part of the American experience. It paints the Dreamer as Aspirational-y American a state of continuously becoming but not a state of being. Often times DACA and Dreamer are conflated within the U.S. political consciousness. So, what is DACA? DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, abbreviated as DACA, is a United States immigration policy that allows certain individuals with unlawful presence in the United States after being brought to the country as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for an employment authorization document (work permit) in the U.S. To be considered eligible for the program, recipients cannot have felonies or serious misdemeanors on their records. Unlike the proposed DREAM Act, DACA does not provide a path to citizenship for recipients. The policy, an executive branch memorandum, was announced by President Barack Obama on

June 15, 2012. This followed a campaign by immigrants, advocates and supporters which employed a range of tactics. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) began accepting applications for the program on August 15, 2012.

However, the concept of the dreamer can be both advantageous and challenging. DACA has served to pacify dreamers, as unlike other subgroups they have the capacity and support to make claims against the state. Individuals who are considered Dreamers may identify as American in every respect, except for their legal documentation. They are individuals who entered the country at a young age, often maintaining strong academic records or pursuing successful careers. They actively participate in the economy and embody the ideals associated with the concept of American meritocracy. In most cases they have unaccented speech or participate and have internalized other aspects of the American identity. Despite the necessity of the dreamer narrative and the benefits that it provides to selective migrants. The caricature of the dreamer itself is problematic, as it presupposes that only such migrants who meet age, economic, and social conditions have the right to protection. And that by extension all those who do not meet those criteria are by definition criminals. The dreamer is not only required to be a law-abiding citizen but also meet extensive often unrealistic goals, and failure to participate or falling short of the lofty model warrants deportation (38) The *dreamer narrative* while helpful to some does not have the same effect across the board, this is particularly noteworthy in case where age, race, or economic standing play a more crucial role. However, it can also simply be a case of failure to meet high expectations, as many dreamers have external and financial pressures that do not allow them to meet these high expectations. The idea leads to a binary definition of those who are deserving of being American and those who are not. The aspiring American narrative which came into fruition alongside of the idea of the dream act itself in 2001. Rather the idea of the dreamer perpetuates good immigrant/bad immigrant dichotomy. A dichotomy that does nothing other than continue to impose criminality on undocumented Americans and require immigrants to work harder than US born citizens to be worthy of their place in the country, through things such as academic accomplishments. Even the use of the term 'dream' becomes subject to the realization that not all American have access to the same American dream. The conflation of the migrant as a criminal is clearly interlinked with the idea.

There are outer limits that define the dreamer, and even this inclusion does not necessarily lend itself to security. As recent policies

have illustrated not only can not all people dream, but their status as dreamers is constantly called into question. Unlike citizenship which one is born with, the dreamers' citizenship is removable, not as a result of any particular wrongdoing on part of the individual but rather as a result of an ever-changing political landscape. That chooses to view the dreamer less as individual and more as a political talking point. Dreamers are young and fresh faces, which leads the public to view them with more favor. DACA recipients are thus in a unique position of having a politically legitimate life. But this legitimacy is borrowed. Consequently, challenging authority becomes an act of rebellion. The implicit message is: "How dare you, a guest, be ungrateful of all that we have given you?" The underlying implication is that this is not your home, but ours, and speaking up is to revolt against the hand that feeds you.

Dreamers are a reframing of the illegality of the immigrant. It legitimizes the illegality in the same manner as it attempts to undermine it by claiming that there can be 'some good immigrants' reaffirms that there are others who do not deserve this status. It regurgitates the point that there is a right way of immigrating and anyone who does not meet the qualifications for DACA is somehow faulty. It also provides an elusive dream the illusion of security. Because DACA is not a path to citizenship, it is simply a security net that can be removed at any given moment. Policy has likewise proven this point, in that its legitimacy as a policy is constantly under question.

The idea of the dreamer is also framed as embracing the idea of the *American dream* a belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society in which upward mobility is possible for everyone. However, likewise the idea of the American Dream implies a kind of meritocracy that has constantly been called into question. The American dream is believed to be achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.

The term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his best-selling 1931 book *Epic of America* described it as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." Adams further extrapolates on this idea explaining, "It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motorcars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for

what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position." (Adams, J.T., 2017) The idea of the American Dream has much earlier roots however, as is exemplified in the declaration of independence in which the idea is heralded "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech referenced the concept of the American dream pointing out some of these very same inconsistencies in this dream: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.'" While contemporary understanding of the American dream pigeonholes it at largely a matter of individual success, the house, the car, the picket fence. Early constructions focused more of the idea of equality itself. In the 1990's the company used the American dream in order to promote the idea that buying a home was the cornerstone of the American dream and this verbiage was central in ads selling home loans. An idea which led to the housing boom and ultimate bubble that popped leading to the 2008-09 financial crisis.

It quite clear that the criticism of this dream is as old as the dream itself. In that reality falls short of the ideals. Slavery, limitations to vote being initially restrained and arguably continue to restrain certain individuals from having access to this dream, arguably most continue to this day.

The metaphor of the immigrant/migrant as *illegal* has been popularized throughout the US. Many conversations about immigration, both formally and informal, often include someone referring to others as "illegal." When choosing between "illegal" and "undocumented," reporters are deciding whether to depict the person as a lawbreaker or as a more neutral and sympathetic personage. A person cannot be illegal. Even the US government refers to certain individuals as illegal aliens. Certain actions may be criminal, or illegal, however people themselves cannot be illegal. Despite that in the US, it is a federal crime to enter the country without inspection, it is not a crime to be present within the country without authorization. As stated by many linguists the term "illegal immigrant" is neither "accurate nor neutral" and other people who break laws are not referred to as "illegal." (Johnston) The language of referring to them as illegals, dehumanizes them and perpetuates the stereotype of them as criminals. The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines the adjective 'illegal' as, "not according to or authorized by law." Synonyms include

“unlawful,” “illicit,” “criminal,” “felonious,” “wrongful,” and “lawless.” Every time someone makes the choice to call an individual illegal, they participate in the dehumanization and demonization of said individual. Their entire existence is marked as illegitimate, inferior and criminal.

It wasn't until the creation of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924 that the term “illegal

alien” had a legal basis in immigration discussions. The 1924 Immigration Act was the first in US history to delineate immigration quotas, along with a framework for deporting undocumented people. It was in this Immigration Act, that Mexican immigrants were identified as “iconic illegal aliens”

Despite this phrase “illegal immigrant” was not popularly used until World War II when it was used to describe Jewish refugees who fled to Palestine without authorization. Elie Wiesel, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor, once said, “know that no human being is illegal. That is a contradiction in terms. Human beings can be beautiful or more beautiful, they can be fat or skinny, they can be right or wrong, but illegal? How can a human being be illegal?” (Long Island Wins 2016) Denial of humanity is the first step to inhumane treatment. Wiesel told CNN journalist Maria Hinojosa that the media should never use the term “illegal immigrant.” When she asked why not, he said:

Because once you label a people ‘illegal,’ that is exactly what the Nazis did to Jews.’ You do not label a people ‘illegal.’ They have committed an illegal act. They are immigrants who crossed illegally. They are immigrants who crossed without papers. They are immigrants who crossed without permission. They are living in this country without permission. But they are not an illegal people.

Nevertheless, the term “illegal immigrant” became a term used by the Court in *Arizona v. United States*. The phrase has been popularized in the US to describe both documented and undocumented immigrants as a result of the misconception that undocumented immigrants, by virtue of existing, violate criminal law. However not everyone of this same opinion, one anti-immigration activist group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, on its website argues for instance that “[The term ‘undocumented’] blurs the distinction between legally admitted immigrants and those who have sneaked into the country or chosen to violate the terms of a legal entry” That do not hold the same negative connotations including: “newest Americans, newcomers, undocumented citizens, unauthorized immigrants, families who have moved from one place to another, and people who weren't born in the United States.”(Johnston) Furthermore, the notion of “illegal”

immigration implies that the opposite legal is possible and obtainable and leads one to ignore glaring flaws in the system which prevent this from being the case.

In not separating criminals from the illegal, the rhetoric implies a conflation of the two. The idea of the immigrant as an alien is also self-dehumanizing process in that it become self-actualizing: the migrant told that they have no rights begins to believe in their lack of rights. Because rather than being simply a human, even if not a citizen, one has rights whereas being told one is a criminal, inherently rids them of their rights. "No matter how many times his attorney explained it, he kept saying "I'm illegal, I have no rights. I 'm nobody in this country. Just do whatever you want with me." what made this framing possible is that humans have rights, criminals do not have rights, immigrants being criminals do not have rights. (28) In this way the immigrant develops cognitive structures that serve this function. They internalize these cognitive structures about themselves and are less likely to act.

This discussion extends beyond referring to people as illegal aliens or describing how someone enters the United States as legal or unlawful. This discussion covers all of the terms used to describe migrants and immigration. There is no "proper method" to enter the United States; there is no "queue" to join; there is no "good immigrant" or "bad immigrant." Some people must wait decades to be reunited with their relatives due to immigration regulations in the United States. Asylum seekers fleeing violence and persecution are subjected to these regulations. These laws discriminate against certain immigrants.

In a narrative that overwhelmingly paints the immigrant as bad, it is unsurprising that immigrants and their supporters attempt to rewrite their own narratives and present a narrative to the contrary. However, the *good immigrant* narrative presents its own problem in so much as immigrants are "bad" by default until they prove themselves otherwise. Often times proving themselves otherwise often by winning an Olympic medal, treat you at your local hospital, or rescue a child from the side of a building. Small criminal activities or simply a failure to live up to the often-outrageous expectation of 'the good immigrant' becomes newsworthy, and worth of scorn. DACA and the Dream Act fall into a unique category of conditional status because they directly challenge the meaning of American identity. They differ from traditional hyphenated identities (such as African-American or Korean-American) and other forms of conditional citizenship by selectively choosing desirable traits for inclusion.

All the metaphors and narratives used to talk about immigrants

have significant consequences in the treatment of immigrants. Immigration attorneys, activists, and politicians in particular must be aware of the importance of using the appropriate language so as to not continue to dehumanize fellow Americans or continue to embolden racists and their hateful rhetoric- as this rhetoric not only hurts those who are undocumented but also those who appear to be undocumented further disenfranchising people on the margins. Although the core discourse surrounding immigrants, the use of similar derogatory terms and metaphors, has persisted over the last fifty years, social media has drastically increased the spread and political influence of this rhetoric. This amplification has led to an influx of hate speech and the legitimization of violence against migrants, often publicly witnessed and, implicitly, condoned.

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