

Why DACA Isn't Enough:

Quotes From DACAmented South Asians

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has met some of the immediate needs of undocumented youth by providing relief from deportation. Unfortunately, this relief is temporary and does not provide a long-term solution for DREAMers. To highlight these challenges, SAALT connected with South Asian DACAmented individuals across the country who struggle to plan for their future, as there is no guarantee the DACA program will continue nor that individuals will be granted their two-year renewal. As a result, many constantly wonder if their status will be renewed, if their family members will be deported, and if they will be able to fully pursue their dreams. Below are excerpts from SAALT's interviews with a diverse cross-section of DACAmented youth.

Ainee Athar, Texas



"I don't know where I will be in ten years. My DACA status may not be renewed, or my parents could be deported. All of these unknown factors make it hard for me to plan long-term. Being granted a green card or citizenship would give me access to health care under the Affordable Health Care Act (ACA), which is currently not accessible to DACA recipients, but is critical for people like me with a history of life-threatening illness."

Yves Gomes, Maryland



"I've faced many educational barriers because applications and scholarships require that I be a citizen or permanent resident. There was no box to check for those of us who had lived in the U.S. since we were children, but were undocumented or had temporary status. Even once I was accepted to certain schools, I was not eligible for tuition assistance or in-state tuition benefits due to my status. I had worked so hard to achieve my dream of being accepted to college, and then had to turn it down for conditions I couldn't control or change."

Pratishtha Khanna, Maryland



"I was ten and a half years old when I first came to the U.S. When I missed my family in India, my father would tell me that once we got 'approved,' we could go visit them. Over a decade has passed and I still miss being in a room surrounded by family with lots of commotion and laughter. It is difficult being so far away and feeling so disconnected from my family."



Hina Naveed, New York



"I have always been passionate about learning and pursuing higher education. I want to become a doctor one day, but it has been difficult to envision that goal due to my undocumented status. As a result, I've put my dream of being a doctor on hold in order to pursue a doctorate degree in nursing while I await the resolution of my immigration status. Nevertheless, my current nursing program requires an eight-year commitment; in order for me to succeed, my DACA status needs to be renewed. It is very challenging to feel like my whole life and future career hang in the balance while I await a decision on my renewal."

Bupendra Ram, California



"DACA is helpful because it provides temporary relief for undocumented youth, but it does have limitations. Having a green card or citizenship would open up more opportunities for me to apply for jobs that I want, which are beyond entry-level, and would advance my career. Through DACA, I have been given a glimpse of what it is like to live with some degree of freedom. I hope that in the future others like me will have the opportunity to become citizens and to truly be free."

Rishi Singh, New York



"It's been difficult to be ineligible for certain benefits like health insurance or a driver's license, which others often take for granted. The limitations I faced to access higher education were even harder for me. Without a green card or citizenship, I only had access to certain colleges or universities, and I was not eligible for most financial assistance even at those schools. Regardless of my academic excellence and drive, I faced barriers beyond my control that would not allow me to succeed in the ways I wanted."

With over 3.4 million South Asians in the United States, there are many more immigration stories to be told. Socially, culturally, and economically, South Asians Americans and all immigrants contribute to the strength of our nation and its success. In order for our nation to move forward, we must create an immigration system that is holistic, just, and humane for South Asian Americans, all immigrants, and our society as a whole.

**To read the full interviews of these individuals,
visit SAALT's DACA Stories page at
[Bit.ly/DACASTORIES](https://bit.ly/DACASTORIES)**



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