

# There Are Black Dreamers, Too:

## How Trump's DACA Decision Affects The Black Community

Black Dreamers speak out about how being black makes being undocumented even more difficult.

**Blavity Team** under a min • Sept. 2017 *Photo: Olivier Douliery*

This week, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, President Trump decided to end the [DACA program](#). “Before we ask what is fair to illegal immigrants, we must also ask what is fair to American families, students, taxpayers and job seekers,” the president said.



DACA is an Obama-era program that allows those brought to the United States illegally as children to live and work legally, without fear of deportation to their country of origin.

There are about 800,000 DACA beneficiaries, known as Dreamers, currently; the vast majority of these (around 600,000) are of Mexican descent, [The New York Times](#) reports. The remaining 200,000 Dreamers are a diverse group. They come from everywhere from South Korea to Nigeria.

In fact, according to a 2015 study by the [Migration Policy Institute](#), the face of illegal immigration is changing.

Since the turn of the millennium, illegal immigration from Mexico and South America countries has dropped significantly, while illegal immigration from Asia has grown by 202 percent.

African illegal immigration has grown markedly as well — by 161 percent.

Due to this increase, a [Pew Research Center](#) study found that there were around 575,000 illegal black immigrants in the U.S. in 2013.

Of that number, about 60,000 were eligible for DACA when Obama announced the program in 2012, a study by the [Black Alliance for Just Immigration \(BAJI\)](#) and the [NYU Law Immigrants Rights Clinic](#) found.

It isn't clear how many of these received DACA protection. The [United States Citizen and Immigration Services](#) only releases DACA acceptance figures for the 25 counties with the most DACA approvals. Jamaica, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic are in the top 25 — 16,054 Dreamers were born in those countries. Around 4 percent of DACA applications come from black majority countries not in the top 25.

Just who are these black Dreamers? Their stories are invariably American.

[The Nation](#) spoke to Mwewa Sumbwe, a dreamer who was born in Zambia. She was brought to the United States in 2002, at the age of four. Her first impression about the United States was that

people there didn't know much about her country of origin. She started school in Maryland not long after arriving, and was placed in an ESL class.

"I think the assumption was just that I [needed ESL because I] was coming from a different country. It was just so weird and insulting."

Zambia, colonized by the British Empire, has English as its official language. As with the young woman [Senator Dick Durbin](#) spoke about on the Senate floor this week, Sumbwe came to realize that she was undocumented when asked for her Social Security number.

She didn't have one, and said it was then that she "fully understood what it meant to be undocumented." She had to be extra careful growing up. Her parents were always telling her not to do "stupid things," specifically, "Don't do stupid things because you're black, and not only are you black, but your status will be affected."

Jonathan Green, one of the founders of immigration advocacy group the [UndocuBlack Network](#), told the Nation that this is something black undocumented immigrants often hear. And it is something that he, as a black Dreamer, fears as well.

"Yes, I'm worried about being deported, but I'm also a young person living in Baltimore," Green said. "It doesn't always matter that I'm an immigrant. I'm still faced with the consequences of being black."

"Statistically, I'm more likely to be picked up for anything," he told Joy Reid on [MSNBC](#). He, and other black undocumented immigrants, fear that what might start as a simple incident of racial profiling could end with them being banished to a country they've never been to.

"The first thing people see is that I'm black," Sumbwe said. "There's already that negativity. The deeper aspect is you don't even have documentation."

Because of this, Green said, black undocumented immigrants "are three times more likely to be deported and much more likely to be caught up in the criminal justice system because of their color."

This fact, Green believes, is "a result of white supremacist policies that impact black Americans." Opal Tometi, BAJI's executive director, took things a step further after the DACA decision was announced. "President Trump is yet again pandering to white supremacists over immigrant, black and poor communities," Tometi said.

Sumbwe's fate, and Green's, and the fates of all the rest of the country's Dreamers are in Congress' hands now. The House and Senate have until March 5, 2018 to pass legislation to keep the Dreamers in the country. Sumbwe is ready for whatever might happen.

The government "doesn't make us human," she said. "We are human. We still exist. We are still powerful and resilient. I'm motivated to work even harder for immigrant and human rights in general."

**For More Information, and to Request Programs, Preaching, or Other Resources, Contact:**

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