Saving the Dream on the Eastern Shore

Estela Ramírez was 15 when she arrived in Easton, MD, fleeing crime and violence in her native country, Honduras. She and her 7-year-old brother joined their mother there. She remembers that during the first two years life was difficult for them. At that time there were few Hispanic immigrants in Talbot County. She and her brother spoke no English. Other students ridiculed her. Her mother worked two jobs. Now, 17 years later, Estela speaks fluent English and works as the Assistant Director of the Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center in Easton. She is a Dreamer, working legally under the DACA program established by President Obama in 2012.

Based on those with whom her agency has worked, Estela states that there are at least 60 Dreamers on the Eastern Shore, however, an online source suggests there, in fact, may be as many as 861 (out of a total Hispanic population of 21,509 on the Shore, according to the 2016 updated census). She noted that her agency had assisted 20 DACA recipients in applying for renewal of their work permits before the October 5 deadline. When asked where she is from, she automatically replies Easton. Honduras is no longer a reality for her. She worries for her two young daughters who were born here and are, therefore, American citizens.

Estela explains that the younger generation of immigrants like herself came here with the intention of staying. Earlier immigrants often intended to return home eventually. Of DACA recipients she says, “We want to give back to our communities. We’re not here to take. We want to give.” She reports that locals are more tolerant now, and that, in fact, (continued on next page)
Dream, continued

the town council recently declared Easton a “Welcoming City.”

Estela’s wish, like that of all Dreamers, is to see Congress establish the DREAM Act as the law of the land. If you would like to help her make that wish come true, call, email or write Congressman Andy Harris and Senators Cardin and Van Hollen, encouraging them to sponsor the appropriate legislation asap. The current policy is destined to end next March. Time is of the essence.

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What Good Is Immigration?

Yes, immigration built this country, but why do we need any more people? That seems to be part of the reasoning behind the new Senate immigration bill, supported by President Trump, that would make significant changes in who and how many people we let into the U.S.

The bill would cut the number of legal immigrants in half over the next decade, with the cuts coming mostly in refugees admitted for humanitarian reasons and in family members (other than spouses and minor children) of current citizens or residents. The bill also proposes a merit-based system for immigration that would favor applicants with advanced degrees, firm job offers, lots of money to invest, and good English-language skills. The merit system would add additional hurdles to the immigration process, but it’s not clear that it would result in significant changes; the number of immigrants with bachelor’s degrees has grown 90 percent between 2000 and 2015, and many entrepreneurs looking to start new companies want to do so here—the U.S. is already a magnet for talent.

Supporters of the bill argue that the proposed changes will improve wages and increase job opportunities for U.S. citizens by curtailing the number of low-skilled, low income foreign workers. But U.S. citizens don’t seem interested in jobs picking fruit or cleaning bathrooms—there are persistent shortages of workers for agricultural harvesting, janitorial or lawn care services, food service jobs, and similar employments. Just ask any farmer of crops that can’t be harvested mechanically, or any restaurant manager.

More broadly, opposition to immigration ignores economically important trends. Historically, new immigrants (continued on next page)
Immigration, continued

have worked so hard that they end up with family incomes equal to the U.S. average within a decade—so immigrants tend to pull their weight and pay their taxes, not become a drag on the economy. Moreover, immigrants have a higher birthrate, which helps to offset our otherwise aging population. Japan, Russia, and Europe—also aging—face growing economic decline, because they lack immigrants to fill jobs and pay taxes to support their economies. So immigrants are in many ways our most important economic stimulus, especially as we face growing competition from a Chinese economy powered by a billion people.

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Whose Lives Are Really at Stake?
Straight-Talk

Harvey, Sandy, Katrina, Irma, Maria, earthquakes, fires, tsunamis, mudslides, droughts, war, illiteracy, starvation and disease....

We rise to the occasion when strangers across our country and around the globe are overcome by natural and man-made disasters. We give our prayers, our dollars, our belongings, our time to alleviate their suffering. We begrudge them nothing.

So why, when individual Americans are suffering personal disasters—a lost job, a debilitating disease, old age, mental illness, hunger, homelessness, violence and abuse—why do we begrudge them every penny our state and federal governments ask from us to give them help? Why do we say it’s right to spend billions of dollars on a wall, and wrong to feed and educate America’s children? Why is it okay to spend 25 cents of every tax dollar we send Washington on the Pentagon and the military, but not okay to spend 8 cents on unemployment and labor programs, 4.5 cents on food and agriculture programs, or a penny on restoring the Chesapeake? When did we decide we didn’t care about each other or our planet anymore?

Or did we...? Maybe too many of our representatives in Washington don’t really represent us. Maybe they don’t care about their fellow Americans. But if we still do, they need to hear from us. Whatever you believe, now is the time to let your representatives in Congress and the White House know where you stand. It’s not just (continued on next page)
Straight Talk, continued

Strangers’ lives at stake anymore. It’s every American’s, including ours.

Francie Miller, taxpayer

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Looking for a Non-Profit to Support?

Non-profit organizations are in many ways the glue that holds societies together. They support and promote the arts, help protect the environment, give aid to those in need, and take on many different worthwhile causes. Some can obtain grants from foundations or government entities, but most sustain themselves on individual gifts of money and on volunteer efforts. There are lots of these organizations-- some 36,000 in Maryland, about 1,500 on the Eastern Shore. Chestertown has 147 registered non-profit organizations, Salisbury has 429. Examples include The Wellness Alliance, (Chestertown), Volunteer Fire Companies in most towns, (Galena, Rock Hall, etc.)

Non-profits don’t have to pay income taxes, and contributions to them can be tax deductible to the donor. However, to be a registered non-profit requires approval by the Internal Revenue Service. If you would like to help support a non-profit organization, either with your money or your volunteer efforts, how would you find one that works on things you care about?

The site Great Nonprofits lists non-profits in every state. You can search by city within the state, making it easy to find local non-profits. Searches can also be filtered by cause such as Education, Environment, Health. This site charges a 4.5% fee for processing your donation. So you might want to take the name of organization and make your donation from the Network for Good which charges only 3%.

https://greatnonprofits.org/state/Maryland
http://www.networkforgood.com

The website Find the Company has a helpful guide and a search tool to find nonprofits by name of the organization or classification (e.g. Animal-related, Civil Rights, Science, etc.). You can also filter results on criteria such as income, total expenses, number of employees, compensation per employee, and assets. For each nonprofit, Find the Company provides an overview, basic financial data, as well as IRS details. Go to the “Perform More Research” (continued on next page)
section to find the organization’s webpage. Find the Company also has a handy feature titled “Research Similar Nonprofits.” In that section is a list of organizations with a similar purpose (music, sports, etc.) that you might want to get involved with or donate to. You can donate directly to any nonprofit by clicking on the “Donate Today” button. If that organization is not a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) organization, you will get a message telling you that. Otherwise, it will take you to the Network for Good (3% fee) site to make a donation. http://nonprofits.findthecompany.com/

Here are several other helpful resources for finding a non-profit organization on the Eastern Shore.

**IRS Exempt Organization Select Check:** This official government source will show whether the non-profit is in good standing with the IRS and if it is able to accept tax deductible contributions. https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organizations-select-check

**Guide Star** can find non-profits by location and provide copies of their tax returns, so you can view their financial health. http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx

**Charity Navigator** locates larger non-profits that have been fully vetted as to their use of your donation dollars. They have a very strict criterion and are usually reserved for the larger, multi-million dollar nonprofits. The smaller local organization may be listed but they won’t have a rating or other information about these smaller non-profits. https://www.charitynavigator.org/

With many non-profits to choose from, there is bound to be one for which you will find inspiration and a desire to support. Happy hunting!