

Voting: An arbitrary right that we take for granted

By Hisrael (Izzy) Carranza and Dalia Pedro Trujillo

Dalia's Take

In the last few weeks, every time I log on to social media, whether it's Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook, my accounts ask me if I have registered to vote. My accounts are so smart that every time I go between Idaho and Washington (I split my time between both while in law school) I get asked if I need to update my voter registration.

I think these reminders are awesome, and I'm glad that they exist. And yet, I can't help but feel annoyed every time I log on. I get annoyed because it serves a constant reminder that in one of the most important elections of our time, I don't get to cast a vote. Voting in the November election is something that as a DACA recipient, I can't do.

The social constructs that we've created around citizenship say that as an undocumented individual in this country I am not allowed to vote. I am denied the right to vote even as I strive to make this country a better place for the communities that I love.

I've called this country home since I was eight years old, and since then I feel like I've done a lot to try and be a part of this country. I've learned the language, I learned about our (at times dark) history, I've immersed myself in our culture, and I'm currently in law school, trying to learn how our legal system works. I look back sometimes, and think about how hard I've

tried to assimilate, and how I still don't belong.

As someone who doesn't have the opportunity to vote, I understand how important it is. That is why voting, and access to voting, is something I am very passionate about. Recently, I've been thinking a lot about a conversation I had with my law school partner in crime, Israel. He once said to me, in a conversation about how we could engage underrepresented communities in voting, "if voting wasn't so important, why would they try so hard to take it away." That's something that has stayed with me, and something I think about often, particularly now that we're in the middle of such an unprecedented election cycle.

Hisrael's Perspective

Like my friend Dalia, I too have had voting on my mind the last couple months. So much has happened and so much has changed, yet so many things remain the same. I cannot help but feel the weight of the immensity of the decisions that lie ahead of us. Regardless of what party you align with, if any, there is one thing we can all agree on. This upcoming election is of monumental importance.

With that in mind, I am confused as to why we make it so hard for people to participate in this decision. I would assume that for a country that prides itself on democratic values, so much so that we spread them to

the rest of the world, this would be our opportunity to shine. However, that is not the case. We make arbitrary decisions based on social constructs that impede people from participating.

For example, Dalia is one of the smartest, most thoughtful, and politically aware people I know, but she cannot participate in the upcoming election. Through no fault of her own, somebody symbolically drew a line that she cannot cross. Although she is the epitome of the American Dream, she cannot partake in this “American” experience.

The thought that “This just doesn’t make sense,” keeps ringing through my mind. Maybe the reason I can relate to her story is because I have one of my own. Although I was born in the United States, I too have lived through the arbitrariness of our social constructs. I can vote now, but only because I happen to live in the “right” state. As a young man I made many mistakes, some of which landed me in the criminal justice system. I am now part of a forgotten secondary class in our society, an American man with a criminal record.

In the United States, each state gets to choose whether people like me get to vote or not. So again, in some of our states, someone draws a symbolic line that takes away your right to vote. What I told my friend a couple of years ago still rings true today. Why so much effort to take away this right if, as many people say, it is pointless. If you believe this, I will tell you what I tell the young people I meet that say this too. Look at what is happening in Florida and the

efforts that are underway there. Also, think about it, why do we take someone's voting right away when they commit a crime? What does that have to do with voting? Maybe it is because we don’t want certain people to vote, but that is a conversation for another day.

The point is that we are living in a moment when civic engagement should be at its highest and yet, we as a country, are missing out on the opportunity for arbitrary reasons. These are just two examples, but there are many more.

Let us not forget, that this election is about something bigger than ourselves. The stakes in this election are so high, because the people who stand to lose the most, are the people who aren’t able to cast their vote. This is our moment. This is our opportunity to do something, to make a difference, and to make sure that that we don’t forget that voting is a privilege not all of us have.



Hisrael (Israel)

Carranza is not the traditional law student. Apart from being married and a father of four, he is also a formerly incarcerated individual. Israel attributes his change in lifestyle to the realization that his old way of life had few possible outcomes.

Israel's decision to pursue a better life was not accompanied by instant praise or a clear path. Instead, Israel had to surpass many obstacles like finding a steady job with a record, paying off his legal financial obligations, and finding a way to afford going to school all in hopes of changing the trajectory of his family's legacy.

He credits his second chance at life to the help of his family, mentors, and dogged work ethic he learned from his immigrant parents. In 2017, Israel graduated from Weber State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Minor in Criminal Justice.

He is currently a rising 3L at Gonzaga University School of Law. At Gonzaga, Israel is active in the law school community and has held several leadership positions in various school organizations and committees. After law school, Israel's goal is to practice in the two areas of law that have intersected in his life, criminal and immigration law.



Originally from

Oaxaca, Mexico, **Dalia Pedro Trujillo** moved to the United States when she was eight-years old. That experience changed the trajectory of her life forever. As an undocumented immigrant, and a DACA recipient, she understand that the impacts of the law can be personal, and have an immense effect in people's lives.

Her experience as an immigrant in the United States has taught her how to navigate two cultures that don't fully accept her as one. This has led to her existing in a quasi-status in this country that she now calls home. This is what drove her to pursue a law degree, and why she hopes to be able to practice immigration and criminal law.

Dalia graduated from Saint Martin's University in Lacey, WA in 2012 with degrees in history and political science. She is grateful to her parents, who taught her to work hard and never give up.

Dalia is a third-year law student at Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane, Washington. She is the President of the Gonzaga Latina/o Law Student Association, and a Removal Defense Intern at RAICES Texas.