



CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION
NETWORK, INC.

415 Michigan Ave., NE • Suite 150 • Washington, D.C. 20017 • 202-635-2556

Press Release

For Immediate Release

June 1, 2005

Contact: Mandy Morgan, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
202/635-5816 or mmorgan@cliniclegal.org

Honors graduate faces deportation

Department of Homeland Security, Congress should intervene

WASHINGTON, DC – Unless the Department of Homeland Security allows them to stay, a 19-year-old high school honors graduate and her parents will be deported to Costa Rica by July 5.

Marie Gonzalez, whose American dream is to become an attorney, was brought into the country at age 5 by her parents on a legal tourist visa.

Her parents owned and operated a Chinese restaurant in Jefferson City, Mo. while Marie was an active member of her church youth group, the National Honor Society and her school's track and tennis teams.

The Gonzalez family mistakenly believed they could apply for residency after having lived for 10 years in the United States. A tip to government officials in May 2002 set off a chain of events that has led to a deportation order and an outcry of community support for her family.

For Marie and other undocumented high school graduates who were younger than 16 when they entered the United States, the Senate's DREAM Act and the U.S. House of Representatives' Student Adjustment Act would have allowed them to attend college and possibly become U.S. citizens. Neither act was brought up for a vote in Congress last year.

The U.S. Catholic bishops strongly support this legislation.

“The Student Adjustment Act and DREAM Act should be passed quickly so that deserving students, who through no fault of their own, are in an undocumented status, can begin their journey on the path to fulfilling the American dream, by getting a college education,” said Kevin Appleby, Director of Migration Policy for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services.

If Congress fails to enact effective immigration legislation, an estimated 65,000 more high school graduates in situations similar to Marie's will face limited educational and employment opportunities.

Marie, who since graduation last year has been volunteering at local Catholic schools and traveling around the country to tell her story, said she hopes the legislation is passed soon.

"All these kids' lives are on hold like mine is," she said. "These are bright students who deserve the chance to go to college. This legislation gives them the option to stay in the country they call home and would provide a means for them to give back."

Congress is expected to reintroduce the bill this year, but not in time for Marie and her family, who would face many legal obstacles if they ever try to return to the United States.

"Marie is an American, and the DREAM Act simply recognizes that fact," said Donald Kerwin, Executive Director of Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC).

"The Department of Homeland Security has the power to stop her deportation. They should allow this young woman to stay and continue contributing her intelligence and passion for justice to our country, the only country she has ever known."

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a subsidiary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the nation's largest network of charitable immigration services with more than 150 affiliates in 242 field offices around the country. CLINIC advocates for transparent, fair and generous immigration policies.

###

If you would like to continue receiving CLINIC's press advisories and releases, please send an e-mail to mmorgan@cliniclegal.org.