

THE CAIRO REVIEW INTERVIEW

AMERICA'S NEW FACE

San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro explains the imperatives of immigration reform in the United States

What to do about the Hispanic migrants who crossed the border illegally to live and work in the United States has been a hotly contested issue in American politics for decades. As Democrats and Republicans continue to debate options from granting citizenship to deportation, San Antonio Mayor **Julián Castro** is a leading voice for the humane treatment of the estimated eleven million undocumented migrants in the United States along with a sensible overhaul of the U.S. immigration system.

Castro is a rising star in Texas politics. At 38, he is the youngest mayor of a “Top 50” American city. He was re-elected to a second term in 2011, with a stunning 82 percent of the vote. (His identical twin brother, Joaquín, captured a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 2012 election.) Due to the Lone Star State’s political weight as the second most populous in the country, as well as the growing clout of Hispanic voters, some observers see Castro gaining national influence. Last September, he became the first Hispanic to deliver the keynote address at a Democratic National Convention. A former advisor to fellow Texan George W. Bush has been quoted saying “Julián Castro has a very good chance of becoming the first Hispanic president of the United States.”

Castro’s case for giving undocumented migrants a pathway to citizenship is rooted in a belief in the “land of opportunity” that flows from personal experience. The grandsons of a Mexican orphan, and sons of a Mexican American political activist, Julián and Joaquín went on to graduate from both Stanford University and Harvard Law School. “The dream of raising a family in a place where hard work is rewarded is not unique to Americans,” Castro said at the Democratic convention. “But America makes it possible. And our investment in opportunity makes it a reality.” *Cairo Review*

Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed Castro in San Antonio on April 6, 2013.

▷ **San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro**,
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center,
San Antonio, Aug. 23, 2012. Bahram
Mark Sobhani/ZUMAPRESS/Corbis

CAIRO REVIEW: *Your grandmother came from Mexico. Your mother became a*



political activist in the Hispanic empowerment movement in San Antonio. How do you see the immigration issue in the contexts of American society and your own personal story?

JULIÁN CASTRO: I consider my family story an American dream story that has been so common throughout the United States history, whether the immigrant came from Mexico or Ireland or Germany or Italy or wherever. The story of my family has been the same story of progress. My grandmother came as a six-year-old orphan from Mexico, dropped out of elementary school. She worked as a cook, a maid and a babysitter. But my mother was able to finish high school and get a college education. And my brother and I have been able to get a good education and reach our own dreams. So when I think of immigrants, I think of them as replenishing the values and the work ethic that make America great. That certainly was true with my grandmother. And I believe that's true today with the immigrants who are at the center of concern in Congress right now.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Your grandmother somehow made it to San Antonio?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: Both of her parents, as I understand it, passed away during the time of the Mexican Revolution. They had relatives, extended family, who lived in San Antonio, and who went down to Mexico, the state of Coahuila, and brought her and her sister through Eagle Pass, Texas, to San Antonio, in 1922. A couple of days before the Democratic National Convention, a genealogist posted on the Internet images of the documents from when she had been stamped through. We had never seen those. We had never done the research. In fact, before then, I didn't even know whether she had come through documented or undocumented. That was the first time that I saw that. I can only imagine for her as a young child what that must have been like.

CAIRO REVIEW: *When we read stories about the immigration of Mexicans, Hispanics generally, into the United States, the stories often seem to have a negative connotation. How do Mexican Americans see their story as immigrants?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: Too oftentimes folks have a two-dimensional view of Mexican immigrants into the United States, both historically and in the present day. A few years ago, Arthur Schlesinger wrote a book titled *The Disuniting of America*, articulating a fear of Balkanization as immigrant groups grew in the United States, and a concern over whether they could learn the language and integrate into the culture. The truth is that Mexican Americans have been part of the United States for generations. Especially in California, the southwest, Colorado. They have had high rates of military service, very hard work ethic. It's a faith-based community. So they have the same values and same work ethic, and tendency to serve the country that have been part and parcel of the American experience. Too oftentimes they are thought of as a threat to the success of the nation when in fact historically they have helped build the nation

successfully. Same thing today. There are so many industries in the United States that rely on their hard work. There are later generations, like me, who are fully participating in the opportunities that America has to offer, and making our own contributions to it.

CAIRO REVIEW: *One rarely sees in the immigration debate the fact that San Antonio, for example, was a Spanish and Mexican settlement before Texas was even part of the United States. Or stories about the Bracero Program, in which the U.S. brought Mexicans into the United States to fill jobs that were needed to build the country, especially during World War II.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: Too oftentimes, the popular perception is the [former California Republican governor] Pete Wilson perception, of folks coming across the border. It's much more nuanced than that. Many Mexican American families trace their roots to the time when this was Spanish territory, or then Mexican territory. And then in Texas, when Texas was an independent nation, and then finally part of the United States. I have no doubt—and I am glad to have been born in the United States—I have no doubt that my life is better because I was born in the United States than it would have been if I had been born in Mexico. More opportunities in the United States, more upward mobility. However, there is a nuanced history there that ought to be understood and appreciated, and that perspective hasn't often been told in the mainstream press.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Would the debate be different if the history was better understood?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I believe that a better understanding of that history is part of the reason the southwest part of United States has generally not been as ravaged in recent times by this debate. Places like Texas, like New Mexico, and of late, California—well, Arizona would be an exception—have begun to take the longer view on this, and understand that we've made more progress over these last 150 years, and a lot of those battles are battles that were fought a long time ago. And that people as human beings have been living, coexisting, with each other, and contributing to the forward progress of the nation. And so this spike of antipathy that you saw a couple of years ago, with SB1070 [in Arizona], with laws in Georgia, Alabama, and so forth—we can weather those out, all of us can weather those out, take a longer view, based on that history.

CAIRO REVIEW: *In February, you testified in the U.S. House Judiciary Committee on immigration reform, and said the immigration system is “broken.” What's the problem?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: The immigration system is broken in several ways. First, it's broken for folks who are legally applying through the front door for citizenship. Today it takes far too long for most applicants to actually become United States citizens. It's broken and needs to be fixed for everyday applicants for citizenship, by

expanding the number of folks who are allowed to become citizens, and clearing up the backlog, putting in place better protocols to shorten that time. It's also broken because on the one hand, immigrants in Mexico, for instance, are being sent a signal by industry that they are truly needed in the United States—because they are—and on the other hand, being told by a lot of political leaders, “Don’t you dare get anywhere near the United States.” There is a push-pull that they experience. We are not being honest with ourselves. Several industries in the United States, principally agriculture, rely on the work of undocumented immigrants, and so many folks pretend like they don’t. The industry acknowledges it. But so many folks—I should say so many public policy makers—pretend as though that’s not true, and they demagogue the issue. Part of fixing the system is finding a way to bring some order to that reality, through work visa programs, and through an earned pathway to citizenship for the folks who are already here, making it possible for industry to thrive and do it in a way that is humane to the people involved.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How serious is the problem?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: It is estimated that there are eleven to twelve million undocumented immigrants in the United States. About 50-60 percent of them were folks who crossed the United States border, and 40 percent are people who overstayed their visas, so they could have come from anywhere. On the industry side, industries like agriculture and construction and others have acknowledged that 40-50 percent of their employees may be undocumented immigrants. That’s a huge swath of their work force. That’s what makes it so urgent to fix this problem. Because you have industries, for instance, in the south—I believe in Alabama, after it passed a very strict anti-immigration law—that literally cannot survive without that labor. The United States agricultural industry cannot afford for the Congress to continue to delay fixing that system. The other part of this is that the United States traditionally has been a nation of growth. Today, we have three hundred and some odd million people. But the birthrate is declining, just like the birthrate in Japan and in most Westernized, top economy nations. We’re hardly at the rate of replenishing the future work force, or the present work force. It’s this immigration of younger people and folks who enhance that reproduction rate that will help ensure there is a strong replenishable work force in the future. The thing is, even in Mexico you’ve seen that reproduction rate plummet over the last fifteen to twenty years. So the question is, what happens if the United States is not taking in as many immigrants as it did before, the birth rate is declining, and in Mexico more folks are staying there, and their rate is declining? What does that mean for the continent in the future? I don’t think that’s a positive outlook for North America.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Do your recommendations represent the Obama administration's perspective, or do you disagree with the President on any of the points?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I have my own perspective on a couple of the finer points of the legislation. Generally, the Obama framework and the "Gang of Eight" Senate bipartisan framework are not too far apart. And I generally agree with the framework that they have proposed. The framework essentially is to first continue to ensure there is strong border security. I believe that should be accomplished through using technology. We've doubled the number of border patrol agents at the southwestern border since 2004. There are over 21,000 of them now. Secondly, there is a need to ensure that when an employer hires someone, that employer can be assured that person is legally in the United States. Employers who intentionally flout the law will be punished accordingly. Third, there is a need to improve the legal immigration system. Clear up the backlog, and increase the number of people who are able to get in here legally. And then finally, do something about the eleven to twelve million who came in undocumented. Specifically the components of dealing with that eleven to twelve million are to have them identify themselves, for them to pay a fine, pay back taxes, learn English, to be put behind the legal applicants in terms of when their applications for citizenship would be considered, and they would become first permanent legal residents and eventually, after five, six, seven years, have the opportunity to become citizens, as long as they don't have a felony criminal record. Those are the components of the reform.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Your quibbles?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: A couple of things. The bipartisan framework, and particularly the Republicans, have suggested that we should hold up allowing a path to citizenship until we have, quote unquote, border security. I believe that we'll never get there by their definition of border security. You are always going to have some people that sneak across the border. You can't keep 100 percent of the people in jail. You have jailbreaks. You're never going to be at zero. The fact is that today the borders are more secure than they ever have been. The number of apprehensions on the border is at a forty-year low. Net migration between Mexico and the United States is estimated to be near zero today, because the Mexican economy is doing fairly well and the American economy over the last couple of years has not been doing as well. People are staying for the opportunities that they have in their home country, which they ought to. I'm not willing to wait until some politicians say that everything is OK, when they won't have much motivation in the future to say that it's OK. That's not the politics of this issue. So I disagree there.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is that a deliberate, cynical tactic? They'll allow a pathway to citizenship, and then they put a condition that invalidates the opportunity?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: One would hope not. Perhaps we should give folks the benefit of the doubt because they are close to a compromise. But I disagree with that component of any kind of compromise. Secondly, there is the issue of the time frame. At least the numbers I've heard suggest that it would be eight to ten years that it would take someone to earn citizenship. I believe that that time frame should be condensed perhaps to five to seven years. There's no science to that. But if you have folks who have not broken the law while they've been here, who are working hard, who pay their back taxes, pay a fine, they learn English, they love the country, and you've cleared the backlog of legal applications first, then I believe they should be allowed sooner than a decade to become citizens. I'm confident that anybody who jumps through all of the hoops to become a citizen under the plan that is laid out is someone who loves the country, and who will be a net positive to the country as a citizen. Why not allow that in a shorter time period than taking a decade or so?

CAIRO REVIEW: *There are other options. You have the path to citizenship, but there is also the proposal to limit the opportunity to permanent residency while blocking the path to citizenship, and there is the deportation option.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: The United States has been a brilliant country, but its lowest moments have come when it tried to segregate some folks into second-class status. Of course, slavery was the best example of that. The internment of Japanese during World War II. In this context, it doesn't compare in degree of intensity to those incidents. However, I do believe that not allowing folks who are already here, who are for all intents and purposes functioning as Americans, prohibiting them from becoming citizens, and only legal residents, would create a group of second-class non-citizens that would not be healthy for the United States. You want people to swear allegiance to your flag. You want people to have their full stake in the advancement of the nation, not for them to have half a stake in it.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So there are two imperatives for reform, a moral imperative and an economic imperative?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: A moral imperative, an economic imperative, and a civic imperative. It is better to have people fully signed up with America, than have them out there in the shadows without a full stake in the forward progress of our country.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there an international discussion to have on this, or is this purely an American domestic issue? That Mexico will just have to take it or leave it, whatever American politicians decide to do?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I've been encouraged by the conversation that President Obama struck up with President [Felipe] Calderón and now President [Enrique] Peña Nieto. They met in December and are going to meet again in the next couple of months. Both nations, Mexico and the United States, have an important role to play in helping to fix the broken system. Mexico, because its economy is growing at a good clip right now, is helping to reduce the number of undocumented immigrants coming into the United States. The United States, of course, has the primary role to play on this issue. But it has reached out to Mexico to see how they can collaborate, which I think it should do.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there a difference in Obama's approach?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I believe that President Obama has been a bridge builder. I give President [George W.] Bush credit for trying as well. You haven't seen at the presidential level in the last two presidents as much of a difference on this issue as you've seen in other issues, to their credit. There's only so much that each country can do on the other side of the border without damaging political prospects for success. That's touchy on both sides. You can't have, in all honesty, a Mexican public official advocating much in the United States because that raises the ire of too many folks here. And on many issues you can't have an American president campaigning in Mexico because of the complicated history between the two nations for instance on the drug war. But in concrete productive policy terms, [former Mexican President Vicente] Fox and Bush and Calderón and Obama have worked well together, without the bluster, to make progress on the issue.

CAIRO REVIEW: *President Bill Clinton's administration dealt with immigration reform. President Bush's proposals were similar to what is being discussed this time. Why is this issue coming to a head now?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: There will be compromise now because the Republican Party has finally gotten the religion of demographic reality. Just two years ago, I had the opportunity to debate [former Colorado congressman] Tom Tancredo and [Kansas Secretary of State] Kris Kobach at a forum for Intelligence Squared in New York along with Tamar Jacoby [president and chief executive officer of ImmigrationWorksUSA] as my debate partner. These folks were talking about essentially how lazy this group of immigrants is compared to the previous groups, more reliance on welfare, a higher pregnancy rate. You had Herman Cain in the presidential race talking about electrified fences. [Congressman] Steve King from Iowa and others making inhuman comparisons about these immigrants to animals. That's all changed because of the November 2012 election. They are not doing it because they suddenly had a massive change of heart. They had a change of political imperative. Frankly, I'm not much concerned at

this point whether they had a true change of heart or it's just their politics. The most important thing is to get to that legislation that will make a great difference in the lives of hardworking people.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happened in the election?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: Well, the fact that the Hispanic community came out at a much greater rate than it ever has. That, in important battleground states, the Hispanic community is a significant factor, and that that's just growing in the future. This immigration issue became a kind of litmus test. It wasn't always the most important issue. It wasn't the most important issue to Hispanic voters. The economy was the most important issue, like it was for everyone. But this was a way of sorting out who was OK with Hispanics, and who wasn't OK with Hispanics. And Republicans have realized that, and they fear it. They fear the political consequences and that's why they suddenly changed their tune.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did Mitt Romney lose the election to President Obama because of the Hispanic vote? The figures show that Obama won 71 percent of the Hispanic vote, compared to only 27 percent for Romney.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: It was one component. Certainly the Hispanic vote was not the only reason that Romney lost. But it was an important component of it. And also among Asian Americans. For Asian Americans, I believe, the strong connection to immigrant communities also matters. I'm convinced that played a role in President Obama getting 75 percent of the Asian American vote. It is not just an issue for Hispanics. It has also been an issue for others.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You mentioned Arizona Senate Bill 1070, the Arizona law passed in 2010 that cracks down on illegal immigration. Can you unpack that controversy?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: SB1070 was part of a cycle that we see in the United States of anti-immigrant fervor, whether it was against the Germans a long time ago, or against the Japanese, or others throughout history. It's not surprising that anti-immigrant fervor heated up in 2010 because we were in the middle of one of the worst recessions we've seen in a while. When you add up economic anxiety with fear of a growing ethnic population, it makes sense that you would see laws like SB1070. For Arizona, it's unfortunate because in many ways that state represents the future. A city like Phoenix that is booming, part of the southwest sunbelt of the United States, a diverse community, a great state. But it shot itself in the foot on this one. The image that the state has is more negative than it was before. It lost tourism dollars. I'm sure it lost conferences that would have gone there. It's lost a lot of good will, in the Hispanic community especially, and

other parts of the United States. When you say Arizona, it has a meaning these days that's not great. And so it has a lot of work to do to rehabilitate itself.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is the objection to the legislation?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: At two levels what they did was bad. The rhetoric around immigration was terrible. Whether it was [former Arizona State Senator] Russell Pearce, or [Maricopa County Sheriff] Joe Arpaio, using the term wetback. Talking about immigrants like they are animals. Making a kind of sport out of it, the way that Joe Arpaio has done in Maricopa County. Also going after ethnic studies programs in Tucson schools. Trying to impact by legislation whether folks who speak with an accent can teach English in the schools. There is a constellation of policies that have been pursued that have sought to limit the ability of both immigrants and Latinos to fully participate in America. And they have done it with a rhetoric that is red hot and plays to a nativist sensibility and that is not lost on people throughout the United States. So with SB1070, in terms of the mechanics of it, what's so offensive is that it's with a wink and nod they create a law that will allow folks to stop people they suspect of being there illegally. Everyone can understand who in the world they're gonna be stopping—that's not hard to understand—and ask them whether or not they are here legally, and so forth. That doesn't seem American. That seems less than American. And the fact that they would target it essentially at brown people made it completely unacceptable. And harkened back to things that have happened in the United States that generally as a nation we are not proud of.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You said in your Congressional testimony that it is a “defining moment.” What did you mean by that?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: It's a defining moment for Congress because people believe that Congress is broken, that they can't get anything done. And this is the one issue where there seems to be a light of hope that they can come together as two parties and get something good done. So there is an opportunity there. It is also a moment because of this awakening that many have had in the Republican Party about the need to update their perspective because of demographics. I don't believe it is going to turn back any time soon. If they are smart, they will recognize that they need to be more inclusive than they have been. This is the defining way that they can begin that transition to a more inclusive party.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Underneath it all, this seems to be a debate about who is an American.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I agree. There has always been a question about who is an American. Throughout our history, our leaders have argued about who we are as Americans,

and what makes someone an American. But generally, over time, we've settled on the idea that America is not a skin color, or a type of accent. It's a perspective, and a willingness to work together to make our country stronger, whether you're from Ireland or from Mexico, or from Italy or from China. And that remains true today. So sometimes if you have the last name González, people don't think of you first as an American. They think of you as being from Latin America. But the fact is that people with the last name González have been Americans for generations now. So this idea that there is one type of American, that wasn't true 150 years ago, and is even less true today.

CAIRO REVIEW: *As you noted, there's actually net zero immigration at the moment. Is some of this debate being driven by a backlash among non-Hispanic whites who see the demographics changing? In the next fifty years, whites will no longer be in the majority.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I believe that there is anxiety out there. But the anxiety is not just around a changing demographic, it's about a changing economic reality. The fact that a factory that used to employ two thousand people in the Midwest is down in Mexico, or it's in China now. That employers generally need less employees to accomplish the same amount of work than they used to. The fear of whether the old model of working for a company and collecting your gold watch thirty-five years later, whether that model even exists any more. So all of the economic changes in our global economy have intimately impacted the anxiety that people feel. And that, combined with demographic changes and technological changes, adds up to a quicker lashing out—or I should say, adds up to an occasional lashing out—at groups. And immigrants—particularly if they tried to come in through the back door and not the front door—are a very convenient target for that anxiety. I believe that as our economic picture brightens, you are going to see a subsidence of a lot of that lashing out. And we already see that now. The fervor is not as heated as it was in 2010 and 2011. Part of that is because the economy has gotten stronger and stronger—it still has a long way to go. But it's all of those things: technological changes, the global economy, and demographic changes, create this 'perfect storm' of anxiety.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is the concept of America as a country of immigrants becoming lost as a prized American ideal? In his book, Who Are We?, Samuel Huntington called Mexican immigration "a unique, disturbing, and looming challenge to our cultural integrity."*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I would point to Texas. Texas was once part of Spain, and part of Mexico, and today has a population that's 38 percent Hispanic, as of the last census, and 46 percent white non-Hispanic. It's been the most successful state economically over the last several years. There's no way one can say that it's not infused with a lot of both cultures. Over time, the people attracted to America have been people who share the ideals

that it was founded on. That's what attracted them here. They have been the dreamers, the hard workers, folks willing to get their hands dirty in order to prosper. So, the filter has been that the people attracted to this county have been folks who wanted to be in the America that those ideals represent. There is not a big difference between the United States of yesteryear and the United States of now, in terms of those ideals.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Huntington argued that the problem with Mexican immigration is that it is extraordinarily high, and that Mexicans don't assimilate enough into American society.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I believe that the Mexican experience will be like the Italian or the Irish experience, in terms of acculturation, language usage. It's ironic that the fastest growing market for the Spanish TV networks in 2013 is English-dominant Hispanics. Univision and others have started these networks that are in English aimed at the Hispanic community. Fusion is one of them. They are going to completely turn on its head the perception of what Spanish language TV networks are. So that's one development that demonstrates that progression of integration into society. I would also say that we are in a different place in the twenty-first century. Today in business, you're rewarded if you speak more than one language. There are students all over the United States who speak English but are also learning a second language, and students around the world who routinely learn English and their home language. English is our dominant language, but there is room for communities that also are strong in another language. The way we evaluate that is different than the way we did fifty or a hundred or two hundred years ago.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Samuel Huntington again—one of his arguments is that this high rate of Mexican immigration into the southwest United States threatens to create two Americas.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: That argument just hasn't borne itself out over the hundreds of years that the Hispanic community has been strong in the southwest United States. A few years ago, for instance, the *New York Times* ran an article at the height of the Iraq War about the difficulty that military recruiters were having finding people. The story was about the city that was completely bucking the trend and that story was about San Antonio. That young people in this city were signing up at a much higher rate than the rest of the nation. This is a city that is 63.2 percent Hispanic, and over 90 percent of those Hispanics are Mexican. You see there that there is an ethos of service and a pride in the country, so much so that they are willing to go and die for the country. That should give confidence to folks that the growth of the Hispanic community is a replenishment of the ideals and the work ethic and service to country, not a subtraction from it. [On the threat to cultural integrity] the same thing was said historically about Germans and Chinese and others. I'm convinced we are never going to

be completely rid of paranoia, but the more success that communities like San Antonio have, that are diverse communities—or like Los Angeles or San Francisco or New York—the more success that they have, the more they teach us about the strength of diversity in America versus the negative.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What's your prediction about the passage of the immigration reform legislation this year? Is it a done deal?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: It doesn't look like a done deal yet, but I do believe it will happen in 2013.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there a civil war inside the Republican Party on this issue?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: There's no question that there is a splinter in the Republican Party between business Republicans and social conservatives. However even many of the social conservatives have come to recognize the importance of compromising on this issue. For that reason, I am confident that 2013 will be the year that legislation passes both houses of Congress.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What will be the impact on America, and specifically on the Hispanic community?*

JULIÁN CASTRO: I believe that if this legislation passes, first it is going to make a positive impact on the lives of several industries and millions of immigrants. It will also send a positive signal to the Hispanic community that hopefully this time period of the blame game and ostracizing Hispanics in places like Arizona is over. In its own way, it will be a sort of offering of a handshake to the Hispanic community, that we recognize the important contribution that it is making to the United States, and that new immigrants will make to the United States. We can no longer separate the destiny of the United States from the destiny of Hispanics in this twenty-first century. As goes the Hispanic community, so will go the United States, in education, in work force development, in the ability to achieve the American dream.

CAIRO REVIEW: *In your Congressional testimony, you mentioned the interesting story of Benita Veliz.*

JULIÁN CASTRO: She was brought to the United States when she was child by her parents. She went to Thomas Jefferson High School, which I know because that was my alma mater as well. She graduated valedictorian, and went to college as a National Merit Scholar, and graduated from St. Mary's University at the age of 20, and has been a leading voice for changing our laws. Benita and over a million Dreamers [young illegal aliens who would be eligible for permanent residency under the DREAM Act

first proposed in Congress in 2001] hopefully will benefit from the legislation that Congress passes this year. She has the opportunity, if there is a pathway to citizenship, to earn citizenship, so she doesn't have to live in the shadows anymore. She would be able to live in the United States without fear of being deported. Many folks have been deported over these last few years. However, there has been more sensitivity to the situation of people like Benita over the last year or so.