

Immigration reform: Reflections on the DREAM act

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Monday, 03 January 2011 13:04

In 1960, African American students staged instrumental sit-ins against racial segregation, igniting a movement that eventually led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In 1968, students of the Chicano movement organized protests and walkouts in response to unequal conditions in public schools and cultivated leaders who (re)inserted Mexican American perspectives into US history.

These days, hundreds of thousands of DREAMers carry on such traditions, taking risks as they fight against dehumanization and push for fair access to opportunities in the country many wish to call home.

On Saturday, Dec. 18, 2010, the DREAM Act nearly passed in the Senate, 55-41, just five votes short of the 60 needed to move forward with the bill that would benefit our families and communities by unblocking the road to higher education for up to 2.1 million young people and recognizing that our immigration system discriminates against some of the most brilliant students in America.

At Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network (MIFN) we worked hard to support our student organizers who made history by pushing the DREAM through the House of Representatives and into public dialogue across the country. These dedicated students took the lead to keep the bill alive, and thanks to them we know it is only a matter of time until our dreams are realized. As one DREAMer put it, "We've been working on this for nearly ten years; it's not going to go away."

In addition, a coalition of Minnesotan faith groups, community organizations, and many individuals -- including MIFN Board Member John Gutterman (Church World Service) and Associate Director Alondra Espejel -- organized across state lines to successfully gain votes from key senators in North Dakota and Alaska.

On the national scale, our relationship with United We Dream was vital for synchronizing our actions and efforts with the movement in Washington D.C. We also thank our two senators in Minnesota, Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken, who demonstrated their strong support as co-sponsors of the DREAM.

We know this fight has been hard for families and students, but we also know that we are moving in the right direction. We will continue to work together with students, allies, and the national network to evaluate and strategize about the next steps.

Right now it is a good time to rest and relax. Share love and happiness with family, friends and our communities. As long as we are connected we know we have the power to change.