

# Cultural Narrative Edition of *The Echo*

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This special edition of *The Echo* includes submissions from students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at Urbana High School. To preserve their responses to questions posed in the class, we have done very little to correct grammar and did not want to change wording of their messages. *The Echo* does not, in any way, wish to offend or alienate any person. The use of the term “illegal immigrant” can be seen as problematic and offensive, but we did not want to change the wording of the responses ESL students so carefully

crafted. *The Echo* believes that no human can be “illegal” in nature, and we understand that many undocumented immigrants live in a way that benefits society. We hope that you can understand the use of language and our choice to preserve the point of view of the ESL submissions completely. Thank you for reading this special edition of *The Echo* and please check out our next printed paper coming out in late March.

The *Echo* Junior Editor,  
Grace Rogers



[http://colorlines.com/assets/c/2012/10/jose\\_antonio\\_vargas\\_101212-thumb-640xauto-6980.jpg](http://colorlines.com/assets/c/2012/10/jose_antonio_vargas_101212-thumb-640xauto-6980.jpg)

Jose Antonio Vargas defied the expectations of the po pouri of assembled staff and students in the lecture hall on Friday Oct.26.

He began his talk without a glitzy introduction presenting his numerous accomplishments and awards — which include the much coveted Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting — but with a surprisingly modest apology. “Sorry guys,” Vargas began. “This is a bit too early for me and I went to bed at three a.m. last night, so questions from you guys will be very helpful.”

And while indeed Vargas was showered with questions roughly 45 minutes later when his presentation came to a close, during Vargas presentation itself, the auditorium full of tired, hormonal teenagers eagerly anticipating a short half day miraculously listened, spell bound to Vargas’ story of discovery, self-doubt, and ultimately acceptance of his status in the United States of America an undocu-

mented citizen. Moving to the U.S. from the Philippines when he was 12 years old, Vargas had no idea that he was living in the U.S. without a valid green card, a discovery he made at age 16 when he tried to get a driver’s license and, after having his green card closely scrutinized, was curtly told, “this is fake, don’t come back here.” “I was shocked. For the rest of my freshman year and into the summer, I was very mad at my mother and grandparents,” remembered Vargas on the discovery a full 15 years later. “I felt very much lied to.”

After a teacher told him he “asked too many questions,” Vargas attended a journalism camp during his sophomore year. There, he was introduced to his eventual ticket out of the lifetime of low level jobs, and the eventual green card producing marriage that his family envisioned for him, “That may have been their plan,” mused Vargas, “but not mine. If not for journalism, I don’t know how I would have turned out.” Becoming an avid reader after his introduction to journalism in camp, Vargas, who previously viewed reading as an activity reserved “only for white people,” swallowed down any book or magazine he could get his hands on, an activity that he attributes his early growth as a writer to. Soon, Vargas was compiling a

list of everything he wanted to do in life, and, according to Vargas, “by the time I was 30 I had accomplished every single thing on that list.”

However, no part of it was easy. After pursuing a Bachelor of Arts, San Francisco State University where Vargas was supported entirely by the goodwill of a venture capitalist and being offered a job at the Washington Post, Vargas finally got his drivers license from Oregon, at age 22. It was his first (and only) official government document in the United States, and that one card enabled him to do everything from attend dinners in the White House to follow the 2008 Republican campaign trail. “Sarah Palin was something else,” remembered Vargas wryly.

Coming out about his undocumented status two years ago, Vargas has become a major advocate for reform on the immigration issue in the United States, because, as Vargas puts it himself, “there is nothing worse than being in the U.S.A. and thinking small.”

He has appeared on a range of talk shows, from the Colbert Report to a small town radio show in Alabama, where, prior to meeting Vargas, the radio host tweeted. “When this guy comes let’s arrest him.” Vargas has thrown himself at the issue of immigration and the plight of undocumented citizens because, as he says, “immigration is such a key issue in our country, and the sad thing is we don’t try to think about it in new ways anymore. Nothing breaks my heart more than the thought of all the undocumented teens in our country who have simply succumbed to their fear and have just given up, internalizing their identity and place in life as ‘illegal’ it is for that reason that the term ‘illegal’ should not be used in discussions regarding immigration in this country, because... the only difference between me and you is a Social Security number and a slip of

paper.”

Vargas’ talk seemed to really hit a chord for many in the audience, undocumented or documented, and the minutes before the bell rang, dismissing the enraptured listeners back to class was filled with somber and serious discussion and reflection on the issue of immigration and Vargas’ amazing life story.

One student, who asked not to be named due to the student’s undocumented status, told the *Echo* that, “It really hit deep in a lot of people. Even if some of us are not going through what Vargas was talking about now, we all will, at some point or another, and needless to say, this talk was very inspirational.”

Another student, who also asked not to be named, told the *Echo* that, “Although I am a legal resident myself, I feel like I have been through a lot of the stuff Vargas has been through, as I have many family members and friends who are undocumented. Despite my status, sometimes I feel that I am undocumented as well due to the way people treat you sometimes, the way they look at you. Sadly, this extends to the police and government as well... It can get really tough, and Vargas’ speech was very helpful for me and many others that I know, both at his speech and not.”

Concluding his presentation, Vargas told the crowd. “My number one point here is that you cannot afford to give up on yourself, undocumented or not, because the rest of the world will for you. Your whole life, people will be telling you no, and closing doors in your face, so it is crucial that you say yes to yourself... I knew when I was 16 that I had to start preparing to take care of myself when I grew up, because the truth is, that begins now.”

It is unlikely that those who had the privilege to see Vargas’ lecture on Oct 26 are likely to forget him and his amazing story of perseverance, blind luck, and eventual triumph in the face of all adversity for a long time.

## Questions about Immigration

1) What is your opinion about illegal immigration?

2) Do you think DACA is a good plan? Explain why or why not.

3) Do you think Romney’s immigration plan is beneficial to immigrants? Why/why not?

4) Whose immigration plan do you think is better? Why?

## Kevin Rudolph (Freshman)

1) I think that illegal immigration is a bad thing, but I think that if they’re in the United States they should be fine because they aren’t doing any harm to anybody and they do jobs that some Americans refuse to do.

2) I think that DACA is a good plan because it is not deporting immigrants that were born here. I think that it is kind of fair because if they are born here then there is no harm

because they live in the same place as us and they aren’t causing any trouble and they aren’t different from people that aren’t immigrants, because they are regular human beings.

3) [Romney] is basically deporting the immigrants back where they came from. He is also saying that, if they don’t seek a path to citizenship then he would deport them back to their country and I think that it is really not fair.

4) I like Obama’s plan because he is giving the immigrants a chance to make their life better and he is giving them an opportunity to be successful in life as well.

## Student at UHS (Senior)

1) I think illegal immigration it’s fine because people come to the U.S for a better life and better security. Because they may live with risk in where ever they come from.

2) I think DACA is good because it gave all undocumented people the right to get a driver’s license, get a permit to work for two years and the right to get a good education. We can only get this if we go to the military or keep going to school.

3) I think Obama’s plan is better because he wanted to help all the illegal immigrants too get a good education. He would give us a permit to work and the right to get a good education.

4) I think Romney’s plan isn’t good because he is racist and he wanted to help all the illegal immigrant but only if we go to the army. We can get killed in the military there’s 50 percent chance any of the thousands of the illegal immigrants get kill.



# Questions about Immigration

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## Jose Gamino (Sophomore)

1) I think immigration it is helpful because immigrants do work that most Americans don't want to do. The United States is a multicultural country and immigrants can help us learn from other cultures and other countries. Many immigrants come to the United States, either for a personal, difficult reason or just to visit family members. The "American Dream," which is one of the reasons that immigrants come to the United States for better conditions.

2) I think the DACA is a good plan because it helps the immigrants who were brought as children to the United States should stay and be approved. Also, the DACA can help immigrants blend in better to the community. It's easier for students to go to college.

3) I think Romney's plan isn't beneficial because immigrants will not have a lot of opportunities in the United States. Also, the immigrants who don't have good conditions will not be able to join the military and they won't be able to stay.

4) I think Obama's plan is better because he is supporting immigrants. I have a lot of friends who are immigrants and they struggle for many things, such as getting a license and going to college. Obama's plan can change a lot of immigrant's lives.

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/May\\_Day\\_Immigration\\_March\\_LA37.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/May_Day_Immigration_March_LA37.jpg)



## Immigration

By Glodie Mulunda for the Echo

Immigration has been a big issue in the United States; and with the election coming up, it's been one of the biggest topics for the candidates. With an estimated 11.5 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., the question has been, what do we do with the immigrants?

During his four years in office, President Barack Obama developed the deferred-deportation program, which allows undocumented immigrants who came to America between the age of 16 and 31 to apply for a two-year visa, if they pay \$465 and meet academic or military requirements and have no serious felonies on their records.

Even with his deferred-deportation plan, some voters think Obama could handle the immigration situation better, but decided that immigration is the second big issue, after economics.

Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney said, if elected, he would not rescind the deferred-deportation plan, but he wants to implement a plan of his own to allow

immigrants to seek a path to citizenship, but only through military services. If elected, he would veto the Dream Act that allows undocumented young immigrants to stay legally in the U.S. if they meet certain education and service requirements.

"The people who have received the special visa that the president has put in place, which is a two-year visa, should expect that the visa would continue to be valid," Romney told the Denver pPst on Monday, Oct. 1. "I'm not going to take something that they've purchased. Before those visas have expired, we will have the full immigration reform plan that I've proposed".

Romney plans on putting an immigration reform plan into place before the deferred-deportation plan expires for those who got it if elected.

The Obama campaign criticized Romney saying, "He is against sensible solution to fix our broken immigration system."

Obama, who in the past four years as president has tried to pass the Dream Act, announced in June that he would prevent deportation for immigrants who were brought here as children. This plan known as DACA

## Houqian Lee (Freshman)

1) I think we should treat illegal immigrant friendly and kind. I think those immigrants are not harmful for most of people who are citizens of U.S, because most of them are coming here for a more comfortable life and better income. They do the jobs and work which the American will not do. So I think the illegal immigrant staying in the nation for not a long time is good for many people.

2) I think DACA is a good plan because it treats the immigrant friendly and opened. It gives a big opportunity for those foreign immigrants (including undocumented) who want to get a better education and a better condition for living and studying. Importantly, it gives right to the children to attend education and school. But if we can change the expiration a little bit long which to let them finish their high school or middle school.

3) I think Romney's plan is not really beneficial to immigrants because it misses the opportunity of fixing the mistakes and problem of the immigration system. It also hurt the immigrants' mentally, because you don't give them a chance to restart a new life and exploit the right of those illegal immigrant to live in another country. Also the only way which can get into America is through military requirement. It is very dangerous and harmful on physiology and on psychology of a person.

4) Also I think, Obama's is better than Romney's. Obama's perspective is to let the undocumented immigrants have a chance to stay in America for a period of time. But Romney's is not to allow them to stay in America. So giving others a chance is much better than a plan what exploits others chances.

(Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), was criticized by Romney, who believes the president is circumventing Congress to make the change before the election.

This announcement got a lot of attention from Latinos who now have some hope that Obama has been listening; after being disappointed that he didn't accomplish his promise that he would push for a reform that would create a pathway to legalization for undocumented immigrants, which Obama admitted was his biggest failure as president.

Other Latinos believe Obama is just trying to get their vote by announcing DACA, just like Romney is trying to get their vote by saying he won't get rid of the deferred-deportation plan that Obama created.

Sophomore Bethany Peppers said, "Obama's plan is better than Romney's because immigrants aren't hurting anybody being here and most of them are doing jobs Americans refuse to do, they are here because they want a better life for themselves and America can help them with that. Immigrants don't seem to be causing any trouble here in America, and America is supposed to be the world's melting pot so we should



<http://fairimmigration.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/flag-and-immigrants1.jpg>

give immigrants citizenship".

The election, coming up Nov. 6, 2012, will determine those who plan for this issue is best suited for America. Obama wants undocumented immigrants to live here in the U.S. legally, if they meet certain requirements. Romney thinks it's a bad idea to let them stay here in U.S., but they can still seek citizenship rights through military services. Immigration is giant issue in America, and more and more immigrants are coming to America each year. The most important question. Is what do we do from here?