

99 WRITING

My Uncle Nilton...

by Ryan

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NARRATIVE
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This piece is from *My Generation Can: Public Narratives for Community Change* (2019, 826 Boston), a book by 12th Graders at Boston's Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers.

My uncle Nilton was a 17-year-old Cape Verdean when he came to the United States looking for a better life. He was a smart kid with a good heart and a lot of dreams, but he struggled a lot as an immigrant. Even though he finished high school with a 4.0 GPA, he couldn't go to college because he had overstayed his visa. He felt sad and disappointed with the situation knowing that he had American friends who went to Harvard. After high school, he started working at McDonald's at the age of 19. Many members of his family were talking about going back to Cape Verde, but he was the only one who didn't want to go because he was determined to make it.

He also knew that if he returned to Cape Verde he couldn't come

back. He always tried to do his best at everything. He's humble and a very caring person but he never shows his emotions. Still, I know that he has suffered. I see it in his face. I think people like him should have a chance to become residents and eventually citizens.

My uncle has tried everything, even marrying an American woman. But that didn't work. She was beautiful and had a lot of plans for the future. They decided to get married. On his wedding day everyone was excited. My grandma came from Cape Verde to attend the wedding, but his girlfriend didn't show up. We're still not sure why, but I think it's because she thought he was marrying her for a green card.

In Boston, there could be up to 180,000 undocumented immigrants, many of them good Cape Verdean people like my uncle. Did you know that there are more Cape Verdeans living abroad than the 500,000 who live on the islands? (4) It is crucial that we find a way to resolve this issue so that good people can stay in this country,

even if they are undocumented. One way to do this is to provide them a path to citizenship.

A path to citizenship is a way to give undocumented immigrants a chance to live in the country legally. There are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (5) and we could never deport them all, and even if we could it would be bad for the economy. I believe we should give them a path to citizenship because immigrants would help the country become more diverse and develop economically by increasing consumption of goods, services, and also tax revenue. This would also help keep families with mixed immigration statuses together, which is the moral thing to do.

I am calling on all Boston residents to make their voices heard. Please write, or even better, call your local representative's or senator's office and tell them that we can no longer wait for immigration reform. We must put pressure on the

federal government to find a way to keep these good people in the country. The way forward is through a path to citizenship.

If we do nothing then the United States risks losing millions of productive members of society. Immigrants would go back to their original countries because they would have to leave their houses that they worked so hard to get. They would have to give up their dreams, their jobs, and their friends. This would make this country a bad place to live.

- “Cape Verde Population 2019,” World Population Review, February 17, 2019, accessed April 2, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cape-verde-population>.
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Jens Manuel Krogstad, Jeffrey S. Passel, and D’Vera Cohn, “5 Facts about Illegal Immigration in the U.S.,” Pew Research, November 28, 2018, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://pewrsr.ch/2Sh6aeu>.