

Review of Michael A. Olivas's

PERCHANCE TO DREAM: A LEGAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE DREAM ACT AND DACA

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Perchance to DREAM: A Legal and Political History of The DREAM Act and DACA (NYU Press, 2020) traces the history of the DREAM Act and DACA, with a detail and experience that only Professor Olivas can bring. The book is comprehensive and a must read for understanding the location and scope of solutions for immigrant youth who call America home but who, for more than a decade, have lived in limbo under a form of prosecutorial discretion and under an administration that has wavered on their fate. With deep expertise in higher education and immigration, Professor Olivas is the ideal historian to narrate the story of the DREAM Act and DACA. His credibility and authority to write such a book are clear, as the reader considers the first step to legally recognizing the rights of children to attend school without regard to their status movement that has followed in the post-K-12 space.

Divided into seven chapters, *Perchance to DREAM* commences with college residency, describing its legal history and significance for undocumented students. The second chapter covers the state DREAM Acts legislation and litigation comprehensively, and really shows how states worked to help or derail opportunities for undocumented kids in higher education. In chapter three, Professor Olivas covers the federal action around the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a bill that has been introduced in every Congress since 2001, and if enacted would provide a legal pathway and eventual citizenship to qualifying noncitizens who entered the United States as minors. In chapter four, Professor Olivas takes the reader through the politics of the DREAM Act and the failure to move it past the finish line when a vote to move the bill forward was taken in 2010.

Chapter five of *Perchance to DREAM* centers on the DREAM Act and prosecutorial discretion, an issue I have sat with for some time. Appropriately, Professor Olivas begins with the immigration case of the late Beatle, John Lennon, and the plight by his attorney, Leon Wildes, to secure a form of prosecutorial discretion known as “deferred action.” He describes the evolution of deferred action, and how it served as the foundation for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a policy enacted in the Obama administration that allows certain individuals who arrived in the United States as youth to request deferred action and work authorization.

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The chronology of *Perchance to DREAM* is significant and communicates the relationship between the demise of the DREAM Act and the birth and endurance of DACA. Professor Olivas also laments the role DACA could have played in the national discourse: “DACA was cut down in its prime, and instead of morphing into a significant playbook for a form of comprehensive immigration reform, it became a pawn in national politics” (p. 81). Professor Olivas also explains how DACA has been challenged during the Trump administration.

In *Perchance to DREAM*, Professor Olivas details undocumented lawyers, DACA, and occupational licensing in chapter six, which serves as a treatise on the licensing of undocumented and DACA-mented people in the United States. I am aware of no other monograph that offers a national picture of the licensing requirements laid against the national backdrop.

Finally, the book includes several appendices that will long serve as a rich resource to those studying the history of and relationship between states and state laws and undocumented college students.

Professor Olivas is the author of more than one dozen books, but *Perchance to DREAM* is special, binding together his life’s work and commitment to immigrant youth, starting with the Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe*. The impact of the book will be tremendous as a new administration and Congress decide how to protect immigrant youth and their families moving forward.