



## ***What Happens To A Dream Deferred***

Scott Boehm & Peter Johnston/2018/12 min/Spanish & English

### Pedagogical Guide

*What Happens To A Dream Deferred* is an intimate portrait of a day in the life of two DACA recipients, José Adrián Badillo Carlos and Osvaldo Sandoval, graduate students at Michigan State University whose lives were thrown into limbo after the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was rescinded on September 5, 2017.

Facing an uncertain future and the prospect of returning to an undocumented life in the shadows, the possibility of deportation and family separation, José and Osvaldo struggle to complete their Ph.D. degrees while maintaining a quiet dignity amid adversity and national debates over immigration.

The film slows down time and invites viewers to walk a few steps in the shoes of those whose dreams have been deferred by a decision that affects nearly 800,000 DREAMers.

Shot in Spanish and English, it presents José and Osvaldo as they are both at work and at home with their families: two normal people who move between the different languages and worlds that have shaped their identities like the millions of immigrant children and teenagers brought to the United States before them.

## 40 Minute Lesson Plan

0-5 min	Overview of DACA program
5-18 min	Watch What Happens To A Dream Deferred
18-20 min	Form small groups
20-30 min	Small groups debate selected discussion questions
30-40 min	Class discussion of the film

This lesson plan can be expanded to 50 or 75 minutes by:

- Allowing more time for small group and/or class discussion
- Providing students with José and Osvaldo's biographies and personal statements and asking them to read and discuss them in class
- Directing students to the film website for more information about the film and how it has been received
- Listening to a podcast interview with José, Osvaldo and the filmmakers about the film ([dacafilm.com/press/collaborative-edges-podcast/](http://dacafilm.com/press/collaborative-edges-podcast/))
- Discussing the film's title with reference to Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem"

### "Harlem" Langston Hughes - 1951

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*



## José Adrián Badillo Carlos



José Adrián Badillo Carlos was born in Guadalajara and came to the United States when he was 10 years old. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Hispanic Cultural Studies and a Teaching Assistant at Michigan State University. He received a B.A. and M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from Northern Illinois University. While at NIU, he received the Outstanding Graduate Student Award and was inducted into Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society and Phi Sigma Iota, the International Foreign Language Honor Society. At MSU, he served as the Co-Chair of the Graduate Student Association of the Romance and Classical Studies Department from 2015-17. His research focuses on representations of violence, corruption and narcocultura in contemporary Mexican music, literature, film and television.

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*I believe identity is one of the biggest issues for many DREAMers. Being able to identify ourselves at a young age is not an easy task. In my case, I was brought to the U.S. at the age of 10 and because I was able to adapt to the language and the culture, I now consider myself as a bicultural citizen. But this has been a struggle for many of us because there is a perception that we are not American enough, but also not Mexican, Dominican, Puerto Rican, Honduran or Guatemalan enough because we have grown up in the U.S. and do not have many memories of our home countries.*

*Currently there are about 800,000 DACA recipients. This is a figure often mentioned in the news, along with 25 billion dollars requested by the president to build a wall along the border. If we are to be referred to as statistics, then we should also talk about how 97% of DACA recipients are currently employed or enrolled in school and at least 72% of the top 25 Fortune 500 companies employ DACA recipients. Research has shown that DACA beneficiaries will contribute \$460.3 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product over the next decade—that is significant economic growth that would be lost if DACA were eliminated. On the other hand, it has been estimated that it would cost nearly 60 billion dollars to deport all DACA recipients.*

*Although these numbers are often discussed in the news, most of the time they do not talk about how we are also human beings. That we grew up here, we received the same K-12 education like other kids and we recited the pledge of allegiance every morning before we even knew what it meant in English. That we have jobs, families and help our communities. Perhaps it is because this affects me personally, but it is my impression that there is not enough coverage of DACA recipients and how they contribute to society. If people had a more humanistic perspective on this issue, then perhaps they could understand the complexity of our situation.*



## Osvaldo Sandoval

Osvaldo Sandoval was born in Mexico City and was brought to the United States when he was 15 years old. He is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Hispanic Cultural Studies and a Teaching Assistant at Michigan State University. He received a B.A. Cum Laude in Spanish and a M.A. in Spanish from California State University, Fullerton, where he also served as president of the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society (Sigma Delta Pi) and president of the Asociación de Alumnos y Ex-Alumnos de Español (AAEE). At MSU, he served as the Co-Chair of the Graduate Student Association of the Romance and Classical Studies Department from 2015-17. His research focuses on contemporary theater and performance studies in Spain and the Southern Cone, and he has adapted and directed various Hispano-American plays.

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*What Happens to a Dream Deferred illustrates how immigration policies can affect the daily lives of DACA recipients. This is not only an educational film about the effects of recent decisions regarding the DACA program, but it also reflects how human beings are treated as political targets and objects of negotiation to fulfill political agendas.*

*I believe the film does a great job portraying our daily routines, which include studying, working, spending time with our families, etc. Besides the personal frustration, anxiety, and anger surrounding my situation, the film positively transmits the strength to continue with our lives. For this reason, I truly believe that this film humanizes what politics have objectified for years. Furthermore, it combats misconceptions, myths, or stereotypes that have been manipulated by the media and political discourse about immigrants, such as the use of the term "criminal."*

*Finally, we are no different for being DACA recipients. I do not want special treatment because of my situation. I do not want to be recognized because I am a DACA recipient. I want to be recognized for what I do in my field of work and for what I contribute to my community. With this film, we raise our voices in order to generate uncomfortable, but necessary dialogues that create awareness within our institutions and communities.*



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### Discussion Questions

#### **Basic Information**

1. What does DACA stand for? When was the program announced? When was the program rescinded? Who approved the program? Who rescinded it?
2. Approximately how many people have been accepted into the DACA program? What benefits do recipients receive?
3. Do you know why DACA recipients are referred to as DREAMers? Are there DREAMers who are not DACA recipients? What is the relationship between DACA and the DREAM Act?
4. Do you know what reasons were given for rescinding the DACA program? Do you know the legal challenges that have been presented to that decision? What do you think should/will happen to the DACA program?

#### **José & Osvaldo's Experience**

1. How old were José and Osvaldo when they were brought to the United States? In terms of rights, do you think it should make a difference if people migrate as children or adults? Why or why not?
2. José compares the DACA program to breadcrumbs – not a full loaf of bread, but enough to survive. What does he mean by this comparison? Do you think it is accurate?

3. Osvaldo refers to DACA as “simply a temporary permit,” but also says it means “everything” to DACA recipients. What are some of the issues that might arise with temporary solutions to permanent problems? What alternative legal solutions can you think of to address the situation of DREAMers?
4. How did the 2016 presidential election campaign affect José and Osvaldo?
5. What obstacles did José and Osvaldo overcome in order to pursue their PhDs? How did DACA facilitate their ability to achieve their higher education goals?
6. How have the personal lives of José and Osvaldo been affected by the decision to rescind the DACA program? What are the similarities and differences of their family situations? How do you think you would feel living in their shoes?
7. At the end of the film we hear Breanne, José’s wife, express that the decision to rescind the DACA program is not fair, a feeling echoed by Osvaldo in the last line of the film. Do you agree or disagree with that sentiment? Do you think you might feel differently if you were a DACA recipient or married to one?

## **Film Analysis**

1. How does the film work against negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants living in the United States that often appear in the news and in political discourse? Do you find the presentation of José and Osvaldo realistic? Why or why not?
2. Although José and Osvaldo are both fluent in English, the film is recorded mostly in Spanish. What effects does the predominance of Spanish in the film have for you as a viewer? Do you think Spanish, English and bilingual speakers might relate to the film differently? What about people born in the United States compared to immigrants to the United States?
3. A significant portion of the film is shot in slow motion. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to shoot in that style? How did you react to the long shot on the bridge at the end of the film? Why do you think they chose to end the film that way?
4. How is the film different from a television news report or feature story on DACA? What is the value of the cinematic treatment of this issue? What qualities does cinema have that distinguishes it from other forms of media?
5. Consider the use of sound in the film. Did you notice any of the sounds while watching the film? How do the deep, low tones contribute to the overall mood of the film? What about the natural sounds we hear at the end? What do you think the filmmakers wanted viewers to feel through their choice of sounds?