



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 9, 2016

## Two Texas H.S. Valedictorians Reveal Illegal Immigrant Status

As many high schools held their graduation ceremonies this week, two class valedictorians from Texas revealed that they are in the United States illegally. Both graduates preferred to describe their status using the common euphemism: “undocumented.”

The first valedictorian, who graduated from McKinney Boyd High School (about 30 miles north of Dallas), is Larissa Martinez, who left Mexico with her mother and younger sister in 2010. In a sometimes heartwarming summary of her journey, in which she related how her mother fled from an abusive husband to take her children to America, Martinez told the graduating class:



On July 11, it will exactly six years since moved to McKinney from Mexico City, where I was born and raised....

After all of these years, I have finally mustered up the courage to stand before you and share a struggle I’ve had to deal with each and every day.

Unexpected reality number three: I am one of the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of the United States. I decided to stand before you today and reveal these unexpected realities, because this might be my only chance to convey the truth to all of you that undocumented immigrants are people, too.

[applause]

I was hesitant to speak about this here today because of the great divide of opinions concerning the topic of immigration in America. But I feel like I owe it to all of you to be honest, and I owe it to myself. The most important part of the debate and the part most often overlooked is the fact that immigrants — undocumented or otherwise — are people, too.

People with dreams, aspirations, hopes, and loved ones. People like me. People who have become a part of the American society and way of life and who yearn to help make American great again, without the construction of a wall built on hate and prejudice.

[applause]

We are here without official documentation because the U.S. immigration system is broken, and it has forced many families to live in fear. I, myself, have been waiting seven years for my application to be processed. So I hope that all of you leave here today knowing that we are trying to do it the right way, but we don’t know how.

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Martinez undoubtedly has endured a difficult struggle, brought by her mother to a strange country, where she says she didn't even have her own bed and took care of her little sister so her mother could work long hours. That she could earn a 4.95 GPA and receive a full scholarship to Yale University under such circumstances is a testimony to her fortitude. These are accomplishments of which to be proud.

However, there is another side to Martinez's adjustment to life in America. This accomplished young lady has assimilated so much of the American system that she has even absorbed the vocabulary favored by President Obama and the president's allies in government and the media.

Like all of those who deny that our immigration laws are actually laws — and not suggestions — this young lady is in apparent denial of the fact that by coming to our country without “official documentation” she is in violation of the law. The fact that she apparently had little choice in the matter and was brought here as a child certainly reduces her culpability and places the burden on her mother, but she includes herself among “the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of the United States.”

Is the term “undocumented immigrant” significant? On January 30, 2013, Gene Demby (the lead blogger for NPR's Code Switch team) posted a blog whose very headline suggests so: “In Immigration Debate, ‘Undocumented’ Vs. ‘Illegal’ Is More Than Just Semantics.” Demby wrote:

On Monday, we pointed to how the bipartisan Gang of Eight senators mostly avoided the term “illegal immigrant” in the language of their immigration reform plan.

It looks like President Obama did the *same* in his address on the issue the next day. [Italics in original]

A little further along, Demby noted:

But the term “undocumented immigrant” is not without its own political connotations. It's been the term of choice for activists in favor of reform; Obama's choice to use it seems to signal that he's on their side in the debate.

“Undocumented immigrant” was not the only term favored by Obama and those on his “side in the debate” over “immigration reform” (a term that, itself, usually means providing amnesty to those who have entered our national illegally) used by the valedictorian.

Martinez, whose is unquestionably an excellent student and quick learner, evidently picked up other buzz words from those on the pro-amnesty side of the debate. For example, when she said: “We are here without official documentation because the U.S. immigration system is broken, and it has forced many families to live in fear,” she used another term favored by the Obama administration. In fact, when we go to the White House website and click on “Immigration,” we find phrases including “America's immigration system is broken” multiple times.

Martinez also said that many families are living in fear, which is undoubtedly so. People who know they are in violation of the law usually are fearful that they will be caught. When the accomplished young valedictorian said, “we are trying to do it the right way, but we don't know how,” it is clear that her civics classes did not place much emphasis on our system of laws and how it is an essential part of becoming a good citizen to abide by those laws.

When Martinez goes to Yale, she is hoping to enter the pre-med program and eventually become a neurosurgeon. With her obvious high level of intelligence, her prospects seem promising. However, with better guidance, she might have come to the United States on a student visa and pursued her goal



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legally.

The other Texas valedictorian who recently revealed her illegal (or “undocumented”) status was Mayte Lara, a graduate of Austin’s Crocket High School. Unlike, Martinez, however, Miss Lara did not bring up her status in her valedictory address, but tweeted afterwards:

Valedictorian, 4.5 GPA, full tuition paid for at UT, 13 cords and medals, nice legs, oh and I’m undocumented.

The tweets that Lara received in response indicated that some were more upset with the fact that she had received a free scholarship to the University of Texas than the fact that she is here illegally.

Someone named Cuervo Jones tweeted: “I did it legally, nobody should get a short cut.”

Sean DuVall tweeted: “Not exactly ‘living in the shadows’ is she? We’re a nation of laws. I abide by them and so should she.”

And a “Dave S” tweeted his “undocumented” opinion that Lara’s ethnicity and gender worked in her favor: “put a white male in exact same situation: he has to take out \$100k in student loans. It wasn’t the GPA, honey.”

A report in Britain’s *Daily Mail* observed that Lara’s public admission to being in the country illegally will compromise her offer of full tuition at University of Texas.

The *Daily Mail* quoted a spokesman for the university who said: “In accordance with state law, Texas universities — including the University of Texas schools — have for decades granted two-semester tuition waivers to valedictorians of Texas public high schools, without regard to their residency status.

“State law also does not distinguish between documented and undocumented graduates of Texas high schools in admissions and financial aid decisions. University policies reflect that law.”

As is the case in other states, the policy in Texas of giving illegal aliens in-state tuition rates has generated much opposition from those who believe that those who have broken our laws should receive no such favorable treatment. However, receiving a full scholarship goes far beyond receiving in-state tuition rates.

It is likely that once news of this event spreads further, further public outrage will result.

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