

# UCLA

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Immigration and Documentation: An Interdisciplinary Research Approach

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### Authors

Garcia, Patricia  
Murillo, Marco

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In the midst of preparing the special issue on *Immigration and Documentation*, America witnessed President Obama respond to the Congressional political paralysis that has stalled the passage of comprehensive immigration reform by announcing the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program and expanding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The announcement of DAPA granted parents of children who were born on or before November 2014 and who are U.S. citizens or green card holders temporary relief from deportation and work authorization. The expansion of the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) removed the condition that applicants be under the age of 31 and made deferred action available to people of any current age who entered the United States before the age of 16 and lived in the United States continuously since January 1, 2010.

With over 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States, issues related to immigration and documentation have gained prominence in political, economic, and social discourse. In recent years, growing research on immigration and documentation has focused on the diverse experiences of immigrants in school, work, politics, and civic engagement. Guided by critical perspectives, this special issue expands upon the existing literature through a collective body of work that moves beyond traditional scholarship to present the perspectives of various contributors to the national conversation, such as researchers, practitioners, and artists. The special issue consists of an eclectic mix of genres, including research articles, policy briefs, reflections, and art. While genres differ, each work in this special issue foregrounds the need for researchers, policymakers, artists, educators, and practitioners to effectively address the unique needs of immigrants. They affirm the diverse identities of immigrants and encourage us to think about better serving this population.

Seven pieces grounded in research, oral history, policy, and art comprise this special issue. Andrew Gomez opens the issue with the voices of activists who fight for the rights of janitorial workers through the Justice for Janitors campaign. Using oral histories collected by the UCLA Center for Oral History Research (COHR), Gomez reveals how traditional oral history methods fail to protect marginalized participants, such as immigrant workers who have experienced trauma and undocumented workers who are at risk of deportation. Further demonstrating the power of collective action, Javier Sepulveda Garibay reflects on the pivotal role that community organizations play in preserving the cultural memories and traditions of immigrants. Drawing upon the work of the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), Garibay presents an array of services, such as language interpretation, that promote cultural heritage and meet the social needs of immigrants. Luis-Genaro Garcia introduces another important community group, Educators for Immigrant Rights, through a visual

representation of the group's mission statement. Garcia's acrylic painting challenges educators to dismantle apolitical notions of the classroom by taking active roles in social justice initiatives that help secure the rights of immigrant families and student. Christian E Zúñiga furthers the discussion on the indispensable role of educators by raising critical questions about teacher preparation and the skills needed for addressing the complex needs of culturally diverse communities. Zúñiga proposes professional development opportunities, such as teacher book clubs, that will promote reflexive forms of practice and spaces of dialogue. Carlos F. Salinas Velasco, Trisha Mazumder, and Laura E. Enriquez move the conversation from the experiences of educators to the experiences of undocumented college students. In their policy brief, these authors urge educators, organizers, and interested stakeholders to recognize the racial diversity of undocumented college students and re-examine existing resource and support structures. Luis-Genaro Garcia closes the discussion of educational issues related to immigration and documentation with a reclamation of an iconic image. Garcia re-envision the yellow "caution" signs on freeways near the U.S.-Mexico border by replacing the generic figures of a family with silhouettes that visually represent the lived experiences and educational aspirations of immigrant families. While Gomez opened the conversation on immigration and documentation with the communal voices of immigrant workers, Silvia Rodriguez Vega closes the special issue with a personal voice that poetically captures the experiences of undocumented immigrants who continue to endure and dream in the face of slow and necessary immigration reform.

Collectively, these pieces provide a strong voice on the unique experiences of immigrants in the United States. As researchers and practitioners, partaking in the process of compiling this special issue was a welcoming reminder of the rich diversity, drive, and cultural wealth immigrant communities possess. We hope that this special issue serves as a vehicle to promote and advance support and resources for immigrant communities, culturally relevant education and the passage of comprehensive immigration reform.