

STATE OF MICHIGAN LAW DAY 2004 ESSAY CONTEST

“To Win Equality by Law”

7th Grade – 1ST Place - By Courtney Roddy

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Should public schools in Michigan be allowed to refuse admission to the children of illegal immigrants?

I believe all children should have the privilege of an education. Michigan is part of America and America is a land of immigrants. Americans have more opportunities in life than children in many other countries. Education is an invaluable privilege that every American has an opportunity to receive. The United States is the world's greatest example of democracy, and education is the foundation of that democracy. I believe that all public schools in Michigan should give admittance to all children, even if they happen to be illegal immigrants.

Although illegal immigrants are not officially American citizens, the government is taking away the core democratic values of justice and equality by not accepting them into our public schools. Equality states that all people should have the same opportunities regardless of where one's grandparents were born. All people in this country should be treated equally in the eyes of the law. An illegal immigrant deserves an education as well as any American.

The “pursuit of happiness” is one of our fundamental core democratic values. Children who are refused admission to a Michigan school are being denied that pursuit of happiness. Illegal immigrants are trying to seek the opportunity to learn. By pursuing an education they are not harming anyone else. Illegal immigrants not only want the happiness of learning, but also the benefits that learning will bring.

The core democratic value of "diversity" is tremendously important. Illegal immigrants would bring that diversity to Michigan schools. This would be magnificent. In many areas of Michigan, Caucasian or African American students are the overwhelming majority in school districts. In many schools, very few students may be of a different ethnicity. Michigan's schools need tolerance of cultural diversities, which these students would bring.

The Supreme Court's opinion is that illegal immigrants are allowed in The United State's public schools. This was affirmed by the Supreme Court's decision in the Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202(1982) case. Schools who deny enrollment to illegal immigrants are violating the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. No child deserves to be deprived of an education. Illegal immigrants may not deserve every right Americans have, however they should have the right to have a proper learning experience.

In conclusion, all children of illegal immigrants should be allowed in Michigan's public schools. These children should be shown the American values of equality and justice. I believe all children everywhere ought to be able to pursue happiness. We must constantly remind ourselves that the most important contribution these immigrants would give Michigan's public schools is tolerance of diversity. All things considered, every child in the state of Michigan deserves an education, regardless of his or her immigration status.