

I was born Nicaraguan, but raised American. I was only 4 years old when my mother brought me to the United States to escape a life full of violence and poverty. This means that although I am considered a “Nicaraguan”, I can’t help but call myself an “American” because that is the only culture I’ve grown to know and love so much.

So when I began fully comprehending what it meant to be “undocumented” in the United States, I was okay with the daily struggles and slights I experienced because I knew that if I stayed in Kansas, I would be treated as the Kansan I am receive the quality and low-cost education needed to go out in the this great state and make positive, encouraging contributions.

I graduated from East High School in Wichita an International Baccalaureate diploma going above and beyond the basic requirements. Further, I earned enough college credits in high school, to begin my college journey as asophmore.

See, I know that one day, under who knows what circumstances, I am finally going to be able to become a permanent resident and then a citizen. I’ll finally be able to join the army and serve the country that I would die for even though I don’t get the same rights as everyone else. I’ll be able to attend law school, graduate and become an attorney like I’ve always wanted, and then finally, armed with my political science degree, military status and a law degree, I want to run for office to fight for a world that our children can live in.

THIS is what we call being a DREAMer. But don’t get me wrong, these are not just dreams: They’re GOALS. Stepping stones in life that I will take in order to truly achieve the American Dream and give back to the community that I believe myself to be a citizen of. I want to keep going attending college to prepare myself for the day I do become a Permanent Resident and then a Citizen. I do not want to waste precious time just sitting around doing nothing when I can be furthering my education and more effectively strategizing my plan to help make my state and country a better and safer place.

So imagine my dismay when I heard that college might become even less affordable for me. I do not receive a single dollar to finance my education. I am a full-time student juggling three jobs and still getting excellent grades every semester, but struggling to pay for college. If instate tuition were taken, I would be forced to drop out and all the time, energy, and money that this amazing state has already given to me would be wasted. This state would lose an ambitious young man that would help lead it in the future. I am here. I am a Kansan. I have chosen to devote myself to this state and nation. Please do not abandon me and my dreams. Please let in state tuition for all students that graduate from an high school in Kansas stand.

Kelvin Lopez