

reunite Yeni and her children. It was a touching moment for everyone involved to see Yeni finally reunited with her family.

Those volunteers, they are the America that I have come to know and love. Those people who put their own needs aside to help a complete stranger whom they knew nothing about, only that she was in distress, represent the values that America stands for. As a father and as a former undocumented immigrant myself, I was proud to play even a small role in this incredible story.

You see, Madam Speaker, a woman seeking refuge for the safety of her children is not some violent criminal, as was portrayed here last night by the President of the United States. No matter what he said here last night, Yeni Gonzalez is not a violent criminal. And if you have ever seen a mother in distress for the safety of her children, you know that no wall, no matter how high, will stop her.

And now it is our duty to deal with the many immigration myths that were perpetrated on this floor last night as America watched.

Now, let me say to you that I want to begin a bit of immigration myth busting, and I hope that President Trump and his acolytes at FOX News are watching because they could use this important lesson.

We will start with my favorite, myth number one: immigrants are violent criminals—false. In fact, all immigrants, documented or undocumented, actually commit far less crime, lower rates of crime than any native-born Americans or any naturalized Americans like you and I, Madam Speaker.

As you can see, this chart, published by the Cato Institute, shows that undocumented criminals commit crimes at far less than half the rate of native-born U.S. citizens. Undocumented immigrants commit crimes at even lower rates.

Now, when you think about this, it makes perfect sense. So many immigrants come to the United States, in the first place, to flee strife in their own countries of origin. Why would anyone fleeing crime and violence just commit a crime in the new country that has harbored them?

I don't know of any immigrant, man or woman, who leaves their house to go to work seeking to get arrested, to then be deported. That is a myth, and it is irrational.

Myth number two: the number of undocumented immigrants is growing due to a porous southern border and people are flowing in—again, false.

Not only has the number of undocumented immigrants decreased over the past few years, but the way most undocumented immigrants arrive in the U.S. has completely changed from what it was just 15 years ago. The data shows that only half as many people arrive by crossing our border as those who legally enter the United States and overstay their visa, and the num-

ber of those crossing at the Mexican border continues to decrease.

Finally, myth number three: there is a crisis at our southern border—again, false.

As you can see right here in this chart, Madam Speaker, the data shows border crossings are at a historic low. Unlike what the President said here last night, unlike what he tweets on any given night, there is no crisis at the border. This has been fabricated. In fact, border crossings are at a historic low.

Only a third as many people were apprehended and turned away from the border in 2017 as there were in 2005. The only crisis at the border is the humanitarian crisis that the President, himself, has created.

So now that we have dispelled some of these myths, let's talk about what we need to do to actually fix our broken immigration system.

First and foremost, we must protect Dreamers. Dreamers are young people who came here at a very young age. They are doctors; they are homeowners and small business owners; they are police officers; they are members of our Armed Forces; they are teachers—and they deserve to stay here in our Nation.

Democrats have been talking about this for years, and President Obama did what he could in the face of Republican opposition to make sure that these young people have some stability and certainty. But President Trump cruelly chose to take that away, and the Federal courts had to step in and say: No, Mr. President, those young people deserve to stay here. Now he wants to use them as a bargaining chip, and we will not allow that to happen.

Next, we must protect recipients of temporary protected status, TPS. The countries TPS recipients came here from are still dealing with extraordinary crises, and we can't just send them back en masse. They deserve certainty, too.

Next, we have to address family separation and the need to improve family reunification. President Trump angrily refers to this as chain migration. We call it family unification, and we know that when a family is together, that family is stronger; and if that family is stronger, our Nation is stronger.

So we want to continue to work to ensure that families are kept together, but what he doesn't understand is that our immigration system has been made stronger by allowing individuals to have their families here with them once they are permanent residents.

If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle truly stand for family values, and family values has been touted by those folks on the other side of the aisle for decades, if they truly stand for family values, they should support the efforts to strengthen families and support family reunification policies.

Finally, any reforms we make must reduce the outrageous backlog in processing applications for legal status.

Over the past few years, we have seen waiting times grow and grow and grow.

Since 2014, the average processing time for cases has nearly doubled. In some cases, by the time someone comes up, they have aged out of their situation, and now they are no longer applicable, making them no longer eligible for permanent legal status.

This administration's backlog just adds more undocumented immigrants to our population and is the perfect example of how broken our system is.

Over the rest of this hour, some of my CHC colleagues will talk more about the specific issues we must address in comprehensive immigration reform. Many of us agree that, to do the right thing by the American people, we must start from the same set of facts and establish a shared set of values.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President of the United States.

NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SABLAN. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from the great State of New York and the great city of New York for inviting me to speak on the need for comprehensive immigration reform for our Nation as a whole and, specifically, about how the broken immigration system hurts people I represent in the Mariana Islands.

In 2013, the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill, with Republicans and Democrats voting together, that would have gone a long way to fixing immigration.

The bill gave people who came here illegally but are now contributing to the economic prosperity of all Americans a way to come out of the shadows, and it provided for substantial improvements in border security—just what the President says he wants.

The Republican-led House decided not to take the path the Senate had courageously shown us in 2013, but I hope that, in this 116th Congress, we can dust off that comprehensive immigration reform bill and breathe new life into it.

Because our immigration problems still need fixing, we have a solution, ready-made, that already passed the Senate with Republican and Democratic votes.

I worked with the Gang of Eight in the Senate who drafted that legislation. I was able to include a section that dealt with groups of people in the Mariana Islands who fell through the cracks when Congress extended U.S. immigration law to my islands in 2008.

Let me begin by saying that none of the people I wanted to help came into our country illegally or stayed illegally. They were all lawfully present, but their situations were not understood or accounted for when Federal law was applied to the Mariana Islands. I have wanted to help them since my first days in Congress 10 years ago, and I will not stop working until they are pulled out of the limbo we left them in. Let me tell you about these people.

Imagine you are the daughter or son of parents who came to the Mariana Islands before 1976, before our islands were even part of the United States. The Mariana Islands is your only home. You grew up in the Islands, went to school, have worked there ever since, raising your own family, always lawfully present.

Then, three decades later, Congress decides to extend America's immigration borders. Suddenly, you are told you are a foreigner. You need a work visa or humanitarian parole or, otherwise, you will have to leave the only home you have ever known. Imagine.

The Senate comprehensive immigration reform bill would have fixed that.

Imagine you are living in the Mariana Islands and the local government passes a law, as it has every right to do, that gives you permanent resident status. Then along comes Congress, 25 years later, and says the Mariana Islands is within U.S. immigration borders now. Oh, and by the way, you permanent residents, you do not have that status anymore. If you want to stay, you need a work visa or humanitarian parole; otherwise, you will have to leave your home, your children, your family. Imagine.

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The Senate comprehensive immigration reform bill would have fixed that.

Imagine coming to the Marianas as a foreign worker. You have contributed to economic growth and have been a lawfully present resident for decades. But Congress passes a new law, and suddenly, your status changes. Even if you have a spouse or children who are U.S. citizens, they cannot petition for you because they are too poor or underage.

Under the Obama administration, at least you were granted humanitarian parole. But the Trump administration wants you gone by June 30, June 30 of this year.

You must uproot your family, pull your children out of school, or leave them behind as orphans. Imagine.

The Senate comprehensive immigration reform bill would have fixed that, too.

Madam Speaker, I come from a very small community, compared to my colleagues here in the House, just 50,000 people. When I ask you to imagine the plight of those who were forgotten when Congress extended Federal immigration law to the Marianas, I do not have to imagine who they are. I know them individually. They are my neigh-

bors. Some are my relatives. None are strangers to me. They are good people who came in legally and remained lawfully present. But their lives are precarious, and the Trump administration is tightening the noose.

We do not have to imagine how to help them. The solution is before us. The Senate-passed comprehensive immigration reform in 2013, a bipartisan vote, a set of policies to fix our broken system and strengthen border security, I dare say could pass this House today. Let us act.

Again, I thank the gentleman from New York for giving me this time to speak.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GARCÍA).

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Representative ESPAILLAT and Representative SABLAN, for yielding this time and for organizing this important hour to speak truth to power and provide an opportunity for the American people to hear the truth in contrast to the lies that were told by President Trump in how he propagandized about immigrants.

I take this issue personally. The way the President has characterized immigrants denigrates the dignity and the humanity of millions around the world, including myself.

You see, Madam Speaker, I was born in a tiny village called Los Pinos in the Mexican state of Durango. I am an immigrant.

My mother raised me, the youngest of four, while my father worked in the United States as part of a World War II-era bracero program. He was a migrant seasonal worker, a pioneer of what would later become the H-2A visa program.

Eventually, my father got a job in a storage plant in Chicago, and my family immigrated to the U.S. in 1965. I still remember my first American meal at a gas station in El Paso, Texas, a Bologna sandwich.

Today, I stand on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives with great pride to have been elected a Member of Congress. But, also, I carry a heavy burden, both on my conscience and on my shoulders.

The President's grotesque characterization of immigrants as rapists, drug dealers, and murderers is an affront to me, to my mother, to my family. Most importantly, it is an affront to my community and every single American, lest we forget that our Nation values immigrants.

Last night, the President doubled down on his rhetoric of hate, once again falsely describing a security crisis at the border. Today, I want to make clear three points on why we so desperately need immigration reform.

First, let me be clear: There is no crisis at the border. The only crisis we face is the inadequate response to the humanitarian relief that women, children, asylum seekers, and refugees want, while this administration abdi-

cates America's moral duty to serve and welcome those most in need.

The truth is that, Madam Speaker, migrants are escaping some of the harshest regimes in Central America, where political and economic turmoil threaten their lives. That is why they come.

Contrary to the President's fearmongering, analysis from The New York Times and the Center for American Progress shows that illegal immigration is near an all-time low. In fact, apprehensions at the border have declined more than 75 percent since the year 2000.

Most drug trafficking is coming through our ports of entry, not rural sections of the border.

Just last year, we witnessed the horror of young children being ripped out of the arms of their parents. The children were detained and held in cold, lifeless cages, like animals, where they slept on concrete floors and were given little more than aluminum sheets to keep them warm.

What a disgrace, Madam Speaker. How can the richest, most powerful country in the world not have the ability to do better?

My second point, on the need for immediate immigration reform, is that we face a tremendous crisis here at home, where millions of hardworking, law-abiding individuals—our neighbors, relatives, and friends—live in constant fear of being ripped apart from all they know and those they love.

Madam Speaker, there are more than 11 million individuals, including children, living in the United States who are currently undocumented. Of those, there are more than 3.6 million Dreamers, children who entered the U.S. before their 18th birthday, and more than 1.8 million children eligible for DACA because they were brought to the U.S. before their 16th birthday.

Their parents brought them seeking refuge, opportunity, a chance to give their children a life free of the fear from hunger, abject poverty, and the violent drug wars that are ravaging Central America.

At this point, I would like to shine a light on one young Dreamer who lives in my district in Illinois, in a suburban community of Chicago, and how she studies, she works, and she helps build communities.

Back home, in the community of Little Village, where I have lived for the past 49 years, there is a story about a young woman named Elizeth Arguelles and the tamales that are making her dreams come true.

Elizeth's mother began working as a tamale street vendor when she arrived in Chicago so that she could save money and bring her children from Mexico to join her in the U.S. When Elizeth arrived at about 7 years old, she immediately began helping her mother make tamales. She would wake up at 3:30 a.m. to prepare the cart and sell tamales until 7:30 a.m. before going to school.

Elizeth grew up in the United States, saved up money from selling tamales, and paid for college tuition, first at Morton College and now at Dominican University.

Elizeth's immigration status, however, continues to present a challenge. Despite all her hard work and her study, her future is uncertain because she is a deferred action recipient. She doesn't know what will happen next.

Despite those obstacles, she has proven that she values resilience, self-reliance, and ingenuity. Those are her values, and they are American values as well. Elizeth's story speaks to the values that make our country great.

Unfortunately, ICE raids continue to terrorize immigrant communities and traumatize children like Elizeth who live in constant fear of losing their parents and their own futures. These young people yearn to go to college, to serve in our military, and to enrich our communities with their entrepreneurial spirit.

Madam Speaker, Congress must create a path to citizenship to prove that, beyond a doubt, we welcome Elizeth and those like her to America.

I want to end and make my third and final point. The status quo cannot remain, and the current legal immigration system is broken, creating decades-long delays for family reunifications and exacerbating workforce gaps that harm our economy.

Madam Speaker, when we hear naysayers complain that immigrants should come to America using the legal route but fail to acknowledge the antiquated and broken state that our system is in—for many, processing time for family reunification visas can last between 18 and 23 years.

Imagine how much can happen in 18 to 23 years, Madam Speaker.

As of November 2012, there were 4.3 million people on the wait list for family visas and 113,000 waiting for employment-based visas.

Those years-long wait times cause others to make an even more difficult choice. In Mexico, a group now referred to as Los Invisibles, the invisible ones, is growing. Los Invisibles, these invisible young people, refers to more than 600,000 American-born U.S. children living in Mexico.

Because our broken system keeps families apart for so long, or it tears mothers and fathers away from their children, some have elected to leave America altogether—a real tragedy, a real loss for us.

Perhaps in another life, I would have been one of those children and, because of the anti-immigrant policies of today's administration, the next U.S. Congressman won't stand here in the future to share the immigrant experience that I share with all of you today.

The true crisis we face, the true danger we face, is the President's propaganda that flies in the face of truth. Immigrants don't worsen the Nation. On the contrary, immigrants help keep this Nation the strongest nation the world has ever known.

We are your mechanics, your nurses, your farmers, your local brewer. We are your teachers, engineers, and law enforcement officers. We are fire-fighters, plumbers, and doctors. In some lucky instances, we are your Representatives in Washington.

As the proud immigrant Representative from a district that is more than two-thirds foreign-born, I refuse to back down and sit silent while the President denigrates me, my family, and my constituents.

As a Congress, we cannot sit idly by while thousands are denied humanitarian relief at the border while millions live in fear here in our communities and while millions more wait, separated from those they love and care for.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) for yielding me the time to share my story.

Mr. SABLAN. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. ESCOBAR), the CHC freshman Representative.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Madam Speaker, I am here to correct the RECORD, to bust the myth, to make sure that Americans know the truth about my wonderful, generous, incredible community, El Paso, Texas.

Last night, in this Chamber, as I was seated in the audience listening to the State of the Union Address, I heard our President misinform the American public. He said that El Paso, Texas, was once one of the most dangerous cities in America, and then a wall was built.

Well, Madam Speaker, that is not true. El Paso is one of the safest cities in America. However, we have been a safe community; we have been a safe city. We are right on the U.S.-Mexico border, and we have been safe for decades.

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The wall was built in El Paso, Texas, in 2008. Our ranking as one of the safest communities in America dates back to the 1990s.

Many people wonder why El Paso is so safe. Why is El Paso, which is, again, right on the U.S.-Mexico border, one of the safest communities in America? Last night, in those conversations, I pointed to my guest at the State of the Union Address, Senaida Navar, who is a Dreamer; she is a teacher; she is an activist; she is exactly the kind of community member, constituent, citizen who makes El Paso and the country great.

As these debates over comprehensive immigration reform, over border security, continue to get louder and, in fact, uglier here in Washington, D.C., El Paso has been, in many ways, at the center of those debates and those discussions.

I will tell you, they should be. El Paso should be at the center of that debate.

The reason why El Paso should be at the center of that debate is not because

we were the site of the President's zero-tolerance policy, not because we were the site of the tent city at Tornillo, not because our processing center is the site where detainees are right now being force-fed through a nose tube against their will. We should be at the center of deciding the future of this country in terms of comprehensive immigration reform because of our generosity, because of our goodwill, because of our kindness.

El Paso has absolutely set an example for our country, and we have done it with the way that we have opened up our arms to everyone and treated people with the dignity that they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I thank Congressman SABLAN for the opportunity to correct the RECORD.

Mr. SABLAN. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for her comments.

Madam Speaker, I just realized that today, this Special Order, we had four speakers, three of whom are immigrants: the gentleman from New York, the gentleman from Illinois, and this gentleman from the Northern Marianas. We are immigrants. The sky hasn't fallen.

There is nothing to be afraid of. We are a country of immigrants.

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. ESPAILLAT, for organizing this evening's Special Order on the need for immigration reform.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PERRY. Madam Speaker, I am here today to talk about something that is completely unimaginable to me. I can't imagine I am here to talk about it on the floor of the House of Representatives. I can't imagine that it occurs in the world. I can't imagine that it occurs on this very day in this world. I can't imagine that it occurs in our country, but it does.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with all who condemn a horrific practice on this, the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

Today, I introduced a bipartisan resolution with my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida, Congresswoman LOIS FRANKEL, which calls for a coordinated response from the United States and the international community to end this horrific and cruel practice.

The numbers surrounding FGM are shocking. They are staggering. Two hundred million women and girls alive today are survivors of FGM. Of those 200 million, 44 million are girls at or under the age of 14.