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Essay on Peace: Christina Jiménez and United We Dream

In the United States, aggressive enforcement policies on immigration and the expanded powers of ICE have made undocumented families and children fearful and uncertain of their future in the country. Undocumented youth especially face the threat of persistent discrimination, family separation, and limited access to healthcare or education due to things such as new executive orders, rollback of protections like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and intensified ICE raids. These events have deepened trauma among immigrant communities, and immigrant children now show signs of depression, PTSD, anxiety, and live in fear as they struggle to feel safe in a country they only know as home. Christina Jiménez and the United We Dream (UWD) organization strive for the safety, justice, and dignity of undocumented children to promote peace throughout our nation. In our divided society, they encourage compassion and understanding through education, empowerment, and peaceful activism. As a young Latina myself, I am deeply inspired by Christina's bravery and leadership, which serves as a symbol of strength and hope for the next generation of immigrants.

At just 13 years of age, Christina Jiménez Moreta immigrated illegally from Ecuador to New York, where she struggled to fit in due to bullying, fear, and language barriers. Although she persevered and became very academically successful in high school, her lack of documentation restricted her access to higher education and made it difficult to fund. Her personal problems with her immigration status led her to later advocate for undocumented youth and cofound UWD, motivating Americans to fight for immigration reform and find their voice.

She started her advocacy while attending college in New York and co-founded the New York State Kids Leadership Council and eventually UWD. She led initiatives that led to the development of DACA and encouraged Dreamers to tell their stories in order to change legislation and public attitudes.

The United We Dream Organization stands as a powerful movement for peace and justice, dedicated to promoting inclusion and dignity for immigrants and their families. Its mission centers on creating safe spaces where undocumented youth can share their stories, find support, and develop leadership skills. Through initiatives such as advocating for the DACA program, leading campaigns against deportation and family separation, and organizing educational outreach projects that humanize the immigrant experience, United We Dream demonstrates a deep commitment to nonviolent activism. The organization relies on peaceful methods such as community organizing, social media advocacy, and partnerships with other human rights groups to amplify immigrant voices and push for compassionate reform.

According to Cristina Jiménez and United We Dream (UWD), peace is the active presence of justice, empathy, and inclusion rather than just the absence of violence. According to her, genuine peace necessitates fairness and opportunity for everyone, particularly for young people without legal status who are constantly afraid and marginalized. By encouraging solidarity and lowering fear and uncertainty among undocumented youth, UWD's community-centered activism advances this peace. The group uses education and storytelling to combat xenophobia, changing public perceptions of immigrants to ones of resiliency and humanism. While efforts like "Here to Stay" foster a sense of hope and community, initiatives like the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program provide undocumented youth with a sense of security and mental calm. In this sense, UWD's nonviolent activism, which is

based on empathy and community empowerment, reflects what academics refer to as a “politics of presence,” in which underprivileged youth affirm their right to participate in shaping society and to belong. By replacing fear, silence, and exclusion with bravery, communication, and unity, their activities reframe peace as a dynamic process of justice-making.

As a young Latina, witnessing Cristina Jiménez spearhead a nationwide movement like United We Dream demonstrates to me that Latina women can be effective agents. Her presence at the front of the Dreamer’s movement dispels prejudices and redefines what leadership looks like in the US, demonstrating the importance of representation. The Dreamer’s movement is an example of how young immigrants, especially Latinos have developed social capital through organization, advocacy, and community empowerment according to Estefanía Cruz’s paper “Young Immigrant’s Association and the Future Latino Leadership in the U.S.” Jiménez’s bravery in speaking up in the face of fear reflects the movement’s overall transition from silence to group action, encouraging young Latinas to view their voices as tools of justice. Her story exemplifies peace as the bravery to confront injustice with compassion and inclusivity rather than the absence of conflict. Her example demonstrates to many young Latinas that they too, are capable of spearheading movements, opposing prejudice, and influencing their communities’ political futures.

In addition to being immigration activists, Cristina Jiménez and United We Dream are peacemakers working toward understanding and justice. They seek to build a more compassionate and inclusive society that respects the potential and dignity of every young person, regardless of their immigration status, via empowerment, education, and advocacy. They address systemic injustices that restrict access to opportunity and a sense of belonging by assisting undocumented students and removing obstacles to education. In the face of fear and

exclusion, United We Dream's dedication to creating hospitable and creative environments gives young people a sense of belonging and bravery. Their work demonstrates that empowerment and togetherness are keys to achieving peace. Cristina's leadership serves as a reminder that genuine understanding and justice start to emerge when minority voices are heard, and that young Latinas such as myself can also be powerful agents of peace and change within their communities.