

# Undocumented Students and Allies seminar sheds light on Advanced Parole

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Undocumented Students and Allies (USA) is a student organization that seeks to spread awareness about the diversity of undocumented students and current immigration talk to the IIT community. It was founded in 2011 by Maria Gonzalez ('14, Sociology) and Daniel Garcia ('12, Material Science and Engineering) as a safe space on our campus for undocumented students to pursue an enriching education, regardless of their status. Four years later, the organization maintains this same mission by partnering with various IIT departments and Chicagoland organizations for programming and initiatives geared towards the needs of one of IIT's most underrepresented groups of students. Most notably, recent initiatives include their "Drop the I-Word" Campaign to have the entire IIT community pledge to use the word "undocumented" instead of xenophobic and legally-inaccurate terms such as "illegal" or "alien," and their annual Coming Out the Shadows spring semester event, during which members of the organization share their stories of self and demand IIT's departments be held accountable for actions unfavorable towards the community.

For those who are new to this concept, undocumented students are students who entered US without inspection or entered legally but overstayed their visa, remaining in the US without authorization. Most students who fall into this category were brought by their parents at a young age and have stayed here ever since. They have lived and attended school in the United States for most of their lives, but at present, lack a pathway to become permanent residents or citizens of the U.S.

The organization frequently organizes seminars to disseminate information about changes and opportunities within immigration procedures. One of their latest seminars took place on Wednesday, September 30th 2015 from 7-9 p.m. at the John T. Rettaliata Engineering Center Auditorium. This particular seminar was about an immigration document

called Advanced Parole (Form I-131) that allows students who have been approved for President Obama's 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy to lawfully re-enter the US after traveling abroad, even though Customs and Border Protection Officers (CBPO) at U.S. port-of-entries still hold ultimate discretion to allow re-entry. DACA is simply a policy that allows students who entered the US before June 2007 and before their 16th birthday to receive a 2-year work permit and stay exempt from deportation.

The seminar started with a sumptuous Mexican dinner that was catered from Carbon Mexican Grill. This was followed by an overview of Advance Parole benefits and the application process by the main guest speaker, Mony Ruiz-Velasco, an immigrant rights attorney and activist of over 18 years who owns her own law firm, Law Office of Mony Ruiz-Velasco, and represents immigrant families, LGBTQ immigrants, as well as other vulnerable populations, such as unaccompanied minors and survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and other crimes. In short, she explained that Advance Parole is available to students traveling for humanitarian, educational, or employment purposes. She covered the various documents required to apply for Advance Parole, the most important being a valid passport. She also explained on how to obtain the evidence for the purpose of travel and gave tips on how to prepare and what documents to keep before traveling abroad to ensure a smooth return. The attendees then discussed the certain special circumstances under which an application for Advance Parole might go unapproved, like a prior criminal record that may prove to be a barrier.

The highlight of the event was the first-hand experiences that students shared of their trips using Advance Parole to travel to countries outside the US. Cindy Agustin, Outreach Coordinator of the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), an organization that frequently partners with Undocumented Students and Allies to host DACA renewal information sessions on campus, was the first one

to share her experience of going back home to Mexico City for a week as part of a "Dreamers" conference, after a gap of 23 years! She covered how their group had to go through an additional inspection with rude and disrespectful CBPO officers and how they dealt with the discrimination that made them feel powerless. She explained to students the importance of informing and communicating with friends and family, even if through Facebook, that they had landed in the U.S. and were going to go through immigration, just in case there was some problem needing community organizing to solve. She also shared with students the repercussions she faced due to her mistake of leaving one of the two Advance Parole document copies she received at home and how she solved it.

Carlos Roa, a 5th year architecture student at IIT also shared his experience of traveling using Advance Parole. He shared how his entry back to Chicago had been relatively smooth despite having to go through the depressing and dreary walls of the secondary room for additional inspection. The last speaker of the night was Egle Malinauskaite, a 3rd year Biomedical Engineering/pre-med student and President of Undocumented students and Allies, who went to Ecuador this summer for community service with IIT's chapter of MEDLIFE (Medicine, Education and Development for Low-Income Families Everywhere). She reflected on how she felt thankful for the life-changing experience, but at the same time upset on how she had been given preferential treatment through immigration just because of the color of her skin. She believes that being an undocumented student should not stop anyone from travelling and missing out on incredible experiences similar to the one she had. When asked about the reason behind conducting a seminar on advanced Parole, Malinauskaite said that "my own Advanced Parole experience instilled a duty in me to inspire others to travel and having the support of the Study Abroad's office is a crucial step in making sure students feel comfortable". Any undocumented student at IIT traveling with Advance Parole

can rest assured they will get full support from Undocumented Students and Allies, especially should they face any trouble re-entering.

The sharing of personal experiences helped to familiarize students who might be traveling with Advanced Parole of the possible scenarios they might face when re-entering and how to overcome them by advocating for oneself, as well as reaching out to the community for support. In addition, anyone who has encountered or heard of discriminatory treatment by CBPO when using Advanced Parole can submit a summary to a case example database created by NIJC, United We Dream (UWD), and Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC), ([https://ilrc.formstack.com/forms/ced\\_cbp](https://ilrc.formstack.com/forms/ced_cbp)), thus advocating for better treatment of Advanced Parole recipients.

Since traveling abroad as an undocumented student is a very practical opportunity, the session attendees were very involved and asked great questions for detail clarification at the end of every speaker's presentation. When Malinauskaite was asked what could have been improved, she responded that had they more time, the organization would love to put together and share with attendees some of the international opportunities that students can take advantage of. However now she will make sure that information is disseminated with the support of the Study Abroad Office. She also expressed her appreciation that Elizabeth Hall, Coordinator of Study Abroad, took the time out to attend and learn about the Advanced Parole process, and even expressed interest in partnering with USA for developing resources to help undocumented students find opportunities abroad based on their personal interests.

At the end of the seminar, everyone was pleased with the turnout at the event and in Malinauskaite's own words, the one thing she hopes people took back is that "Sure, applying for Advance Parole presents a risk, but it is one of the most worthwhile and life-affirming risks one can take as a student, especially when coupled with all the extracurricular, educational, and career opportunities IIT has to offer."

# Petition to seek inclusion of Rave Guardian app in IIT's safety strategy

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Safety is obviously a huge concern on this and all other college campuses. Our Public Safety does what they can, but many times it is difficult to get in contact with them and in certain situations, it may be inconvenient or even impossible to. That is why better and more assured methods of communication between and among students, faculty and staff, as well as campus and city emergency responders are always welcome.

One option that Student Government Association (SGA) President Rahul V. Wadhvani sees as a potentially immensely beneficial resource is the Rave Guardian mobile safety application, which is a method currently in use at over 100 colleges in the country, including the University of California Los

Angeles, Dartmouth College, and the University of Tennessee.

Rave Guardian is powered by a national safety database called Smart911. Information from this database is displayed to Campus Safety as well as to Smart911 enabled 911 centers when you contact them. This information can include family member contact information, photos, medical conditions, disabilities, addresses, even pets, and anything that a user feels like it would be important for someone to know about them in the case of an emergency.

The app is free to download, and will allow you to connect directly with 911, police, emergency responders, or "Personal Guardians." Personal Guardians can be trusted friends and family as well as campus safety officials that users can interact with through the number of features that the application allows.

One of these features is called a "Safety Timer." This is a timer that users can set when they plan on going away for set periods of time. If the timer expires without the being deactivated, then the app will notify the Personal Guardians to check up on them.

Another feature of the app is that it allows for "Tip Texting," through which users can send anonymous, two-way text and image tips to Campus Security in the case that they see something suspicious.

Rave Guardian's panic button allows students to contact 911 personnel and allows campus safety to immediately see their GPS location and their Smart911 data for rapid response to emergency situations. This app connects directly to 911 with a voice call, the caller of which will be clearly identified. The GPS location available will also include schematics of the buildings and the layout of the campus to

help safety responders locate the caller in need.

There are most certainly benefits to the partnership with the school, including the previously stated connection directly to campus safety as well as more integrated schematics of buildings and a wider base of users to increase the security of the greater campus community. Also, student information provided by the school, such as class schedules and family contacts, which will only be available when students establish that they are in an emergency, will be more readily available to responders via the school's student information system.

In the next few weeks, SGA will be advertising and petitioning for the inclusion of the app as part of IIT's safety program. There will be advertisements along the MTCC Bridge and on social media and SGAs other internet platforms.

# Galvin Library partners with Shimer College for Banned Books Week celebratory read out

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Banned Books weeks, as the American Library Associations' (ALS) website reads, is meant to "highlight the value of free and open access to information" by celebrating books that have historically been challenged, banned, or kept from the general public for some reason or another. It is typically held the last week of September, and libraries across the country celebrate this week with events that criticize acts of censorship and promote open publication for all literary works.

Last Thursday, IIT's Galvin Library teamed up with Shimer College for a banned book read out, located in the Upper Level, Northeast Corner of Galvin.

Students (mostly Shimer students) and library staff gave short readings of the sorts of works that were censored, banned, or otherwise kept from the public eye.

There was no standard procedure for those that were performing readings that night, but the precedent that was set early on was that each would give a little background on the story, what category of censorship it fell into, and why they chose it.

The titles that were read include the poem by Nikki Giovanni from her book "Black feeling, Black talk, Black judgment" entitled "Nikki-Rosa," a passage from "A Past Revisited" by Filipino Historian Renato Constantino, an expert from Chicana/Feminist Theorist Gloria Anzaldúa's semi-autobiographical work "Borderlands," from a chapter entitled "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," and an undelivered speech written by Indian politician B. R. Ambedkar called "Annihilation of Caste."

One of more interesting readings was by a library staff member about a paper entitled "An elastic tube theory of pulse transmission and oscillatory flow in mammalian arteries" by John R. Womersley. The audience was

taken through a trip where the reader asked the audience to imagine themselves as mathematicians on a hunt to find this paper that has been referenced in a number of other works written for an audience of physicians. This was document, as it turns out, was subjected to limited distribution, which means that though it is unclassified as far as scientific papers are concerned, the government can keep it from being openly distributed. Luckily, due to efforts made by the library to the Department of Defense, they were able to get the study digitized, and a digitization of Galvin's own copy is now available on their website. This presentation was concluded with a passage from the abstract of this paper.

The final three readings were from an Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir called "Fun House," Vladimir Nabokov's famously provocative novel "Lolita," and a passage from The Quran, which emphasized the tolerant aspects of such a historically censored work.

The ending remarks included ruminations about a controversy over this year's Banned Books Week bookmark, which was scattered atop the tables around Galvin. The first draft displayed a woman's eyes peeking through a space on the bookmark, one who just so happens to be of Italian ethnicity, looked very much like a woman's eyes peering through a Hijab. Not wanting to give the wrong impression, the woman's eyes were removed for a more plain design. This instance certainly offered an interesting and ironic perspective of what is a sort of censorship in media.

The totality of the event was recorded for use by Shimer College for the promotion of the event, and because of that, all non-Shimer Students who participated had to sign releases to be in their video. Hopefully, these readings will be made available at some time soon through the Shimer website for all those that couldn't be there.