

DENIED,

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fence and into the United States.

In exchange for registering under DACA, the federal government agreed not to deport Nicolas and allowed him to apply for a renewable two-year work permit. The permit came with a social security number that meant he could be paid above-the-table and enjoy the protections afforded other American workers.

"I was excited about the things I could do like being able to go to college, being able to drive, being able to travel within the United States, being able to contribute and really get involved. I felt empowered to basically have no obstacles," Nicolas said.

Last week, President Donald Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions slapped an expiration date on Nicolas' American dreams. DACA privileges will be rescinded for Nicolas and 800,000 other undocumented youths, collectively known as Dreamers, registered through the program. Their best hope now is Congress coming up with an alternative by March 5,

2018. In the wake of the action by the Trump administration, Oregon joined 14 other states and the District of Columbia in a lawsuit to block the termination of the program. Another suit to stop the DACA wind down was filed by three additional states on Monday, Sept. 11.

While those lawsuits travel through the judicial system, Nicolas and his younger brother and sister, who are also registered through DACA, are recalibrating their plans.

Last year, Nicolas decided to take time off from earning his degree at the University of Oregon to focus on saving money if Trump's campaign promises to end DACA ever came to fruition. With some of the money he and his brother were socking away, they planned to purchase their father a new car, maybe even a new home for their parents. His family sold their car to afford the fees and attorney costs associated with Hugo's initial DACA application.

"All that's kind of on-hold now," Nicolas said.

But, truthfully, the impact of Trump's words began having an effect on Nicolas long before it was announced DACA would be rescinded.

"I feel like he is trying to paint a picture of immigrants as bad people who are only bringing crime and other problems. It's totally the opposite of what we have done with deferred action," Nicolas said. Nicolas is currently working as a personal banker with plans to start earning his investment licenses this month. "It has also made me pay more attention to the announcements coming from the administration every week. I have to be aware and more careful with all the changes that are happening."

Between the president's words and actions and the vocal support of both from his fans, Nicolas finds himself questioning how others view him and more driven to tell his story, the crux of which is in that middle school vow.

Even then, Nicolas wanted to go to college. He had his sights on a military or Ivy League school. His undocumented status would have stood in the way of both.

"Thinking about college in high school was depressing and I felt so ashamed," he said. Still, he wanted to prove his value.

"Being undocumented, there is risk in everything you do - even if you are doing something good."

- Hugo Nicolas

the "Hugo Rule" was approved. The rule still stands, but was tweaked for exchange students to be part of the youth councilor program.

Once he registered for Deferred Action, the college door swung open. He started taking classes at Chemeketa while working three jobs, eventually transferring to the University of Oregon.

"I could finally stand up and show what I could do if people allowed me that opportunity. I also knew that I was following a procedure and didn't have to worry about what would happen tomorrow," he said.

Nicolas is altering some of his plans, but he is also feeling a renewed sense of purpose. He bristles at the language used by Trump and Sessions when talking about immigrants.

"The way Jeff Sessions talked about Dreamers made us sound like criminals and not contributing. We're teachers and nurses and attorneys and bankers. If someone needs representation and can't afford it or needs tuition assistance, there is a whole group that chips in to help support them," he said.

He is reconsidering his plans for taking a year off school with the notion that finishing his education is its own form of rebelling against the labels some would stick on him.

Deferred Action recipients have also found resilience in numbers.

"We're more politically involved than we were and we've become more united because we can travel and learn from each other," he said.

For those who want to help prevent DACA from winding down, Nicolas said there are two ways to act locally. First, contact Oregon Rep. Greg Walden, and tell him you support the Dreamers. Oregon's other representatives and senators have already voiced their support.

The second is more personal and, potentially, more of a challenge: Be vocal in your support of Dreamers wherever you go.

"When Trump is saying things about immigrants that are not true, it makes me hold back more because I don't know if that's the way people really see me," he said. "When I see someone who never supported immigration reform now offering encouragement, that means everything."

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