SOCIAL ISSUE: Immigrants’ Rights

Causes and Research

Imagine that you are five years old and you have a younger sister. The two of you are living happily with your parents. Life couldn’t be better. But one day, the United States government tells you that your parents might be deported because they are not legal citizens of this country. You and your sister get to stay because both of you were born in America. But without your parents, what would you do?

This is what happened to Sophie and her sister. Sophie’s mother and father are Raul and Zoyla Cruz. Because Raul and Zoyla are undocumented immigrants, they might be deported back to their home country. There are many mistaken beliefs about immigrants who do not have legal status. Every undocumented immigrant has their own story for why they don’t have the proper paperwork. There are some immigrants who have been waiting for 15 years for their paperwork. Not everyone can wait that long! Raul and Zoyla decided to stay in the United States because they could find more job opportunities and ways to provide for their family.

Sophie does not want to be separated from her parents so she is doing something about it.

THE FACTS

- Born in 2010
- Likes doing taekwondo and cooking with her family
- She received the “Activist of the Year” award from Define American
- There is a mural of her in San José, California

VOCABULARY

Deported › to force someone to leave a country
Undocumented Immigrant › someone who moves to a new country without the proper paperwork
Social Security Number › an identification number given to U.S. citizens, and permanent or temporarily working residents

SOURCES

- http://youngheroesadvisors.libertymuseum.org/heroes/sophie/
Goals and Obstacles
Sophie believes that families should not be separated from each other. She wants people to unite to fight for their rights and live happily with their families in this country. But fighting against the U.S. government is hard and takes a long time. Sophie’s family and other immigrant families need help if they want to change the laws.

Actions
Sophie is Catholic, so she decided to ask the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, for help. Pope Francis came to Washington D.C. in 2015, and even though there were a lot of security guards, Sophie ran up to the Pope and gave him a letter, a drawing, and a hug. In her letter, she told the Pope about the current immigration policies here in the United States. She also told Pope Francis about what would happen to her parents if the policies stayed the same. She hoped that Pope Francis could help undocumented immigrants in the United States. In 2016, Sophie went to the White House to meet President Obama to talk to him about the concerns she has on immigration policies. She had to go inside alone without her parents because they do not have Social Security Numbers. In 2017, Sophie used her Freedom of Speech to address millions of people in Washington, D.C. She said, “We are here together making a chain of love to protect our families. Let us fight with love, faith, and courage so that our families will not be destroyed.” She ended her speech saying, “Sí, se puede! Sí, se puede! Yes, we can! Yes, we can!”

Impact
Due to Sophie’s pleading, Pope Francis addressed the issue of immigration rights during his trip to Washington, D.C. A filmmaker created a movie about Sophie’s story and titled it “Free Like the Birds.” When Sophie was asked where she found the courage to speak up, she said “God made me like that.” Sophie continues to fight for immigration rights today. For now, Sophie and her family are together, but they do not know what will happen tomorrow.

“Let us fight with love, faith and courage, so that our families will not be destroyed.”
—Sophie Cruz

Photo credit: remezcla.com and slate.com