

THE ORIGINS OF BEING LEGAL

- 1790 Naturalization Act: naturalization for "free white persons"
- 14th Amendment (1868): citizenship expanded to include African Americans
- 19th-century exclusion laws: shift from open immigration to race and class discrimination (esp. against Asian immigrants)
- Expiration Act of 1907: Women who married non-citizens lost their citizenship



MODERN EXCLUSIONARY SYSTEM

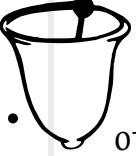
- Most asylum cases from Mexico & Central America are denied
- Immigrants are labeled "aliens" in legal terms
- Humanitarian programs fail to provide a direct route for permanent stability
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for certain countries has existed for years/decades
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was introduced in 2017



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Claudia Rojas
www.Claudiapoet

THE COST OF STAYING LEGAL

- Case Study: TPS and DACA
- To travel outside the U.S., you apply for Advance Parole, which costs \$575 and lasts a limited time.
- Recurring work permit fee \$410
- Recurring biometrics fee \$85
- Recurring lawyer fees
- Recurring passport photos and shipping costs (for mailed documents)
- Recurring DMV fees for a new ID/license matching the dates on your work permit



WHY NOT GET MORE LEGAL?

- Not all immigrants can afford the time (months-years) to legally enter the U.S.
- Law requires a passport stamped for a legal entry even if an immigrant has DACA or TPS
- Not all immigrants can afford the fees for immigration forms and for a lawyer
- The legal entry is not enough; an immigrant must be sponsored, commonly by:
 - An employer
 - A citizen family member
 - A spouse



CIVICS TEST

- Formerly composed of 100 questions. 10 Qs were selected
- Since Oct. 20, 2025: composed of 128 questions. 20 Qs selected
- Over 90% of immigrant applicants pass the test according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- Research shows 20-30% of U.S. citizens would pass the test

CITIZENSHIP PROCESS

- Apply for permanent residency, including paying medical exam fees not covered by health insurance
- Receive a permanent residency card (PRC)
- Wait 5 years with a PRC before applying for citizenship
- Pass a citizenship interview and civics test

EXPLAINER: BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN

