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Reflection from Pedro Arturo Lopez

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Pedro Arturo Lopez
5th Anniversary of the Postville Raid, Interfaith Service
May 10, 2013

This last Friday, I was in St. Louis Missouri
Standing at the base of the Gateway Arch
Night had fallen, and the arch was beautifully lit up
I was mesmerized not only by the beauty of the arch
But also by the vision it represents:
The gateway to the west
What it embodies: the potential and dreams of a generation of immigrants
Standing before a future full of possibilities,
And Committed to building the nation.

We are standing at a new gateway to the future:
Before us is not the promise of western expansion
But the equally rich potential of a new generation of immigrants.
Today I am asking, on behalf of my generation of immigrants,
to be given a chance to walk through this new gateway,
and the chance to help shape the future of this nation.

My parents left all that was familiar to them
And came 2,000 miles
So that I would have new opportunities
They wanted to break a cycle of injustice that had framed their lives
Only true change can help my generation of immigrants
step through our gateway to possibility.

Only true change can break the cycle of injustice my parents so longed to escape.
This will not be accomplished with band-aid legislation
That leaves us all feeling that we do not fully belong,
That traps me and other young people without hope
Without true change,
our potential is wasted.
Give me a chance to break that cycle
To contribute to this great nation

When I walk across the stage for graduation next week
I want to feel a part of my class, my community, and what in my heart
I believe to MY nation—the United States of America—
Not just another wasted potential.
When I head off to college in the fall
The youngest person in my immediate family—
My 3 year old nephew Ronnie--will be heading off to his first school experience.
What I want is that by the time he walks across the stage at his high school
graduation
He will have a monument to be mesmerized by
Built by those of us who have been given a chance.