

■ ■ ■ *"I can help my family now."*
DOUGLAS AYALA, 22, came to this country at age 13 from Guatemala with his parents. "They came to find better opportunities," says Ayala, who works as a bill collector and hopes one day to become an attorney. If his application is approved in the coming months, "it's going to change everything for me. I'll be able to get a better paying job and attend college." He'll also get to stop worrying about deportation. "I feel like an American."

A DREAM COME TRUE

BROUGHT TO THE U.S. AS CHILDREN, THEY'VE LIVED IN FEAR OF DEPORTATION. NOW A CONTROVERSIAL NEW POLICY GIVES YOUNG ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS HOPE OF STUDYING, WORKING—AND STAYING—IN AMERICA

Photographs by Joe Pugliese



THE PROCESS
Thousands lined up for applications the first day. As many as 1.7 million under age 31 could qualify for the deportation deferral.

■ ■ ■ *A life beyond the fields*

Struggling to find work after high school, **JESUS CRUZ, 22**, and his sister **MONICA, 24**, moved to Oxnard, Calif., and began working the fields picking raspberries. "I want to do something important in life," says Jesus, a native of Michoacán, Mexico. "Not just pick fruit." Adds Monica: "We'll now both be able to look for better jobs."



■ ■ ■ *Her daughter will be proud*

"I came here from Morello, Mexico, when I was 5. I had a baby when I was a very young age," says **BRENDA ANDRADE, 19**. "This will help me in so many ways. First thing I want to do is to get a job and go to community college—maybe become a nurse." Most of all, Andrade wants to share a successful future with her daughter Violeta, 1. "I want her to see me achieve my goals."

■ ■ ■ *She wants to save lives*

"This is the closest thing I've ever had to a dream come true," says **CINTHYA VEGA, 22**, a former high school honor-roll student and an aspiring physician who currently volunteers at an L.A. clinic. "This is excitement, like going to Six Flags." The Puebla, Mexico, native's plans over the next two years include finding a steady job and using that money to pay for college. "My parents taught me that if you want something, you have to work for it."



■ ■ ■ *Afraid no more*

"I'd wake up each morning thinking this could be my last day here," says **HUGO PONS, 24**, a former high school swimmer born in Rosario, Argentina. Studying to be a physical therapist, Pons says, "It's life-changing to be able to work with all your documentation."

By Johnny Dodd