

DECLARATION OF JOHN Q. SMITH
IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD
ARRIVALS (FORM I-821D)

1. My name is John Q. Smith. I was born on March 1, 1989 in Veracruz, Mexico. I don't have any memories of living in Mexico because I was brought to California when I was just a year old.
2. My father was already living in the United States when I was born. My mother brought me to the U.S. through San Diego, California. I was only an infant, about 1 year old, so I don't have any memories of Mexico, or of our entry to the U.S. My mother told me that we entered the U.S. without inspection by immigration officials. My parents brought me to the U.S. because they dreamed of giving me a better life.
3. We settled in Redwood City, California. My neighborhood was a rough place to grow up. I did well in elementary and junior high school. I loved mathematics- nobody in my neighborhood back then would have respected me for that.
4. I got involved with some friends who were bad influences on me. I never joined a gang and I was never a member of a gang. But in my neighborhood, the gangs had a big presence.
5. While some kids are put on track to compete for admission into the top universities in the country, to prepare themselves for great careers that give them the opportunity to experience the finer things in life, others are put on track towards state penitentiaries.
6. In 2005, when I was fifteen years old, I ended up in juvenile hall after a police officer pulled me and my friend over. We were going for a joy ride downtown in my friend's aunt's van, which he did not ask for permission to drive. His aunt reported the van stolen and the officer found it with us in it. Although I wasn't the one driving, the officer asked both of us to step out of the car. The officer patted us down for any illegal possessions. He found the brass knuckles I had in the back pocket of my jeans, which I had never used, and took both of us in. I was charged with possession of a generally prohibited weapon. I spent one day in juvenile hall for that, and was put on probation.
7. I wish I could say that I learned my lesson after that incident, but I got a tattoo soon after on my neck. None of my tattoos was gang-related. My neck tattoo said "RWC," which stood for Redwood City, where I grew up. My other tattoo was a cross, which stood for my religion as a Christian. When faculty members at school saw my neck tattoo, I was suspended from school, which violated my probation. I ended up spending approximately 60 days in juvenile detention. After other probation violations, such as curfew violations, I spent more time in detention. In 2005, I spent Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve in juvenile hall. It was hard to be away from my family during the holidays and it really made me think about my life.
8. Growing up I somehow agreed with the notion that people and kids committing crimes were bad people, but then I took a look at myself, at my family, and the kids I got to know in Juvenile Hall. Now I can only link that notion to inequality, to an unfair shot at the future. Most parents of kids in juvenile hall lacked resources to put their children in a sports little league, eat healthy foods that improve the body and mind, take classes to learn how to play an instrument, get a good tutor, go on trips (like seeing the snow for the first time). Kids in

rough neighborhoods, like me only knew the “neighborhood” or the friends’, cousins’, or uncles’ “neighborhood” with the same exact lifestyle.

9. I soon realized that I was headed straight down towards a dead end. Kids who were being transferred to penitentiaries as soon as they turned eighteen made that evident for me, not to mention older relatives already locked up out there. Also, being locked in four small walls all day felt like a waste of my potential. I decided that I wanted more, that I was better than that. My mother visited me week after week. She suffered a lot to make sure I had everything I needed, and that made me feel like I had to make a change.
10. A professor in juvenile hall, who loved an assigned essay I wrote, approached me after class and gave me a life lecture telling me that she never wanted to see me in her class or the whole complex again. This really hit me. My probation officer, who at first seemed like a nuisance, began to feel like someone who actually cared about me and wanted the best for me. I don’t know if it was me simply growing and maturing through these experiences, or doing what was being expected of me, but I made that change.
11. Sometimes when some of us do try to change our social circle, we end up in trouble anyway. I stayed out for trouble for over two years, until 2007.
12. In 2007, when I was 18, I remember being invited to a house party Los Gatos, CA, while his parents were out of town. Not long after midnight the police crashed the house and shut the party down. I will never forget the first words one of the officers directed towards me before arresting me, “what the hell are you doing here?” I was the only person arrested, despite the fact that the house was filled with underage partygoers. Until this day, I am not completely sure as to why the officer singled me out, but I was taken into custody for public intoxication. The charges were later dismissed for lack of evidence.
13. I believe experiences like these are enough to make anyone angry at the world, it is easy to blame others and just accept the situation, but I try to rise above that. I am thankful for the great teachers I had when growing up, who pushed me and believed in my intellect even when I seemed to be empty of it. I am thankful for my parents’ unconditional love and support. I am also thankful to my probation officer—who at first seemed like an annoying burden, but really ended up being a guardian angel watching my back. I have overcome all of these obstacles and I have become stronger.
14. I made the decision to have my tattoos removed. Even though they were personal to me, they made the wrong impression. My probation officer referred me to a tattoo-removal program. I had my tattoos lasered off of my body. It was a really painful process, especially for the tattoo on my neck, but it was worth the pain to get a fresh start.
15. After earning my GED from a state continuation program held at the Boys and Girls Club in 2006, I enrolled in community college at Cañada College.
16. Initially, I had interest in profitable economics. My drive was solely making money as my ticket to a new life, but I later realized there are things far more important. To complete the science requirement for general education, I took human biology and was awed by it. I was fascinated by how we function as humans, our mechanism, and the amazing things life gives us that money cannot buy.
17. I am pursuing a degree in Biology, to better prepare myself for medical school. I am

interested in many different fields in medicine, and I am thinking of focusing in surgery or internal medicine. Apart from my passion to understanding humans-- our behaviors, our mechanisms, our anatomy, I am interested in finding a way to positively impact other people's lives. I try to stay focused on what really matters to me in life. I am aspiring to inspire as much as I can, to provide evidence of the power of the mind, to pick others up, and to continue to learn as much as I can.

18. I am currently a full-time student at Cañada College with a 3.64 GPA. I am taking molecular and cell biology, organic chemistry, and a physical activity class. I will be transferring to a four-year university as a junior in the fall of 2014. I hope to become a surgeon someday.
19. I love to weightlift throughout the week and I play soccer on weekends, which raises and revives my spirit every time. I have simply made that change, looking to be an example for the youth in my community, working hard, beating the expectations for someone like myself, enjoying everyday of my life, and looking forward to "better" days. Days filled with positivity, with grateful people, with happy people, whether we live in the suburbs or in the "neighborhood."
20. One day, when I am a doctor, I hope to serve as an example to at-risk youth. I want to show them that there is more to life than what they might think.

I, John Q. Smith, certify that the foregoing statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signed this ____ day of _____.

Signed: _____
John Q. Smith