

# The Human Cost of Terminating Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

## GABRIELA\*

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Gabriela is a working mother of four U.S. citizen children (ages 9, 11, 15, and 16) who came to the U.S. from El Salvador fleeing violence. Gabriela is a paraprofessional at a public school in Maryland and she and her husband work very hard to be able to send money to her uncle and brother still in El Salvador.

Gabriela is a devout member of her faith community. She attends mass every weekend and teaches Sunday school in her church. Gabriela's greatest fear is being ripped away from her children. She would rather take the risk of living in the U.S. undocumented than be separated from them. If she had the opportunity to address the administration directly, she would remind them, "many TPS holders have families they have to feed, and can't afford to be separated from them."

## ISABEL\*

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Isabel and her two young children came to the U.S. in 2001, reuniting with relatives that had previously settled in Massachusetts. After an earthquake ravaged her native El Salvador, Isabel was unable to return home and TPS allowed the family to put down roots in the U.S. Isabel built and administered a family-run bakery before moving to work in local city government. Her children, now grown, have enrolled in local universities and have built their own families: Isabel now has three grandchildren, all U.S. citizens. The possibility of TPS being terminated for El Salvador would divide her family, a reality that has hit Isabel's eight-year-old granddaughter especially hard. She recently wrote a letter to President Trump asking him not to deport her grandmother and father. Isabel, age 50, has worked continuously since arriving in the U.S. but now worries about being able to find a job in El Salvador. Hiring practices there favor young applicants, and the age cutoff for new hires is age often age 35.



Credit: UndocuBlack

Esther, a TPS holder living in Florida, works on a research project.

## ESTHER\*

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Ester is a Haitian TPS holder living in Florida pursuing higher education. Ester would remind the administration that TPS allows her to achieve her full potential: "Having TPS has changed my life. It has allowed me to be able to work, and having the ability to work means that I have the ability to go to school. TPS allows me to continue my education and my work in a biology lab where I am currently working on my own research project."

## EMILIO\*

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Emilio's parents did not know each other when they left their native Honduras nearly 30 years ago to build a better life in the U.S. They met in New York, where they married, received TPS status, and raised two children. Emilio's mother has worked as a shift supervisor at the same company for the past 25 years, and his father has worked with various family-owned construction companies in New York. Their hard work put Emilio and his sister through private school through 8th grade, and secured their enrollment in a top-tier high school,

where they enrolled in AP-level courses. Emilio went on to earn his undergraduate degree and MBA in just four years, and now—inspired by his father—supports other small business owners as a director at a consulting firm. His sister, equally accomplished with aspirations to pursue a PhD program in child psychology was tragically killed by a drunk driver in the summer of 2017. As Emilio’s family reels from the loss of his sister, they are burdened by the possibility of his parents having to return to Honduras, leaving their home (and a mortgage) behind. “I ask the government not to break up my family even more so,” he says.

## **YVETTE\***

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Yvette’s work as a journalist in her native El Salvador forced her to interact with sources and chase down stories on the rough streets of San Salvador. It also subjected her to escalating levels of gender-based violence in the city. After surviving several incidents of physical abuse, Yvette no longer felt safe in El Salvador, and decided to make the journey to New York, where a colleague had offered her a job at a local newspaper. She received TPS status in 2001, and devoted her career to work in community-based organizations, focusing on public health and education. Yvette’s work has allowed her to crisscross the country over the years, taking her to Puerto Rico and later to California. She remains in close contact with her family in San Salvador, who warn her of continuously deteriorating conditions and an uptick in violence. The family fears that Yvette’s potential return could compromise all of their safety.

## **EMELY\***

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In 1998, at age 9, Emely moved to the U.S. with her younger brother from El Salvador, settling with her mother and aunt in Philadelphia. Emely’s mother had come to the U.S. a few months earlier to be able to send money home to El Salvador to give her children a better life. She soon realized that due to lack of running water, electricity, and other basic needs to survive in El Salvador, her children would be safer in the U.S. with her. Emely remembers her journey with her 4-year-old brother and aunt, traveling through the desert, counting on a coyote to get them where they needed to go. It was a difficult time but Emely focused on a brighter future.

In 2001, Emely and her family learned that the U.S. was granting TPS for El Salvador. Because of TPS, Emely was able to pursue her dream of attending nursing school. Now, as the Lead Nurse at one of the largest home care facilities in Philadelphia, she wants to be a role model and inspiration for young Latina girls—anything you put your mind to you can accomplish with hard work and dedication. Emely is at risk of losing her job as Lead Nurse and many other opportunities she’s used in the service of others when TPS for El Salvador is terminated. She fears the loss of her family, loved ones, her future, and her dreams.

## **TERESA\***

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Teresa left her native San Pedro Sula, Honduras in 1994 and came to the U.S. to temporarily care for her ailing grandmother. However, evolving circumstances have kept her in the U.S. for the past two decades, and she has put down deep roots—and built a successful career—here. Teresa completed her last year of high school in Massachusetts and enrolled in college, but struggled to pay for her education and had to drop out. When she received TPS status in 1999, she secured a job as an administrative assistant at a local bank, re-enrolled in college, and completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in economics. Her hard work has paid off. She is now a vice president at a bank and a homeowner in New York. If forced to return to Honduras, Teresa would walk away from a mortgage and her leadership roles at several community and cultural organizations in the city.

\*Names have been changed to protect TPS holders and their families