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# Week in Review



THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

THE BASICS

## When a Foreigner Turns American

By NINA BERNSTEIN  
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### Readers' Opinions

Forum: [Immigration](#)

When an [immigration](#) judge granted asylum last week to an orphaned Pakistani youth who grew up in Queens, one argument she considered was that he was so Americanized, "he would stick out like a sore thumb" in his native land.

### Can you be too Americanized to be deported?

In the end, the judge used other grounds to halt the deportation of the young man, Mohammad Sarfaraz Hussain, 21, and to recognize him as a refugee from persecution. But the question is part of a growing debate over how to treat the Americanized children of foreign parents.

It makes sense that the concept has now turned up in an asylum hearing, said Stephen Knight, deputy director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. At a time of simmering conflict between the United States and Muslims in other countries, Americanized young people may very well become targets of persecution overseas.

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At the same time, he added, no one is suggesting asylum as an answer for more than a handful. Among Pakistanis of all ages, for example, fewer than 2,000 cases of asylum were granted nationwide in a decade, and in New York, only 77 Pakistanis received asylum in 2004.

"It's a very difficult, strenuous avenue to pursue, to try to gain asylum in the United States," Mr. Knight said. "Judges are skeptical, the standard of proof is high, Congress is making it harder to apply and easier to deny."

A broader answer is a measure known as the Dream Act, included in immigration bills now stalled in the Senate. It offers a path to citizenship to young people of good character who have lived in the United States for five years, been accepted to college, or earned a high school diploma.

Opponents say the measure will encourage illegal immigration and subsidize immigrants' education at the expense of American children and their taxpaying parents. Supporters contend it is unfair to punish young people for parental decisions, and unwise to leave a generation of strivers in a dead end — let alone to deport them to lands where anger at America is boiling over.

"Like many first generation immigrants, they're very loyal to the country that took them in," said Cris Toffolo, director of the Justice and Peace Studies program at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, who testified as an expert in Mr. Hussain's asylum hearing. "But then if we deport them or deny them citizenship, they're like a jilted lover. Why should they be loyal?"

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