

Bartsch graduates, immigration status still in limbo

Tiffin, Ohio -

Graduation at Heidelberg University is like many others, filled with speeches about overcoming challenges and facing adversity. However, one student in the audience is all too familiar with those terms. Just a few years ago, 24 year old Manuel Bartsch didn't believe earning a diploma was a possibility.

"I was in a state of limbo. I never thought I would graduate or attend college," said Bartsch just hours before getting his diploma.

Bartsch, came to Ohio from Germany in the fourth grade with his step grandfather. In high school he went to the Immigration and Naturalization offices in Cleveland to get his paperwork straightened out so he could take the ACT and get a driver's license.

He was turned away, but returned at their request a few weeks later.

"I walked in that door, and it locked behind me," recalls Bartsch. "It was petrifying. I never thought I was going to be able to step foot on soil as a free man ever again."

Bartsch later learned he came to the United States on a 90 day visa. The proper documents were never filed.

He was released after a couple weeks, and his legal case has since been dropped.

After graduating from Pandora-Gilboa High School, Bartsch was unable to get student loans. That's when Heidelberg offered a special circumstances full tuition scholarship.

Bartsch started out as a business management major, but soon switched after a lobbying trip to Washington D.C.

"You know it sparked a kind of love for it, and ever since then I've made the switch from business management to political science."

Now with a degree, Bartsch remains undocumented-- meaning he can't vote, still can't get a license, and can't get a job.

American history professor David Hogan doesn't understand why Bartsch's status still isn't settled.

"We want good people in this country. We want honest hardworking people, and that's Manny pure and simple," said Hogan.

Now that he is an adult, Bartsch is committed to following the law.

"I would go through any channel I have to correct this situation," said Bartsch. "I'm not asking for citizenship. I would love to earn it if that possibility would arise."

He's remaining hopeful that, like graduating from college, another dream-- his American dream-- will one day become a reality.

Your News Now will have more on the Manuel Bartsch story Monday at 6pm. Tricia Bell will ask what next for Manuel and what is being done through his immigration attorney. Tricia will also explore federal legislation via the Dream Act.

<http://www.hometownstations.com/story/18369485/bartsch-graduates-immigration-status-still-in-limbo>