

Saying 'illegal immigrants' was poor word choice: Hillary Clinton

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Denver: Responding to criticism from immigration activists, Hillary Rodham Clinton on Tuesday said that her use of the term "illegal immigrants" was a "poor choice of words", pledging not to use it anymore.

The Democratic presidential front-runner was asked about her use of the term to describe people who are in the US illegally during a question-and-answer session on Facebook held by Telemundo. The question came from Jose Antonio Vargas, a filmmaker and journalist whose organization, Define American, has said the terminology is offensive and asked all presidential candidates to stop using it.

"Yes, I will," Clinton wrote during a stop in Boulder, Colorado. "That was a poor choice of words. As I've said throughout this campaign, the people at the heart of this issue are children, parents, families, DREAMers. They have names and hopes and dreams that deserve to be respected."

DREAMers take their name from the acronym for legislation that lays out a process toward citizenship for immigrants who were brought into the country illegally as children and grew up in the United States.

During a town-hall meeting in New Hampshire earlier this month, Clinton said she voted "numerous times when I was a senator to spend money to build a barrier to try to prevent illegal immigrants from coming in. And I do think you have to control your borders."

Clinton has called for expanding President Barack Obama's executive actions on immigration and overhauling US immigration laws, providing a pathway to citizenship for those living in the US illegally.

Her plans mark a sharp contrast with Republican White House hopefuls, who have vowed to roll back the president's immigration orders. Many Republican candidates also routinely use the term "illegals" to refer to immigrants in the country illegally.

Clinton, during a subsequent rally in Boulder, said the US was "fighting for human rights and dignity and freedom" against terrorism and said the US was justified in allowing refugees to enter the US after a "strong vetting process." Republican presidential candidates have largely opposed allowing refugees from Syria into the country. Republican front-runner Donald Trump has suggested he would support ways to track Muslims in the US.

"I've heard all of this loose and inflammatory talk about refugees," Clinton said. "And I don't think that does us any good at all in waging and winning the fight against criminals and killers who misuse religion and promote a different set of values than the ones that we believe in."

Clinton met in Boulder early Tuesday with relatives of mass shooting victims, and she later vowed to fight gun violence with tougher gun control laws.

Clinton met with Jane Dougherty, sister of Mary Sherlach, who was slain at the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012; Tom Sullivan and Matthew Jenks, the father and brother-in-law, respectively, of Alex Sullivan, who was killed in the 2012 movie theater shootings in Aurora, Colorado; and Coni Sanders, daughter of Dave Sanders, killed in the 1999 Columbine High School shootings in Colorado.

"If 33,000 people were dying every year from something else, we'd surely do something about it," Clinton said of US

shooting deaths at a Denver rally.

- AP