

The Face of Immigration

By Jerry Grzeca and John Sesini
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On December 15th, Robert arrived in my office – tired, tears in his eyes, an overall look of desperation hanging heavily in his face. “I can’t live like this,” he told me. Robert gripped the side rails of his chair tightly, his knuckles almost white. “John,” he said with utter seriousness, “I don’t think I can go on anymore.” I wasn’t exactly sure what he meant. Did he mean that he no longer wanted to fight for his wife’s permanent residence status? Or, much worse, did he mean that he was thinking of taking his own life?



Robert came to see me after his wife’s waiver application was denied at the U.S. consulate in Ciudad Juarez. Unfortunately, he previously

obtained help from a Notario to apply for his wife’s residency. However, because the Notario did not present and submit the waiver application effectively, the U.S. consulate denied his wife’s application and ruled her inadmissible to the United States for ten years. Robert was devastated. He asked himself how this country can keep him away from his family for ten years. It was incomprehensible to him and he was not sure if he wanted to continue with his life because his wife and children mean everything to him.

Julia had entered the United States when she was a young girl without papers, in search of a better life. When she and Robert met, they fell in love, got married and had three beautiful children, Christina, John and Andrea. When she was required to appear in Ciudad Juarez, Julia had to take the two youngest children with her because Robert was not able to take care of all three by himself. Robert was working a full-time job, going to school with plans of becoming a police officer, and he was taking care of two elderly parents who suffered from relatively serious health issues. Thus, he thought it best for his youngest children to be their mother and he thought that they would all be reunited within a couple of months.

First, I was angry that another individual had fallen victim to a Notario’s inadequate advice. A Notario in the United States is someone who presents him or herself as a legal professional, but is not licensed to practice law. Not being able to properly understand and advise on the complexities of immigration law can result in serious consequences for immigrants. Second, Robert’s case broke my heart. From the way he spoke of his children and his love for his wife, it was abundantly clear that he was a kind and loving husband and father. He did not deserve

the heartache from which he was suffering.

As Robert sat in my office, gripping his chair, wiping the tears from his eyes, I was worried that he wouldn’t live long enough to see his wife and children again. He had already been separated from Julia and his children for several months. He seemed depressed and stated that he could not continue to live without his family. Given the separation from his family, taking care of his elderly parents whom were very sick, and the fact that his children were now sick, he was at his end. This conversation worried me and after we discussed his “extreme hardship” case, I attempted to allay his fears and advised him that he had a winnable case. However, as with any case in the immigration system, I could not guarantee anything.

Given the circumstances, he was forced to quit school to send money to his family in Mexico to pay for medical fees for his children. All of these factors led Robert to begin drinking heavily to relieve his pain, and eventually this brought him back to my office, now contemplating the idea of taking his own life.

I advised Robert that he needed professional, medical help right away. He started going to a neuropsychiatrist, who was quite disturbed by the suicidal behaviors Robert was showing. The doctor wrote a letter on Robert’s behalf describing the extent of the hardships that Robert was suffering. Not only did Robert start to get the help he needed, but this letter also made our case even stronger, for the only way we could obtain approval for a waiver was if Robert showed signs of significant hardship, which he clearly did.

Meanwhile, we waited for Robert to get better and waited for the approval of Julia’s waiver. The process took 4-5 months before the waiver was finally approved and an immigrant visa was granted. Robert had now been separated from his family for almost an entire year.

After her arrival, Robert came to my office with his family. Robert and Julia sat together, their hands intertwined, their smiles warm and comforting. I felt so lucky to share in their happiness. Julia had obtained her green card and they were finally able to reunite as a family.

Robert and his situation touched me deeply, but I wish I could say their story is one of a kind. In truth, their story echoes that of so many other families we encounter on a daily basis. Asking for your help in creating positive change is not something we take lightly. The only way we can move forward is to join together and fight for what’s right.

For more information about how to properly obtain U.S. citizenship or for information on other immigration-related issues, please contact Grzeca Law Group at (414) 342-3000 or visit our website at www.grzecalaw.com.

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