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The Art of Fear

I got married in 2015 to the love of my life, Lawrence. Going into this marriage, I knew it was going to be a stressful start. Why you may ask? In one word; immigration. There is a problem with the current process of immigration and the fears that families live with are paralyzing. How do I know this, well, to try to explain my feelings, I need to explain my experience that actually starts with my sister.

My sister was married in 2001and started her life and began to build her family. Her husband Himnai had a past that probably wasn’t the best, but he made the necessary corrections and turned his life around, that’s when he met my sisters. Fast forward to 2009. My brother in law who is a permanent resident for the United States of America, through his mother’s naturalization, was working on a job site and then was approached by two ICE officers. They asked if his name was Himinai and he replied yes and then took him into custody, he called my sister and explained that one of his cousins had used his name on a beer run when he got caught so they went looking for him, and realized that since he is not a U.S. citizen, they were going to begin the process of deportation, even though, they knew this was not the guy that did the beer run.

My brother in law was detained in a holding cell in Park City, where his kids were able to come and see him. Bad decision. My niece and nephew saw their father and did not want to leave. They cried and screamed for their father who was being detained for no reason. A lawyer was secured and we immediately went to do as much research as we could to try to figure out how to bring my brother in law home.

Fear. We lived in fear. My brother in law was legally here in the United States and yet was threatened with deportation. As our lawyers worked tirelessly around the clock to find a way to get Himnai out of holding, Himnai was transferred to and ICE holding facility in Arizona. We knew nothing about Arizona except we now hated it because it’s where a lot of people were transferred to before they were deported.

With support pouring in from local church leaders, local officials and even a senator wrote in a letter of support to grant the release of my brother in law. Monetary donations came in from friends, family and co workers to help alleviate the fees we were accrued during this ridiculous process. We went to court. We fought and fought, we were desperate. My nieces and nephews wanted their father, my sister wanted her husband and our family, wanted our brother in law to come back home. After the court hearing the judge told us he would give us his decision in three days. The longest three days of our lives. We prayed, fasted and cried together as a family. After three days, we were called back into court and was told that the judge would grant a release letter for my brother in law, but that we would have to go to Arizona to get him.

With determination in my sisters heart and a whole lot of faith, my sister, her kids and my parents traveled to Arizona, hoping that they would find the facility that my brother in law was being held. Google maps was not a thing back then and if you wanted to purchase a TOM or GPS tracker it was going to cost you. At this point and time, money was not important; my sister packed her rental and drove to the Arizona holding facility.

My sister was told that she is lucky that she had come that day, because they were going to deport my brother in law later that evening. My sister impatiently asked the officers to please hurry with the paper work so that she could take her husband home. Hours later, my brother in law was released and all my sister could think about was, get back to Utah. After three months, we reunited with my brother in law.

Now reading this you may wonder, why was my brother in law taken into custody if they knew that he was not the guy that did the beer run. Why was my brother in law facing deportation on a simple beer run. Well, according to the officers, “he had experienced some trouble before.”

I get it. The United States of America has had issues with illegal immigrants coming to here and causing trouble. Because there is usually no documentation of these illegal immigrants, it’s hard to track down those that would cause trouble. I think deportation is necessary in cases where people are causing trouble. There are people who are here illegally and lie, cheat and steal and cause problems and don’t care, because they are not from here.

This is similar to when you save up money to purchase something you’ve always wanted. You treat it differently, you see the hard work you’ve put into purchasing that item. You take care of it. Compared to something that might just be given to us, sometimes we don’t really take care of it, because well, you didn’t earn it. This isn’t the case with everything that is given to us. Some of us are grateful for the things that are handed to us.

The USCIS webpage defines deportation as; “The formal removal of an alien from the United States when the alien has been found removable for violating the immigration laws. Deportation is ordered by an immigration judge without any punishment being imposed or contemplated.” When you look at my brother-in-laws situation, he may have violated the immigration laws which is why the ICE officers was able to take him into custody. Yes, there was a mix up with who my brother in law was versus his cousin who had actually committed the beer run crime, but my brother in laws past haunted the present.

In an article written by Kate Sweeny entitled, “For dreamers, fear of deportation is scary – but waiting is even worse,” Sweeny points out that because of current administration, fear grows in these dreamers. The thought of uncertainty causes more stress and anxiety in a person because of the waiting and wondering. In the article, Sweeny mentions that,” I’ve learned from my research into worry and waiting, that kind of deep uncertainty can be even more stressful than facing down the worst-case scenario when the wait is over. Even if all ends well, a happy conclusion cannot erase the suffering that preceded it.”

We lived in fear. We still live in fear. Even after we got the necessary paperwork done, we live in fear. August 2015, when I married my best friend. I had a lot of fear. Not just because I was I was going to start a new life with another person, but because my husband was an immigrant from Tonga and I was going to have to go through the process of filing papers for my husband. I learned from my sister’s experience with her husbands immigration battle. I didn’t want to go through that again. I followed the necessary steps that was given to me through the USCIS website and paid the thousands of dollars necessary. Even after that, I was still afraid. I was afraid that if my husband, who was working here legally was going to be taken by ICE. I had a fear, even after we got the notification that my husband was granted permanent residency that he could be taken from me. The art of fear at it’s best. The unknown kills me and causes me stress. I live in fear everyday that my husband will be taken from me and with current administration and their stance on immigration; it doesn’t calm my fears but add more stress. There have been moments recently that the fear has paralyzed my thoughts and actions. I didn’t know what to do or even where to begin solving problems because the fear I had within me took over. I over think just about everything. I know I was over thinking my husband being taken from me. That one experience of my brother in law is something I never want to experience again.

The united states is a country built on dreams and immigrants, and yes, times have changed that have caused us to have a process to gain residency or citizenship within the country, but if someone has the correct papers filed, like my brother in law, then deportation is something that they should never fear. If Dreamers have come to America and were once protected by a law, then they should not have to live in fear. The United States Department of Homeland Security that houses the USCIS immigration services, should understand this. There should never be a mix up on who should be deported and who should not have to live in fear.

Citations

1. Sweeny, Kate. “Perspective | For Dreamers, Fear of Deportation Is Scary - but Waiting Is Even Worse.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 27 Apr. 2018, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2018/04/27/for-dreamers-fear-of-deportation-is-scary-but-waiting-is-even-worse/?noredirect=on&utm\_term=.c6933217b6e4](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2018/04/27/for-dreamers-fear-of-deportation-is-scary-but-waiting-is-even-worse/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c6933217b6e4).
2. “Deportation.” *USCIS*, www.uscis.gov/tools/glossary/deportation.