



Video Story Transcript

THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvtT8EsCj5I>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

My name is Arianna Ross. It was 2006. I was watching the sunset - the sky was a wash of purple and peach. I, I turned to face my boyfriend, Alexandre. He was smiling; there was a twinkle in his eye.

Right behind him was a statue of the Madonna holding baby Jesus, awash with the same colors as the sky. He looked at me, “Você quer você orar comigo? Do you want to pray with me?” We held hands and we took a deep breath in and were silent for a moment.

When I opened my eyes, he was looking at me hesitantly. And then he said to me in a very tentative voice unlike his normal voice, “Você quer ser meu noivo? Do you want to be my fiancé?”

“ABSOLUTELY!”

For the next 24 hours, we were in pure wedding bliss. We discussed where we were going to get married. The kind of food we were going to eat, the type of music we were going to have and, of course, the most important part for both of us - the ceremony. We decided that my parents would say prayers in Hebrew and that his parents would say a few prayers in Portuguese. And we would have a master of ceremonies run the entire event.

We were excited until we sat down in front of the computer. We decided that we were going to spend the first half of our life in the United States and the second half of our life in Brazil, which meant that we had to get married in both places. We turned on the computer, we loaded the USCIS website, the Immigration Services website, for the United States.

We looked up the K-1 fiancé visa. There were nine pages of instructions.

Step number 1, fill out the I-129F document in dark ink. Step 2, gather evidence that proves that you are planning on getting married and staying married. That proves, essentially, that you are in love. Evidence that proves that we are in love?

I called Immigration Naturalization Services. I asked them, "What exactly do you mean by evidence? What kind of evidence or what form of evidence? I mean, I recognize that there are people who try to dupe the system. We're not one of those people so I would appreciate clarification?"

And the man over the telephone calmly explained to me, "Excuse me, you need, essentially, to provide simple evidence, simple evidence that proves that you are in love and you are truly planning on getting married and staying married."

"Sir, I get that. It states that in the document, in the instructions. But what do you mean by 'proves that we're go... in love' in evidence? What kind of evidence?"

"Anything you deem necessary."

All right, I went home to the United States and I started to gather evidence. I gathered photographs, receipts, letters from my parents, letters from his parents, letters from all of our friends. I had two hundred and fifty pages of evidence when I turned in our application. I crossed my fingers and I waited.

Six months passed and we received a letter. They were telling us we had made it to the next step. We needed to turn in more documentation and more evidence. I mailed in 150 more pages and we crossed our fingers and we waited. One year and two months later, we received our interview date in Rio. I got on a plane. I met my now fiancé there and we arrived at 7:45 am at the consular office. Our appointment was not until 11:30 but I didn't want to be late. We sat and we waited patiently. Eleven o'clock rolled around, 11:30 rolled around, 11:45 rolled around, 12:25. All of the couples had gone in and out, in and out. There was only one consular office left in the entire room when he motioned us in. We sat down and the first thing I noticed was that he was behind a Plexiglas bulletproof window and then he smiled. He had his hand... a stack of papers.

"Here are three hundred and fifty of your four hundred pages of documentation. I would like to return them to you because I really don't want them clogging up my filing cabinets. If you have more evidence with you, which I'm sure you do, please don't give it to me. I believe that you are going to get married. I believe that you are in love. I would just love to know how the two of you met."

"Ach! How the two of us mmmet?"

I was ready to screech at the man! My hands actually balled into fists! And then, suddenly, I felt my normally nonverbal husband reach down and relax my fingers. He looked at me. He looked at the man and he began to tell our story. The story that we had documented in all those photographs and all those letters. By the time he was finished, I was surprised. He knew all those details.

The consular office reached underneath his desk. He grabbed his stamp and in one fell swoop, he stamped my husband's passport.

"Welcome to the United States. I can't give you your passport. I need to mail it to you. Do you have the self-addressed stamped envelope?"

"Yes." We handed it to him.

He explained to us that it would arrive in five to six days and then he hoped my husband had an excellent journey. One year and six months later, my husband got off the plane. He looked at me and he smiled - a

twinkle in his eye. He was wearing my favorite T-shirt. I knew that we were ready to bring joy into our world and to start our pre-wedding bliss.