



# Video Story Transcript

## TO PROVE YOU ARE LEGAL: IMMIGRATION FROM TAIWAN

**By: Storyteller Ada Cheng**  
www.renegadeadacheng.com

**Link to YouTube Video:**  
<https://youtu.be/FLncxHYw4vE>

---

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.

---

I'm Ada Chen. So, um, after being a green card holder for 10 years, I finally decided to apply for American citizenship last year. And two weeks after I did my citizenship interview, I received a notice from the Citizenship and Immigration Services of Homeland Security (and I have to say that clearly) and notifying me that my citizenship application was approved and my swear in ceremony was on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Um, and I was excited. I was very excited! Um, I have to say, though, my citizenship application was absolutely smooth.

Uh, the only problem I had was the way the USCIS staff handle the mail. They actually mailed it out without sealing the envelope. Um, so, the notice with my legal name, social security number, green card number, uh, and address was sticking out of, the... out of the envelope in the mailbox and I was just floored. I thought, you know, what if... what if this - one of the most important documents -was lost. Um, but, uh, you know I'm just excited. So, I invited my partner... and my then partner and the chair of my department at the university where I was a faculty member to, uh, join me for this important event. Um, and on May 27<sup>th</sup>, we arrived at the USCIS building right before 1:00 p.m. Um, we got through the security check, um, took off our shoes, went through it and I, actually had to throw away my, uh, camera and recorder because they would not allow any kind of recording, uh, devices. And we went up to the third floor and there was a open waiting area and a lot of people were waiting there. And so, after half an hour I was called to stand in line... all of the people who, uh, will be sworn in that day. So, we were standing in line, standing in line and moved to a bigger, uh, ceremony hall.

Uh, and so, as we walked toward, uh, the ceremony hall, there was a long desk, uh, right at the entrance of the ceremony hall and three agents were sitting there. Um, so, the first agent took my green card and my notice. And the second agent examined the documents and threw them into the big yellow envelope, and a third agent took my name off the list.

And then my heart sank when I turned in my green card. Uh, this was, actually the only legal documentation in my possession to prove that I was documented or shall we say the term legal in this country. And I didn't bring my alien ID with me so I didn't have any, uh, ID that day to prove where I was. But then the thing is that it really didn't matter because any form of ID would not prove, uh, your legal status.

So, at that moment I was without legal documentation and I became illegal in a moment! So, I started to panic when I walking to the big hall. And you have hundreds of immigrants like me... had already been seated. None of us had any... none of us had any legal documentation. And I have to say, I was, uh... it was very, very scary to be with hundreds of people in that big room and it was as if we were waiting for our collective sentence. We're just waiting for them to process people and, theoretically, um, without any documentation, we could be arrested. Um, locked up and deported. Right? Right there and then.

And then I started to think. Okay, deported back to where? I'm from Taiwan originally. I was born there 52 years ago. Um, I came to this country 25 years ago. The last time I went back was 17 years ago. So, my question I asked myself, "Where is home? Right?" Um, I still have family there and it hasn't been home for more than two decades. Um, so, going back there, is not necessarily going home. It has been... I've been away for two decades. But then that's what raise the question, "Then is Chicago home?"

Um, so, I was sitting there. And every time an agent walked toward me, I panic because I started to wonder, okay. "You have so many people that are undocumented in one room. Is this just a trap? Right? Is the Asian walking toward me and are they going to tell me, 'Okay. There's something wrong with your application. We change our mind about naturalizing you, right?' " is... I would... they are going to say and did not believe me when I indicated on the application form. I told him during the interview and the list of questions that he asked, for example. Um, well, I didn't engage in genocide. I didn't torture anybody. I was not a Communist... Communist. I was not a terrorist. I did not intend to overthrow U.S. government. I was not a gambler. Uh, I was not an alcoholic. Uh, I did not force anyone to have sex and I did not solicit sex.

And so, these are the list of questions that, uh, the immigration, um, officers will ask you when they... during the interview. And I just started to wonder, wow, are they not going to believe me and, uh, are they going to change their mind. So, then I was starting to think, well, if that happens, uh, what is going to happen. Uh, but then after a while, I saw my friends coming and, uh, they took their seat. And the USCIS director went up to the podium and say we will start, uh, the ceremony. So, we started the ceremony.

The ceremony included, uh, watching documentaries, uh, eh, and we have to pledge loyalty to the flag. Uh, listen to speeches and, uh, then we, uh, received our certificate of naturalization. One thing I have to say, though, during the ceremony, the documentary talked about how it was that we, like generations of immigrants... that we were so fortunate to come to this country and, uh, escaped war and poverty, uh, and political and religious repression and to receive American citizenship. I actually felt very terrible that I invited, uh, the chair of my department who was 70 year-old African-American man. Um, at that time, many people were protesting the police brutality in the United States, um, and his ancestors didn't come to this country voluntarily. And when I was thinking about this, that war is not just out of the United States... it is right here in the United States. And so, for me when I was celebrating, um, he was not necessarily celebrating with me. Um, and I feel very ambivalent about that. Um, but eventually I received a certificate, um, of naturalization and when I got home, I immediately locked it up in the safe because that was now the only legal documentation to

prove I was a legitimate American citizen. And, believe it or not, a few weeks ago when I applied for affordable care health insurance, they, actually asked for numbers from that documentation, um, when I identified myself as a naturalized citizen. So, this kind of thing never ends even after you become naturalized. Um, but, regardless, I have to say I'm very excited about the process and it has been a long journey to become American.