

13 Your petition is denied because you've been accused of lying

Shortly after we got married, I filed a visa petition for my wife Claudia. After the petition was approved, Claudia's case was sent to the U.S. Embassy in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, for her green card interview. The officer at the Embassy misunderstood my wife, and wrote in her notes that my wife had lied to a border official in the past. The officer then told us that my wife was not eligible for a visa. Claudia and I tried to correct the officer, but she did not allow us to correct her. The Embassy denied Claudia's visa. After that interview, I met with an immigration lawyer. The lawyer explained to me that people who falsely claim to be United States citizens are not eligible to become permanent residents. There is no exception to this rule. The lawyer also told me that, even though the officer misunderstood what Claudia told him, there is no way to appeal the officer's decision in the United States courts.

Luis, Washington

14 Racial Profiling

As Congress has repeatedly failed to work for a comprehensive national solution to the broken system, state and local governments have gotten involved in immigration enforcement. Local police departments around the country are engaging in racial profiling, pulling over Latino drivers and asking them for proof of immigration status. Organizations have heard many stories of immigrants who have been turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) when they went to city hall or court to do things like pay a traffic ticket. When local police enforce immigration law, they erode the trust immigrant communities have in the police and make it impossible for immigrants to call for help when they need it.

Stories from In Our Own Voices:

Three years ago a police man treated me badly. When I asked him for help, he responded inappropriately, saying we all dress badly and are in gangs. **Monica, 41, Oregon**

15 Immigrants and Insurance

A 2005 study by the Rand Corporation found that 68 percent of the undocumented immigrant adults they studied had no health insurance. This compared with 17 percent of the native-born Americans, 23 percent of immigrants who had become citizens, and 38 percent of immigrants who are permanent legal residents.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: My daughter has insurance because she was born here. When I go to the doctor I pay out of my own pocket. Since I don't have papers I don't have a right to insurance, they tell me. **Andrea, 18, Oregon**

16 Naturalization Fees

The path to citizenship is very expensive, and getting more so. This year, the government raised the application fees for immigrants applying for legal permanent residence and citizenship. The fee for an immigrant applying for a green card (legal permanent resident status) rose to \$1,010, a 155 percent increase. A green card holder applying to become a United States citizen has to pay an application fee of \$675, a 66 percent increase. Other government fees, lawyer's fees, and other costs add to the bill.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: Well, all of the immigration fees are so expensive. They have gone up a lot in five years. We don't really have a choice, we need our papers so they can charge what ever they want and we have to pay. There are so many costs: for a lawyer, a notary, all the applications. But to have papers would mean that you don't have to always live in fear that they're going to come and throw you out of the country. So, if they tell you \$2,000 you say, "Okay \$2,000." **Juana, 23, Washington**

17 Detention – Detention Center

The U.S. government detains over 280,000 people a year in over 400 facilities at an annual cost of more than \$1.2 billion. Being in violation of immigration law is not a crime; it is a civil violation. But the majority of immigration detainees (57 percent) are held in 312 county and city prisons nationwide because the Department of Homeland Security's facilities do not have the capacity to hold all the detainees. Torture survivors, victims of trafficking, and other vulnerable groups can be detained for months or even years, further aggravating their isolation, depression, and other mental health problems associated with their past trauma. (**Detention Watch Network**)