

Testimony of Mathi Mugilan Paguth Arivalan

To a hearing on

The Separation of Nuclear Families under U.S. Immigration Law

Thursday 3/14/2013 - 1:30 p.m.

2237 Rayburn House Office Building

Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security

Thank you Chairman Gowdy, ranking Member Lofgren, and all the members of this distinguished Committee. My name is Mathi Mugilan Paguth Arivalan. I am a legal permanent resident of the United States. I hope to become a US citizen one day.

I was born in India. I am a Tamil. That means I am a member of one of the oldest continuous nationalities on earth – as venerable as the ancient Hebrews, older than the Romans, nearly as old as the Egyptians who built the Pyramids. Tamils are scattered across much of South Asia – India, Malaysia, and, most painfully, Sri Lanka.

It is exciting to me, as a legal immigrant to this country, to think that I am bringing one of the world's oldest peoples to one of the world's youngest nations.

I am also married. I hope you don't mind if I exercise one of the prerogatives enshrined in the Bill of Rights, and petition the government for a redress of grievances.

I came to the United States on an L visa in 2005, as a software consultant. I got my green card in 2009. These days, I work for Newsmax, which I expect most of you are familiar with.

I am well-known in the Tamil community, which is worldwide. It was through my work in human rights, particularly after the genocide against Tamils in Sri Lanka, that I met Bhavaneswari. She is also a Tamil, born and raised in Malaysia.

We fell in love – and we got married on February 14th. Of course you all recognize that is a marvelous bit of multiculturalism. I did not grow up celebrating Valentine’s Day, but I think I like that it will also be our wedding anniversary.

But I have to tell this Committee that I was shocked to discover, when I filed a petition to bring Bhavaneswari to America, my new country, as my new wife, that the minimum wait in this category is more than two years. I understand that this delay has been as long as 8 years for some people.

Let me explain why that shocked me. After all, I have been working legally in the United States for 8 years. I know many professionals who work here on various visas: L-1, H-1B. *They* can bring their wives to the United States almost immediately.

But I have made a commitment to the United States by becoming a legal *permanent* resident. As a Tamil, I cannot say that there is any nation on earth that is truly my home – and isn’t that America’s story, that this is the land where those who are not at home anywhere, can make one?

So I was shocked to find that *because* I had made a commitment to America, my wife must wait in another country for years. If I was just a temporary worker, my wife would not be 12,000 miles away.

I did what any redblooded American would do – I went on the Web, and used Google. I found **AmericanFamiliesUnited.org** – and realized that my problem was not unique. It is in fact a feature of US immigration law. I cannot believe that was the intent of Congress. This organization was founded to fix it. I joined.

All I know is what I see in the media, but we are very hopeful that Congress will comprehensively reform immigration laws to reflect the values that attracted me to this country.

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