

**LEGAL RIGHTS**

By Atty. Johnson Lazaro

# Relax, It's Only a Marriage Interview

Built into this objective construct of a legal marriage between a man and a woman in immigration law is a principle that the parties must be free to marry. There must be no legal impediment to the marriage for it to be recognized for immigration purposes. Otherwise, the marriage is not valid.

Be confident but be smart as well. Make sure if you were previously married that you have obtained a divorce or annulment from your prior spouse. You say well people don't really forget to get divorced before they get married to a new spouse do they? Unfortunately, if we were perfect we wouldn't be here. It is not uncommon for people to rush into marriage before they divorce their prior spouse. And when this happens, Immigration gives you a very unpleasant surprise.

During the interview you are to prove that you truly intended to be married. So you walk into the officer's office holding hands, and you sit down and give each other those sweet stares and maybe

blurt out an "I love you" as you proceed. Then you provide the immigration officer documents of your intent to be married "till death do you part." Evidence showing intent can take many forms, including documentation that the couple reside together, share financial transactions such as bank accounts, take joint responsibility for contracts such as leases, car loans, or insurance, hold themselves out in the community as a married couple, and share important family and holiday events.

If you are truly married, you act naturally. People generally see the love you have for each other. You're not stressed or worried. You feel as if "come hell or high water" the world knows that the woman by your side is your universe. She is Mrs. Universe. There was a time when Immigration Officers would intimidate you during the interview. But they are becoming nicer and more accommodating. You need to be organized with your documents to insure a quick approval. After the interview, you will know if you passed or have to return for a second interview. You don't want to return for a second interview. So be confident, relax, and get an approval the first time.

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(Advertising Supplement)

YOU need to take it seriously but you need not lose sleep over it. Many applicants prepare for the Immigration marriage interview as if it would be the end of the world if they don't pass. RELAX. Don't worry about all the hype. Sure you need to prepare carefully and with a lawyer, if you can afford one, but you can pass it with flying colors if you remain calm and confident.

Due to the relative ease of acquiring residence through marriage, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has historically battled marriage fraud, and will disregard a marriage that appears valid in form only if it is discovered to be a sham. But if you are truthfully in love and are crazy for each other, how can any government deny the validity of your marriage? As long as you are truthful, it will show. No need to be nervous.

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