

I Am American by Anna Golubev

I do not remember how we came to the decision to leave Russia. Perhaps the deterioration of post-perestroika freedoms pushed us in this direction. By 1999 we decided to emigrate. Coincidentally, I got an email from a relative who lived in the US. He wrote that the software industry is booming; that people find jobs after 3-month coding courses and that we will have a Green Card after 1 year.

After some study, I left my work as a college teacher and applied for a job as a software tester. I poured my heart into this job because it was our path to the US. Meanwhile, a large US company made me a job offer. The “dot-com crash” came shortly after; the stock of my future company plummeted; layoff was announced. By some miracle, however, the company did not withdraw my job offer. On April 1, 2001, we arrived in Boston. My husband's visa was H4, no right to work. As we were passing the border control, the officer jeered at my husband and said, "No work for you, huh?". I guess he was amused that I was going to work and my husband to stay at home.

Well, we quickly found that there was nothing amusing about this situation. Up to that point, my husband had been the breadwinner and head of the family, but now the roles changed. We were not ready for that and it almost ruined our marriage.

There were many struggles ahead, going through dot-com crash and the aftermath of 9/11 and high-tech crisis of 2003. It took us over 4 stressful years to get the Green Cards and become Americans. For this, I am grateful. I am also proud of myself for being able to give my children a better life.

What is the point of my story? I guess it's this.

There is a lot of press coverage calling for compassion for refugees or those who come to the US illegally.

There is very little coverage of struggles that the legal immigrants are facing, particularly, immigrants from India. I guess it is hard to feel compassion towards someone who outwardly is doing well. It is, on the other hand, quite easy to be annoyed by someone with an accent who has got a big house, a new car and kids who earn straight As. Let us not forget that behind this facade of a good life, some people are going through immigration purgatory for years - or decades - not able to plan their future, all in hope to become Americans. And, for those of us who are Americans simply by birthright – let's be grateful for the good fortune, and let's not take it easy.