

# A lost weekend across the border and into another world

*They must find it difficult, those who have taken authority as truth, rather than truth as authority.*

- Gerald Massey, Poet.

*To cheat oneself out of love is the most terrible deception; it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation, either in time or in eternity.*

- Soren Kierkegaard

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**W**e can spend a considerable amount of time discussing the banality of the authority that thrives on fear of its nation. But let us shed light on this one-of-a-kind story of two passports meeting each other. This story is based on truth and

took place over the weekend before which President Trump signed an executive order halting green card holders from seven muslim countries from re-entering the United States for 90 days as well as banning Syrian refugees indefinitely. Those who hold a valid visa are also banned from entering the country for 90 days. This thoughtful order impacts 90,000 people and one of these lucky people happens to be me, Delaram

Moradpour. I am the Iranian immigrant featured in the Street Roots Planet Portland article "Rebel Heart." (Sept. 18, 2015)

Everything happened too quick and too abruptly for me to get a chance to change my Facebook profile to a sad picture of me with a short message under it that says "I'm an immigrant." In fact, I did not even get a chance to protest the executive order on social media. It fell on me and a friend of mine who I decided to visit in Canada over the weekend of Jan. 27. I always go to Vancouver, B.C., to unwind (and by that I mainly mean partying). Feeling very confident about my green card I decided to visit a guy with one of the most powerful passports on this planet: the German passport.

After five years of living in Portland and becoming absolutely oblivious of my past and the fear and anguish of a rebellion I was thriving on, I received the gift of freedom of expression that the United States First Amendment gave me. I opened my wings and flew around with a precious green card in my wing pocket. I spoke my mind without having the fear of a big bulky guy in a swat team suit knocking on my door and questioning me about it. I forgot that there are no cars without license plates to take me away because of what I do or what I say. I learned that there are rules; I have rights, as crazy as it sounds.

On Thursday, Jan. 26, I decided to go to Vancouver B.C. for the weekend. I packed my stuff and on Friday Jan. 27 at 3:30 p.m.

I headed toward Canada. My friend Ali, who is a PhD candidate at Portland State University, called me when I was already at the border and said, "Dude, are you sure about this? I do not want to scare you but I think you could have chosen a better time. What if they do not let you back in? Ask them!" And I responded, "Just relax. I have already crossed the border." (That was a lie.) "And I asked them and they said it's fine." (Also a lie.)

I was nodding my head, telling myself, "He is overly concerned because he is on a student visa. I am a *legal* resident." and it was funny the way I was pronouncing *legal* in my head, as if it really meant anything. As if Ali was illegally there.

After crossing the border to Canada the time went by fast. We had drinks, walked along the bay where I dipped my feet into the frigid water and met Kelly who improved his houseboat in the middle of the night. After having another drink and spilling it all over the carpet we went to bed, since the weekend was short and we had enough plans to fill a two-week vacation in Vancouver.

At 8:36 a.m. I was still in bed and woke up to the ringtone of my cellphone and I barely opened my eyes, just to Marc's hand handing over my cellphone to me. It was my mother video calling me and I can recall that she called me at least twice before I could put something on and answer. I swiped right and before I got a chance to say "Hi mom!" she yelled "Dela! What are you doing? Get your butt out of there and go back NOW!" And the moment I opened my mouth to ask what was going on she shouted with her Persian squeaky voice "the immigration ban that Trump just signed includes green card holders too! We just heard it on BBC Persia! You have to get out of there and go back now! No! Call them first and see if they will let you in."

I interpreted the message in English to Marc just to hear him say, "Excuse me?" I called the Peace Arch Border Control and a lady answered the phone "Hello?" I explained the situation and she said, "Yes, I have heard about the new executive order but I do not understand how it would affect those who are legal permanent residents. I am not sure if we can deny entry to those who want to enter their own country."

My own country?

She said "hold on a minute." Then she transferred me to someone who I could tell had just gotten there. He said, "Ma'am, I cannot say what exactly will happen. I cannot tell you if you should come now but if you are coming back tomorrow I would say follow the news for more information. All I know is that there will be an inspection."

The decision was made immediately. I packed my luggage and threw it in the car and Marc grabbed a few packs of cigarettes and shoved them into his duffel bag and made coffee. At the very last moment he grabbed his German passport "just in case" and we headed toward the U.S. border, not thinking about what to say or what to do.

As we drove by a Canadian police car, I remembered the time that seeing a police car would terrify me almost to the point of

having a heart attack, and how those feelings disappeared after residing in Portland.

As we approached the kiosk to have our documents checked, I felt my heart palpitating. I asked "What should we do? Should I tell the office what is going on or just proceed as always?" Marc said, "Yeah, just do as you usually do." I scanned my green card at the RFID station in front of the kiosk. It did not register as a card! I began thinking: "I think this is it. They have already canceled it." I tried again and it went through. I approached the officer upon the green light and I handed my green card and Marc's passport. He stared at me and I looked ahead and I thought, "Oh, look at him, otherwise he is going to think that you are hiding something." I looked right back at him and he asked us where we were going and where we were from.

"Oh we are going to Seattle," Marc said. "Yeah, for the weekend," I added.

He handed our documents back and with a smirk on his face said, "Well, all right then. Have a safe trip!"

Wait, are you joking? Am I not getting pulled aside? Are you not going to inspect every inch of my car?

It was only a few seconds after crossing the border that the reality started to sink in. I burst into tears involuntarily and we started laughing at the morbid situation that was nonexistent 24 hours ago. I immediately started thinking about all of the refugees and other immigrants I have been working with for the past four years as a medical interpreter and case worker. I was so oblivious of their problems when this catastrophe befell me.

I can speak English. I know my way around the city and I have college degree. I have a job. But I know that a man I worked with does not possess any of these privileges, and he has a son who is disabled during the war on terrorism in Afghanistan.

I know a woman who is not even aware that her status as a refugee is endangered because she was never given a chance to go to school and learn foreign languages. I know another who is not going to see her husband next week after two years of waiting and her two little children are not going to see their father for the first time. Ali will probably not be able to renew his visa and another man I know will never see his wife who is coming from Syria.

I know that my friend Samira who is a case manager at Catholic Charities might get laid off because with no refugees coming who is she going to work with? Her colleagues might lose their jobs because the new president wishes to keep the jobs safe by not letting outsiders in.

The sense of pride I always used to take in my choice of career was negated and I could foresee the sparkles of hope leaving my eyes pretty soon because I had to go back to work and slowly tell my people that their situation is going to change.

I pulled the car over in a town center and we got out of the car to have a cigarette and eat. I was once again in a country in which



Delaram Moradpour is an Iranian immigrant who works with refugees as a translator in Portland. Marc Banholzer, a German immigrant living in British Columbia, contributed to this story.