

My Story: Part 9

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

"I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice."

- Abraham Lincoln

How often does one hear someone say that things can only get better, only to see things get worse? It's like the kiss of death. As soon as someone says something like this, you begin to imagine a worse scenario than the one you are already wrapped-up in.

In this world, it is not easy to try to follow a straight and honest line and achieve one's goals. We have seen how ruthless ambition leads to greed and corruption. Then there are those who are given just a little power, but still behave as if they are greater than the responsibility that has been devolved to them. In other words, give almost anyone a little power, and you begin to see the worst side of their nature.

It's a question of responsibility and ethics. Self-preservation will always overrule morality when one has a job to do. And when one convinces oneself that they can do something unethical because do otherwise will cost them their job, then it's easier to forget that one's ethics are being compromised. To often do we observe a distinct lack of courage when someone tells you that they do what they do because 'it is their job' and they have to obey their superiors. This is the first level of dereliction of responsibility. The second level comes when said people get used to the idea they can abuse their power for the sake of self-preservation and convince themselves that what they do is justifiable.

In my battle to get back to the US and to see my wife and reclaim my personal possessions, I have fought against all types of apathy and ego. I drew a blank and now had to consider other alternatives.

My wife and I had a mutual contact in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. To be more precise, they were relatives of a mutual contact whom I had come to know by speaking to them on the telephone on several occasions. Therefore, my next step was to fly to Canada and take up the generous offer of accommodation at their apartment. I could stay here and perhaps arrange for my possessions to be bought North of the border. Possibly, Ling-Ling may also be able to join me.

One thing that did concern me was that the US shares 'information' with the Canadians. I did not know what perverse and untruthful things the US may have shared with the Canadians and if my name was on some kind of 'watch list'. While this may seem a rather dramatic statement to make, we have to balance this thought with the incredible level of neurosis that exists within Homeland Security and how far they would go to stop anyone getting anywhere near the US.

I was also concerned that my identity had been compromised. I had papers in the US which anyone could get access to. Being at a serious risk of identity theft, and all that ensues from this predicament, I legally changed my name by Deed Poll. With my new name established, I acquired a new passport and booked a flight to Toronto, Ontario, Canada. I could have flown directly to Vancouver, but having been to that airport twice before, I wanted to avoid the unfriendly and suspicious nature of immigration officials there.

I landed in Toronto on the 13th September, 2008. My plan was to take a domestic flight to Vancouver the next day. By avoiding an international flight to Vancouver and taking a domestic flight, there would be no immigration check. I got to Toronto and sailed through passport control. I answered all the questions posed by the passport control officer honestly and was admitted.

The next day I flew to Vancouver. I was now almost broke and was depending upon the charity of my friends there to house me. But a new problem arose. Having just returned for a business trip to the US, they told me they may have to go away again to conclude some unfinished business. By the time I reached Vancouver, they had left for the US again.

I was now potentially homeless in Vancouver. I had enough funds left for a motel and to book a ticket to travel by bus and train to Portland in Oregon. Would I be able to enter the US? I had to make some tough decisions about what I would tell US immigration at border control (at the Pacific Highway crossing point - "Pacific Highway") when I would try and enter the following day (15th). I should have not rushed, but it was Ling-Ling's birthday and I was determined to be with her - even though it would be later in the evening.

So I went out and bought my ticket. By around 11-30am on the 15th, I boarded a bus to Seattle. From Seattle, I would take an Amtrak train to Portland. Before boarding, I asked the driver about fingerprinting routines at Pacific Highway. He said that sometimes they did not take fingerprints, but could guarantee nothing. This is likely because he usually transported American or Canadian travellers and fingerprinting was not required.

Despite my apprehension, I was unusually relaxed on the way to the US. My fingers were unusually dry and raw when I got to Pacific Highway. I was hoping that the roughness of my skin would throw off the fingerprint scans IF I had to go through this check.

By lunchtime, I was at Pacific Highway and being questioned by a passport control officer if I had been to the US before. I was afraid of another ordeal, an ordeal similar to the one I suffered in San Francisco. Wishing to avoid any repeat, I said 'no'. I was asked several times, and if I also had previously travelled under a different name. I still tried to bluff my way through. Big mistake on my part. I should have just said 'yes' and hoped that I would be treated more humanely on this occasion.

I was delayed at Pacific Highway. My identity could not be confirmed and I was sent to a cell. My bus left without me and I began to get seriously worried. I'm not sure how long I was in that cell, but immigration officers there kept trying to trick me into answering questions. They assumed I was the same person who had been to the US before under a different name - but they could not prove it.

I spent relatively lengthy spells in that cell. I made pleas to get access to my soft drink, but was denied. I was offered undrinkable water. Eventually, I said through the locked door that I would sign any statement they wanted to draw up so I could be returned to Canada. I was feeling very ill by now and wanted to get out.

But my health and wellbeing, as you may expect, was of no concern to the immigration officers. By the time someone returned to my cell, I was lying on the floor and semi-conscious. My left arm was shaking and (as it later transpired) my blood pressure went through the roof. However, the cynical and unsympathetic immigration officer who came to my cell could only say that he would pepper-spray me if I did not get off the floor.

I was waiting for the worst. I could not move and was waiting to be assaulted by this monster. Fortunately, he relented and called another officer. Then I was forced against the wall with a knee rammed into my chest. Now I was choking and unable to breathe. They then called some paramedics, who arrived after a short time, and I was rushed to the local hospital (I think it was in White Rock).

My blood pressure was 216 over 140. I was in serious danger of a stroke, or worse. I refused the medication offered by the hospital because I have other health problems and was afraid of adverse side-effects. I did take one Valium and then I blacked out.

During my time at this hospital, the officer who threatened to assault me was sitting on a chair at the end of my bed. He had a sick, self-gratifying look on his face. I told him he was evil and taking pleasure from my illness. All he would say was that he 'enjoyed' his job.

By the time I awoke I was being prepared to be returned to Pacific Highway. I was now in fear of further abuses and complained to hospital staff that I was not safe in the hands of the Pacific Highway immigration officers. I was ignored.

