

Donnay Hunt

I am an immigrant from Johannesburg, South Africa and a soon to be American citizen. Having gone through the US Immigration process at a young age, I have experienced situations not many other kids have which has left a large impact on my outlook on life. Immigration allowed me to have a safer life, education, and the ability to explore places I never imagined.

The political disarray of South Africa was not an ideal situation for my sister and I to be raised in. My family made the decision to leave our home, family, and roots and make the move to America to start a new life and do what we could to enhance our futures. Countless attempts at the green card lottery, thousands of dollars in lawyers, one more child, and ten years later, we had visas and could finally put the process in motion of moving to America.

Once we moved to Las Vegas in 2008, the neon lights and glamour of the city gave us a false sense that everything would be painless now, but little did we know the trials we were to endure for the next 12 years to gain citizenship.

Five-year-old me was continuously interrogated by government officials to verify every minuscule word, document, and action from my family. We just wanted to be American, but it was not that easy.

Growing up, I was oblivious to the inner workings of the process. My parents were doing everything they could to make the process continue successfully so that we could live the life they dreamed us having. The stress alone was enough to drive a wedge between my family. My sister and I were doing the best we could to keep our family in a peaceful state, but we all knew what was happening, even if we did not want to talk about it.

As a young adult, I have experienced situations no other average child endures. I have had to think about the betterment of my family before I could think of my own needs. My parents worked hard to shield me from the hardship we were going through and I had more than I needed, yet still, I never asked for anything because I knew, in my seven-year-old brain, that we needed the money more for lawyers and immigration than I did for candy or toys. Immigration caused me to mature at a very young age and taught me to be dependent only on myself and know that there is always more than what the eye can see. I do my best to make other people's lives easier even without them noticing. The small things like opening a bank account or getting a driver's license is of no thought to many. For me, it made me realize why we did everything we did. Having to carry every document with me for any appointment was incredibly frustrating and being turned away multiple times proved to me that my perseverance would all be worth it. This challenge in my life taught me the importance of dedication and determination for a cause that you strongly believe in, even when the outcome is unknown.