

GREAT IMMIGRANTS ★ GREAT AMERICANS

FEATURING GHIDA DAGHER

IMMIGRATION IS PART OF THE ORIGIN STORY OF AMERICA.

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IT WAS YESTERDAY. IT IS TODAY, AND IT WILL BE TOMORROW.

NEW AMERICAN LEADERS
EMPOWERING NEW AMERICANS

AND THAT'S WHY I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE ALL OF YOU HERE, STEPPING IN TO YOUR POWER AS LEADERS.

DON'T WE HAVE TO BE ELECTED BEFORE YOU CALL US LEADERS?

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU WON'T GET ELECTED?

WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE EVERYONE IN MY DISTRICT IS AN IMMIGRANT ...

ARE YOU PLANNING ON MAKING POLICIES THAT ONLY BENEFIT IMMIGRANTS?

NAH...

OF COURSE NOT

I GET IT...

SHE'S GOT A POINT ...

MAYBE THIS SOUNDS CORNY, BUT IN MY FAMILY, THEY USED TO CALL ME THE "AMERICAN DREAM KID."

BECAUSE I REALLY BELIEVE IN THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY AND THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXIST HERE.

GHIDA

I ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE DO OUR BEST WORK WHEN WE CONNECT AUTHENTICALLY BY SHARING EVERY PART OF OURSELVES.

LIKE I'M A FIRST-GENERATION AMERICAN,* 100% LEBANESE AND I WAS BORN IN SIERRA LEONE.

I GREW UP IN A MULTI-ETHNIC, MULTI-FAITH COMMUNITY THERE, WHERE EVERYONE CELEBRATED EVERYONE ELSE'S HOLIDAYS.

JINGLE BELLS, JINGLE BELLS ALL THE WAY

THEN THE CIVIL WAR STARTED.

WHEN IT DID, MY FAMILY TOOK SHELTER IN A HOTEL WHERE NIGERIAN UN SOLDIERS WERE PROTECTING CIVILIANS.

*49.5% OF IMMIGRANTS ARE NATURALIZED U.S. CITIZENS. MAP THE IMPACT, AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL, 2024

THE U.S. SENT IN THE MARINES TO EVACUATE THEIR CITIZENS FROM THE HOTEL TO SHIPS OFF THE COAST.

AS A CHILD, IT WAS FASCINATING TO WATCH A COUNTRY USE THAT POWER TO PROTECT ITS PEOPLE.

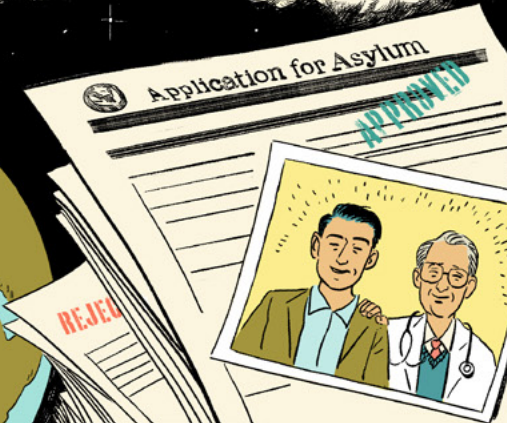
BUT WITHOUT GREEN CARDS, THAT'S ALL MY FAMILY COULD DO: WATCH.

SOON AFTER, THE HOTEL WAS ATTACKED BY REBELS AND ALMOST BURNT DOWN WITH US INSIDE.

FINALLY, MY FAMILY ESCAPED BY CANOE TO A CATTLE SHIP, THEN SPENT A YEAR BOUNCING FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY.

... UNTIL WE FINALLY LANDED IN THE U.S., AND SOUGHT ASYLUM - A YEARS-LONG PROCESS THAT ENDED WITH A REJECTION.

THEN, BY SOME MIRACLE, A MAN MY FATHER WORKED WITH REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE RESULT, AND SPONSORED MY FATHER'S WORK VISA. WE HAD A HOME.



AND TO THIS DAY, EVEN THOUGH I'M PRAGMATIC AND REALISTIC ABOUT IT, I HAVE VERY DEEP FAITH IN WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED HERE.



AND THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN: YOU'RE ALL HERE BECAUSE YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO ACCOMPLISH, FOR YOUR COMMUNITIES AND FOR THIS COUNTRY.

SO WHO'S READY TO BE A LEADER?



GHIDA DAGHER IS CEO & PRESIDENT OF NEW AMERICAN LEADERS, A NONPARTISAN ORGANIZATION THAT TRAINS FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION AMERICANS TO RUN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE. SHE PREVIOUSLY OVERSAW POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS FOR THE STATE OF MICHIGAN. READ MORE GREAT IMMIGRANT STORIES AT CARNEGIE.ORG/IMMIGRANTSTORIES