

JOURNEYS
FROM
THERE
TO HERE

STORIES *of* IMMIGRANT TRIALS, TRIUMPHS, *and* CONTRIBUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

THE HUMAN FACE OF IMMIGRATION: IMMIGRANTS STRENGTHEN THE SOUL OF OUR NATION

On a cold New England Saturday night in late January 2017, the day after then-President Donald Trump issued an executive order banning immigration from seven Muslim-majority nations, I wanted nothing more than a short reprieve from my hectic immigration law practice. I had looked forward all week long to attending my close friend's sixtieth birthday party and seeing her have fun. I also wanted to let loose on the dance floor.

But at the party, I was distracted and couldn't fully enjoy celebrating with my friends and my husband. I had to keep checking my phone for any urgent incoming news.

I'd previously warned the host that I might have to leave early and abruptly, but when the DJ played the first song, I was able to unwind, kick off my shoes, and move to the music. By the time the second song started, partygoers had flooded the dance floor, and you could feel the electricity of celebration. Like everyone else, it seemed, I lost myself in

revelry, happy for my friend's joyous occasion with all of her close friends gathered together for her milestone birthday.

When that song ended, I realized I'd better check my phone and, sure enough, I had a message: "Come immediately to the airport." Without a moment's hesitation, I said hasty goodbyes and dashed out of there, knowing that good people were being detained at Boston's Logan International Airport and in desperate need of legal representation to fight for their rights.

My partner Sue Finegan and I, along with several other colleagues at the Boston-based law firm Mintz Levin, knew that people from some of those seven nations had boarded flights to Boston; several of them were lawful permanent residents, including professors at the University of Massachusetts. They were unaware of the executive order signed late the night before and were at-risk travelers who might be turned away because of that unjustified, xenophobic directive from the White House. They needed our protection.

Our team, along with our tightly organized small band of Boston immigration and civil rights lawyers, received word that a request for an emergency judge had been honored and the judge would preside over the matter at a federal court. So I scrambled to put on my shoes and rushed out, headed for Logan Airport. But first, I made a quick stop at my house on the way to the airport. I zipped into my driveway, left the car running with the door open, ran into my house, changed out of my high heels and into a pair of sensible shoes, and grabbed a blazer to cover up the sexy, low-cut party dress I was wearing. I didn't want to go into court and stand before the judge wearing an inappropriate outfit. I threw the jacket over my dress, sprinted back out to the car, and raced to Logan.

En route, I received a call from my colleague Sue, who was leaving the airport and said that everyone was meeting at the courthouse. I changed course, drove to the courthouse, parked illegally, and ran inside. I was sure my car would get towed away during that long night—but it wasn't. I spotted it, right where I parked it, as I walked out of the courthouse at

two o'clock in the morning in exhilaration because we'd secured a temporary restraining order (TRO) enjoining the enforcement of Trump's executive order.

While I have more than three decades of immigration law practice under my belt—I created and oversee Mintz Levin's immigration group—that rush to the courthouse was just the official beginning of my advocacy to protect people from the Muslim Ban, as it came to be called. For the next several months, I worked hard, as did other passionate lawyers at Mintz and in the Boston legal community, including, importantly, at the Massachusetts office of the ACLU, to help those it affected as the situation took many twists and turns, with various courts ruling on the legitimacy of that executive order. Although our TRO was short-lived, ultimately, through vigorous and persistent advocacy, we were able to successfully defend and secure the rights of many of those immigrants.

Unfortunately, many others were subjected to the travel ban because, ultimately, the Trump administration was able to sustain the ban throughout his presidency, despite scores of legal scholars maintaining that it was unlawful and unconstitutional. As one of his first executive acts on his first day in office, January 21, 2021, President Joe Biden overturned the ban.

