"FEAR OF DEPORTATION"

NARRATOR Mohammad Razvi

RUN TIME **8:43**

RAZVI All right, so during the time of **special registration**, this is what was happening. This was one of our clients. Any person who was Pakistani, they were in a catch-22 if they were a visitor into the United States. They were damned if they didn't register, and they were damned if they did. This particular student registered, he had a visa, he was going to school, when he registered, he was detained for almost, I think, 24 hours. He wasn't allowed to get anything to eat, and then he was informed that he has to leave the country. He's like, "But my visa says I'm allowed to stay, and I'm allowed to go to school here." But yet, they were being put into deportation proceedings. And this is what happened to so many at that time. This is what scared the community. This is what scared everyone and anyone who was here. Twenty-five countries were put onto that, and Pakistan was one of those countries.

STRONG Put on the list of countries —

RAZVI On the list.

STRONG — people had to register if they were from.

RAZVI Had to register if they were from there.

STRONG Wow.

RAZVI Other things that happened in the community, I will show you. Individuals who were trying to get, who were trying to become citizens of the United States, and who went through the process, were being denied citizenship. Because they were saying that "Oh, you need to go through a background check." And the background — it takes you usually in the immigration process,

SPECIAL REGISTRATION another name for the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS. This Bush administration program, which launched in 2002, required non-citizen men from predominantly Muslim countries to be registered by the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (Immigration and Customs Enforcement has assumed INS's functions). Registration involved fingerprinting, photographs, and in-person interviews. Over 80,000 men and boys were registered and around 13,000 residents were deported. The program ended in 2011 and did not result in any terrorist convictions.

to naturalize, close to four to five years. You have to be a green card holder, you know, after becoming a green card holder, then you apply for becoming a citizen. So now what happened was, individuals were putting to two or three years for background check. Which means you can't become a citizen after five years. You're going to become a citizen maybe after eight years. And people couldn't vote, people couldn't advance in their careers. They couldn't do anything.

And this is, we found out, because we — the *Daily News* aired the story that there were over 2.7 million names of applicants into the FBI for additional background checks, causing a backlog. We worked with our congresswoman, Yvette Clarke, at that time, and she emphasized — and then all of the sudden, they started to move, and you know, many applications were starting to be reviewed. Otherwise, it would never have happened.

STRONG And this story came out in 2006.

RAZVI Yeah.

STRONG Wow.

RAZVI And, you know, try to scan it and get it to you. I can get you all this information. More than this, we also found out, people who registered, who complied, were being put into deportation proceedings, and about 83,000 individuals registered with the FBI and INS under the special registration program. Not one individual was even alleged to have any types of link for terrorism. However, they put 13,000 individuals into deportation proceedings. And the reasons were being very — how could I say it? The reasons were very simple. "Oh, ten years ago, you had moved to Brooklyn, to Queens, and you didn't inform us. We're going to deport you." Those were the reasons being used at that time.

STRONG Practically cooked up.

RAZVI Well, it's not cooked up; it's actually — it is a guideline in the book for immigration protocol, but you know, this was something that was never practiced. You know? Never emphasized. So, and then all of the sudden we're hearing that Guatemalans were being deported. Jamaicans were being deported. And I'm like, oh my God, and they were using the same rhetoric, just to deport those individuals.

Here's a story in the *Village Voice* where a person was being deported, and he was in detention. His name is Tauqir Zafar. He was about to have a wedding, and he went to visit his family and come back, and they started putting him into deportation proceedings. We intervened, I intervened, and helped, and assisted them. And you know, lo and behold — it took some time, but then they finally released him. Until today, he comes and visits me, and tells me, "Now I have kids, and living my American dream, thank you so much." Those are the things that I live for.

STRONG Did he make it to his wedding?

RAZVI He made it to his wedding. I mean, that was the thing. I mean that's why I emphasized like, oh my God, how could you? This is not —

Here's another case. This is the Shahid Ali Khan's case. This person, the father, who also registered, he was apprehended, put into deportation proceedings. His child, who's a quadriplegic, and also has to get a tube, a feeding tube in his stomach, was put into deportation proceedings. This aired — I aired it. I contacted the USCIS [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services], and they looked at the case, and thank God, then they released him May 11, 2005.

STRONG Two thousand and five. Wow.

RAZVI He was able to reunite with his family. And his case was the one that just recently came up, that was aired in the *New Yorker* magazine.

STRONG And you told me before the recording how it all came out.

RAZVI Yes. And I was so happy, he came to me, you know, two days ago, he goes, "Moe, I got this, Mr. Razvi, look, I got this, I got this, they're letting me stay."

STRONG Permanently?

RAZVI And I was so happy. No, he — the order of stay is in effect, and they're not just, you know, they're not going to put him into deportation proceedings at the moment.

STRONG Great. And he — his family has been in the country now for how long?

RAZVI It's got to be over 20-something years.

STRONG Yeah, I believe it.

RAZVI Yeah. So, I mean I can go on and on, multiple stories, you name it.

STRONG Well, tell me about the first ones you remember, before you knew how to make these calls and get media involved. Tell me about some of your first interventions.

RAZVI Okay, so this is what happened. After 9/11, very basically, the office I opened up, Council of Pakistan Organization, which was back then, and now Council of Peoples Organization, people used to come into my office and say, "My husband's arrested, my son's arrested, my cousin's arrested, what do I do?" And some people came to my office, "These are the FBI card left in my office.

I don't know what to do; I'm afraid they're going to deport me, or they're going to do this." I started making phone calls. If a person was missing, I started calling county jails. Because that's where they were being held. I was calling multiple jails, and I still have the list, of trying to figure out where they were being held, and if they were being held, then try to get them pro bono attorneys. I held the largest legal clinics for the community. I had over 1,000 people just come in, in days after days. Just to get legal services. I was working very closely, even then, with Donna Lieberman from NYCLU [New York Civil Liberties Union], Udi Ofer, and others to assist these constituents. I learned that their — free legal representation is possible through Legal Aid. Until today, I'm holding free legal clinics and immigration services. As I was learning, I started to implement those programs. And now, if a person is arrested, I need to only make one phone call to find out where he is, if that agency has them. And provide them with assistance. This is what I learned, this is what I do now. But I'm also teaching it to others. I'm making sure that other community members also are aware, that I'm not the only one. The most important thing that we can do is teach others, so they can help others.

BIO **Mohammad Razvi was born in 1971 in Pakistan. He and his family immigrated to the United States in the late 1970s, where they settled in Sheepshead Bay. He started several businesses in Midwood, and founded the Council of Peoples Organization (COPO) after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Through COPO, engagement with law enforcement agencies, and participation in research regarding hate crimes, Razvi worked to provide support to Muslim and immigrant communities.**

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