Immigration – win or lose

By Joy Lucius

“My name is Winner Jacobson.” he says, “W-I-N-N-E-R. The opposite of loser.” And with that simple introduction, comes a man who, against all odds, paints a successful picture of the American immigration dream.

Winner Jacobson’s odds didn’t always look promising though. He was born in Burma (also known as Myanmar) in 1990, one of six siblings. His parents were faithful Christians in a country that for generations had shown extreme hostility toward believers. That hostility grew until government-backed militia killed Winner’s dad and other villagers.

Fleeing with her children to the jungle, Winner’s mother sought safety in her parents’ village. Things weren’t much better there, so she eventually fled to a refugee camp in Thailand.

Perpetually homeless and impoverished, Winner’s mom had no option. She left Winner and his brother at a Christian orphanage sponsored by Christian Freedom International. With no shoes, the clothes on his back, and very little education, life had seemingly dealt Winner a losing hand. But God had different plans.

 “Like kids around the world,” Winner says he wanted to learn. At the orphanage, he finally got the opportunity and supplies needed for school. And through CFI’s educational and vocational programs, Winner learned to read and write. He also learned to speak English and discovered a life-changing love for computers. In fact, Winner believes that the support and skills he garnered through CFI set the foundation for his life.

**God’s moving hand**

So when then First Lady Laura Bush implored the United Nations to aid the persecuted Christians of Burma, Winner was a well-prepared candidate for immigration. When he came to America in 2008 with a temporary refugee status, Jim and Karen Jacobson, founders of CFI, adopted him.

After a year, he received his permanent resident green card. Winner applied for his citizenship five years later. Now in the final stretch of the road to citizenship, Winner sees the American immigration process as one of the best opportunities of his life,

“For a refugee…I am blessed,” he said. “People always ask me what I went through as a child,” he continued. “It was not easy—it was life or death. I was either going to make it or not.”

However, he believes that struggle made his faith grow stronger. Grateful for his past, Winner fully realizes that it is not self, family, or friends, but “it’s only His hand, God’s moving hand” that helped him.

Indeed it was God’s hand that protected and directed Winner Jacobson, but God chose the practical hands-on ministry of CFI to carry out His plan for Winner’s immigration story. Jim Jacobson, president of CFI explained to *AFA* *Journal* that the example for such practical ministry to refugees and immigrants is found in the Bible. He offers Paul’s account of tent making as a model for how CFI runs their global ministry to persecuted Christians.

**Biblical model of immigration**

In Acts 18, Paul details his arrival in Corinth, where he met Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish believers exiled from Rome. In order to assimilate and prosper, this couple opened a tent making business in their new home. Tent making gave them a source of income, as it did for Paul, their houseguest. Tent making also gave Paul an opportunity to meet and evangelize many Corinthians.

CFI basically does the same thing. They go globally wherever Christians are reported to be suffering persecution – providing advocacy, as well as Bibles, food, clothing, medicine, shelter, and education.

Through leadership of indigenous pastors and laymen, CFI offers vocational training as a way to earn a living in the midst of oppression. Like Paul’s biblical illustration, CFI proves that a vocation can be a hand-up rather than a handout for persecuted and displaced people, especially when and if the opportunity for immigration arises.

 **From suffering to service**

That opportunity did arise for Winner, and he will forever be grateful to God for the chance to come to America.

 “I do not want to take this life I have right now, the blessings I’ve received, for granted,” he says. Equally grateful that God allowed and used his suffering to empower him, he adds, “I do believe I am the person I am now because of that.” So, Winner tells his story in order to speak for those without a voice, the countless other suffering, persecuted Christians who never get the chance to speak.

He also uses his immigration experience as an avenue of ministry to other refugees. Winner declares that most people think of the word ministry and see a church pulpit or a foreign mission field. He decided early in his college career that even missionaries and ministers need a practical way to earn a living.

Accordingly, Winner utilizes his degree in accounting and business management to do just that. Beyond his full-time career, he also volunteers as an interpreter and liaison, helping immigrants assimilate into everyday American life—things such as trips to doctors and hospitals, schools, banks, and local government offices. In doing so, he helps others achieve the American dream that he is living.

Winner has come a long way from those days of running through the jungles of Burma to escape persecution. He and his wife Deanna have a toddler son and a baby girl on the way. He has a great job, a nice home, and a good life. Plus, he hopes to soon become an actual American citizen.

 Completely the opposite of a loser, Winner Jacobson is an American success story.

 Sidebar 1

The Constitution and immigration

Constitution Day, September 17, is one of the most significant dates in American history. It is an annual celebration of the 1787 signing of the United States Constitution.

Just one day, one document, 4,543 words, and 39 signatures…yet 230 years and billions of citizens later, the United States Constitution still stands to “provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

Those words and the entire Constitution still speak hope to persecuted people worldwide who are seeking refuge from tyranny and terrorism. While the Constitution shines as a beacon of possibility, it does not address immigration.

Instead, both Article I and the 14th Amendment speak of naturalization. Immigration was perceived to be a state matter under Amendment 10, until the Supreme Court ruled it entirely under the federal government’s jurisdiction.

From the establishment of the Immigration Service in 1891 to the “Refugee Act of 1980” and the “Immigration Act of 1990,” the process of immigration and naturalization has changed dramatically. Yet, countless people throughout the world still dream of the freedom and opportunity offered through American citizenship.

Go to [www.theamericanview.com](http://www.theamericanview.com) or [www.wallbuilders,com](http://www.wallbuilders,com) to learn more.

Sidebar 2

Can you pass the test?

Could the average native-born U.S. citizen pass the American Civics test required by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in order to become a naturalized citizen? The USCIS practice test is a multiple-choice test containing 20 questions centered on American history and government. The actual test (only ten questions long) is conducted orally during the applicant’s naturalization interview. Immigrant candidates for naturalization must answer six out of ten civics questions correctly, plus pass a written and oral English exam.

 Follow this government link - <https://my.uscis.gov/prep/test/civics> to take the civics test! Be brave though, and don’t take the review course first.