

The Story of the C Family*

**Names withheld to protect confidentiality*

The story of the C family is the story of The Refugee Reunification Project. While working with this extraordinary family, we realized the critical need to help asylees bring their loved ones to safety in the United States. In his own words, Mr. C describes his struggle to save his family from death in a war-torn nation, and the life-saving kindness of strangers who made the American Dream possible for his family:

I am a Liberian refugee in the United States of America. My family is now safe in this country because of the good will and support of people like you. I would like to share my family's story with you, and ask you to please support The Refugee Reunification Project.

In 1999, I fled to the United States to escape persecution in my home country. In Liberia, President Charles Taylor's security forces arrested and tortured me because of my political opposition to the brutal dictatorship. With God's grace, I was able to escape, but I had to leave my wife and children behind. This was the most heart-wrenching decision I have ever made. My wife and I have been married for over twenty years. She and my six children are the most important part of my life.

After I arrived in the United States, I applied for asylum with the help of the Yale Law School legal services clinic. Acknowledging the torture that I had suffered, the U.S. government granted me asylum. I felt very grateful, but I wanted desperately to be reunited with my family.

I felt so guilty, knowing that it was dangerous for my loved ones to stay in Liberia. Fortunately, getting asylum meant that I could apply for visas to bring my family to the United States permanently. I worked two full-time jobs to save money for my family's plane tickets so they could join me as soon as their visas were approved.

While my family's visa applications pended, the situation in Liberia deteriorated sharply. In 2003, the civil war reached terrifying heights, killing and displacing thousands of civilians. Finally, my family received their visas. This meant that my wife and children could travel to the United States—provided that I was able to raise money for their plane tickets before their visas expired.

Much to our despair, I soon learned that I had not earned nearly enough to pay for my family's plane tickets out of Liberia. Meanwhile, the civil war worsened. Every day, my wife and children heard gunshots and bombs outside their home. Soon the fighting got so bad that my family had no choice but to flee to a refugee camp. There they survived on little food and water, waiting helplessly as rebel forces slowly closed in on the capital city. To make matters worse, my youngest son became very ill.

When just one week remained before my family's visas would expire, the law student who had been working with me decided she had to do something to help. Knowing there was no time to lose, Elora began a fundraising effort for my family. Incredibly, the generosity of her colleagues and friends allowed us to buy seven one-way plane tickets for my family the very next day.

I cannot tell you how shocked and grateful I was. For the first time since I escaped, I knew that my wife and children would survive, and that I would see them again.

Today, we are overjoyed to be living together as a family once more. Each day, we celebrate how lucky we are to be together, and we understand deeply in our hearts the meaning of the American Dream.

Recently, we learned that Elora and two of her friends have started a fund to help other asylees whose families are legally authorized to enter the United States but who lack the funds to purchase one-way plane tickets to safety. We hope and pray that their efforts succeed. On behalf of my family and other refugee families in similar situations, I ask you to please support to The Refugee Reunification Project. Your contribution will make a lifetime of difference. My family and I thank you with all our hearts.