

Love From Abroad

By Jaylen Pearson

“I came here for love,” said Carolina Szarawara, 43. Born and raised in Bogotá, Columbia, she first came to the United States at the age of 28. As a young woman, she dealt with various challenges, including poverty. She started working at the age of 18, using the money she earned to help support her family. She also paid for her own college tuition as well as the tuition of her siblings.

Szarawara was well-known for setting her friends up with romantic partners back home in Bogotá. She was match-making one of her friends when another friend told her she should try to find love herself. At the time, Szarawara was focused on raising her infant son, Julian, and not romance. Eventually, she decided to find love,

and made a profile on the dating site, Udate. That is where she met her husband, James, who lived in Pennsylvania. The two of them hit it off and began messaging each other.

“Our relationship was based on honesty. I was honest about my son and my way of life. He worked for a big university there as a librarian,” Szarawara said. They decided to meet up in person, which prompted her to come to America. “I was not looking forward to leaving the country, but I found love.” On the third day of her visit, James proposed to her, and she said yes. Two weeks later, Szarawara returned to Bogotá. She and James began to file the necessary paperwork for her to immigrate to the United States.

The couple went through the Catholic church in New York City to attain Szarawara’s visa. The process was difficult. James had to go back and forth from Pennsylvania to New York to handle the paperwork. He ended up selling his motorcycle to pay for the various fees. It took three months for him to prove that he was financially stable enough to support Szarawara and Julian. Once everything was taken care of, she still had to wait another three months to enter the country.

Szarawara, looking back on it, is content with the process. “I don’t think I would have changed anything because everything was done through the legal process. I don’t think there is anything I would have changed as far as that.”

In January 2003, James and Szarawara were married in a bilingual ceremony in Colombia. Seventy guests attended. In March of that year, she was able to come to the United States. Her daughter, Jamie, was born in December.

Since her arrival in America, Szarawara has prospered. She has had no issues gaining access to human services. She also did not



Carolina Szarawara

have any problems finding work. Szarawara had attained her bachelor's degree in English from La Salle University in Bogotá. When she came to America, she managed to find a variety of English- and teaching-related jobs. During the early stages of her time in America, she tutored children in Spanish. Then, nine months after Jamie's birth, Szarawara found a job at the community library in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. She has since worked as a teacher, a case worker for immigrants coming to America, and a variety of other jobs.

Though Szarawara does miss her family at home, as well as the food and culture, she is also enjoying her time in America. Before, she only had a basic understanding of the nation via the entertainment media. Once she came to the country, she saw firsthand what it was like.

"One of the things that strikes in a positive way is that Americans are very generous, kind-hearted; they show a lot of compassion."

Though she is disheartened by the recent election and political climate, she still thinks that this is a nation which can grow. ☺



Love and marriage brought Carolina Szarawara from South America to the U.S.

#FactsMatter:

Immigration has an overall positive impact on long-run economic growth in the U.S.

Source: The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
