

## BARRISTER'S CORNER



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## What to do with conditional Green Card status in troubled marriages

dence. Such conditional permanent residence status lasts for two years from the date on which it is granted.

Step two of the procedure involves the removal of the conditional label to permanent residence status. Removal of the conditional label is initiated by filing an I-751 Joint Petition to Remove Condition to Permanent Residence ("Joint Petition"). The Joint Petition provides an opportunity for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") to inquire as to the legitimacy of the marriage after conditional permanent residence is granted. Accordingly, documentation evidencing that the marriage was entered into for bona-fide reasons should be submitted as part of the Joint Petition. The Joint Petition must be filed with the USCIS service center in the 90 days immediately prior to the second anniversary of the granting of conditional permanent residence.

Typically, upon the filing of the Joint Petition, a one-year extension of the conditional permanent residence is granted. The extension affords the USCIS time to schedule an interview with the person seeking permanent residence, and to make a determination as to whether unconditional permanent residence will

be granted for a ten-year period. In cases in which documentation submitted as part of the Joint Petition clearly show that the marriage is bona-fide and not merely for immigration purposes, INS may approve a Joint Petition without an interview.

The procedure described hereinabove applies in situations where the marriage has not been terminated. Often, the Joint Petition cannot be filed or approved because the marriage, although bona-fide when entered into, has been terminated by divorce. May aliens become threatened of falling out of status once their marriage is in trouble because the spouse often refuse to cooperate or has filed a divorce petition. In such cases there is still hope and the prospect of obtaining unconditional permanent residence status still remains. A waiver of the joint petition requirement may be sought in such cases.

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## The spotlight shines on global Pinoys in TFC's 15th year station ID

FILIPINOS around the world are at the heart of the 15th anniversary station ID of The Filipino Channel (TFC). Featuring vocal performances from Charice Pempengco and Billy Crawford, the new



The young Filipino who wowed the world with her powerful voice, Charice Pempengco puts her whole heart into TFC's newest Station ID.

station ID *Dahil Tayo'y Filipino*, shares ABS-CBN Global's message of hope to millions of Pinoys worldwide.

As the singing phenomenon that captured the hearts of Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, and mainstream America, Charice Pempengco lends her voice to inspire other Filipinos with her story of triumphs and humble beginnings. Another international singing sensation, Billy Crawford, who made his mark across Europe, Asia and the US, mixes in a contemporary rendition in the song. Charice's ethereal

ballad and Billy's hip-hop style blend to embolden in every Filipino overseas his determination, resiliency, and courage through difficult times.

ABS-CBN Global dedicates TFC's new station ID to the Global Pinoys as part of its mission to empower and rekindle national pride in them. It underscores its commitment of providing the most innovative products and

services to bring *Pinoys* overseas closer to home, making every *kababayan* also a *kapamilya*. *Dahil Tayo'y Filipino* is a reminder that ABS-CBN Global remains in the service of Filipinos wherever they may be.

A talented team brought this vision to life in TFC's 15th anniversary station ID Joel Barquez, TFC's head of on-air and broad-

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## Log off and enjoy...

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canvases to paint, places to see, photos to shoot, plays to watch, games to play, puzzles to solve and mysteries to unravel, books to read, people to meet, goals to achieve, skills to learn and courses to take, stuff to give away, stories to write, naps to take and a thousand and one more things to feel, see, touch, taste, hear and soak in before the end game. With all that's in the past, life still feels like a tabula rasa – lots of living to do, so little time. Sigh.

It doesn't help that the virtual world encroaches. If you spend even only a few hours on the internet each day, then you are a de facto active, living, breathing denizen of Cyberville, part of the audience of the world stage. Witness Susan Boyle's instant global fame in the audition of *Britain's Got Talent*, which has over 50 million hits on youtube in a matter of days. What we see is a frumpy, dowdy old maid from Scotland who lives alone with her cat, a complete unknown, wowing the judges, even snarky Simon Cowell and pretty much the skeptic audience and the rest of us in Cyberville. By her plaintive song, her magnificent singing and just by being true to herself, the world sat up and took notice. How many can do that these days? Boyle has become somewhat of a phenom for our times, which prompted one wag of a British publication, to ask the question of our obsession with sexy, good looks: "Is Susan Boyle ugly or are we?"

Personally, I am rooting for her and every Charisse Pempengco, every Arnel Pineda and every phenom who whacks us out or our smug ways and wows us via the great equalizer and media decimator – youtube. I am hoping fame and fortune don't change their core beings overly much.

If we permit it though, the virtual world can usurp reality. We tend to spend inordinate number of hours glued to the screen. We've seen how the last US election played out over the internet and how the new rules for power, money, media and political gamesmanship are all being rewritten right before our very eyes. God forbid a chilling scenario for one megalomaniac individual with a lust for power and omnipotence, to muster enough resources and harness the power of the web to shape minds, move people to action and rule the world by Blackberry or iPhone. China foresees this and similar to its effort to stave off the incursion of enemies in its domain during its long history by building the Great Wall, it is doing all it can to firewall, censor, block or neutralize this unstoppable force, particularly youtube, with a cadre of internet police. The threat is real.

Until that purely imaginary fateful day and just for the moment, I am picking and choosing from the constant flow of messages in my inbox, only this one below. We receive forwarded jokes, prayers, stories, photos, news, slideshows, petitions and everything else that goes round

and round unregulated on the internet loops. Some are for laughs, others inform while some can make you think harder or even take action. Pet peeves are those that are pure drivel and chain emails with a punitive clause, like a curse of bad luck, if you fail to forward. For malevolent messages and all the rest of the junk from scammers promising riches, simplify your cyberlife and hit DELETE. Do not engage.

Sometimes a golden nugget comes through that deserves to be amplified. So simple, it hits you right between the eyes. I searched for the author's name but like many other pieces flung by anonymous, creative beings in Cyberville, authorship is largely unknown and unclaimed. To the originator of this metaphor then, whoever you are and wherever you may be, please accept a profound thank you, from the rest of us. Here it is.

### The hot chocolate story

A group of graduates, well established in their careers, were talking at a reunion and decided to go visit their old university professor, now retired. During their visit, the conversation turned to complaints about stress in their work and lives. Offering his guests hot chocolate, the professor went into the kitchen and returned with a large pot of hot chocolate and an assortment of cups-porcelain, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite – telling them to help themselves to the hot chocolate.

When they all had a cup of hot chocolate in hand, the professor said: "Notice that all the nice looking; expensive cups were taken, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. The cup that you're drinking from adds nothing to the quality of the hot chocolate. In most cases it is just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really wanted was hot chocolate, not the cup; but you consciously went for the best cups... And then you began eyeing each other's cups.

Now consider this: Life is the hot chocolate; your job, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain life. The cup you have does not define, nor change the quality of life you have. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the hot chocolate we have. The happiest people don't have the best of everything... They just make the best of everything that they have.

Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly.

And enjoy your hot chocolate.

But first, LOG OFF.

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## Bankruptcy: Plan your own...

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bankruptcy protection can provide you immediate relief from all creditor actions so that you can regain financial footing. That's all it really is - a legal remedy that allows you to regain control of your finances so that you can start over. In life, sometimes all you need is a second chance.

When financial disaster strikes, lives can be shattered and marriages destroyed. I have seen the emotional toll that this takes on people - the shock, confusion and uncertainty about the future that this situation creates. Most people need time to recover emotionally even after the financial crisis is over. Remember, however, that if you do decide to file bankruptcy, you can be taking the first step to financial recovery if you have no other choice. Stop over-analyzing your situation and stop wasting your time worrying and feeling sorry for yourself. As someone said: "Worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere."

The first thing you need to do is to find out what your legal options are and to find out whether

bankruptcy is the right solution for your situation. In spite of all the negative things that most people have heard about bankruptcy, once they make the decision to file, they realize that the process can actually be positive and ultimately rewarding if it is their last chance for financial recovery. By knowing your options, you don't need to wait for things to change because in most cases, they don't - unless you take action now. This is not a time to be complacent and bury your head in the sand pretending that your debt problems don't exist. Be realistic and develop your own financial recovery plan.

Call my office for a free consultation at Toll-Free 1-866-477-7772 and we can help you decide what option is best for your situation. We have offices in Glendale, Cerritos and West Covina.

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None of the information herein is intended to give legal advice for any specific situation. Atty. Ray Bulaon has successfully helped more than 4,000 clients in finding solutions to their debt problems. To schedule a free attorney consultation, please call Ray Bulaon Law Offices at TOLL FREE 1-866-477-7772.

(Advertising Supplement)

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