



COD, July 18, 2019: Reader adds new hue to red, white and blue

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Editor, Times-Dispatch:

In July, American citizens honor our independence as a nation. We celebrate with red, white and blue. From now on, I also will celebrate with a touch of green. On July 13, the refugee family I have mentored for the past 32 months received the cards that, when first issued, were green. These green cards grant them legal permanent residence in the United States.

Their status did not come easily. They did not walk or swim across a border, although they had the same hope in their hearts as those who have attempted such an entry.

In 2010, the father of four was shot and left for dead because he counted ballots in hopes of ensuring a free and untainted election (his hopes were for naught). He was imprisoned and beaten daily for 18 months. His wife and infant daughter were held in jail as ransom while the young son was hidden away by his grandmother. Through a clever ruse, they escaped into Kenya, where they struggled to make a living for five years while awaiting refugee status. I met them in October 2016 after they arrived in Richmond. As I helped them acclimate to their new home, we encountered many challenges but also received help from many wonderful organizations.

We give recognition and thanks to:

Church World Services, which sponsored them for six months and guided them through the process of applying for green cards;

Rescue Richmond, which helped them with finding employment and health issues;

ReEstablish Richmond, which assisted them in learning to drive and introduced them to Vehicles for Change (which provided them with a low-cost car);

The Community Tax Law Project, which provided legal advice; and

Enroll Virginia, which aided them in procuring health insurance.

Today, this family feels safe, welcome and joyful. Our favorite colors are red, white, blue and green.

Judy Richardson.
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