

GREEN CARD STORIES



Mary Apick shares her journey of immigration and re-triumph

Green Card Stories, a collection of 50 true stories of courage, vision, and tenacity gathers in one place the lives of 50 individuals who now call the US home! It is often said that we are a nation of immigrants because almost every person in the US is a descendant of someone who came to this land from another country. And beyond the numbers and the statistics are the lives and the stories of the individuals whose fate brings them to this beautiful land, in pursuit of their own individual brand of success and happiness.

In an exclusive interview with Zan, Mary Apick, a successful actress, playwright, and activist, talks about the journey that brought her to the United States, and what this project means to her and many others who have similar exemplary stories to tell.



Green Card
Stories

Introduction by Laura Henderson and Stephen Velez-Larrea
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ZAN: How did you come to be involved with this book project, 'Green Card Stories'?

MARY APICK: The authors contacted me because they had heard about my work as a human rights activist. They were aware of my speaking before the U.S. Congress on the subject, and they had read about my play, "Beneath the Veil," which deals with the rights of women and children in the Middle East. These are subjects I care deeply about. They also knew I had emigrated from Iran, fleeing for my life after the revolution, so they wanted to hear my story. They wanted to know how and why I left, the obstacles I faced in getting here, and what I did once I arrived.

Of course, one of the main things I was hoping to find here in America was the freedom to be myself, and to express myself. And that's exactly what I found. Including the ability to speak freely to the authors of this book and have my story, along with all the others, published like this.

How did the idea for this book come about?

Several immigration attorneys wanted to create a book about the amazing, inspiring stories their clients from around the world were telling



them about their journeys to the U.S. They envisioned it as a coffee table book to be placed in the offices of other immigration attorneys. But as the book progressed they realized the stories were too important, too dramatic to keep to themselves. These immigrants consistently told them about how, once they were established here in America, they wanted to give back. The noble spirit of helping others was truly alive in these people. And the authors realized they needed to share with everyone these chronicles of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Green Card Stories describes the struggles and successes of 50 recent U.S. immigrants, each now with permanent residence or citizenship, with each story appealing to the heart. All types of people are interviewed, from office workers, to engineers, to teachers, to people in the creative fields like myself. All the stories are very compelling. People come here for many different reasons, and all those reasons are represented here, from love, to seeking education and opportunity, to escaping persecution.

What is the greater vision for this book? What do you hope it will do for our community at large?

I hope it reminds everyone, not just us, where all Americans came from, what their history was, because we are all – either us or our ancestors – immigrants. We can never turn our backs on the idea of immigration. It makes this country stronger. The book introduces readers to peoples and countries they may not be all that familiar with, countries, like Iran, that they may be afraid of. To know is to understand. To understand is to accept. And to accept is to be at peace. ➤



Green Card Stories puts a human face on immigration. It tells the stories of Iranians and others from every part of the globe, and how they are contributing in a positive way to the nation.

There is a huge Iranian American population in the U.S. and I believe this book can help the rest of the country accept us for who we are as individuals.

How was the experience for you, in sharing your story, in this manner?

I loved sharing my story for this book. It's about time that there was a book like this. I wasn't aware of any of the other immigrants' stories when they were interviewing me, and when I read them later I was amazed at how many similarities there were. I am proud to be Iranian, I am proud to be Armenian, I am proud to be American, and I am proud to be one small member of this fascinating group of fellow immigrants.

While I was being interviewed I was drawn back to my memories of Iran, of my family, friends and colleagues there. And I appreciated that too. I'm an American citizen now, but my heritage will always be from the country of my birth.

What would you tell the person living one of the 'Green Card' stories right now —a new land, a melting pot...going at full speed, someone with big dreams! What would you tell them of what is possible?

That anything and everything is possible. Not easy, not guaranteed, but possible. In the lands they came from they may not have had any chance whatsoever, but here, like everyone else, they finally have opportunity. The dreams of

what we aspire to be are tremendously important. But when you live in a country filled with oppression, or if you live in abject poverty, it's very hard, and maybe even impossible, to have any dreams at all. Having a long acting career in the limelight, international recognition as an Iranian actress, and stardom for years, I had to start again from scratch in the new land. From the bottom, work my way thru to the top with all challenges, rejections ahead of me as a young woman.

So I tell the recent immigrants – keep on dreaming, be kind, work hard, persevere and believe in yourself. Dream of greater things, they can be yours one day!

What project or projects are in the works for you for the near future?

I have many projects in the works, including turning this book, "Green Card Stories," into a television series. It was so inspirational reading the stories in this book that I realized they needed to be presented to the widest audience possible. I had no intention of getting involved with the project until I had finished reading the book, then I felt compelled to do what I can.

I am also preparing my play, "Beneath the Veil," for shows in several more cities, this time in Dallas, Houston and Boston.

I also have several other television series and feature film projects in various stages of development.

And, of course, as always I will be continuing my work on the issues for women and children globally as a responsible human rights activist. Mirroring their images, stories, and most importantly their voices thru the power of media, trying to make a difference. 