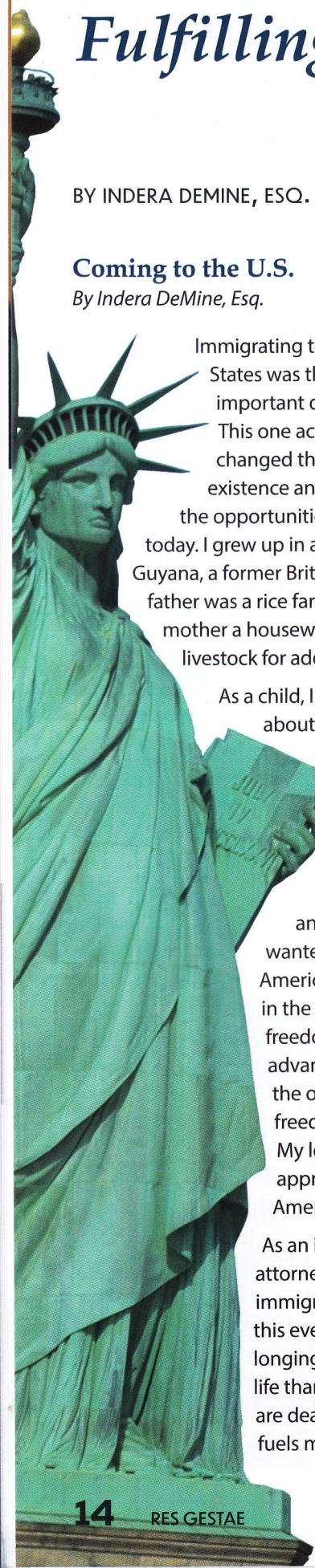


Fulfilling dreams and helping immigrants

A large, detailed photograph of the Statue of Liberty's head and upper torso, facing left. She holds a tablet in her left arm with the text "July 4th" visible.

BY INDERA DEMINE, ESQ. AND NIRUPA NETRAM, ESQ.

Coming to the U.S.

By Indera DeMine, Esq.

Immigrating to the United States was the single most important day of my life. This one act dramatically changed the course of my existence and afforded me the opportunities that I have today. I grew up in a small town in Guyana, a former British colony. My father was a rice farmer and my mother a housewife who sold livestock for additional income.

As a child, I dreamed about coming to America and what my life would look like in this foreign land. More than anything, I wanted to be an American, indulge in the culture, taste freedom and take advantage of all of the opportunities freedom offers. My love and appreciation for America runs deep.

As an immigration attorney, I hear immigrant stories like this every day. This longing for a better life than the one we are dealt with at birth fuels my work. I have

seen Southwest Florida quickly become a melting pot of cultures, accepting immigrants from all walks of life.

I have seen an increase in foreign nationals wanting to invest in Southwest Florida and an increase in foreign workers wanting to bring their skills to our area. With the ever-changing and confusing immigration system, it is vitally important that we provide resources and information to our colleagues in different areas of practice who oftentimes encounter immigration-related issues in their work.

Introducing the immigration practice section

By Nirupa Netram, Esq.

As we continue to move the needle to increase diversity, we are so pleased that the LCBA launched the immigration law practice section. The practice section is important for our community and long overdue.

We have a large local immigrant population, who work in industries such as agriculture, health care, hospitality, fishing, construction, etc. Did you know that approximately 40 percent of all Lee County students live in a home where English is not the primary language (2018-19 Impact Report, The School District of Lee County, Florida)?

In Lee County, 16.6% of our population is foreign born and 53.3% of that population is not a U.S. citizen (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-18 Data Profile). Our non-citizens may be legal permanent residents or lawfully residing in programs such as investors, foreign students or other categories of persons lawfully residing or in the process of

becoming legal permanent residents.

A person's immigration status often impacts many other aspects of their life. Immigration affects multiple practice areas, including, but not limited to, employment law, criminal law, business law, family law, constitutional law, tax law and entertainment law.

We are so fortunate to have several reputable local attorneys specializing in immigration law and local reputable nonprofits who provide immigration legal services for free or reduced cost. This practice section aims to educate attorneys and community-based organizations interested on how immigration does and can impact their work. It provides meaningful opportunities for networking and collaboration. We hope that you will walk along us on our journey as we continue to make great strides in diversity, equity, and inclusion, through this practice section.

Our initial kickoff meeting, postponed because of COVID-19 closures, is Sept. 30 from noon to 1 p.m. in person or virtually, if necessary. A location for the meeting is not yet determined. 



Indera DeMine, Esq. emigrated at the age of 15 to the United States. She is founder of DeMine Immigration Law Firm in downtown Fort Myers. Indera co-chairs the Immigration Practice Section.



Nirupa Netram, Esq. is an immigrant from Guyana. She is the founder of Lotus Solutions LLC, a consulting company that helps for-profit and non-profit entities conduct outreach to immigrants. Nirupa co-chairs the Immigration Practice Section.