



* Passed by Congress in 1986, the Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendment was intended to deter illegal immigration that occurred through fraudulent marriages between American citizens and immigrants seeking legal status in the United States. The act requires the U.S. citizen and his or her foreign spouse to prove two years of valid marriage before the foreign spouse can apply to become a permanent U.S. resident, except under certain special circumstances.

An article in the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, "The Gender Dimensions of U.S. Immigration Policy," argues that female immigrants tend to be at a disadvantage because their entrance into the country often depends more on family ties than other more "legitimate" reasons for entry. For example, employment-based immigration is dominated by men because it tends to favor people who already have advanced degrees in their field, are wealthy, or have much sought after scientific or technological skills. The number of "unskilled" workers who are allowed to enter the country has been lowered; therefore, immigrant women, who tend to come to work as housekeepers or child care providers, have a more difficult time having a "legitimate" reason to enter the United States.

Don't get me wrong, though! The United States does love its immigrants. Of course, on the condition that they can do something for

the economy. They don't want to hear about your poverty and persecution, but if you have money or special skills, well, that's a different story. Immigrants are allowed to enter the country legally if they make an outrageous monetary donation. Supermodels are also given special visas as entertainers and as possessors of specialized skills (being skinny and being able to pout on cue, I guess).

In 1986 the Immigration Marriage Fraud amendment* was passed by Congress. This is the amendment that made the two-year minimum marriage period mandatory before a person could be considered for permanent resident status. The *Yale Law* article argues that this piece of legislation gives the spouse who is a citizen, most often the male, excessive power over the immigrant spouse because, believe it or not, after the two-year period is over, if the citizen spouse chooses not to sign the petition for resident status then the immigrant spouse and children, if there are any, can be removed from the United States. So for at least two years an immigrant woman can be at the mercy of whatever her spouse wishes.

You get a whole other story from the senators who spoke at the July 26, 1985, session of Congress for the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy. According to Senator Alan K. Simpson (chairman of the subcommittee), "United States citizens legitimately petition for 'mail order brides' advertised in the backs of magazines and tabloids sold at the checkout lines of supermarkets. The alien admitted as a fiancé will go through the appearance of wanting to marry and build a future life until after the actual wedding ceremony. The alien then promptly abandons his or her spouse." Now, come on. It's okay for these men to order brides through the mail, but god forbid someone try to marry in order to stay in this country and hope for a better life? Does the idea of ORDERING a bride not seem even slightly disturbing to Senator Simpson?

Throughout his speech Alan Simpson made it seem like those who marry immigrants do so

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