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## Immigration is About Hope for a Better Life

By Attorney Radlyn Mendoza



Attorney Radlyn Mendoza took naps on bags of rice in her parents' grocery store as a child.

On a beautiful morning, as I was walking, hand-in-hand with my four-year old, Rae, she looked up at me and asked, "Mommy, anything I want to be, will I be it?"

I stopped in my tracks and said, "yes, you can sweetheart" and then proceeded in a very enthusiastic manner to tell her all of the things she could be – "you can be a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, the President of the United States! Anything in the world you want to be, you can!" Thankfully, we were outside, because I was animated and gesturing up to the blue skies to emphasize that the world is hers.

I didn't mention fish cleaner, or crab picker or laborer in my list of professions that she could pursue that day – not that there's anything wrong with these jobs. But as my dad told me growing up, "you need to go to school and study hard so you don't have to clean fish like me all day, so you don't have to work like me."

And working like my dad and mom meant putting in 14-hour days, 364 ½ days a year, at our ethnic grocery store and fish market – Mendoza's International - and still finding it hard to keep up with the bills and taxes. Struggling. Surviving. My parents, Filipino immigrants, did not want that for their three children.

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My daughter received a reckless driving ticket going 60 in a 35 mph zone, so understandably, I was very concerned. In court, Mr. Gardner was able to get the reckless driving charge and ticket completely dismissed due to his knowledge of what the police officer had to present in court. Mr. Gardner was a familiar face to the judge and the clerks in the Virginia Beach courthouse. When we contacted John Gardner's office at Gardner & Mendoza, he and his staff made us feel comfortable by explaining the whole process to us. His track record and the reviews online helped make the decision to choose Mr. Gardner over other attorneys easy. I highly recommend Mr. Gardner. He gave us peace of mind and won the case, too! - Michelle



### Vasquez Building & Renovations, Inc. & Vasquez Real Estate Group, Inc.

Leonel (Leo) Vazquez is an ambitious entrepreneur, and an immigrant from The Dominican Republic. Leo moved to The United States at the age of 14 and didn't speak a word of English. He joined the United States Navy at age 18, where he continued to struggle with his English. Throughout his 10-year Navy career, he not only mastered the English language but developed a passion for real estate. Inspired by the real estate boom in 2005, he effortlessly made the transition from the Navy to real estate agent. While working for large firms like Rose & Womble and EZ Vest Realty, Leo received his broker's license and decided to open his first business, Vasquez Building & Renovations, Inc. After realizing immediate success, he decided it was time to achieve his ultimate entrepreneurial dream and open Vasquez Real Estate Group, Inc.

Leo takes pride in providing quality living to everyone, whether renting or buying. Between his two companies, Leo can ensure you love where you live – whether you buy a new home, or make your current home look new through breathtaking upgrades like flooring, cabinets, windows and more!

Most importantly, Leo is the epitome of making something from nothing. He immigrated to the States with little money and no comprehension of the English language. Now he is a proud citizen of The United States with two thriving businesses and living the American dream!



### Attorney Barbara Fernandez-Griffin is BACK!



We are so happy to announce that our immigration attorney Barbara Fernandez-Griffin is back to work after maternity leave, ready to serve your immigration needs! Baby Beatriz ("Betty") just turned 3 months old and is a happy, healthy bundle of joy!

Check out this cutie!!



## Silvanna's Arroz Con Coco

### Ingredients:

- 3 cups long-grain white rice
- 6 cups light coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon, plus 1.5 teaspoons of sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup toasted coconut flakes

### Directions:

Place the rice, ¾ cup water, coconut milk, sugar and salt in a medium saucepan and stir to combine. Bring the rice to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low to simmer until the water has evaporated to just below the level of the rice and little holes begin to form on the surface, stirring occasionally so that the rice doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan and burn.

Reduce the heat to the lowest setting, cover the saucepan and continue to cook until the rice is tender, 20-25 minutes.

Fluff the rice with a fork and stir in raisins. Cover the saucepan and let it sit off of the heat until the raisins are plump and warm, 10 minutes. Top with coconut flakes and enjoy!



Silvanna Padilla is one of the friendly voices you'll hear when you call our office. She's been handling our client services for almost a year. Silvanna is from Cartagena, Colombia where Arroz Con Coco is a staple dish. "This is my mother's recipe, and it has been one of my favorite dishes since childhood! It's still a traditional dish in our household." -Silvanna Padilla



## Immigration is About Hope for a Better Life

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This is the same sentiment I hear from my clients. That's why they're here, living in the U.S. with no documentation. That their struggles, their survival in the U.S. will lead to a different, better life for their own children.

It sounds cliché, I know, especially to the many people who are tired of the immigration debate, to those who want something done *right now* to deport those who are living here without documentation. But it is a meaningful idea and one that will never, ever go away so long as we have mothers and fathers with their deep desires to protect and provide for their children.

The picture on the front cover is one of me taking a nap on bags of rice we sold at our store. The grocery store was very much home for me and my family. After school, it's where I went every single day. As a kid, I wanted to play outside and have a "normal" life. Today, my husband and I have provided that for our kids. Nothing makes me happier than to see them laughing and playing with their friends. When they were younger, my kids took naps on the warm sand at the beach, steps from our home; we take family vacations and they are living the dream (even though they may not know it yet).

So, it worked. My immigrant parents' push to work hard in school and their daily struggles and surviving for us, led in large part to this life I'm living now. This circle will never end and when our politicians talk about immigration reform and stopping illegal immigration, it's one of the most important things for them to recognize.





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Baby Rae just turned 5!  
Where did the time go?!

## *Thank you for your referrals!*

### Ask Our Legal Beagle



**Q:** What happens if I get stopped for a  
DUI and refuse the breathalyzer?

**A:** If you refuse the breathalyzer, there will be no determination of your blood alcohol level and the Prosecutor may have a harder time proving you were driving under the influence of alcohol. However, refusing the breathalyzer will result in a separate charge of Refusal, which carries a 1 year suspension of your license. That's a very short leash! Taking the breathalyzer will likely increase the odds of your being convicted of the DUI, but you will be eligible for a restricted license that will allow you to drive certain places - think retractable leash!



Follow us on Facebook to send us your questions and find more answers.  
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