



Beyond the Digital Nomad:

Finding Refuge and Building a Life



Uhhh... who the heck are you?

Elior Sterling

- Jew who grew up around Holocaust refugees
- Started volunteering as a translator for refugees at age 16
- Still volunteers... most recently with Al Otro Lado in Tijuana and remotely
- Left the US in 1999 to get away from a stalker
- Has lived and worked in a bunch of different countries
- Pretty stressed out about what's happening in the US right now

IANAL

Even if I were, we've only got 50 minutes here.
The right answer for your situation is different from anyone else's.
This is just a starting point for your own research.

Who is this talk for?

This isn't just for US Citizens. Some of these immigration routes are available to people with (just about?) any passport.

This won't help much if you are in imminent danger and must run for your life right now. This is for people who are generally in danger or are experiencing growing danger and have time to plan and strategize.

The Stories I Grew Up On...

“We saw the writing on the wall...”

“My parents sent us to live with our cousins in the US...”

“My dad left first and he sent for us when he had a job and an apartment...”

“We got our passports too late, and couldn’t get a visa to leave...”

“We hid in the house of a Christian family...”

“Everyone else in the family died...”

What I've Learned From Refugees

- The International laws that are supposed to help refugees don't work well.
- Many people with verifiable reasons to request asylum still get rejected.
- Escaping life-threatening danger is often a choice of the lesser of two evils
 - Death by gang violence or 2-5 years in immigrant detention?
 - Prison or death at the hands of your government or leave your family behind
 - There are cats in every country on earth. (actually, that's from An American Tail)
- You aren't escaping from Hell to Paradise.
- Where you land at first isn't necessarily where you'll end up.
- The place you want to go might not be your best option.

What I've Learned From Refugees Part 2

- You can help other refugees once you get safe.
- You can continue to fight for the people back home once you get safe.
- Wherever you go, there will still be things that can be made better.
- Survivor's guilt is real, but there's help and practical ways to address it.

Should I Stay Or Should I Go?

STAY

- You can do more good by staying put
- Leaving will put other vulnerable people at more risk
- If we all just go away, the baddies win
- Child custody issues
- You have enough privilege to protect you

GO

- You are a member of a targeted group
- You are unable to help much by staying
- You could help more from a safer place
- You have vulnerable people that you must protect by getting them out of here

How Can I Move Abroad?

Have a \$150,000? You win!

- You can buy citizenship for as little as \$100,000 investment plus legal fees in St. Lucia & Antigua and Barbuda, which gives you a passport that can travel to 146 - 150 countries.
- You can get a residence visa in Denmark with an investment of €100,000
- Bolivia's Investor visa requires a US\$30k investment and Brazil is US\$40k

Look up “[country name] investor visa”

Check ratings of lawyers that show up in your search before choosing one.

Also check out <https://henleyglobal.com/>

Immigration Point Systems

Many countries have an immigration point system. If you have enough points, you can get a residence visa. You get points based on your age, the type of job you do, your level of education, your fluency in the local language, and likelihood of acclimating to the new country.

For Canada, search “Express Entry” to learn about immigration by point system.

Vital Skills Get You Visas

This is a hacker conference, so most of you have some of those vital skills that other countries are looking for. You can, in fact, hack the planet.

The Netherlands has programs to help reduce the cost of migrating there if you have computer skills, whether that's programming, IT, or infosec.

<https://www.government.nl/topics/immigration-to-the-netherlands>

New Zealand has a site for immigration to fill skills shortages

<https://skillshortages.immigration.govt.nz/>

Find a Job So You Can Get A Visa

- Network online to meet people in your field in your target country
- Attend a conference in your target country
- Go on a tourist visa and look for jobs while you are there
- Apply to jobs online
- Apply to transfer within the company you already work for

You can also try a website like

<https://relocateme.eu/>

<http://wearedevelopers.com/>

Family Ties

Part 1

Do you have close family living in another country? They may be able to sponsor you.



Look up the immigration rules for the countries that each of your grandparents and/or parents were born in.

Family Ties

Part 2

Was one of your parents or grandparents an immigrant?

Family Ties

Part 3

Making Aliyah

Yes, I hear the howls of horror from some of you. But consider this...

Oh!

Did you know?

Descendants of Sefardi Jews
May Be Able To Get
Portuguese Citizenship

If you can trace your ancestry back to someone who was expelled from Spain or Portugal, you may have a route to citizenship.

The original Sefardi immigration program in Spain is closed, but there may still be opportunities. Seek competent advice.

The program in Portugal is ongoing.

Getting married for a visa is generally a TERRIBLE IDEA™

You are more vulnerable to domestic violence if your visa is based on marriage.

If you are caught, you get deported.

However, if you are in love with the right person, and they happen to have citizenship in a place you both want to live...

Family Ties Part 4

Mawage is wot bwings
us togeder today.

Migrating As A Disabled Person

It's not easy, but it's not impossible.

When people tell you that no country will take a disabled immigrant, they are flat wrong.

You may have to do extra research to make sure that your needs will be met.

Here's advice from someone who migrated to Panama alone who requires a wheelchair for mobility:

<https://internationalliving.com/moving-abroad-with-a-disability-tips-on-becoming-an-expat/>

I made a short link for it here:

<http://bit.ly/disabledmigration>

Migrating As A Trans Person

A 3 Part Problem

- Can you get a visa?
- Is it safe?
- Healthcare continuity

There is an org that can help:

<https://transrescue.org/>

Talking to trans people in your target country/ies will help you navigate all the vagueries.

The Nomadic Escape Hatch

If you can't get a work visa or a residence visa, but you want to get out now, you might be able to manage the nomadic life for a while.

Stay in countries only as long as your tourist visa or visa waiver allows. Move to another country when your visa is up, at least for the minimum required time.

What you'll need:

- A source of income from remote work or freelancing
- A permanent address in the country where your passport is from
 - Use a family member's address if possible
 - Ask a friend if you can use their address
- A lot of flexibility
 - Living conditions
 - New cultures
 - Bumps in the road
- A good sense of humor, cuz this ain't for the faint of heart.

Europe Is Not The Only Continent

Seriously, people, there are many wonderful places to live around the world. Some of them are classified as “low resource countries” but that doesn’t mean you can’t find good work and make a good life.

- Do your research.
- Network with people before you go.
- Visit first if you can.

Historical Note:
Many families escaping the Holocaust moved to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and other Latin American countries if they couldn’t get into the US.

Questions?

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Thank You

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