

“The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” - Leviticus 19:34

As our family reaches its 3rd anniversary in Godalming and nears our 5th anniversary in the U.K., I am very cognisant of the way immigration has been in the news the past couple of years. Plans to ship refugees to Rwanda...then to a barge...then off the barge because of Legionella. Discussion in the government about “discouraging immigration”. Sometimes one can get the impression that the U.K. is not a very welcoming place!

For us, though, it has been the opposite. Coming into the country on my wife’s nursing visa then switching to a Minister’s visa, has all been relatively painless. Which, while we’re naturally grateful for this, seems a bit off with the rest of the messaging regarding immigration.

Now, you might say this is because we were “invited” where the refugees were not. And maybe that’s some of it. However, right now my family and I are in the midst of renewing our visas to allow us to stay in the country for (at least) 3 more years. As part of that, we had to go to a processing centre in Croydon to have our biometrics taken (basically they took a picture and scanned our fingerprints).

When we arrived at the centre, there was an employee standing out front, yelling at a group of people about how they should line up, where they should stand, etc. Yet, upon seeing my family, his demeanour changed and we were cheerfully ushered into the building. As I turned my head and looked back at the crowd, my wife caught my eye and I could tell we were both thinking the same thing. Our welcome was a very different thing than the mass of people standing outside.... and looking back at them, there was only one immediately discernible difference between us and them. I’ll give you a hint: it wasn’t our lack of a British accent.

This plays into something else I have noticed in recent months. Both here and back in the States, there seems to be different terminology used depending on WHERE the people are coming from. With the exception of Australia and New Zealand (and possibly South Africa), it seems if you are from north of the equator, you are an “expat”. If you’re from south of the equator, you’re an “immigrant.” Or maybe, as I suspect from our welcome in Croydon, it has as much to do with colour of skin as to country of origin.

There are many active groups of Americans living in the U.K. who refer to themselves as “expats”. Brits who move to Spain often use the same term. It sounds somewhat glamorous and

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mysterious. Whereas “immigrant” has been used disparagingly by politicians on both sides of the ocean.

I’ve therefore decided that I’m no longer an expat (pretentious term, anyway!) I’m an **immigrant**, and proud of it. We immigrated to this island nearly 5 years ago and we’re better people for it. Hopefully, through our service, this country (or at least Godalming) is a little better for it as well. We embrace our status as immigrants, and hope you do, too. And the next time you’re watching the news or listening to a politician talk about migration from various places, pay attention to the terms used, and maybe remember that we are all just immigrants on our way from here to God’s Kingdom.

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Resources/Good News

Staying Cool!

While some of us may be enjoying the very late summer sunshine, the extreme heat can cause some risk to health. The British Red Cross has lots of information as well as tips to stay cool and what to do if you feel unwell [Beat the Heat](#)

The Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden, Ockley, Dorking

Heralded as one of the first of its kind in the UK, The Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden has been proudly exhibiting and selling contemporary sculpture in a unique and magical environment for nearly 40 years. A few points to note if you plan on visiting: tickets must be booked in advance, children under 12 are not permitted and there is no café on site but you’re welcome to take a picnic. More information can be found here [Sculpture Garden](#)