

South Korean Man Denied Entry to U.S. is Allowed Back

Houston Chronicle

By Tony Freemantle

A South Korean man who was denied entry into the United States to help care for a son shot in the neck and paralyzed during a robbery nearly four years ago will be allowed back into the country on humanitarian grounds, his lawyer said Monday.

Inhee Park, a Seoul businessman, and his wife gave up their comfortable life in the South Korean capital, selling their condominium and their cars so they could pay for their son [Dominic's](#) medical bills and constantly be at his side.

They traveled between South Korea and Houston every six months since their son was injured to keep their tourist visas valid. But on Feb. 15, Park was stopped by a Customs and [Border Patrol](#) agent at [George Bush Intercontinental Airport](#), accused of illegally working in the U.S. and sent back.

His story caught the attention of Houston Congresswoman [Sheila Jackson Lee](#) and a prominent Houston immigration law firm, who worked to get Park permission to come back into the country.

Move 'very rare'

On Monday, his attorney, [Naomi Bang](#) of the firm FosterQuan, LLP, said Park had been granted humanitarian parole into the United States.

"It's very rare," said Bang. "It usually takes three or four months, but we got this done in 10 days, so this was really like a miracle."

Not having his father here has been particularly difficult for Dominic Park, who was a [University of Houston](#) student when he was shot early on the morning of July 5, 2008. Paralyzed from the chest down, he needs someone strong enough to help get his 6-foot, 200-pound body in and out of bed and into his wheelchair.

Without his father here, it has not been possible for Dominic to get to and from his physical therapy appointments since his mother, [Namhee Oh](#), is unable to help him.

"I was in despair upon learning my father's deportation, thinking I might have to go back to Korea and start all over again," Dominic Park, 28, said Monday. "But I'm elated ... that my father can be with us again and I can continue with my treatment. He's so grateful such a miracle has happened in his family."

Jackson Lee said she believes Inhee Park being denied entry was a result of a "misunderstanding," but the "humanitarian aspect" of the case was obvious, and apparent to officials in Washington when they heard about it.

"I couldn't think of a more desperate and needy case," she said. "I thought this case deserved humanitarian relief, and my office took it up."

The congresswoman said Park's case demonstrates the need for a change in immigration law that will allow a review process to avoid such misunderstandings in the future.

Help from others

After the story of the Park family's plight became public, they were swamped by offers of help, not only from Jackson Lee and the law firm, which handled his case pro bono, but also from strangers and Houston's tightly knit Korean community.

Linda and [Dan DuChemin](#) of Conroe, whose daughter, [Dianne Helms](#), suffered a traumatic brain injury in a drunk driving accident in 2006, donated a special air mattress that alleviates the need to constantly turn Dominic in bed.

Members of his church organized a dinner rotation for the Parks and collected money for the humanitarian parole application. Volunteers stepped in to get Dominic to and from his doctor's appointments.

A 'compelling' case

Bang said humanitarian parole is difficult to get because it is a discretionary visa and the burden is entirely on the applicant to demonstrate a "compelling reason" that it be granted.

"We thought this was a particularly compelling case," Bang said. "You have a son who has suffered a serious gunshot wound and is a paraplegic. Without his dad here, there is no one he can count on."

Inhee Park will meet with [U.S. Embassy](#) officers in Seoul on Friday, Bang said, and is expected to be back in Houston in early May. He will be allowed to stay in the country for one year, then will have to apply for a renewal.

tony.freemantle@chron.com

<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/South-Korean-man-denied-entry-to-U-S-is-allowed-3504318.php>