

Gay Immigrant to Stay

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A **gay immigrant** in the District, whom federal immigration authorities tried to deport to his native Malaysia because his visa had expired, has won an unusual ruling in immigration court and will be able to remain in the United States.

Wan Lee, 44, a professional massage therapist who lives and works on Capitol Hill, was granted relief from deportation on the grounds that it would damage his "mental health" to return to Malaysia, where homosexuality is frowned on and **gay** people face official harassment.

Lee, whose situation was described in a Washington Post story in April, had a hearing last month in Arlington immigration court. He testified that he would have to conceal his homosexuality if he returned to Malaysia and that he would be emotionally distraught if he had to leave his longtime partner, Patrick Gleason, a social worker in the District.

In many cases, **immigrants** are sponsored to become legal residents by their spouses, but **gay** couples cannot do so. Moreover, under a new immigration law, illegal **immigrants** who seek to avoid deportation must prove that their U.S. relatives would suffer "extreme and unusual" hardship if they were forced to leave. Few **gay immigrants** have sought and won relief from deportation.

"Of course we are thrilled," said Gleason, 49, "but the situation is still very stressful, because the bureaucratic process [of formalizing Lee's residence] is far from over. It would have been devastating to both of us if Wan had to leave."

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