

RELIEF AMID GRIEF Pol helps slain man's parents gain residency

Daily News (New York)

August 20, 2002, Tuesday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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Section: SUBURBAN;

Length: 438 words

Byline: By WARREN WOODBERRY Jr. DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Body

On the day last August when Leonor and Armando Garzon learned their application for permanent U.S. residency had been approved, their son Edgar became the victim of a vicious anti-gay attack.

Edgar Garzon, 35, who sponsored his Colombian parents for citizenship, was beaten senseless - his skull crushed by a bat or metal pipe - after leaving a gay bar in Jackson Heights.

Edgar Garzon never regained consciousness, and in early September, he died from injuries suffered in the attack. In addition to grieving over the loss of their son, his parents had another issue to face: Edgar Garzon's sponsorship of citizenship for them was in jeopardy.

Usually, in such cases, applicants must return to their homeland if their sponsor dies or is killed. But Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-Jackson Heights) intervened in the process to persuade the Immigration and Naturalization Service to transfer sponsorship of the application to Leonor Garzon's sister Lilia in California.

On Friday, Leonor and Armando Garzon gained permanent residency status in the U.S.

"A lot of politicians make promises but only one delivered," Leonor Garzon said of Crowley. "It was something that helped to lessen the pain that I felt for a year."

Edgar Garzon, who was openly gay, was a dancer who worked as a set designer for Off-Broadway shows. He was attacked shortly before 4 a.m. on Aug. 15, 2001, at 77th St. and 37th Ave., after leaving Friend's Tavern, a gay bar on Roosevelt Ave. He was walking to his 77th St. apartment when he was attacked.

Edgar Garzon spent his final days in a coma at Elmhurst Hospital Center, where he died Sept. 4.

Police said that a nearby surveillance camera captured the attackers leaping from a red Nissan. The attackers could not be identified on film and have not been caught.

"This horrific act took place here in my congressional district, Jackson Heights, a peaceful neighborhood," Crowley said. "On the [first] anniversary of Edgar's violent attack, it is fitting that the INS grant Mr. and Mrs. Garzon permanent residency. They have been nothing but gems throughout this whole process."

Begin new lives

Now, Leonor and Armando Garzon, originally of Bogota, Colombia, can begin to put their minds at ease as they begin new lives residing in their son's apartment.

"When they took my son, they also took his whole family and the whole community because he has friends that are part of a large family," Leonor Garzon said. "I feel like he's . . . watching over us. In some regards, he's still alive."

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The family has planned a vigil for their son for Sept. 4 at 8 p.m. at Roosevelt Ave. and 80th St.

Graphic

MATTHEW ROBERTS GRATEFUL "A lot of politicians make promises but only one delivered," says Leonor Garzon (l.) of Rep. Joseph Crowley (r.), whose efforts helped Garzon and her husband, Armando - who are from Colombia - obtain permanent U.S. residency status.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: CITIZENSHIP (90%); THEATER (89%); GAYS & LESBIANS (89%); IMMIGRATION (88%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); WOUNDS & INJURIES (78%); APPROVALS (73%); COSTUME & SET DESIGN (65%); SURVEILLANCE (62%); ANNIVERSARIES (50%)

Company: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%)

Organization: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%)

Industry: DRINKING PLACES (71%)

Person: JOSEPH CROWLEY (79%)

Geographic: BOGOTA, COLOMBIA (58%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); COLOMBIA (90%); UNITED STATES (79%)

Load-Date: August 20, 2002