

## **A LOST DREAM REBORN**

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**Dateline:** TAMPA

**Highlight:** A veterinarian who lived an immigration nightmare for a year rebuilds his American life.

### **Body**

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Dr. Salvador Galindo spent weeks wondering and worrying.

What would become of him? The life built in the United States as a veterinary neurosurgeon had been taken away from him because of bureaucratic errors over his visa.

He was back in Mexico where his degrees did no good. Would he bus tables? Or become a hotel worker?

"It was really tough," he said. "I was a foreigner in my own country."

But he refused to give up. And on Wednesday, six weeks after returning to Mexico and ***losing*** everything, Galindo was back in Tampa, taking care of Fiona, a feline, and basking in his old life again.

"My rebirth," he called it.

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Galindo's nightmare began in the fall of 2008 when he walked into immigration offices in Tampa expecting to walk out with a green card.

He had entered the country legally. But during that hearing, immigration officials discovered a warrant for his arrest and a final deportation ruling issued by a judge in Chicago.

It was a surprise to Galindo, his wife, and his attorney, who had accompanied him to the appointment.

Attorney Jennifer Roeper of Fowler White Boggs asked an agent to help Galindo obtain bond until she could get a court hearing. The agent handed her a letter sent from immigration to Galindo in 2007. It was a notice to appear immediately in immigration court.

Roeper was stunned. Agents had mistakenly issued Galindo a second alien number for the most recent green card application with his second marriage. Still, that didn't explain why U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agents in Chicago had sent that 2007 letter, or why the attorney for Immigration and Customs Enforcement failed to see numerous legal visas in Galindo's file before bringing him to court.

Galindo, 38, was immediately handcuffed and spent months in detainment. Roeper sorted through the mess, making phone calls, filing motions, pleading for a change.

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In January, an Orlando immigration judge threw out the old Chicago deportation case. By then, Galindo's marriage had broken up. He divorced in June.

Six weeks ago, Galindo sold most of his possessions and returned to Mexico because he no longer had legal status in the United States.

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While Galindo visited relatives all over Mexico and contemplated his future, Roeper continued to work tirelessly to help.

Dr. Katy Meyer, owner of Tampa Bay Veterinary Emergency Service in North Tampa, sponsored Galindo's visa.

On Sept. 25, Galindo was given the green light to return to America on a three-year work visa. During that time, Roeper will work on getting Galindo a green card.

Galindo, back at work Wednesday at Tampa Bay Veterinary Emergency Service, said he arrived in Tampa with everything he owns: two suitcases of clothes and a tent. A friend bought him an air mattress, which he will sleep on when he moves into a Channel District apartment in a few days.

Despite his emotional journey, Galindo said he did not shed a tear during his hearing at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico.

But he soon found himself climbing atop the tallest pyramid at the ancient archeological site of Teotihuacan in Mexico. He spread his arms upward toward the sky and cried.

He gave thanks for his future.

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## Graphic

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PHOTO - ATOYIA DEANS - Times: Veterinary surgeon Salvador Galindo, 38, got back to work Wednesday on patients like Fiona at Tampa Bay Veterinary Emergency Service in Tampa, after he was detained for months and moved back to Mexico over a bureaucratic error.

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