

July 5, 2009

Daphne Bramham

Re. Vancouver Sun Citizenship articles June 2009-- 27th, 29th and 30th (archived)

Hello Daphne

Thank you so much for your series of articles on Canadian citizenship. First a brief summary of my family situation and then some opinions.

I am a naturalized Canadian. Arrived as a teenager in 1951 in BC. Left for study in US at 20 but now a Canadian citizen. After 8 years of study in US, went to Africa, **where I worked for a Canadian church for some 30 years.** Left Canada in 1958 as a student and returned for permanent residence to retire in 2001. I hold dual citizenship—Canadian by naturalization; Dutch by birth.

I married a naturalized American citizen of Dutch birth, who accompanied me to retire in Canada. She now holds dual citizenship—Canadian and American.

We have three children, none born in Canada. **First one** born in US and thus naturally US citizen. I also registered him as a Canadian citizen born abroad. Born to a father who also holds Dutch citizenship, he is automatically Dutch as well. In other words, triple citizenship. After completing his high school in Nigeria, he attended college in the US, joined Peace Corps to work in Botswana. Upon completion ended up in South Africa. Currently living in the US, where he gained an MBA from Yale and now operates a private IT consultancy in real estate. Even if he wanted to come to Canada, the country most likely would not accept his American wife, who has a very serious illness. So, he is “stuck.” Because of wife illness, no children as yet.

Second one born in The Netherlands during a period of post-grad studies in the 70s on my part. Again, the American mother registered her as an American born abroad; I registered her as a Canadian born abroad. Dutch due to father being (also) Dutch. Thus: triple citizenship, like no. 1. Did college in the US and married an American. After a few years, the couple took a teaching assignment in Japan, where their first child was born. Duly registered as American and Canadian born abroad. The mother being Dutch, that citizenship came automatically. Since then a son born in US with same story—mother and children having triple citizenship.

Third one born in Nigeria. Same triple situation. Did college in US and ended up with a Yale Ph. D. Married a Trinidadian citizen. Now living in Nairobi, Kenya, as employee of the American Rockefeller Foundation. Two children born in the US and one in Kenya, but all having the same triple citizenship.

Will any of them ever come to live in Canada? Very doubtful. Our children have a degree of pride in their Canadian citizenship, but will *their* children? Remains to be seen, but probably will only regard it with a degree of humour.

I have encouraged my adult children to keep up their triple status, for themselves as well as their children, if only for reasons of opportunity and freedom of movement. The two sons have been able to take advantage of it over the years.

OPINION

Since the opportunity exists, I have encouraged them all, but my opinion is that Canada is not served well with such situations. Since I was employed abroad by a Canadian corporation, I believe Canada should accept the citizenship of the born-abroad children of such employees. But when these children do not return to Canada at all, what interest has Canada in continuing to recognize their citizenship? None. Let alone that of **their** children!

I believe that citizenship by descent should be supported by at least five years of Canadian residence by the age of 25, unless they are employed abroad by a recognized Canadian agency or corporation.

I believe that children of Canadian citizens who have never lived in Canada should not be entitled to Canadian citizenship. Citizenship by descent should be restricted to the first generation and only if supported by a minimum of 5 years of residence by age 25.

Citizenship of convenience should not be allowed. The example of Lebanese “Canadians” is an offensive one. I regard the Canadian government as terribly irresponsible for having paid for their “repatriation.” Can you imagine the Hong Kong nightmare if China were to act up?

Though I hold dual citizenship, if a referendum were held, I would vote against dual citizenship. It opens the door to gross abuse. It opens the door to extreme government embarrassment with respect to citizens who voluntarily travel or even live in volatile parts of the world, especially potential terrorists.

I also hold that the government should disavow all **legal** responsibility for Canadians who go abroad unless they are properly registered as employees or representatives of Canadian agencies and corporations. That would leave her free from responsibility for those who travel to or live in volatile areas or those who join groups hostile to Canadian interests. It will save embarrassment and money.

Daphne, I hope you will pursue this subject. I also hope that my experience and opinion will help you to arrive at a Canada-friendly solution.