



KANU & ASSOCIATES, P.C.



THE 9 FATAL MISTAKES IMMIGRANTS MAKE ★ IN AMERICA ★

How to Avoid Costly Errors and
Succeed in the United States



SOLOMON O. KANU, ESQ.

ATTORNEY • AUTHOR • IMMIGRANT ADVOCATE

THE 9 FATAL MISTAKES IMMIGRANTS MAKE IN AMERICA

How to Avoid Costly Errors and Succeed in the United States

Solomon O. Kanu, Esq.

Published by Kanu & Associates, P.C.

kanulaw.com | 602-324-5320

Copyright © 2026 Solomon O. Kanu. All rights reserved.

This publication provides general educational information only. It does not create an attorney-client relationship and is not a substitute for advice from a qualified attorney regarding specific facts.

About the Author

Solomon O. Kanu, Esq. is an experienced immigration attorney who has spent more than two decades helping immigrants navigate the U.S. legal system. He holds a bachelor's degree in Economics, a master's degree in Banking and Business Finance, and a Juris Doctor degree. As an immigrant himself, Attorney Kanu understands the challenges, uncertainty, and opportunity that come with building a life in the United States.

He is the founder and managing attorney of Kanu & Associates, P.C., serving clients in Arizona, New Mexico, and throughout the United States in immigration matters. His work focuses on helping individuals, families, and employers understand their options, avoid preventable mistakes, and move forward with a clear legal strategy.

"Knowledge is important, but timely and informed action is what protects your future."

Table of Contents

Foreword

Introduction: The Immigrant Experience in America

1. Worrying Instead of Acting
 2. Trying to Handle Immigration Issues Alone
 3. Misunderstanding Asylum Procedures
 4. Disregarding American Laws and Customs
 5. Failing to Protect Your Legal Status
 6. Overreacting to News or Changing Laws
 7. Representing Yourself in Removal Proceedings
 8. Failing to Have an Estate Plan
 9. Failing to Protect Their Assets by Creating a Business
- Conclusion: Taking Control of Your Immigration Journey

Foreword

As an immigration attorney and an immigrant myself, I understand the overwhelming challenges many people face when they arrive in the United States. Immigrants come with dreams of safety, stability, opportunity, and a better life for their families. Too often, however, those dreams are derailed by mistakes that could have been prevented with timely information and qualified guidance.

Over the years, I have seen the same errors repeated: waiting too long to seek help, relying on rumors, submitting applications without understanding the legal consequences, ignoring court notices, and assuming that a problem will disappear on its own. These mistakes can result in unnecessary stress, financial loss, denial of benefits, detention, or removal.

This book is written to help immigrants recognize danger before it becomes a crisis. It is not only about knowing what to do; it is also about understanding what not to do. The goal is to help you approach your immigration journey with courage, preparation, and sound judgment.

Introduction: The Immigrant Experience in America

Immigrating to the United States is a journey of hope, but it can also be confusing and demanding. The immigration system is governed by statutes, regulations, agency policies, court decisions, filing deadlines, evidentiary requirements, and procedures that may change over time. A mistake may affect not only one application, but also future applications and the ability to remain in the country.

Many immigrants make serious errors because they do not have reliable guidance. They may worry instead of acting, rely on friends or social media, or attempt to solve a complicated legal matter using generic online information. Every case is different. A solution that worked for another person may be unavailable or dangerous in your own circumstances.

The nine mistakes discussed in this book are common, costly, and preventable. Understanding them is the first step toward protecting yourself, your family, your assets, and your future.

Important: Immigration law is highly fact-specific. Do not make a filing, travel, plead guilty, miss a hearing, or ignore a government notice based only on general information.

Chapter 1: Worrying Instead of Acting

One of the most common mistakes immigrants make is worrying excessively without taking productive action. Immigration problems are serious, and fear is understandable. But worry alone does not protect your status, preserve a deadline, answer a request for evidence, or stop a removal order.

Fear can cause paralysis. A person may avoid opening mail, fail to appear in court, delay responding to USCIS, or wait until a deadline has passed before seeking help. The longer a legal problem remains unaddressed, the fewer options may be available.

Take action early. Gather your documents, write down your immigration history, keep copies of all notices, and consult a qualified immigration attorney when you are uncertain. Early advice can identify risks, preserve evidence, and reveal options that may disappear with time.

Practical safeguards

- Do not ignore mail from USCIS, EOIR, ICE, CBP, the Department of State, or the Department of Labor.
- Keep your address updated with the appropriate agencies and the immigration court.
- Calendar every deadline and hearing date.

Chapter 2: Trying to Handle Immigration Issues Alone

Another fatal mistake is assuming that an immigration case is simply a matter of completing forms. The questions on an application are connected to legal definitions, eligibility requirements, inadmissibility grounds, removal grounds, prior immigration history, and possible waivers.

Online instructions and advice from friends may be useful for general education, but they cannot replace a case-specific legal analysis. Two

people with similar family relationships or visa histories may face entirely different outcomes because of entry history, unlawful presence, prior orders, criminal records, misrepresentation, or jurisdiction.

An experienced immigration attorney can evaluate the full history, explain the available routes, identify weaknesses, and help prepare evidence. The cost of correcting a serious mistake is often far greater than the cost of obtaining proper advice before filing.

Practical safeguards

- Never sign a form you do not fully understand.
- Review every answer and supporting document before submission.
- Be truthful; omissions and inconsistencies can create long-term problems.

Chapter 3: Misunderstanding Asylum Procedures

Asylum is one of the most misunderstood areas of U.S. immigration law. A person does not receive asylum merely by stating that they are afraid to return home. Generally, the applicant must establish past persecution or a well-founded fear of future persecution connected to at least one of five protected grounds: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Protection under the Convention Against Torture is separate from asylum and has different legal requirements. Economic hardship, general crime, unemployment, or a desire for better opportunities usually do not establish asylum eligibility by themselves.

An asylum application must be accurate, detailed, consistent, and supported where possible. Filing a false or knowingly fabricated claim can carry severe consequences. Applicants must also pay careful attention to filing deadlines, procedural posture, prior statements, travel history, and the relationship between the facts and the claimed protected ground.

Practical safeguards

- Explain who harmed or threatened you, what happened, when and where it happened, and why you were targeted.
- Preserve identity documents, medical records, police reports, messages, photographs, witness statements, and country-condition evidence.
- Seek legal advice before filing whenever possible.

Chapter 4: Disregarding American Laws and Customs

Living successfully in the United States requires understanding and following federal, state, and local laws. Conduct that may have been ignored or handled informally elsewhere can have serious consequences here. Traffic violations, missed court dates, driving without a license, domestic violence allegations, and violations of

protective orders can create legal and immigration problems.

Immigrants should not assume that a minor criminal charge or plea will have minor immigration consequences. Before accepting any plea agreement, an immigrant should obtain advice from counsel who understands the immigration consequences of criminal dispositions.

Cultural adaptation also matters. Learning English, understanding workplace expectations, maintaining records, paying taxes correctly, and respecting court and agency procedures can strengthen long-term stability and future eligibility for immigration benefits.

Practical safeguards

- Appear for every court date.
- Do not violate protective orders or probation terms.
- Ask for immigration advice before entering a criminal plea.

Chapter 5: Failing to Protect Your Legal Status

Immigration status must be actively protected. This means monitoring expiration dates, complying with the terms of a visa or status, filing timely extensions or changes when appropriate, and avoiding conduct that may trigger inadmissibility or removability.

Criminal arrests and convictions can have immigration consequences, but the result depends on the specific statute, record of conviction, sentence, immigration status, and procedural history. Even when an offense does not automatically lead to removal, it may affect naturalization, travel, adjustment of status, discretionary relief, or bond.

Protection also means preserving documents. Keep copies of passports, visas, I-94 records, employment authorization cards, approval notices, applications, tax records, and court papers. Never surrender original documents without keeping a copy and receipt.

Practical safeguards

- Track all expiration dates.
- Consult counsel before international travel when there is any immigration concern.
- Keep a complete immigration file and a written timeline of entries, applications, and encounters with authorities.

Chapter 6: Overreacting to News or Changing Laws

Immigration news can create fear, especially when headlines discuss proposed laws, executive actions, enforcement priorities, court rulings, or agency policy changes. Social media often spreads incomplete or inaccurate information before the legal effect is known.

A proposal is not necessarily law. A law may be blocked, limited, delayed, or subject to litigation. A court decision may apply only in

certain jurisdictions. An agency announcement may contain exceptions, effective dates, or implementation guidance that is not reflected in a headline.

Do not make major decisions - such as abandoning an application, leaving the United States, failing to appear, or submitting a rushed filing - based solely on rumors. Confirm the information through official sources and qualified legal advice.

Practical safeguards

- Check the date and source of every announcement.
- Distinguish proposals, enacted laws, court orders, and agency guidance.
- Ask how the change applies to your particular status and location.

Chapter 7: Representing Yourself in Removal Proceedings

Removal proceedings are adversarial court proceedings in which the Department of Homeland Security seeks an order of removal. The Immigration Judge cannot serve as the respondent's attorney. A person who appears without counsel must still understand the charges, pleadings, filing deadlines, evidentiary rules, forms of relief, burdens of proof, and consequences of waiving appeal.

Jurisdiction and classification issues can be critical. Whether a person was admitted, paroled, charged as inadmissible or deportable, or classified as an arriving alien may affect bond, adjustment jurisdiction, and available relief. These questions require careful review of the Notice to Appear, entry documents, I-94 history, and applicable law.

If you are in removal proceedings, act immediately. Obtain the complete court record, keep the court informed of your address, attend every hearing, comply with filing deadlines, and seek representation from an attorney experienced in removal defense.

Practical safeguards

- Never miss an immigration court hearing.
- Do not concede charges or waive appeal without understanding the consequences.
- Bring all immigration and criminal records to your attorney.

Chapter 8: Failing to Have an Estate Plan

Immigrants often work for years to build a secure life in the United States, yet many never create a plan for what will happen to their children, property, business interests, and financial accounts if they become incapacitated or die. An estate plan is not only for wealthy families. It is a practical way to protect the people you love, preserve what you have built, and make your wishes legally clear.

A complete plan may include a will, a revocable living trust when appropriate, financial powers of attorney, healthcare directives, guardianship nominations for minor children, beneficiary designations, and instructions for managing a family business or property located in more than one country. The correct documents depend on your family structure, assets, state of residence, and long-term goals.

Without a valid plan, state law may decide who receives your property and who may ask the court for authority to act for you. Loved ones may face delay, expense, conflict, or uncertainty. Parents should give special attention to guardianship planning, emergency contacts, and clear instructions for the care of minor children, particularly when close relatives live outside the United States.

Creating documents is only part of the process. Trusts may need to be properly funded, deeds and account titles may need review, and beneficiary designations should be coordinated with the overall plan. Estate planning should also be reviewed after marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, the purchase of property, the creation of a business, a major change in assets, or a move to another state.

Practical safeguards

- Prepare a will and name guardians for minor children.
- Consider a revocable living trust when it supports your goals and ensure that it is properly funded.
- Sign financial and healthcare powers of attorney before an emergency occurs.
- Review deeds, beneficiary designations, business interests, and assets located outside the United States with qualified counsel.
- Update your estate plan after major family, financial, or geographic changes.

Chapter 9: Failing to Protect Their Assets by Creating a Business

Many immigrants build income, purchase equipment, invest in real estate, or provide services without creating a formal business structure. Operating only in an individual name may expose personal assets to business debts, contracts, lawsuits, and other liabilities. Forming an appropriate business entity can help separate business obligations from personal property, but only when the entity is properly selected, created, maintained, and used.

A limited liability company or corporation may provide liability protection, continuity, clearer ownership, and a stronger foundation for contracts, banking, hiring, and succession planning. However, creating an entity does not automatically protect every asset or eliminate every risk. Owners may still be personally responsible for their own misconduct, personal guarantees, unpaid payroll or trust-fund taxes, commingled funds, fraudulent transfers, or failure to follow required formalities.

Business owners should keep business and personal finances separate, use written contracts, maintain accurate records, obtain appropriate insurance, follow licensing and tax requirements, and document ownership and management decisions. The choice of entity may also affect taxation, immigration strategy, employment compliance, estate planning, and the ability to bring in partners or transfer the business to family members.

Asset protection should be lawful, proactive, and coordinated. A business should not be created to hide assets from creditors, courts, taxing authorities, or government agencies. The best time to establish a proper structure is before a dispute, accident, debt, or claim arises. Qualified legal and tax professionals can help determine whether an LLC, corporation, partnership, or another structure is appropriate for the owner's goals and state of operation.

Practical safeguards

- Do not operate a growing business indefinitely through personal accounts or informal agreements.
- Select the business entity based on liability, tax, management, immigration, and succession considerations.
- Use separate bank accounts, bookkeeping, contracts, and records for the business.

- Maintain required registrations, licenses, insurance, annual filings, and tax compliance.
- Avoid personal guarantees when reasonably possible and understand them before signing.
- Coordinate the business structure with your estate plan so ownership can pass according to your wishes.

Conclusion: Take Control of Your Immigration Journey

A successful immigration journey requires more than hope. It requires honesty, preparation, discipline, reliable information, and timely action. By avoiding these nine mistakes, you place yourself in a stronger position to protect your future and pursue the opportunities available under U.S. law.

Do not wait for a small problem to become a crisis. Keep your records organized. Respond to notices. Attend hearings. Understand what you are signing. Be cautious about travel and criminal pleas. Most importantly, obtain qualified legal advice before making decisions that may affect your status, your family, or your ability to remain in the United States.

Your immigration story deserves a thoughtful legal strategy.

Kanu & Associates, P.C.

Immigration Law • Business Immigration • Employer Compliance •
Removal Defense • Family-Based Immigration • Humanitarian Relief
• Naturalization • Estate Planning

Phone: 602-324-5320

Website: kanulaw.com

Schedule a consultation to receive legal advice based on your individual facts and immigration history.

PUBLICATION EDITION • 2026



SOLOMON O. KANU, ESQ.

ATTORNEY • AUTHOR • IMMIGRANT ADVOCATE



Practical guidance to help
immigrants avoid costly mistakes
and build a stronger future
in the United States.



★ SCAN TO VISIT ★
KANULAW.COM



602-324-5320



kanulaw.com

EXPERIENCE • INTEGRITY • RESULTS

