

What is Your Story?

In reality, your story is complicated, not necessarily chronological or in order, and things are not black and white.

Your asylum story is not your full story. It is a story that focuses on the elements of asylum and presents them chronologically and clearly.

What Must You Prove For Asylum?

- 1. You belong to a certain race, religion, nationality, political affiliation, or other social group.
- 2. You were harmed and/or you will be harmed because of that.
- 3. Your government will not or cannot protect people who belong to your group OR the government itself harms you.

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What Else Will Asylum Officers Ask About?

4. Any past travel to the U.S. or other countries

5. If you entered with a visa, what you said to get your visa and what you said when you entered the U.S.

6. If you are filing after one year, why?

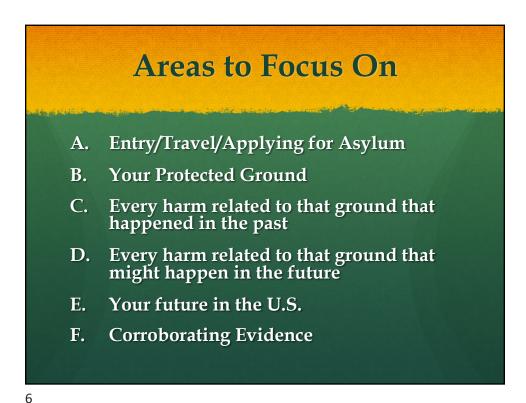
Suggestions for Writing Your Story

Don't write it all in one day

Break it up into the different things that the Officer will ask

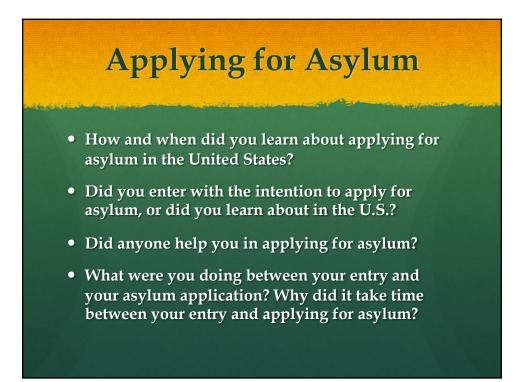
Try your best to then put it together chronologically

If you don't remember something exactly, say so



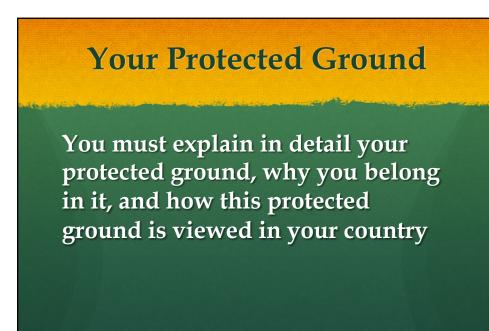


- When did you apply for a visa at the Consulate?
- What did you say in your visa application and does any of it conflict with your story?
- What happened at the border? What were you asked and what did you say? Does any of it conflict with your story?



Past Travel/ Safe 3rd Countries

- Did you live or travel anywhere else before coming to the U.S.?
- Why didn't you apply for asylum there? Were the country conditions there also dangerous? Did the persecution happen after you returned to your country?
- Have you ever had permanent residence in any other country?
- Are you a dual citizen, or can you be a dual citizen? Check your parent's place of birth!



Example 1 : Religion

Let's say you are applying for asylum because you belong to a religious minority that is being persecuted in your country. You want to demonstrate that you hold this belief, that you are perceived to hold this belief, and that your country regards this religious group differently from those in the majority.

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Protected Ground Question - Religion

- Were you born in this religion or did you convert?
- What are the main tenents/beliefs of this religion?
- How is this religion different from the majority in your country?
- How do you practice your religion? Do you go to a place of worship? Did you go to classes? Were there celebrations that you go to? Why is this religions important to you?
- How are you identifies as being part of this religion? Does your name identify you? Does your manner of dress identify you? Are there other ways that society would identify you?

Political Opinion

What is the political view you hold? Why do you hold it? Why is it so important to your identity?

Is there a political party or a group that you belong to? When did you join? How did you join? What did you do there? Who specifically do you interact with there? Did you have a position there?

Have you ever signed any petition holding your opinion?

Have you ever protested expressing your opinion?

Have you ever voted expressing your opinion?

Are you not permitted or excluded from anything because of your political opinion?

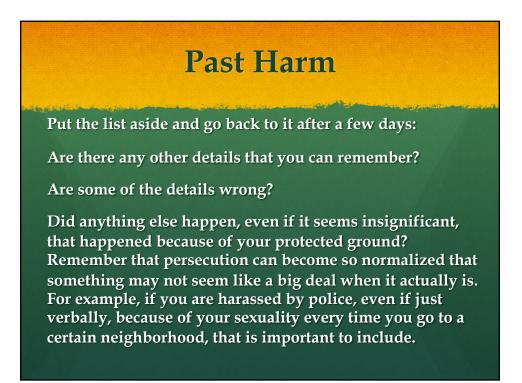
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Past Harm

List EVERYTHING that has happened to you because of your protected ground. This may take a long time to remember everything. For now, just have a list. Think about the following:

- 1. What was the harm (words, feelings, physical harm, imprisonment, etc.)
- 2. Who did it and what did the person say, or what was the situation, the made you know it was being done because of your protected ground?
- 3. Did you seek any protection after (from the police, from your teachers, from your parents, etc). Why or why not?
- 4. How did this harm affect you afterwards?

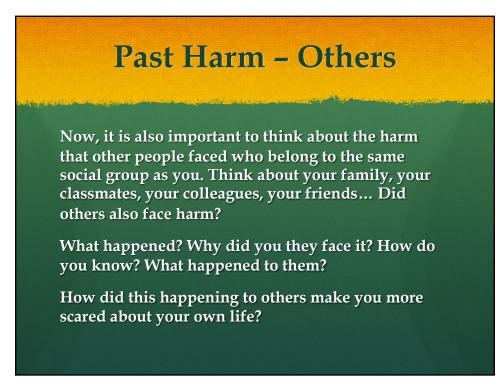


Past Harm

Begin putting the harm into chronological order

Think about what happened between those events of harm, and whether any of that information is important to include to give what happened to you more context

If any details are hard to remember, just say so. If you can't remember the exact year or the exact name of somebody, just "I think it was", "approximately", "It's hard for me to remember because..."



Past Harm – Country Conditions

Look up country conditions about your protected ground on the internet. Find as many articles as you can.

Now look back at what happened to you- was any of the harm that you faced connected to what was going on in your country at that time? Were there others who experienced similar harms in your country that are documented? If there are similarities, you can add information in the section about past harm about what you have read in these articles.

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Don't Forget to Write About The Police/Government

It's important always to say whether you went to get official protection.

If you did not, why not? Would it be more dangerous? Would it be ineffective? Please be very specific.

If you did go to the police, explain in detail what happened, whether they took a complaint, whether they followed up with you, whether you followed up with them, how you know that they are no longer pursuing the matter, etc.

Are there country conditions that support the fact that the police/government is unwilling to help you?

Put together the first few sections

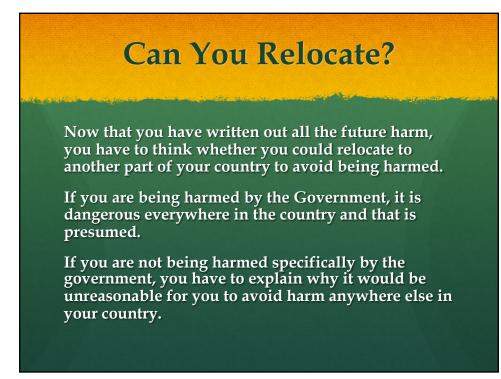
- I. Your Social Group
- II. Past Harm (including information about the police not protecting you & it not being possible to relocate)
- III. Information about your entry to the U.S., how you learned about applying for asylum, and how you went about doing it



The Future

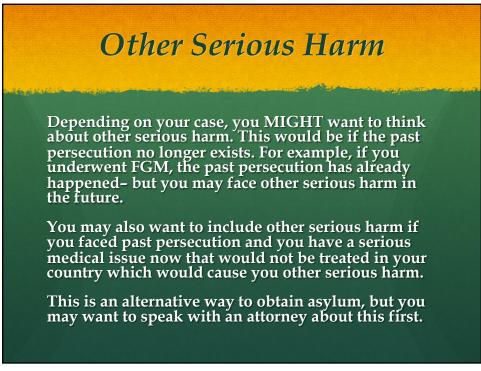
What are all the things that might happen to you if you returned? List every single type of harm that might happen to you because of your protected ground.

Be very specific and why do you believe that– based on your past experiences? Based on country conditions?



Why is Relocation Unreasonable?

- Your Age
- Your Health
- Evidence that Persecution Happens Throughout the Country
- Inability to fit in/blend anywhere else in the country
- Ability for your persecutor to find you based on various factors (size of country, resources of your persecutor, etc.)



The Future in the U.S.

How have you been in the U.S. based on your protected ground? Have you experienced any harm based on it? Have you joined any groups/associations here that support people who belong to your protected ground? Why do you feel safer in the United States and why would you need to be granted asylum for your safety?

Finally, what do you plan to do in the U.S. if you are granted asylum?

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Now You Have Completed Your Story

If you have a friend you trust that you are willing to let read it, let them do so to give you feedback to see whether it is clear and organized?

Check your I-589 application and make sure that everything is consistent? Are the dates in your address and employment history consistent with the events that happened in your story? Is the information you provided in the boxes consistent with your story?

Completing Your Story

Put your story aside for a week, and then go and look at it again. Does it read clearly? Is it sufficiently detailed? Will you be able to testify to everything?

Does the story express your emotions? Does it express you fears?

Does the story sound like your words?

Does the story, as best as possible, capture what you went through?

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Use Your Story to Get Other Evidence

Finally, look through your story and see what evidence you can get to support it. If no evidence is possible to get, you may want to explain in your story why not. For example, if you went to the hospital or made a report to the police, the asylum officer will ask for that- if you can't get it, explain in your story there how you tried to get it and why you couldn't. Try also to get letters from other people who have experienced the same harms, or who can attest to the harms that you faced.



Take your time writing your story

- Remember that you can always add in more information at the interview
- Be mindful of the one-year filing deadline