

I crossed the border illegally to enter the United States. Is there anything I can do to legalize my status?

Q: I crossed the border illegally to enter the United States. I have never had any contact with the authorities nor have I come forward with any type of immigration application. Is there anything I can do to legalize my status?

A: If you have been here less than a year, your only option would be to claim political asylum if you have a legitimate fear of being persecuted in your home country. You would need to file an I-589 application and wait for an interview. If you are successful in your interview you would be granted status as an asylee, and can apply for your permanent residency a year later. If you are unsuccessful at the interview, you will be placed in removal proceedings before the Immigration Court, where you will have a chance to renew your claim for political asylum. Ultimately, if you do not win your asylum case on this level or in the appeals process you will be deported or granted voluntary departure to leave the United States.