

ID Card Renewal Trip 2014

I do not normally take Keeb on when he makes dire predictions since he's typically a glass half empty dude and I'm a "Wow! There's water in that there glass!" gal. The night before the ID card renewal trip, I reminded Keeb to confirm that his friend Tolo would give me a ride. And Keeb said "Remember Sherry's Roti shop? Well tomorrow you'll get a good taste of that in the public service".

Now the Sherry's Roti shop saga is a sad story that involved me getting a completely different order to what I wanted despite repeating the order to them and ended with me getting curry on my Monsoon dress. And, as Keeb has often reminded me, I had exclaimed, "This is the worse thing that could happen!" as I tried to scrub out the curry stain. Just so you know, boiling hot water followed by dish washing liquid followed by a dab of bleach. But I digress...

So, the next day, Tolo took me to the San Juan Elections and Boundaries commission to renew my national ID. The letter they sent me did not contain any information on recommended documents to take. Keeb and I discussed it and I went there with my national ID card, driver's permit, passport, and marriage registrar's certificate as I wanted the national ID to finally reflect my hyphenated married name. This registrar's certificate was all that was required to update my passport with my married name.

So I get there and there was no line (yippee!!) and I walked up to the window with my registrar's certificate and the girl looked at it and then told me I needed to give them a copy of it, she helpfully advised that there was a photo copying place down the road so I walked there, got the copy and returned. Still no line! She took the copy and then asked if I brought a shawl. When I said no she said they could not take the photo of me because my dress showed my shoulders! I discussed my options with Tolo and asked if he had anything in the truck like a towel. He left and returned with a roll of toilet paper and a wet chamois. When the girl saw him trying to cover both my shoulders with the chamois, she could not take it anymore and told me that would not work. So I went out of the office and tried to buy a scarf - the store would not take \$100.00 so Tolo ended paying the \$20.00 for the scarf.

We returned to the office with the scarf and the girl goes back to my registrar's certificate and then says "Hmmm..." then she takes it and shows her colleagues and one actually laughs out loud. When I asked her what was wrong, she said I was supposed to bring in a marriage certificate not a registrar's certificate. She sniffed that I should go and apply for a marriage certificate and come back whenever I get it. Tolo realised I was getting to boiling point and asked where did we need to go and we drove into Port of Spain and were pleasantly surprised that the process to apply and receive a marriage certificate was less than 40 minutes so we went back to the San Juan elections and boundaries commission to continue the process of getting my ID card renewed.

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I triumphantly handed over the marriage certificate (and a copy as I was not going to get caught out a second time) when she looked at the marriage certificate and my other documents, she then said she needed to see my original hand-written birth certificate. This was the one document I had not thought to take as it was a renewal after all. She said that my national ID card did not have the hyphen in my first name. When I pointed out this is not the only piece of ID that I own and offered to show her my passport and driver's permit which I did have on hand, she said she did not want to see either. So I asked to speak to her supervisor to whom I gave a blow by blow account of everything that happened since I walked into that office several hours before. The supervisor was polite but firm - she said they would fill out the forms and take the photo since I was already there but I'd have to send in the birth certificate before they decide if to follow through with the renewal. I knew for a fact that my computer generated birth certificate had the hyphen because I had checked it carefully on getting it and when I told the supervisor that, she insisted they wanted the hand written one to verify. So bottom line - after all that I went through, they may not renew my national ID. Not because of the hyphenated last name that I was trying to get included, but because someone from the ID office did not put the hyphen in my first name in the last ID card.

Needless to say, Keeb was not surprised when I got home and poured out my tale of woe. He just bundled me into the car and took me out for dinner and ice cream.

I eventually had to get a notary public to prepare to an affidavit swearing that variations of my name, with and without the hyphen, were still referring to me. The day that I went to pick up my ID card turned out to be the day of their office Christmas party and they wanted me to come back another time. I just stood there looking through the metal bars feeling like a Dickensian street urchin. Just by chance the supervisor turned in my direction and recognized me, she said very loudly "After all the trouble you caused us, you should be grateful to get this today!" But I was not complaining, because she was bringing my ID to me personally. I'd like to think she was actually sorry for me and put on that show to explain why she left the party to help me out. It was, after all, the season of good cheer.