



AmericanRhetoric.com

Leo Perrero

Statement to Congress on Training Foreign Replacements at Disney

delivered 25 February 2016, Washington, D.C.



AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

I made a change in the direction of my career, because January 31st of 2015 was my last day in the technology field.

That day, 20 years of hard work, a bachelor's degree in Information Technology, and an IT job for Disney were all over when my team, along with hundreds of others, were displaced by a less-skilled foreign workforce imported into our country using the H-1B visa program.

The former Disney employees, with far superior skills and knowledge, were the trainers, and the guest workers just entering the technology field were the trainees. This situation is far from the original intent of this program, and is shocking to everybody that hears it.

I worked at Disney in Orlando in some capacity for well over 10 years and received the very highest employment performance review. Quotes included,

"Leo continues to provide value to our team."



AmericanRhetoric.com

"This year Leo was instrumental."

"Leo saved the company over 10,000 dollars."

And finally,

"I look forward to another great year of having Leo on our team."

During the holiday season of 2014 I was sent a meeting invitation by a prominent Disney executive. With an excellent review in hand, along with the company announcements of record profits, my mind buzzed with thoughts of promotion or a bonus.

I walked into a small conference room with about two dozen highly-respected fellow IT workers. The Disney executive made a harsh announcement to us all: All of you in this room will be losing their jobs in the next 90 days. Your jobs have been given over to a foreign workforce. In the meantime, you'll be training your replacements until your jobs are a hundred percent transferred over to them, and if you do not cooperate you will not receive any severance pay.

The only glimmer of hope during that meeting was the announcement that new, more exciting jobs would be opening soon. However, we found out that only four people would be directly rehired by Disney, of the hundreds that were lost.

I was completely silent during this meeting, thinking how I was going to -- how this is going to affect my co-workers. How was I going to break the news to my family and pay all their expenses? I would soon be living on unemployment.

Later that same day, I clearly remember going to the local church pumpkin sale and having to tell the kids I couldn't buy any that year because my job [was] being turned over to a foreign worker.



AmericanRhetoric.com

I started to think what kind of American I was becoming. Was I going to become part of ruining my country by taking severance pay in exchange for training my foreign replacement? How many other American families would be affected by the same foreign worker that I trained?

The first part of my 90-day period was focused on capturing all that we did our jobs. We all felt extremely humiliated when the foreign worker sat next to us and watched everything that we did.

The final period of the 90 days was the most disgraceful and demoralizing, as we had to watch the foreign workers completely take over our jobs. And we came to grips that the upcoming Disney jobs promised didn't exist.

Then finally on January 31st of 2015 we were ordered to turn in our company badges, laptops, and then ushered out the door.

How can it be that everybody that hears these stories about Disney and the like, from the barbers to the bankers, are completely shocked -- yet our lawmakers continue to evade the topic and take no action?

The reason that more affected IT workers don't come out into the public is two-fold. And that is why most lawmakers mostly hear from the tech giants, and are very rarely from -- heard from the displaced American workers that -- who will disclose themselves publicly.

The first reason is, they're scared to find the next IT job. After being displaced, when that job pool is shrinking for Americans, if they speak out, they will certainly not improve their prospects of landing the next job. But this could permanently bar them from the field, when the large portion of large technology companies are exploiting these visa programs.

One of my former peers, who is now working for a consulting company, decided to speak out publicly. He was told he had to stop immediately, since most of his clientele were large Fortune 500 companies, and they used the H-1B program extensively.



AmericanRhetoric.com

The second reason that more of them don't speak out is for legal intimidation reasons. From gag orders signed when American workers sign severance package agreements, the American IT worker feels they are legally bound to keep that situation quiet, and at most speak anonymously.

I'm appearing today because I'm one of the few workers [who can] speak out in public, because I made the decision to walk away from technology.

This abuse of the H-1B visa program is not about the lack of talent here in the US. If our own pool of IT professionals were so incompetent, then why would companies like Disney and many others have us spend months training our replacements? And also, why would such a low ratio of US STEM graduates land a STEM job?

The situation at Disney is not an anomaly. This same abuse is happening nationwide. Some quotes from IT workers that I've worked with:

"I know that jobs like mine are scarce, because they're filled with H-1B employees." (Jeff, current Disney employee)

"The big tech giants say they don't have enough skilled workers, which is false. This will become a self-fulfilling prophecy as we have more students opt out of technology as they continue to recruit from developing countries." (Matt, former Disney employee)

"Unemployment hurts. I ran out of benefits and I have to pay for -- for full -- full COBRA insurance, which is over 3,000 dollars per month, because my young daughter suffers from anxiety. Besides that, I have a mortgage, utilities, schooling, and job searching to pay for. As my young daughter outgrows her clothes, that is even more money." (former IBM worker)

That's all I have to say this afternoon.

Thank you for listening.