



MARKO RISOVIC FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Every year, tens of thousands of young people, such as Dino Cekic, come to the U.S. on visas as part of a government program.

Promised a Taste of America, but Enduring Exploitation

By AMY JULIA HARRIS

They came from the Philippines, from South Africa and from Kosovo, dozens of young people eager to experience the best that America had to offer.

Some had emptied their savings. Others had borrowed from their families. All had traveled to New York under a U.S. government program meant to foster cultural exchange, and they were eager to learn on the job at Kurt Weiss Greenhouses, one of the largest plant nurseries in the nation.

But when they arrived at the sprawling compound on Long Island, with its acres of flower beds, busy forklifts and speeding conveyor belts, it was nothing like what they had been promised.

Instead of receiving mentorship and time off to visit beaches, they spent 10-hour days stuffing soil into pots on an assembly line, or rose before dawn to plant flowers in the fields, or toiled past midnight loading heavy cartons of hydrangeas onto trucks



VINCENT ALBAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Kurt Weiss Greenhouses has hired as many as 70 J-1 visa workers a year.

bound for Costco, Walmart and Home Depot. They slept in filthy trailers on the property, sometimes two to a bed, choking on the dust kicked up by passing trucks and recoiling at the mice and cockroaches that skittered through their kitchen cabinets.

One visa worker, a student from Brazil, was made to tend plants in a greenhouse while laborers in protective suits sprayed

chemicals around her. Given no safety gear, she fell violently ill, vomiting as her skin broke out in angry red spots. Another, a man from Eastern Europe, had his hand crushed beneath the wheels of a forklift. A third, an ambitious 22-year-old from Kosovo who was at the top of her class, winced as her bosses screamed at her to work faster — and threatened to have her deported if she did not.

“There was no treating you like a human,” the student, Behare Mlinaku, said. “We were just cheap labor.”

Every year, tens of thousands of young people come to work at companies like Kurt Weiss on J-1 visas, as part of a program that is supposed to provide an exhilarating taste of the American way.

Instead, a New York Times investigation has found, many of them have suffered abuse and mistreatment by American businesses in a poorly regulated program that is ripe for exploitation.

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Inquiry Halted On Cash Given To Trump Ally

Homan Said to Accept \$50,000 Last Year

This article is by Devlin Barrett, Glenn Thrush, Alan Feuer, Maggie Haberman and Hamed Aleaziz.

WASHINGTON — Tom Homan, who was later named President Trump's border czar, was recorded in September 2024 accepting a bag with \$50,000 in cash in an undercover F.B.I. investigation, according to people familiar with the case, which was later shut down by Trump administration officials.

The cash payment, which was made inside a bag from the food chain Cava, grew out of a long-running counterintelligence investigation that had not been targeting Mr. Homan, according to the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the case.

Mr. Homan's encounter with the undercover agents, recorded on audiotape, led him to be investigated for potential bribery and other crimes, after he apparently took the money and agreed to help the agents — who were posing as businessmen — secure future government contracts related to border security, the people said.

After Mr. Trump took office this year, Justice Department officials shut down the case because of doubts about whether prosecutors could prove to a jury that Mr. Homan had agreed to do any specific acts in exchange for the money, and because he had not held an official government position at the time of the meeting with undercover agents, the people added.

One person familiar with the case said the evidence gathered had not met all the necessary elements of relevant federal crimes,

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Ouster Pushes Justice Dept. Closer to Cliff

Independence in Doubt Under Trump's Watch

This article is by Alan Feuer, Glenn Thrush, Maggie Haberman and Devlin Barrett.

The ouster on Friday of the federal prosecutor who failed to charge two of President Trump's most-reviled adversaries was a huge blow to the Justice Department's teetering tradition of independence, showing how far Mr. Trump has gone in exerting personal control over the institution.

The way in which the prosecutor, Erik S. Siebert, was abruptly forced from his post atop the U.S. attorney's office in the Eastern District of Virginia deepened troubling questions that have arisen in recent months about the politicization of the Justice Department's supposedly self-governing satellite offices. But it also raised a blunter and more immediate issue: Which of the nation's U.S. attorneys might be next?

Beyond their efforts to push out Mr. Siebert, whose inquiries into Letitia James, New York's attorney general, and James B. Comey, the former F.B.I. director, effectively fizzled out, administration officials have also ramped up pressure against Kelly O. Hayes, the U.S. attorney in Maryland, according to three people familiar with the matter.

Ms. Hayes, a career prosecutor who has spent more than a decade in that office, is leading inquiries into two other vocal critics of Mr. Trump: Senator Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California, who has been accused of mortgage fraud by Mr.

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MEMORIAL A service for Charlie Kirk on Sunday in Arizona is expected to feature the highest-profile figures of the MAGA movement. PAGE 21

ALLIES' FEAR Some European leaders worry that Trump officials are promoting a takeover by far-right parties in their countries. PAGE 13

Scathing Post On Kirk Killing Disquiets Town

By RICHARD FAUSSET

One by one, the angry residents who had packed the council chambers last week in Palmetto Bay, Fla., stepped to the podium to express their disgust over online comments that a councilman, Stephen Cody, had made about Charlie Kirk.

One man called Mr. Cody's comments “vile.” Another called them “abnormal and dangerous.” A third man said that the councilman's Facebook post, which went up a few hours after Mr. Kirk was fatally shot in Utah, “smells like it came out of the pit of hell.”

All three wanted Mr. Cody to resign from office. If that did not happen, a fourth speaker said, “We'll come after him.” While he did not intend to harm Mr. Cody, he added, “He's not going to have a very nice life while he's living here.”

The most contentious civic matters anyone had anticipated this month in Palmetto Bay, a prosperous Miami suburb of 25,000, involved the tax rate and the details of a contract to manage a municipal pickleball facility. But in the last few days, Palmetto Bay, like many communities around the country, has been consumed by the wave of ferocious indignation directed at people who declared their lack of remorse about Mr. Kirk's death or merely took issue

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JUN MICHAEL PARK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Wolmido, an Incheon islet that U.S. planes napalmed before landing, is now a tourist attraction.

U.S. Move to Free Korean City Fortifies a Bond 75 Years Later

By CHOE SANG-HUN

INCHEON, South Korea — Douglas MacArthur has not faded away in Incheon, South Korea. From its hilltop Freedom Park, the late American general, in the form of a bronze statue, gazes down at the narrow channel that connects the city to the Yellow Sea.

On a September dawn 75 years ago, tens of thousands of U.S. and South Korean Marines under his command braved a hail of enemy fire to approach the shore and scale sea walls protecting Incheon. They retook the city from North Korean forces and went on to liberate Seoul, the South Korean capital, which lies roughly 25 miles to its east.

The Incheon Landing, the U.S. military's most daring amphibious assault since D-Day in Normandy, turned the tide of the

Korean War and made MacArthur a household name in South Korea. In Incheon, he is more than that; the city has made him and his maneuver part of its identity, hosting commemorative ceremonies each year.

Last Sunday, South Korean and U.S. Marines marched down an Incheon street as onlookers cheered, waving flags of both countries. On Monday, the landing's anniversary, amphibious assault vehicles vroomed across the water into the harbor. Marines later hoisted the South Korean flag on a pier as a large outdoor screen flashed black-and-white images from the actual landing 75 years ago.

If the Incheon landing symbolized the United States' commitment to defend South Korea, then Incheon's annual “We Remember” ceremony, which commemorates the 75th anniversary of the landing, turned the tide of the

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The Zelle Scam Is So Good, Even a Skeptical Crime Reporter Almost Got Reeled In

By MICHAEL WILSON

“Please hold,” the caller said, “while I transfer you to my supervisor.”

It was a Wednesday in August, a little before lunch. The call came from a 212 number, which for a New Yorker could be almost anything — the school, the pharmacy,

the roof guy — so I answered.

The caller asked for me by name and stated in measured tones that he was from Chase Bank and he wanted to verify transfers being made from my account to someone in Texas.

Wrong number, I said. I don't have a Chase account.

But one was recently opened in

your name, he replied, with two Zelle transfers. And minutes ago, someone tried to transfer those funds, \$2,100, to San Antonio.

Now, this carried the whiff of plausibility. I'm one of some 150 million people who have access to Zelle, the payments platform that lets you send and receive money from your phone. But my scam ra-

dar was also fully operational and pinging.

“How do I know this isn't a scam?” I asked, sounding like that guy in every movie who asks an undercover cop if he's a cop.

He had a quick answer. Look at the number showing on your phone and Google it, he replied. “Now look up the Chase branch at

3 Times Square,” he instructed. “See the office phone number?” I did, and it matched the one on my phone's screen.

Then he added, “Here at Chase, we'll never ask for your personal information or passwords.” On the contrary, he gave me more information — two “cancellation

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INTERNATIONAL 4-13

A Purge in Nicaragua

President Daniel Ortega and his wife and co-president, Rosario Murillo, have arrested many of their longtime allies in the Sandinista movement. PAGE 4

NATIONAL 14-24

It's Not Earth Day, It's Sun Day

Fifty-five years after the first Earth Day, climate activists organized a nationwide celebration of the sun and its ability to provide clean energy. PAGE 23

SUNDAY OPINION

M. Gessen

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FALL TRAVEL

The Call of Autumn Leaves

A special section explores how savvy travelers are taking advantage of what used to be the off-season.

METROPOLITAN

Brand Brainstorming as Teens

At a school with a basketball-themed curriculum, students were “dreaming big” and created a streetwear line. But could they find a buyer? PAGE 1

Tossup Race Stirs Washington

National party leaders have taken a keen interest in the showdown for governor of New Jersey. PAGE 7

ARTS & LEISURE

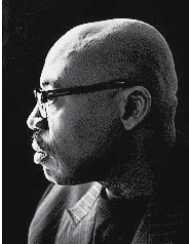
MoMA Director Steps Down

Glenn D. Lowry led the Museum of Modern Art for 30 years, and now the institution faces all-new trials. PAGE 9

SUNDAY STYLES

A Big Reveal All His Own

Edward Enninful left British Vogue but then dived back into the fashion world with a new brand. PAGE 6



SPORTS 25-28

Out Injured, but Still in Game

The Indiana Fever are getting a vocal boost from their bench in the W.N.B.A. playoffs from Caitlin Clark and other sidelined players. PAGE 25

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Airbnb Is Altering Galápagos

The islands that Charles Darwin made famous have become more accessible. Too accessible, say some locals and researchers, who fear nature is imperiled off the coast of Ecuador. PAGE 6

A Calming Field of Dreams

As ICE raids stoke anxiety in California, some Latino men find solace playing on a baseball diamond that workers built in the middle of a vineyard in Sonoma County. PAGE 1

