

EXPOSING 'WRONGS' DONE TO CHINESE IMMIGRANTS

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Byline: By Eric Mink

Body

EXPOSING HUMAN rights abuses continues to be the mission of public television's "Rights & Wrongs," which launches its fourth season tonight at 10:30 on PBS (WNET/Ch. 13).

Tonight's premiere focuses on the abuse or mistreatment of **Chinese immigrants** by the governments of China and the U.S., as well as by freelance smugglers known as Snakeheads.

Independent producer Jon Alpert, working with ace Daily News reporter Ying Chan (currently on leave from the paper for a prestigious Nieman fellowship at Harvard), supplies the centerpiece of the half-hour broadcast: a report taped on locations in China, in New York's Chinatown and in a jail in the California desert.

Alpert begins his piece recalling the notorious Golden Venture, a smuggling ship bearing hundreds of illegal **Chinese immigrants** that ran aground just outside New York Harbor in 1993.

Alpert, Chan and producer Peter Kwang track some the survivors of that wreck to the Kern Co. jail outside Bakersfield, Calif., where they have been confined for years, and to basements in Chinatown, where scores of **immigrants** live in squalor as they desperately work to pay off debts to the brutal Snakeheads.

Finally, the team travels to China and has no trouble finding Snakeheads cutting deals for boatloads of human cargo. They even discover a **Chinese** government agency that appears to be running its own **immigrant**-smuggling operation, in competition with the Snakeheads.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault of PBS' "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" returns as the host/anchor of "Rights & Wrongs." As usual, she adds a little polish to the proceedings but not much else.

A discussion segment that follows the Alpert piece is dry, to put it charitably.

But the program ends with images of remarkable sculptures made in jail by survivors of the Golden Venture wreck three-dimensional houses, birds and even ships, created with astounding ingenuity from little more than magazines and glue.

It should be noted that, because of Alpert's long-running relationship with NBC News, some footage shot in China appeared last spring on an installment of "Dateline."

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