

## 15 IMMIGRANTS WHO FLED WTC NOW SEEK VISAS

Daily News (New York)

March 24, 2005 Thursday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 14

**Length:** 284 words

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### **Body**

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FIFTEEN ILLEGAL immigrants injured in the terror attacks have asked the NYPD to help them qualify for special visas for crime victims, the Daily News has learned.

The U-visa grants people without legal status temporary relief - if they can prove they suffered substantial physical or mental harm in a crime.

"We were evacuated, we were injured," said Oscar, 32, a Washington Heights resident who has been taking anti-depressants since fleeing the World Trade Center on 9/11. "The certification should be given to us."

But a law enforcement official must certify victims' claim - and the New York Police Department maintains the issue is outside its jurisdiction.

Mayor Bloomberg's office said in a statement that it wanted to help the immigrants, but that the FBI is the agency authorized to issue certification.

"We're not involved with these visas," said a police official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

But Councilman Hiram Monserrate said the NYPD's hand-in-hand work with federal agencies during and after the attacks gives it jurisdiction.

"For the people who escaped with their lives - was there an intent to kill them, hurt them? Were they either physically or mentally injured by Sept. 11? Absolutely," said Monserrate (D-Queens), a former cop.

The city has issued U-visa certification before - primarily to victims of domestic violence, said Shawn Saucier, a spokesman with the U.S. Immigration and Service Center.

Since lawmakers approved U-visas in 2000, 1,800 people have applied, including many from New York City, Saucier said.

"Congress didn't imagine this would happen and that the visa would be used for 9/11," Saucier added. "But we have adjudicated three cases."

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## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Document-Type:** EXCLUSIVE

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** POLICE FORCES (94%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (90%); CITY GOVERNMENT (90%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK (78%); VICTIMS RIGHTS (78%); WOUNDS & INJURIES (78%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (74%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (73%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (73%); TERRORISM (73%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (54%); DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (50%)

**Organization:** FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (56%)

**Person:** MICHAEL BLOOMBERG (54%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, NY, USA (92%); NEW YORK, USA (92%); UNITED STATES (92%)

**Load-Date:** March 24, 2005