

Wall of fear for vics. Visas unclaimed in deport paranoia

Daily News (New York)

March 28, 2012 Wednesday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2012 Daily News, L.P.



Section: NEWS; Pg. 36

Length: 467 words

Byline: BY ERICA PEARSON NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Body

FEAR OF **DEPORTATION** stops many immigrants who are victims of crimes or trafficking from reporting to authorities what happened.

Trafficking survivors, in particular, are so wary of coming forward that the pool of 5,000 special T **visas** available to them each year go largely unassigned. Just 557 were approved last year.

Officials believe thousands more immigrants are out there who haven't found help.

"They're right in front of us and we don't even know it," said Scott Whelan, an officer at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Office of Policy and Strategy.

Whelan and other USCIS officials

are touring the country - from Los Angeles to Boston to Queens in New York - to spread the word about T **visas** and other special **visas** that let immigrant victims who help law enforcement stay in the U.S.

They stopped in the agency's new Long Island City office last week to teach cops, immigration agents, community groups and nonprofits more about the benefits available to victims.

Dozens of staffers from groups like Sanctuary for Families, Safe Horizon, Kids in Need of Defense and Legal Aid showed up for the training, which is part of a Homeland Security anti-human trafficking project called the "Blue Campaign."

While T **visas** are just for survivors of labor or sex trafficking, the feds give U **visas** to immigrants who are victims of serious crimes.

As co-director of nonprofit Sanctuary for Families' Immigration Intervention Project, Julie Dinnerstein has counseled many clients to alert police or testify before a grand jury without fear of **deportation** after terrible misfortunes.

In one shocking case, an undocumented Mexican immigrant mom living in the Bronx came into Dinnerstein's office last year and told her she'd discovered that her boyfriend had repeatedly raped her 10-year-old daughter.

"The child rapist had been telling this little girl that if she said anything to the police or her schoolteachers, to her mother, that her mother would be **deported** and that she and all of her siblings would end up in foster care," said Dinnerstein.

Wall of fear for vics. Visas unclaimed in deport paranoia

"And of course, the child was terrified. The reality of what happened when she finally told is actually quite different."

Dinnerstein said her group is now working with the feds to secure U-visas for the family.

Lynn Boudreau, an assistant center director at USCIS' Vermont Service Center, where all victim-related petitions from around the country are filed, said a growing number of immigrants are securing U visas.

For the past two years, the agency has awarded all of the 10,000 U visas available each year.

Before then, many went unused. If pending legislation to renew the federal Violence Against Women Act is approved, the feds will raise the cap for the next few years and give out U visas from past years that were never awarded.

epearson@nydailynews.com

Graphic

Julie Dinnerstein (l. to r.), from Sanctuary for Families' Immigration Intervention Project, Lynn Boudreau, assistant center director at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Vermont Service Center, Scott Whelan of the Office of Policy and Strategy at the USCIS and Andrea Quarantillo, district director of the Queens USCIS Center, host a press conference in Long Island City to discuss assistance for victims of human trafficking, violent crimes and domestic violence. Many options go unused by fearful immigrants. Photo by Jeanne Noonan

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: IMMIGRATION (92%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (90%); NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (90%); DEPORTATION (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (89%); CHILD TRAFFICKING (89%); SEXUAL ASSAULT (89%); SEX OFFENSES (89%); APPROVALS (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); SEX TRAFFICKING (78%); COMMUNITY ACTIVISM (78%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (78%); LABOR TRAFFICKING (78%); CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS (78%); HUMAN TRAFFICKING (78%); ALIEN SMUGGLING (78%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (73%); LEGISLATION (73%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (72%); DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (71%); CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (70%); PENDING LEGISLATION (68%); LEGAL AID (68%); TEACHING & TEACHERS (68%); PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (67%); MISOGYNY (67%); NATIONAL SECURITY (66%); GRAND JURY (63%); PETITIONS (60%)

Organization: US CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION SERVICES (91%)

Industry: LEGAL AID (68%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (90%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (79%)

Wall of fear for vics. Visas unclaimed in deport paranoia

Load-Date: March 28, 2012

End of Document