

-It-s shocking and disappointing-: Council leader slams anti-refugee protesters

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Wirral Globe

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WirralGlobe

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Byline: Rebecca McGrath

Body

WIRRAL'S council leader has condemned protesters who gathered outside a hotel during a planned anti-refugee protest.

Around 60 people travelled to the Grove House Hotel in Wallasey at around 7pm on Friday evening (March 10) after a poster circulating social media advertised a -make our streets safe again- protest.

The poster displayed slogans stating: -refugees welcome illegal immigrants aren-t-, -enough is enough- and -close the borders to stop the boats and protect our women and children-.

Eye witness said that around 40 counter protesters challenged the group although there were no reports of trouble.

Last month saw asylum seekers living in the Suites Hotel in Knowsley targeted by violent protesters resulting in 15 arrests, officers injured and a police van set ablaze.

READ: Police van torched during disturbance near hotel in Knowsley

Council leader Janette Williamson described the demonstration as -shocking and disappointing-.

She told the Globe: -It was shocking and disappointing to see that people travelled to Wirral and chose to spend their Friday night outside this hotel. We are a welcoming, inclusive place and I know many individuals and groups within our communities have been working to help refugees across Wirral.

-It's worth noting too that there was a number of counter-protestors, and I-d like to thank our officers and the police for their work to ensure it was a peaceful evening.

-And, of course, none of this has been helped by cynical conservative government rhetoric, whipping up resentments while repeatedly missing its own targets to process applications. Suella Braverman has again proved that she could not be less suited to any government role, let alone home secretary.-

In December last year, the Globe reported that plans had been submitted to turn the once popular hotel into a hostel for a temporary period of 36 months.

-It-s shocking and disappointing-: Council leader slams anti-refugee protesters

READ: Plans submitted to turn popular Wallasey hotel into hostel

Police officers could be seen lining the street on Grove Road as protesters and counter-protesters could be seen outside the hotel. A spokesperson from Merseyside Police told the Globe that no arrests were made and that the protest -passed without incident-.

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'Ravage & Son': When New York gave Jewish immigrants poverty, violence

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Body

Di goldene medina. That vision of a "golden country," where one could reach down and pick up gold nuggets from the streets – or at least where Jews would be given the opportunity to earn enough money to support their families and to worship God as their ancestors had for millennia – inspired millions of Eastern European Jews mired in poverty and repression.

So how was that paradise working for Eastern European Jews living in the great New York City ghetto during the two decades after the turn of the 20th century?

Not so well, writes Jerome Charyn, author of the novel *Ravage & Son*.

Jews lived horrible lives in early 1900s New York

Almost every official that the Jews dealt with was tainted, Charyn says.

In the courts, "judges, clerks, politicians' runners, bail bondsmen, cops, doormen, attendants, shoeshine boys, and candy peddlers – flailed the hides of those poor souls who were arraigned while they fattened their own pocketbooks."

New York City. (credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Rotten policemen would arrest some poor soul on trumped-up charges and tell his relatives to sell their possessions and bring \$500 to an official or the poor guy would find himself in prison.

Violence and crime were everywhere, and the poverty was deep-seated and unending. Poverty, of course, causes social problems – like teenage prostitution and adultery.

"Adultery was a common enough theme in the Ghetto," writes the author, "where wives, husbands, and boarders were packed into tenements, rushed half naked in and out of some toilet in a darkened hall."

In the face of this dystopian nightmare, very few Jews chose to return to their former homes in the Austrian, Russian, or German empires – a testament to the horrors of Jewish life in those places.

'Ravage & Son': When New York gave Jewish immigrants poverty, violence

To help New York City's downtrodden Jews is a real-life hero, Abe Cahan, who scourged the crooked officials in his Forward newspaper and gave advice to poor Jews in his column, A Bintel Brief (A Bundle of Letters).

In that column, "Cahan himself would offer his advice, not like some potentate on the tenth floor, but as a friend, a secular rabbi, like Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, transported from the eighteenth century and the Vilna ghetto to the Ghetto of East Broadway."

Cahan had rescued a boy from a Jewish orphanage and sent him to Harvard. When that boy, Ben Ravage, the illegitimate son of a sadistic, uber-wealthy Jew, graduates, he returns to the ghetto to work for the Kehilla.

That organization, composed of wealthy German Jews, earlier arrivals to America, tries to keep order in the ghetto – partly from good intentions to help their fellow Jews, but also to prevent the besmirching of American Jewry by the newly arrived, somewhat uncouth Russian Jews.

But Ravage's wealthy and powerful benefactors were not enough to prevent his destruction.

The sudden twists and turns in Ravage & Son's ever-changing plot are sometimes hard to follow. But the storytelling is off-the-chart wonderful, and the gritty images of Jewish life in New York and the historical and fictional characters who live there – Lionel and Ben Ravage, Jacob Schiff, Babette Bristol, Abraham Cahan, Manya Rabinowitz – continue to bounce around in my head.

Yes, I loved the book. But if the author was trying to communicate something to his readers – besides depicting the poverty and violence that comprised the life of most Eastern European Jewish immigrants living in New York in the early 20th century and, in so doing, debunking the "goldene medina" myth – in my case, he failed.

The writer's memoir, Figs and Alligators: An American Immigrant's Life in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s (Chickadee Prince Books), is available online and at bookstores.

Ravage & Son By Jerome Charyn Bellevue Literary Press 287 pages; \$17.99

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A visa program created to help law enforcement puts immigrant victims at risk instead

A visa program created to help law enforcement puts immigrant victims at risk instead

NPR Weekend Edition Saturday SHOW: Weekend Edition Saturday

August 12, 2023 Saturday

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Anchor: Tirzah Christopher

Guests: Luis Melean, Leslye Orloff, Rodrigo Betancourt, Biviana Espitia, Nathan Chung, Leticia Quevedo

Body

SCOTT SIMON: There's a type of visa in the U.S. called the U visa for immigrants who are victims of crime in this country. It is meant to encourage the reporting of such crimes to police. But the program is plagued by delays, and that leaves applicants in limbo, as NPR's Tirzah Christopher reports.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: Luis Melean fled his home country of Venezuela in 2016.

LUIS MELEAN: We had people, like, break into our house. My brother-in-law was kidnapped once. I was mugged three times in a period of 30 days, with guns. So it was really, really scary.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: He got to the U.S. and applied for asylum. Three years later, he and a friend got mugged again, this time in Tennessee.

LUIS MELEAN: Two guys with guns approached us and were like, you know, give me the cash. But as they walked away, they said, you are lucky we're not going to kill you tonight.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: His misfortune came with what he thought was a stroke of luck. He was now eligible for something called a U visa. The only immigrants who can get a U visa are those who have been victims of certain crimes in the U.S., like felony assaults, abduction, domestic violence, torture and trafficking. One of the program's goals was to encourage more reporting of crime.

LESLEY ORLOFF: The U visa program was to basically be a tool that would help law enforcement and prosecutors and other government agencies, like courts, build better relationships with immigrant communities.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: Leslye Orloff was a lead drafter of the U visa program when it was created in 2000 and is now director of the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project. She says this visa is a two-way street.

LESLEY ORLOFF: Victims come forward and they're able to cooperate, and the police and prosecutors are able to solve crimes.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: Victims only receive the visa if they agree to work with American law enforcement to help catch their perpetrator. For Luis, this was an opportunity. He had been waiting for years for asylum, but this was a new pathway to citizenship.

A visa program created to help law enforcement puts immigrant victims at risk instead

LUIS MELEAN: You know, I had hopes that the U visa was a faster pathway to getting documents and be able to, like, I guess, have some sort of security. But, you know, it's taken over five years.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: Luis is one of more than 300,000 people waiting for their U visa applications to be reviewed. NPR looked into the U visa program and found that a backlog that could last up to 10 years puts most applicants in a tense holding pattern. They have to stay in the United States to get the visa but are unable to work legally. NPR spoke to 17 U visa applicants, each of whom have been waiting for 2 to 7 years. Here are Rodrigo Betancourt (ph), Biviana Espitia (ph), and Nathan Chung (ph).

RODRIGO BETANCOURT: So five years, I don't see my daughter. I don't have work permit. And every day is worse for me.

BIVIANA ESPITIA: Yeah, I kind of felt like I was stuck.

NATHAN CHUNG: I didn't know that the wait time would be so long.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: Leticia Quevedo (ph) is a paralegal who works for a California nonprofit organization.

LETICIA QUEVEDO: I have clients who are forced to collect cans, bottles so that they can make ends meet.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: She works regularly with U visa applicants.

LETICIA QUEVEDO: It seems like the backlog has been increasing.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: An internal report from the Department of Homeland Security in 2022 said that the U visa program was susceptible to fraud and was not managed effectively. Multiple lawyers said that even though the U visa was established to protect these victims, the backlog makes them vulnerable to revictimization. Here's Orloff again.

LESLYE ORLOFF: When people are working undocumented, they're more at risk for sexual assault, sexual harassment, physical abuse, wage theft, all of those kinds of things that are debilitating and dangerous and abusive.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: For Luis, he says this meant working in a warehouse with no days off, doing 13-hour shifts and getting paid \$9 an hour. But he had to work.

LUIS MELEAN: Because you don't have documents, they force you to work. Like, if you want a day off, they are like, no. You can take it off, but don't come back.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: He did eventually get a work permit through his asylum application, but most U visa applicants don't have that alternative.

LUIS MELEAN: Not being able to work makes life stressful, you know? Everyone has bills to pay. And so every aspect of your life, it's up in the air.

TIRZAH CHRISTOPHER: A U visa administrator from the Department of Homeland Security told me that they are committed to eliminating barriers and restoring faith in the system, but he did not specify how for the applicants still in limbo.

Tirzah Christopher, NPR News.

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A visa program created to help law enforcement puts immigrant victims at risk instead

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AMERICAN ANARCHY The Epic Struggle Between Immigrant Radicals and the U.S. Government at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

AMERICAN ANARCHY; The Epic Struggle Between Immigrant Radicals and the U.S. Government at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

Kirkus Reviews (Print)

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Body

Vigorous history of the anarchist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In this well-written narrative, history professor Willrich, author of *Pox: An American History*, focuses on the agitators who immigrated to the U.S. and quickly became involved in the Gilded Age struggle for workers' rights-some peacefully, some with bombs, some using both nonviolent and violent strategies.

The author also investigates the invention of the modern surveillance state, tracing it to "the nation's extraordinarily brutal and explicitly racist colonial war in the Philippines," a horror show of mock trials and summary executions that, applied to the anarchist movement in the U.S., put soldiers on the streets to monitor and suppress American citizens. As Willrich writes, many lawmakers and law enforcement agents thrived in the era of Palmer raids and the post-Haymarket crackdown on suspected labor activists. The NYPD bomb squad, for instance, collaborated with the Justice Department to prosecute Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman and to have them deported to Russia after New York's U.S. attorney characterized them as "exceedingly dangerous to the peace and security of the United States." Against a broad range of oppressors stood the anarchists themselves, who organized workers in places such as the West Virginia coal fields and Chicago steel mills, as well as numerous sympathizers-and, more, devotees of civil liberties, including a lawyer named Louis Post, who wrote in an editorial, "Public indignation at the reckless violence of a few foreigners overshadows all other thought and affords an excellent screen behind which freedom of assembly, of speech, of the press, is being strangled." As Willrich capably shows, the efforts of Post and like-minded lawyers and government officials helped slow the wave of deportations, established truly legal procedures for proving the anarchists' supposed crimes, and "breathed new life into the Bill of Rights." A memorable portrait of an era of official lawlessness in the name of law and order, one with echoes to this day.

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