

[On the] Chinese Community Immigration Fraud Case

Vance urges [victim] to report [crimes]



New York County Prosecutor Vance (Cyrus R. Vance Jr.) announced on April 3 that, 39-year old Queens woman Jennifer Lam, suspected in the immigration fraud case, has pled guilty. He reminds the public to be on their guard against “immigration fraud,” and to come forward to report [crimes] (Photo/Tiancheng Cheng/Epoch)

【Reported by Epoch, April 4, 2012】 (Reported from New York by Epoch Reporter Tiancheng Cheng) New York County Prosecutor Cyrus R. Vance Jr. announced from the Manhattan District Attorney’s office on April 3 that, 39-year old Queens woman Jennifer Lam, suspected in the immigration fraud case, has pled guilty, admitting to the two charges of third degree grand larceny and practicing law without a license, and is expected to be sentenced on June 13, 2012. Jennifer Lam previously claimed to be able to help immigrants to apply for green cards, and had defrauded more than fourteen thousand dollars from a green card applicant of Chinese nationality. The Manhattan District Attorney’s Office is also using this case to remind immigrants to be on their guard against “immigration fraud,” and to come forward to report cases of fraud.

“Defendant Jennifer Lam defrauded a Chinese person who needed an attorney’s assistance. This Chinese immigrant went to seek help, hoping to understand information relating to immigration and the legal system, but was defrauded out of his money.” Prosecutor Vance said, “This case is typical of the immigration services fraud that our department has encountered, in which unethical

persons masquerade as attorneys or immigration service providers. I and the immigration affairs office under my department have always endeavored to protect the people in our community, but [these] cases still happen from time to time. I urge the immigrant community to be more prudent in being on their guard against such fraud. At the same time, no matter what your status is, you can always report similar criminal cases through our immigrant affairs hotline 212-335-3600.”

This case was headed by the director of the Immigration Affairs Program Office, ADA Rosemary Yu, supervised by Special Prosecutions Bureau Chief Thomas Wornom, while Detective Keith Christensen and INS Fraud Detection and National Security Immigration Officer Terry Shaw assisted in the investigation.

Rosemary Yu said that. Based on the defendant’s confession and the court documents, around August 2010, Lam claimed to be a registered and licensed attorney to an immigrant of Chinese nationality, and claimed to be able to apply for a green card and to obtain permanent residency for the victim in the case. During this time, Lam demanded that the victim give her more than \$14,000 dollars in money orders as attorney’s fees and relevant application fees, demanded that the victim leave the money orders blank, and that Lam then filled her own name in. Lam did not offer any legal services for the victim after charging these fees.

Rosemary Yu also described numerous immigration fraud cases from recent years. Because many immigrants do not understand the relevant law, and are eager to successfully complete their immigration procedures, they are often cheated by perpetrators of fraud. These perpetrators tend to be quite similar on many points, such as only accepting cash, claiming to be able to undertake procedures through special channels, refusing to provide written service contracts, refusing to provide original documents and forms submitted to INS or the government, claiming to be attorneys while not displaying attorneys’ licenses, threatening to expose the client’s illegal status to the authorities, etc.

With regard to victims of similar fraud being fearful of reporting their cases for fear of exposing their immigration status, Rosemary Yu stated that, the prosecutor’s office and the immigration affairs office will not disclose the relevant legal status of the people involved, and that sometimes their personnel will ask inquirers for detailed information, but it would only be to better assist them. [She] asks that the people come forward to report [these cases] without fear.

Executive Director of the Asian-American Bar Association of New York (AABANY) Yang Chen, Esq., Association Immigration and Nationality Law Committee Chairwoman Tsui Yee, [Immigrant] Affairs Program Coordinator Jacob Pang and others also attended the news conference. Mr. Chen stated that, based on recommendations from Ms. Tsui and Mr. Pang, to increase the people’s awareness of the tactics employed in immigration fraud and to prevent the occurrence of immigration fraud, AABANY and the Manhattan prosecutor’s office will jointly hold the “Preventing Immigration Service Fraud” forum on April 22 (Sunday, 12 noon to 3 PM) at St. Patrick’s Youth Center (268 Mulberry Street). Chinese interpreters will be present, and [they] look forward to the public’s attendance.