

**FACT SHEET: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF  
NEW YORK'S IMMIGRATION FRAUD PROSECUTIONS**  
**(SELECTED CASES 2006-2008)**

U.S. v. Beverly Mozer-Browne, et al.: On June 7, 2006, thirty defendants were charged in a massive immigration fraud scheme in which sham marriages were used to fraudulently obtain immigration documents. The scheme netted the defendants over one million dollars in illegal proceeds. Of the thirty charged defendants, twenty-eight have pleaded guilty, one was found guilty at trial, and one defendant, Wendy Harrison, is a fugitive. *[Press release issued: June 7, 2006]*

- Former Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) District Adjudication Officer Philip Browne and his sister, Beverly Mozer-Browne, pleaded guilty on September 7, 2007 to fraudulently procuring green cards in exchange for fees ranging from \$8,000 to \$16,000 per customer. Mozer-Browne owned and operated a Queens business, which purported to offer customers assistance in a variety of financial and legal matters, but, in fact, was used to arrange sham marriages between foreign nationals and U.S. citizens. Philip Browne used his position at CIS to approve the green card applications filed based on the fraudulent marriages. Philip Browne was sentenced to two and a half years in prison, three years of supervised release, and to forfeit \$500,000 in illicit proceeds. *[Press releases issued: June 7, 2006; September 7, 2007; and December 19, 2007]*
- On August 13, 2007, co-defendant Peter Absolam was found guilty at trial of conspiracy to commit visa fraud for his referring potential clients to Mozer-Browne's business. *[Press releases issued: June 7, 2006 and August 13, 2007]*
- On July 26, 2007, Cameron Lloyd, a Bronx minister, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit visa fraud in connection with the sham marriage scheme. Specifically, Lloyd performed the various sham marriage ceremonies upon which the fraudulent immigration applications were based. *[Press releases issued: June 7, 2006 and August 13, 2007]*

U.S. v. Vyacheslav Manokhin, Vladimir Derevianko, and Kamiljan Tursunov: United Nations employee Vyacheslav Manokhin, Vladimir Derevianko, and Kamiljan Tursunov were charged in a wide-ranging immigration fraud scheme involving documents, some of which were prepared on United Nations letterhead, that requested U.S. Entry Visas so that aliens could attend conferences in the United States that either did not exist or that the aliens did not attend. The cases against Manokhin, Derevianko, and Tursunov remain pending. *[Press release issued: August 6, 2007]*

U.S. v. Vladimir Bararushkin, et al.: On July 31, 2007, five individuals were arrested for arranging sham marriages between foreign nationals and United States citizens so that the foreign nationals could apply for permanent resident status in the United States. The foreign nationals were required to pay approximately \$15,000 for a fraudulent marriage. In at least one instance, it was explained to a United States citizen that the citizen would receive \$5,000 for entering into a marriage for immigration purposes and then divorcing after nine months. In another instance, Bararushkin offered to create fraudulent documents that falsely claimed that the foreign national was abused by her spouse so that she could obtain permanent resident status following the dissolution of the marriage. In an effort to make the marriages appear legitimate, the participants in the marriages were instructed to open joint bank accounts, obtain utility bills in both of their names, and take photographs together. This case remains pending. *[Press release issued: July 31, 2007]*

U.S. v. Maria Maximo: On March 16, 2007, Maria Maximo, a Bronx woman who operated an immigration-document preparation service out of a store-front nonprofit organization, pleaded guilty to charges stemming from two immigration fraud schemes from which Maximo received well in excess of \$1 million. In one scheme, Maximo informed illegal immigrants that she could obtain work permits for a fee of \$500 when, in fact, illegal immigrants cannot obtain work permits (only individuals who are in the country lawfully or are applying for lawful immigration status are entitled to them). Maximo prepared and submitted approximately 500 work permit applications on behalf of illegal immigrants who did not qualify for them. In the second scheme, Maximo claimed that -- for a fee, which over time grew from \$500 to \$2,500 -- she would prepare a "legalization" application which would result in the applicants receiving green cards. Despite knowing that the immigrants did not meet the application requirements, Maximo promised green cards for any illegal person in the United States, and prepared and submitted approximately 1,800 applications for ineligible aliens. On October 26, 2007, she was sentenced to serve 17 and a half years in prison. Maximo also was ordered to forfeit \$2 million in proceeds from the scheme, and to make full restitution to her victims. *[Press releases issued: April 4, 2006; March 16, 2007; and October 26, 2007]*

U.S. v. Jimmie Ortega, et al.: On October 26, 2006, former Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) Supervisory District Adjudication Officer Jimmie Ortega, then CIS Supervisory District Adjudication Officer Oscar Fabregas, and nine others were charged with participating in a scheme to grant United States citizenship to dozens of ineligible foreign nationals in exchange for bribes ranging from \$1,500 to \$4000. Ortega, Fabregas, and others used their positions at CIS to approve citizenship applications without the applicants meeting necessary requirements, including requirements that they (a) appear at CIS's office in New York, New York, for an interview with a CIS adjudications officer; (b) demonstrate proficiency in the English language during such an interview; and (c) pass the required civics and United States history examination during such an interview. On July 20, 2007, Ortega pleaded guilty to taking tens of thousands of dollars in bribes in exchange for granting United States citizenship to ineligible aliens. Ortega was sentenced on January 10, 2008 to 3 and a half years in prison, and was ordered to forfeit

\$50,000. Seven of Ortega's ten co-defendants pleaded guilty to a charge of unlawfully procuring naturalization, and Fabregas pleaded guilty to one count of making a false statement relating to naturalization. The cases against the two remaining co-defendants are pending.. *[Press releases issued: October 26, 2006; July 20, 2007; and January 10, 2008]*

U.S. v. Loretta Wilhite: On September 14, 2006, former Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) Supervisory District Adjudications Officer Loretta Wilhite pleaded guilty to making false statements in connection with a scheme to grant permanent resident status to a foreign national whose green card application had been previously denied by CIS in Kentucky. On March 15, 2007, Wilhite was sentenced to serve 6 months' home confinement, 3 years probation, and ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine. *[Press releases issued: November 14, 2005; September 14, 2006; and March 15, 2007]*

U.S. v. James and Remila Christo: On September 7, 2007, attorney James Christo and his wife, Remila, were indicted on charges that they had conspired to commit perjury and immigration fraud and make false statements as part of an immigration fraud scheme in which the defendants coached clients of James Christo's law firm on how to present fraudulent stories of persecution in support of applications for political asylum. The case against James and Remila Christo is pending. *[Press release issued: September 7, 2007]*

U.S. v. Raghbir Gupta: On December 21, 2006, attorney Raghbir Gupta was arrested on charges stemming from a scheme in which he charged foreign nationals fees between \$1,500 and \$3,000 for the preparation of fraudulent immigration applications on amnesty claims, which he claimed would result in valid work permits. Gupta prepared claims to be submitted to the Citizenship and Immigrations Services LULAC Program, a limited immigration amnesty and legalization program, and instructed the foreign nationals, who were ineligible under the program requirements, to provide false information in the applications. The case against Gupta is pending. *[Press release issued: December 21, 2006]*

U.S. v. Jennifer Rowe: On September 25, 2007, Jennifer Rowe was arrested for her alleged involvement in a conspiracy to commit visa fraud. Rowe is alleged to have charged between \$1,000 and \$5,000 in exchange for the promise of permanent residency and eventual citizenship under the Citizenship and Immigrations Services LULAC Program, a program for which the immigrants were not eligible. *[Press release issued: September 25, 2007]*