



CYRUS R. VANCE, JR.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DISTRICT ATTORNEY – NEW YORK COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY VANCE ANNOUNCES INDICTMENT OF PHONY
CHINATOWN IMMIGRATION LAWYER**

Defendant Used the Alias “Peter” and Promised to Obtain Green Cards for Clients

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., announced today the indictment of TE-HU TSUEI, a/k/a “Peter,” for stealing over \$6,000 from immigrants by falsely claiming to be an attorney or an experienced paralegal who worked for an immigration attorney. TSUEI, 54, has been indicted on charges of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, Unauthorized Practice of Law, and violations of various subsections of the Immigration Assistance Services Law.¹ The crimes charged in the indictment occurred between November 2007 and May 2009.

The District Attorney’s Office launched an investigation into the defendant’s criminal activity after several victims reported TSUEI to members of the District Attorney’s Office’s Immigrant Affairs Program (IAP) at a June 2009 Safety Seminar in Chinatown. The event was organized by New York County District Attorney’s Office’s Community Affairs Unit.

“We are pleased that the community’s support, stemming from a Safety Seminar conducted by the District Attorney’s Office, led directly to today’s indictment,” said District Attorney Vance.

According to statements in the court record, TSUEI defrauded two Chinese immigrants by introducing himself to one victim as a licensed attorney, and to a second victim as an experienced paralegal who worked for a well-known immigration attorney. The victims did not know each other. After consulting with the victims regarding their immigration status and background, TSUEI repeatedly assured them that they qualified for a U-Visa and would soon receive their green cards, or permanent residency cards. The U-Visa program is a valuable tool for prosecutors, in that it grants a humanitarian visa to immigrants who cooperate with law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of certain qualifying

¹The charges contained in the criminal complaint are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

criminal offenses. The U-Visa provides temporary legal status, which can lead to a green card.

According to documents filed in court, TSUEI demanded multiple payments of cash from the two victims in exchange for his services, which exceeded \$6,000. For several reasons, neither of the victims qualified for a U-Visa. By May 2009, the victims discovered that TSUEI's office at 230 Grand Street in Manhattan was closed. Both of the victims had made multiple unsuccessful attempts to visit the defendant at work, and neither of the victims was able to reach him by telephone.

TSUEI is neither a licensed attorney in New York State nor is he authorized by the federal Board of Immigration Appeals to provide legal services to immigrants. Without meeting the requirements of the New York City Immigration Assistance Services law, TSUEI provided legal counsel and rendered legal assistance from his office suite in Chinatown, but failed to post a sign stating he was not an attorney.

The investigation into TSUEI is ongoing. The District Attorney's Office is aware of other victims, and District Attorney Vance is asking those to come forward by calling the Immigrant Affairs Program at 212-335-3600.

In conjunction with the pending criminal charges, Assistant District Attorney Suzanne Herbert, under the supervision of Tara Christie Miner, Chief of the Asset Forfeiture Unit of the District Attorney's Office, has commenced a civil action for forfeiture against TSUEI to seize the proceeds of defendant's one-and-half-yearlong fraudulent scheme.

District Attorney Vance thanked Assistant District Attorney Melissa Pennington of the District Attorney's Immigrant Affairs Program, who is prosecuting this case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Daysi Mejia, Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigrant Affairs Program, and Assistant District Attorney Thomas Wornom, Chief of the Special Prosecutions Bureau. Investigator David Lee and Supervising Investigator Santiago Batista of the District Attorney's Investigation Bureau assisted in the investigation, along with Jacob Pang, a Program Coordinator for the District Attorney's Office's Immigrant Affairs Program.

District Attorney Vance also thanked the Office of Fraud Detection & National Security within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, New York District, and the Fraud and Abuse Prevention Program's Executive Office for Immigration Review for their assistance.

Defendant Information:

TE-HU TSUEI, a/k/a "Peter," D.O.B. 3/6/1956
Jamaica, NY

Charges:

- Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, 1 count, a class D felony
- Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, 1 count, a class E felony
- Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, 1 count, class E felony

- Practicing or Appearing as Attorney-at-Law with Being Admitted and Registered, commonly known as “Unauthorized Practice of Law,” 3 counts, class A misdemeanor
- Immigration Assistance Services Law violations of New York City Administrative Code sections 20-771, 20-772, and 20-773; 6 counts, class A misdemeanor

A class D felony is punishable by up to 7 years in prison, a class E felony is punishable by up to 4 years in prison, and a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to 1 year in jail.

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