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Chinese Woman Pleads Guilty in Birth Tourism Scheme

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Anchor babies, children born in the United States to foreign parents yet still considered citizens, are bad enough when the parents have slipped across the border from Mexico.



But when the parents are flying from China to give birth, and when the parents are Chinese officials, that just might suggest that birthright citizenship isn't such a bright idea.

The latest proof: The guilty plea from a Chinese woman who ran a "birth tourism" business used by rich Chinese and government officials to plant their children as American citizens.

19 Defendants

On Tuesday, the [Justice Department announced](#) that Dongyuan Li, 41, who lives in Irvine, California, admitted to running a birth-tourism outfit that "catered to wealthy pregnant clients and Chinese government officials, charging them tens of thousands of dollars to help them give birth in the United States so their children would get U.S. citizenship."

Li, a Chinese citizen, pleaded guilty to one conspiracy count of immigration fraud and one count of visa fraud.

Li ran the business from 2013 through March of 2015, when authorities arrested her. The business, You Win USA Vacation Services Corp., operated in Irvine and China, and "would assist pregnant foreign nationals — typically from China — to travel to and remain in the United States to give birth so their children would receive birthright U.S. citizenship, according to the plea agreement."

You Win "advertised that it had served more than 500 Chinese birth tourism customers seeking U.S. birthright citizenship for their children," [Li confessed](#). "Li used 20 apartments in Irvine, charged each customer between \$40,000 and \$80,000, and she received \$3 million in international wire transfers from China in two years."

You Win's customers, of course, helped perpetrate the fraud. Though "coached by the company," the customers "made false statements on their visa applications and to U.S. immigration officials."

Li also confessed, the [prosecutors reported](#), that You Win coached its customers on passing the interview at the U.S. Consulate in China, "including by falsely stating that they were going to stay in the United States for only two weeks, when in reality, they planned to stay for up to three months to give birth."

As well, Li admitted that customers skirted U.S. immigration controls with a clever ruse. They booked flights from China to Hawaii and then from Hawaii to Los Angeles because passing through customs in Hawaii is easier. You Win even coached the customers about "how to trick U.S. Customs at ports of entry by concealing their pregnancies, according to the plea agreement."



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Li admitted that she paid more than \$60,000 in October and November 2013 to rent apartments to house the birth tourists, [prosecutors said](#).

Not surprisingly, Li got rich quick. She surrendered \$850,000, a \$500,000 home in Murrieta, and “several Mercedes-Benz vehicles.”

Li faces a maximum of 15-years in federal prison when she is sentenced on December 16.

Big Arrest

[When prosecutors announced](#) Li’s indictment in January, they included others that show just how big a business birth tourism has become.

An outfit called Star Baby Care in Los Angeles, prosecutors said, “is believed to have been the largest birth tourism scheme in the U.S. On its websites, Star Baby Care boasted that it was founded in 1999 as the ‘number one designated maternity service to the pregnant mother from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan,’ and had ‘provided services to 8,000 pregnant women (4,000 from China) since we established.’”

That scheme used 30 apartments and 40 total properties and served “many customers alleged to be Chinese officials, including some associated with Chinese Central Television, China Telecom, Bank of China, and two local taxation bureaus.”

A [third indictment detailed](#) the activities of USA Happy Baby Inc., which charged customers \$100,000 for a birth-tourism package. “Using apartments in Rancho Cucamonga and Irvine, USA Happy Baby allegedly also served Chinese officials,” prosecutors said, “including people associated with the Henan People’s Radio Station in Zhengzhou, the Public Security Bureau in the Beijing Municipal Government, and the Harbin Medical University in Heilongjiang Province.”

Prosecutors charged the business and its operators with filing false tax returns and failing to report \$1.9 million in income.

Those immigration fraudsters “used 14 different bank accounts to receive more than \$3.4 million in international wire transfers from China during 2013 and 2014 alone,” [prosecutors alleged](#).

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