



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on November 14, 2021

## Black Americans Sue Farms After Being Replaced by Foreign Visa Workers

Black agricultural workers who spent decades working the land on big Mississippi farms are suing their former employers after recently being displaced by foreign workers on the H-2A visa program.

The black Americans filed their [lawsuit](#) in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi and accuse Pitts Farms of firing them merely for the sake of replacing them with visa workers from South Africa.

The black workers [told](#) the *New York Times* that they spent most of their lives at Pitts Farms. One of the plaintiffs, 50-year-old Richard Strong, said he has worked on farms for more than 25 years. His fathers and grandfather did the same before him, as did his enslaved ancestors.



Martin Barraud/iStock/Getty Images Plus

According to Strong, he first began to see farms along the Mississippi Delta import foreign visa workers about 10 years ago. The imported laborers have reportedly been almost entirely from South Africa. Strong initially helped train them.

“He taught the men how to properly plow, how to input GPS settings into the tractors’ navigation systems, how to operate the irrigation system so just the right amount of water was sprinkled on the crops,” the *Times* article says.

Now, over 100 farms along the Mississippi Delta employ foreign visa workers from South Africa instead of Americans.

“Sunflower County, where [Pitts Farms] is located, is predominantly black; as of 2019, blacks made up an estimated 73 percent of the county’s population,” the lawsuit notes, going on to state:

For many years, [Pitts Farms] employed a majority Black workforce. As of 2014, however, this number has steadily dwindled, as [Pitts Farms] began applying for and hiring white South Africans for the same work. And since 2014, PFP has used the H-2A program to hire only white South Africans — no black South Africans — although that country too is majority black by a wide margin: estimates stand at around 80% Black compared to less than 8% white.

By 2020, Strong said Pitt Farms fired him and the other American workers, including his brother, Gregory, who had also spent most of his life as a worker at the farm.

“I never did imagine that it would come to the point where they would be hiring foreigners, instead of



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people like me,” Strong told the *Times*. “It’s like being robbed of your heritage.”

“I gave them half my life and ended up with nothing,” Gregory said.

The lawsuit asserts that whereas Strong and his American coworkers were paid the minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour and \$8.25 an hour on weekends, the foreign workers received nearly \$12 an hour.

The Biden White House has expanded the H-2A visa program. Just last week, Biden’s Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that American farms will be allowed to import foreign visa workers from six new countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mauritius, and Saint Lucia.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas defended the H-2A visa program as a way for U.S. farms to import more foreign visa workers when Americans “are not available” to do the work, an argument seemingly contradicted by Strong’s claims that Americans are being fired to make way for the foreign visa workers.

Under the H-2A visa program, the agricultural equivalent of the H-2B visa program for non-agricultural foreign workers, U.S. farms can annually outsource an unlimited number of American jobs to foreign workers who can extend their stay for up to three years. The program also allows the foreign workers to bring their families over with them.

Breitbart News [notes](#) that “[i]n 1997, a little more than 16,000 foreign visa workers were imported to take American jobs on U.S. farms. By 2020, that number has ballooned to a record 213,400 foreign visa workers — an increase in the H-2A visa program of more than 1,200 percent in less than 25 years.”

There is precedent for the federal government taking the opposite approach to the Biden White House. Under the Trump administration, the Department of Justice probed a construction company in South Dakota that had used the H-2B visa program to import foreign visa workers in order to avoid hiring available and qualified American construction workers at higher wages.

That same year, the DOJ fined a Houston, Texas, bus company for importing foreign visa workers through the H-2B visa program rather than hiring qualified Americans who applied for those jobs.



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