



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on May 16, 2019

96 Indicted in Marriage Visa Scam, Student Visa Fraudster Sentenced

The half-million-strong horde of illegal aliens [who have crossed](#) the border since October are the worst, but not the only, problem for federal immigration gumshoes.

Another is visa fraud. This week, Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced the arrest of nearly 100 marriage fraudsters, a scam by which foreigners become legal residents with a fake marriage. As well, a student-visa fraudster in Pennsylvania skated with a very light probationary sentence for the scam he set up.



Upshot of the story? Illegally entering the country needn't entail a [risky trip across](#) the desert with smugglers or rafting across the raging currents of the Rio Grande. A fake marriage or fake college acceptance will do nicely,

Just Say I Do

ICE's Homeland Security Investigation division in Houston has arrested 50 of 96 people who are charged in connection with a major marriage scam based in Houston, the [agency announced](#).

A federal grand jury indicted the eight dozen on April 30, but the indictment is still sealed because of the 46 still at large, [ICE reported](#).

"These arrests mark the culmination of a comprehensive yearlong multi-agency investigation into one of the largest alleged marriage fraud conspiracies ever documented in the Houston area," said Special Agent in Charge Mark Dawson, HSI Houston.

The schemers, prosecutors allege, created sham marriages "to illegally obtain admission and immigrant status for aliens in the United States."

The mastermind of the operation, the [indictment alleges](#), is Ashley Yen Nguyen, aka Ashley Duyen, 53, who "headed the Southwest Houston-based organization and had associates operating throughout Texas and the Republic of Vietnam."

The indictment says the marriages "were shams because the spouses did not live together and did not intend to do so, contrary to the official documents and statements they submitted to [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services]," ICE reported. "The spouses only met briefly, usually immediately before they obtained their marriage license, or not at all."

The scheme also involved hefty payments to the "beneficiary" spouses, [ICE reported](#), who "entered into an agreement with Duyen in which they paid about \$50,000 to \$70,000 to obtain full U.S. permanent resident status." Prosecutors allege the agreements were "prorated" so that Duyen would pay even more as the immigration status of the fake spouse improved from admission into the country, to



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conditional U.S. permanent resident status, and then, finally, to full U.S. permanent resident status.

The “beneficiary spouses,” of course, needed U.S. citizens to go along. Thus, Duyen and other fraudsters recruited citizens who acted as petitioners in the fake marriages and received some of the money the immigrant spouses paid. “Several individuals who were recruited as petitioners soon afterwards became recruiters themselves,” [ICE reported](#), while others, prosecutors allege, “were in charge of receiving the proceeds from the beneficiary spouses and disbursing the payments to the petitioners.”

Other individuals charged in the scam were guides for the citizen petitioners, prosecutors allege, who went to Vietnam to meet the individuals to whom they were supposedly engaged.

Such was the scam’s magnitude that Duyen’s scammers faked wedding albums that the immigrants “spouses” and their citizen petitioners could use to show they had more than a quickie courthouse marriage. As well, [ICE reported](#), “the criminal organization provided false tax, utility and employment information to help ensure USCIS would approve the false immigration forms.”

The criminal charges, ICE reported, including “47 counts of marriage fraud, 50 counts of mail fraud; 51 counts of immigration fraud; 51 counts of false statements under oath in a matter relating to registry of aliens; and one count each of conspiracy to engage in marriage fraud, conspiracy to commit mail fraud, conspiracy to commit immigration fraud, conspiracy to make false statements under oath in a matter relating to registry of aliens, unlawful procurement of naturalization, obstructing and impeding the due administration of justice, and tampering with a witness, victim or informant.”

Quaker State Visa Fraud

The case in Pennsylvania involved an official at Mercyhurst University, Daniel Cabanillas.

A federal judge sentenced him to two years’ probation and ordered him to pay a \$1,000 fine for visa fraud and making false statements, [ICE reported](#).

Cabanillas, the official who handled foreign students, lied on immigration forms to certify acceptance at the school, which then enabled the foreigners to get student visas and enter the United States.

Cabanillas, [ICE reported](#), faked documents for dozens of students.



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