

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, August 24, 2017

Woodbury Woman Sentenced To Prison In Labor Trafficking Case

Judge also ordered the defendant to forfeit her house and pay more than \$123,000 in restitution

Acting United States Attorney Gregory G. Brooker today announced the sentencing of LILI HUANG, 36, for withholding documents as well as enslaving, starving and beating the victim in a forced labor case. HUANG, who pleaded guilty on May 31, 2017, was sentenced today before U.S. District Senior Judge David S. Doty in Minneapolis, Minn.

“With today’s sentencing, Lili Huang must accept the consequences of committing such an egregious crime – not only financial repayment, but also the loss of liberty and property,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Gregory Brooker. “I am grateful for the dedicated work of the ACTeam and our local law enforcement partners for their collaborative efforts in bringing this case to a successful resolution.”

“Homeland Security Investigations is committed to investigating and prosecuting all forms of human trafficking, including forced labor,” said Special Agent in Charge Alex Khu of HSI St. Paul. “Lili Huang’s prison sentence, and the forfeiture of her home and other assets, can never fully restore all that she took from her victim, but it shows that her actions will not be tolerated in our community. HSI is proud of the work accomplished in this case with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Washington County Attorney’s Office and the Woodbury, MN Police Department.”

“In February 2016, the Woodbury Public Safety Department received training on investigating human trafficking cases and identifying trafficking victims. As a result of this critical training, the responding officers quickly recognized that this individual was a victim of human trafficking and were able to access the appropriate help and resources for the victim,” said Woodbury Police Commander Steve Wills. “The Woodbury Police Department and Washington County Attorney’s Office remain committed to putting resources into combatting all forms of human trafficking.”

According to the defendant’s guilty plea and documents filed in both state and federal court, on February 25, 2016, HUANG brought the victim (identified as F.L.) from Shanghai, China to her home in Woodbury, Minn. to work as a nanny and housekeeper. Although F.L. had previously worked for

the defendant in China where she cooked, cleaned and cared for the defendant's children, the scope of work and the defendant's treatment of F.L. was significantly different once she arrived in Minnesota. HUANG forced F.L. to work up to 18 hours a day cooking, cleaning, and providing childcare. HUANG was very demanding about household tasks and became emotionally and physically abusive toward F.L. if she did not do exactly what was asked.

According to the defendant's guilty plea and documents filed in both state and federal court, on April 23, 2016, due to the repeated physical abuse, F.L. asked HUANG to buy her an airplane ticket so she could return home to China. Instead of buying her a ticket, HUANG took F.L.'s passport and told F.L. that she was not leaving. HUANG continued to physically abuse F.L. by kicking, punching, grabbing F.L. by her hair, and subjecting her to other abuse. F.L. was able to document the physical abuse by using her cell phone to take photographs of the bruises and other injuries. F.L. also hid clumps of her hair under her mattress, which had been grabbed and torn out by the defendant.

On July 13, 2016, F.L. fled the house after HUANG approached her with a large kitchen knife. Just after midnight on July 14, 2016, F.L. was found wandering the streets several miles from the defendant's home walking in the direction of the airport. F.L., who was visibly shaken and crying, was taken to United Hospital for medical treatment. The victim sustained several bruises and injuries to her face, including two black eyes, significant weight loss, and fractures to her sternum and ribs.

HUANG was also pleaded guilty in Washington County to one felony count of third-degree assault and was sentenced on August 11, 2017.

The District of Minnesota is one of six districts designated through a competitive, nationwide selection process as a Phase II Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team (ACTeam), through the interagency ACTeam Initiative of the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security and Labor. ACTeams focus on developing high-impact human trafficking investigations and prosecutions involving forced labor, international sex trafficking and sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion through interagency collaboration among federal prosecutors and federal investigative agencies.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by Homeland Security Investigations, Woodbury Police Department, U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, U.S. Department of Labor, and the Washington County Attorney's Office.

Assistant United States Attorneys Laura M. Provinzino and Manda M. Sertich prosecuted this case.

Defendant Information:

LILI HUANG, 36

Woodbury, Minn.

Convicted:

- Unlawful conduct with respect to documents in furtherance of forced labor, 1 count

Sentenced:

- 12 months and 1 day in prison
- Forfeiture of the defendant's house
- \$95,944.80 in restitution paid to the victim
- \$27,344.73 in restitution paid for third-party victim services
- Removal from the United States to China following the defendant's prison sentence

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