

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of New York

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, September 26, 2018

**Former Owner of Long Island Catering Hall Pleads Guilty to  
Forced Labor**

**Defendant Threatened Filipino Nationals Working at the Thatched Cottage  
with Deportation**

Earlier today, in federal court in Central Islip, Ralph Colamussi pled guilty before United States District Judge Denis R. Hurley to forced labor of employees at the Thatched Cottage, a catering and wedding venue in Centerport, New York. When sentenced, Colamussi faces up to 20 years in prison, as well as restitution and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), New York; Michael Mikulka, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, New York; and Thomas M. Cioppa, District Director, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), announced the guilty plea.

Colamussi formerly owned and operated the Thatched Cottage. At the plea proceeding, Colamussi admitted that workers were brought from the Philippines to the United States on H-2B visas that expired shortly after their arrival here. Once their H-2B visas expired, Colamussi coached workers how to apply for student visas by fraudulently representing that they intended to attend school full-time and had sufficient resources to support themselves during school. Colamussi admitted that at times, he deposited funds into the workers' bank accounts to give the appearance of ample resources and then withdrew the funds once the student visas were approved. Colamussi further admitted that when workers objected to performing certain jobs, working consecutive shifts or not being paid promptly, he threatened to report them to immigration authorities.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Long Island Criminal Division. Assistant United States Attorneys Charles P. Kelly and Madeline O'Connor are in charge of the prosecution.

**The Defendant:**

RALPH COLAMUSSI

Age: 64

Huntington, New York,

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 17-0592 (DRH)