

Surge at U.S. border pushes some evangelicals to help asylum seekers

PHOENIX/TAOS, N.M. (Reuters) - Members of an Arizona evangelical church are for the first time taking Central American asylum seekers into their homes, responding to record arrivals of migrant families at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The predominantly white Central Christian Church, a Phoenix area "megachurch" had in the past assisted Muslim refugees. Church leaders wanted to help another group that lacked support and were portrayed as a threat in areas of the media and politics - asylum seekers.

Central Christian is among a group of around 10 churches, most of them Hispanic, taking in up to 500 migrants a week from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in greater Phoenix.

The migrants, mostly families, have been released into the United States to pursue their immigration cases in court. That flow could dwindle if the Trump administration is successful in its plans to make non-Mexican asylum seekers wait in Mexico while their claims are processed

"It's the first time we have been engaged with asylum seekers," said Matt Nutter, director of global outreach at Central Christian. "It's an issue of humanity, we look at this beyond the politics of it."

'THEY'RE NOT CRIMINALS'

President Donald Trump has said many migrants who left their countries for economic reasons are applying for asylum in the United States even though they may not have legitimate claims for protection from persecution.

Central Christian members Stephanie and Peter Apostol said they put aside politics and labels put on asylum seekers to host six families in the last two months. They ranged from a Mexican mother and infant to a Guatemalan father and teenage son, with families staying up to three nights.



The Apostols have received criticism and praise on social media for giving shelter to asylees. They said their faith compelled them to show compassion for this "vulnerable" group.

"These are just very wonderful people, they're not criminals," said Stephanie Apostol, 48, who has given away the family's luggage to help asylum seekers travel on to relatives and other sponsors after staying at their home in Chandler, a Phoenix suburb.

Her 9-year-old son gives up his bedroom if they host two families at once. A Mexican-American neighbor translates for the Apostols, who only speak a few words in Spanish.

"It's very easy to put yourself in their shoes when you're with them in your home," said Apostol, a market research analyst. "What would we do if we were facing hunger and violence and the safety of

our kids?"

NEVER SEEN THIS BEFORE'Illegal crossings at the southern border have dropped dramatically since the late 1970s, but in recent years applications for asylum have ballooned and more Central American families and unaccompanied children are heading to the United States. Facing high numbers of migrant families, and to avoid holding them beyond legal time limits on how long children can be detained, ICE began releasing large groups to Arizona charities and churches in October, ICE spokeswoman Yasmeen O'Keefe said.

With Hispanic churches running out of beds, coordinator Magdalena Schwartz reached out to dozens of churches in the Phoenix area. Two Anglo-American churches stepped up, one of them Central Christian.

"They have opened their churches and homes, I've never seen this before," Schwartz, pastor of evangelical church Nueva Esperanza in Mesa, said of the Anglo congregations.

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French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner meets policemen patrolling around department stores during the Christmas and New Year holiday season in Paris



French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner meets French soldiers patrolling around department stores during the Christmas and New Year holiday season in Paris



Protesters wearing yellow vests, the symbol of a French drivers' protest against higher diesel fuel prices, count ballots as they elect a representative to liaise with other blockade points in Aubevoye



A child walks past New Year illumination in Yevpatoria, Crimea December 20, 2018. REUTERS/Pavel Rebrov



A forester chop firs for sale in a forest before Christmas and New Year celebrations in a forest near the village of Atalez



FILE PHOTO: A scale model of an AGV high speed train with the logo of Alstom is seen before a news conference to present the company's full year 2016/17 annual results in Saint-Ouen

HONG KONG — Raymond Chow, a Hong Kong film producer who thrust Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan into global stardom while helping to transform the action movie genre, died on Friday in Hong Kong. He was 91.

His death was confirmed in a statement by Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive. The statement did not list a cause of death.

A former journalist, Mr. Chow entered the film industry as a publicist in 1958, when he joined Shaw Brothers, a studio that had a pioneering role in kung fu movies and other popular low-budget films. But he quickly grew frustrated with the quality of the studio's output. "It was hard to publicize a film that I do not believe in," he said in a 2011 interview. "There are only so many lies I can tell. I can't really exaggerate. Nobody will believe us."

So the studio founder, Run Run Shaw, invited him to contribute his ideas on scripts, and he soon became a producer. Mr. Chow longed for more freedom over his work, and in 1970 he left to co-found his own studio, Golden Harvest.



Raymond Chow in 2005. He joined the film industry as a publicist in 1958 and soon became a producer. CreditCreditVincent Yu/Associated Press

punches on Hong Kong television, and learned that Shaw Brothers had been unable to sign him to a film contract. Golden Harvest offered him \$15,000 for two films, along with a share of the profits and greater say in the production. Mr. Lee agreed, and Mr. Chow quickly flew his new actor to Thailand, where, in rough rural conditions, he filmed "The Big Boss" in 1971. Mr. Lee's intense aura and florid fight scenes helped the film become the most successful one shown in Hong Kong to that point, breaking the box-office total set by "The Sound of Music." That success was followed by hits including "Fist of Fury" and "The Way of the Dragon."

"In our early action films, we used ac-

tors who knew little about fighting," Mr. Chow told The New York Times in 1973. "We had to use various camera tricks. But the audience can tell the difference. It knows a real fighter when it sees one. That's why Bruce Lee has been such a hit."



Bruce Lee, right, and John Saxon

with Mr. Chow, center, on the set of "Enter the Dragon. (Photo/Stanley Bielecki Movie Collection/Getty Images)

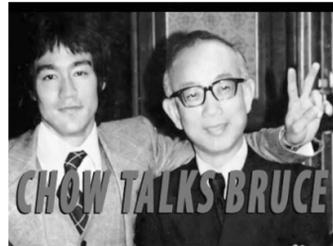
After Mr. Lee's death in 1973, Jackie Chan became a breakout star for Golden Harvest. He first imitated Mr. Lee, then modified his style to develop a more irreverent, comedic style of kung fu film. Mr. Chao also discovered Angela Mao, who is called the first female kung fu star, and produced her first major film, "Hapkido," or "Lady Kung Fu," in 1972.

"I have to thank God and Raymond Chow," she told The Times in 2016.

Mr. Chow pursued films in Hollywood in the 1980s, and Golden Harvest produced several American box-office hits,

including "The Cannonball Run," with an ensemble cast that included Burt Reynolds. Mr. Chow found small roles for Mr. Chan and the Hong Kong comedian Michael Hui in the movie, hoping to develop the market for Chinese actors in the United States.

While his works were often critically panned, Mr. Chow had an eye for box-office success. In the 1990s, Golden Harvest produced the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" series, based on earlier comic books and cartoons. The first film took in more than \$200 million.



Mr. Chow was born in Hong Kong on Oct. 8, 1927. He attended St. John's University in Shanghai before returning to Hong Kong in 1949, when Mao Zedong and the Communist Party took over China. He worked as a journalist for outlets including The Hong Kong Standard and Voice of America.

The names of his survivors were not immediately available.

His production company had a long run of success, but it stumbled after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, just as mainland China's film industry began to grow. He sold his stake in the company in 2007 to the mainland businessman Wu Kebo, who merged it with his own entertainment group to create Orange Sky Golden Harvest Entertainment.

In a 2013 interview with The South China Morning Post, Mr. Chow described a liberated, collaborative style as the underpinning of his work.

"My philosophy is to entertain people, to make people happy," he said. "Film-making also suits my way of thinking: I love freedom, and don't like being placed under restrictions." (Courtesy nytimes.com)

Bruce Lee in "The Big Boss," a 1971 film produced by Mr. Chow. The film was an enormous success, and Mr. Chow said the audience "knows a real fighter when it sees one." (Photo/Fortune Star Media Limited)

Golden Harvest's initial films did poorly against Shaw Brothers, which dominated the local market. But Mr. Chow then outbid his former employer to sign Bruce Lee, a young actor and martial arts expert who had appeared in the sidekick role of Kato on the American television series "The Green Hornet." Mr. Chow had seen Mr. Lee break boards in displays of powerful kicks and

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USA's 'First Biometric Terminal' In Operation At Atlanta Airport

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Photo above shows new biometric scanning technology at Terminal F in Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. (Photo/Delta Air Lines).

Imagine looking at a screen for two seconds and then check in for your flight? Then you glance at a screen for another two seconds to drop off your bags at a luggage station? How easy would it be to merely look at another screen to breeze through ID checks at TSA security checkpoints or the departure gate? All this, without having to use your passport.

Now all this is reality. Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport and Delta Air Lines have opened the nation's first curb-to-gate biometric terminal, which promises to improve aviation security while moving travelers faster through screening.

"Atlanta airport -- the busiest airport in the world, our largest hub -- is the first airport in the US to roll this out," Delta Chief Operating Officer Gil West told CNN at the terminal's opening on November 29. "It saves nine minutes on the ground for the boarding process which is time that our customers won't be spending in lines waiting to board the aircraft."

The biometric ID technology being used here is facial recognition. It's a camera-based system that compares scans of travelers' faces to a database of verified ID photos curated by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Passengers use a facial recognition screen to verify their identities before boarding a Delta Air Lines flight from Atlanta to Mexico City on Thursday.



Delta's competitors -- including JetBlue, American Airlines and Southwest Airlines -- have started pilot facial recognition programs at a handful of US airports for international boarding. But so far, Delta says Atlanta is the only airport to also offer biometrics for check-in, luggage and TSA ID checks.

CBP says America's air travel industry is on a path toward widespread adoption of facial recognition verification at all US airports with international flights and eventually, say industry leaders, domestic flights too.

It's the "next leap in airport security," says Matt Cornelius, vice president of Airports Council International, North America. Although Cornelius is confident in the technology and it "continues to evolve very rapidly," he says it "still has a lot of development to go."

It's more secure
Using the system is totally optional. Passengers who don't feel comfortable using it can opt to go through traditional ID verification using their passports. Privacy groups say they're worried facial recognition databases are subject to limited accountability and vulnerable to government abuse or lack of oversight.

Experts and authorities believe biometric ID technology will make airports and air travel safer in an era when aviation is targeted by criminals and terrorists. "Facial recognition is much better from a security perspective than a paper, barcode scan," said John Selden, Atlanta airport's new general manager who spent four years as deputy general manager at New York's JFK International Airport. "This technology is leading the way in improving security."

Your face can be your passport
In a nutshell, here's how it works: If you're unfamiliar, facial recognition technology uses a complex algorithm that recognizes each person's unique facial characteristics -- including shapes of eyes, noses, mouths, proportional relationships and other factors.



Delta Air Lines offers customers in Atlanta the option of using facial recognition technology to check in for international flights.

-- Passengers enter their passport numbers into their frequent flier airline profiles.

-- Check in to your flight at one of several kiosks in the international terminal by pressing a touch-screen tab labeled "LOOK: Facial Recognition" and looking into the screen. The image is compared to the image on file in the CBP database.

-- Drop your luggage at the nearby airline baggage drop station by looking into a camera.

-- At the TSA screening area, look into a scanner screen and show your boarding pass. No need to pull out your passport or driver's license.

A typical stop at a TSA ID check station can take 11-20 seconds. With this -- in less than three seconds -- boom, you're cleared to continue on through the TSA passenger and carry-on baggage screening lanes.

Next year at Atlanta's international terminal, TSA plans to use facial recognition so participating travelers won't have to show a boarding pass either.

It has a 98% success rate

Finally, at your departure gate, instead of having to pull out your passport before you board your international flight, just briefly stare into a screen set up at the jetway entrance. In 2 seconds, you're cleared and bouncing down the jetway to your seat. An airline gate agent is staffing the screen to take care of any technical hiccups.

Yep, once in a while, the screen doesn't recognize a face.



In fact, about 1% or 2% of the time, face scans aren't able to verify passengers, said John Wagner, CBP deputy assistant commissioner. He blames that on bad scan images -- poor lighting

conditions, for example. "If you do get rejected, all you do is present your passport and your boarding pass."

TSA facial recognition screens are now available for biometric ID verification at Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

Wagner says the technology will be continually improved with a goal of 100% effectiveness.

When it does work, the CBP's facial recognition database can help authorities nab travelers who use false passports. Recently three airline passengers at Washington's Dulles International Airport were caught over a period of 40 days, according to CBP.

Privacy questions

When authorities have your facial image in a database, you're giving up control over how the government can use it, said Jeramie Scott at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based organization aimed at protecting privacy. The CBP says facial images of US citizens scanned at airports are deleted from their database shortly after confirmation. Facial images of non-citizens who arrive in the US are stored for 75 years, the CBP website says, and departure photos of non-citizens are deleted after 14 days.



Biometric facial recognition cameras have been installed at Delta Air Lines' baggage drop station at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Delta's West said the airline never has control of the CBP database -- "only the ability to access it to verify identity."

Privacy advocates are calling on lawmakers to create legal safeguards to prevent the abuse of these kinds of databases.

As for passengers, Keary King of Dothan,

Alabama, said he was willing to try the CBP system. "We have no privacy concerns," he said, waiting with his family to board Delta Flight 365 to Mexico City. "Maybe it makes the boarding a little quicker," King said. "That would be good, not only for me but for all the passengers." Most of the flight's 124 passengers who originated in Atlanta used the facial scanner and boarded the Boeing 737-700 on time in about 10 minutes. Only a few had to show their passports because the system rejected their scanned images.

It's expanding to other airports

Outside the US, airports such as Singapore's Changi, Amsterdam's Schiphol and Aruba International Airport reportedly already offer biometric check-in and boarding capability at some gates and terminals.



Airports in Japan reportedly are rolling out facial recognition boarding facilities at several airports this year. China's Hongqiao International Airport is also using facial recognition for security screening, according to The Independent, and is in the process of expanding to a full curb-to-gate facial recognition system. London's Heathrow plans to start testing an end-to-end facial recognition program next year.

Meanwhile, Delta is expanding its biometric program. "We'll look to scale this at all our hubs internationally, and aspirationally, throughout our entire operations," West said, implying the addition of US domestic travelers. Delta plans to kickoff a facial recognition option for customers flying internationally out of Detroit in mid-December.

Passengers should always have the ability to opt out of any facial recognition system, Cornelius said.

Full implementation is "a number of years away," Cornelius said. Wagner said the CBP hopes to have facial recognition boarding at all US airports serving international flights within 3 or 4 years.

Right now, airports' main concern is getting these systems up to speed, Cornelius said.

If all goes as planned, airports believe facial recognition can reduce those annoying bottlenecks at security lines and make air travel safer for all of us. (Courtesy cnn.com)

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