

Travel ban fight personal for Hawai'i's 'scholarly gentleman'

By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher

The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Growing up in Washington state, Douglas Chin says he was the stereotypical “smart Chinese kid that got straight As.” His parents taught him not to stick out too much and used to say “don’t poke the lion.”

So when Chin, now the Hawai'i attorney general, was deciding on whether to challenge the Trump administration's latest travel ban, he understood those who said it wasn't the state's fight.

But the Stanford University-educated lawyer stepped into the spotlight, making Hawai'i the first state to challenge President Trump's revised travel ban — and convince a federal judge to temporarily block it before it took effect.

His motivation was personal, he said. Chin said he felt as if he was invisible during his time in an overwhelmingly white suburban Seattle high school, and wanted to fight for an invisible minority in Hawai'i: Muslims.

“It really hits home with me,” he said. “It worries me about this society and what's happening.”

Before his appointment as attorney general, Chin, 50, was Honolulu's managing director (who would serve as acting mayor when the mayor was out of town) and a prosecutor. People who know and worked with him say he is nice, smart, and a fast walker.

Some, however, criticized him for challenging the travel ban.

“Let's allow the big states with more resources to fight this issue,” Republican state representative Gene Ward said in a statement. “My sense is that the people of Hawai'i would rather see potholes fixed rather than trying to lead the nation against an executive order.”

Those who have worked with Chin say the reason he is fighting the ban is simple: He's kind.

Jean Ireton was a fellow Honolulu prosecutor with Chin, who started out in traffic court. He had “some of the toughest, most god-awful trials that we had there,”



she said.

Those kinds of cases showed her the worst in humanity, she said, but Chin didn't see them that way: “He's just a kinder person than I am. I don't have as much faith in people as he does.”

Ireton and Chin have differing views on the travel ban. “I do have a problem with the amount of vetting they're able to do in those countries,” she said. “Doug sees it from a people perspective. He sees it from people who are suffering.”

U.S. district judge Derrick Watson blocked the federal government from enforcing its ban on travel from six mostly Muslim countries and its suspension of the nation's refugee program.

The judge agreed with Hawai'i that the travel ban amounts to discrimination based on nationality and religion.

Trump called the ruling an example of “unprecedented judicial overreach” and called his new travel ban a watered-down version of the first one. He said the order was a necessary measure to prevent terrorists from entering the country.

For Chin, the issue of immigration is a

personal one. He is named after the Christian missionary doctor who sponsored his Chinese parents' immigration to Washington state, where Chin was born.

His middle name Shih-Ging means “scholarly gentleman, which is weird,” Chin said.

“I think that's where you probably can catch a spark of a personal sense of duty about this whole travel ban,” he said, describing his parents emigrating in 1957 at a time when U.S. immigration policy still imposed nation-based quotas.

Chin eventually moved to Honolulu in 1989 as part of a job transfer with IBM and was exposed to Hawai'i's diversity. “All of a sudden I wasn't in this place where I felt invisible anymore, so that was really empowering,” he said.

Chin's career after IBM took him to the University of Hawai'i law school and then various stints in the Honolulu prosecutor's office and private practice.

On a bookshelf in Chin's office is a newspaper front page from a murder conviction he won in 2010. A 15-year-old boy who was tried as an adult and

PERSONAL SENSE OF DUTY. Hawai'i attorney general Douglas Chin sits in his office in Honolulu. Hawai'i was the first state to file a lawsuit challenging President Donald Trump's revised travel ban. For Chin, the son of Chinese immigrants, fighting the travel ban is personal. (AP Photo/Jennifer Sinco Kelleher)

convicted of murdering his 51-year-old neighbor is one of Chin's most memorable cases.

Near the shelf are portraits of Chin's children and wife, who is white and from New York. He describes his daughter, 18, and son, 16, as *hapa*, a term locals in Hawai'i use for mixed-race people.

Former Honolulu prosecutor and former mayor Peter Carlisle recalled first meeting him at Chin's church while Carlisle was campaigning. Carlisle said he was so impressed with Chin's public speaking, he told him to look him up if he ever needed a job.

Chin attends Oahu Church of Christ, a nondenominational Christian church that meets in rented spaces at the university or an elementary school. At church, Chin arranges music and sings a capella — he has perfect pitch, he notes sheepishly.

He found the time to go to Sunday services the week of the Honolulu hearing. After the hearing, Chin stopped at his office and then to Waikiki where he was hosting a meeting of the Conference of Western Attorneys General because he's the group's chairman.

Chin has also spent a lot of time giving interviews to news organizations nationwide about his lawsuit. Part of the reason he does that is to educate — even those who live in Hawai'i.

“It's a no-brainer why we have to object to this. I totally know how there's another segment of the population that, to them, it just doesn't connect,” he said. “What does the Middle East have to do with Hawai'i?”

The answer, he said, is Hawai'i's some 5,000 Muslims are the invisible minority and Chin knows first hand what that feels like.

“People in Hawai'i don't know how to process a Muslim other than what they see on TV,” he said.

Trump Winery in Virginia seeks more foreign workers

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — As President Donald Trump touts job creation for Americans as a top priority, his son's Virginia winery is seeking permission to hire foreign workers to cultivate its grapes.

Trump Vineyard Estates, better known as Trump Winery, asked to bring in 29 workers this season through the federal H-2A visa program, *The Daily Progress* reported. The program enables agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of domestic workers to bring foreign workers to the U.S. to do agricultural jobs or perform other temporary or seasonal

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intentions, inspiring words, then sudden, silent withdrawal from all that. Seventy-five years of this.

The Asian Reporter's Expanding American Lexicon

Ibu (Bahasa Indonesia): Madam or mother. Does not have to be, in mainstream American sense, your mom. Please let me clarify another important issue that often comes up when traditional folk use this respectful form of address: With all my respect for evolving feminism, in all its rich and life-enhancing, ethno-cultural varieties — as used here, “Mother” means a woman who generously birthed us, who gently and sternly nurtured us. Mother is (as in “Ibu Luar” Mother Ocean or “Ibu Bumi” Mother Earth or Soil) to whom we owe our existence, and for whose approval we do our very best in this short, precious life. Like Ibu Kathleen.

services.

Trump Vineyard Estates, owned by Eric Trump, initially applied for six foreign workers in December. Two months later, the company applied for 23 more. Both job orders for Trump Vineyard Estates say the primary tasks include planting and cultivating vines, adding grow tubes, and pruning grape vines.

H-2A workers and U.S. workers in corresponding employment must be paid a certain rate — \$10.72 an hour for vineyard farm workers in Virginia this year. Employers say they've been unable to find American citizens to fill the jobs. At least three other local vineyards also applied to hire foreign workers.

“It's difficult to find people,” said Libby Whitley, an attorney who has worked with employers, including Trump Winery, on labor issues.

But news reports that followed the winery's December requests for the visas prompted criticism over the request. Trump campaigned on promises to create new jobs for American workers and used harsh rhetoric to talk about immigrants, including his promise to build a border wall to keep out people from Mexico and Central America who make up much of the migrant workforce in the U.S.

Whitley said she assumed her company would be flooded with people applying for the jobs because of the media coverage of the winery's initial request.

“Guess how many applicants we had? ... 13,” she said. “And they were all from

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