

Has Stone Pro cheated immigrant workers of hundreds of thousands of dollars in wages?

Stone Pro owner Gerald Manning seems to think that immigrants are ruining America based on a review of Facebook content.¹ But that apparently hasn't stopped him from making a living off their labor or from stealing some of their hard-earned wages based on LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota's investigation.

Despite his clearly anti-immigrant views, Gerald Manning's company is among a small handful of contractors that have relied heavily on immigrant workers recruited through the Federal H-2B visa program. The H-2B program allows employers to bring in workers on temporary visas for seasonal work when U.S. workers cannot be found. The program has been described as rife with abuse and as a form of indentured servitude by the Southern Poverty Law Center, because immigrant workers are shackled to a single employer and have little recourse when they are cheated or abused, and because enforcement of program rules is lax.²

For example, in 2019, Stone Pro obtained permission to employ [20 H-2B Visa Workers](#) in the Twin Cities and [10 more](#) in Eau Claire and Western Wisconsin. In 2020 and 2021, Stone Pro was allowed to employ additional workers despite a COVID-induced spike in local unemployment rates. The H-2B program requires employers to pay minimum wage rates based on the location and type of work performed in order to protect immigrant workers from exploitation and prevent the program from displacing local workers or eroding area wage standards.

Stone Pro is a concrete and masonry contractor and it is apparent from observations and worker testimony that the company's H-2B employees are primarily engaged in the placement of concrete, for which the minimum rate of pay under the program should have been \$25.95 per hour in the Twin Cities in 2019.³ But Stone Pro evidently took advantage of lax enforcement of program rules by misclassifying its H-2B workers who are performing the work of Construction Laborers as Carpenter Helpers, who were only required to be paid \$18.04 per hour, allowing the

¹ See examples from a Facebook page identified as belonging to a Gerald Manning of Eau Claire, Wisconsin and listed as the owner of Stone Pro Masonry, including, among others, a video titled "[Father's Story About His Son Is A Perfect Example of Why We Need A Wall](#)"; a purported photo of a sign in Dearborn Michigan that reads "[Advancement Of Islamic Agenda For America: Allah Be Praised. American We Will Kill You All And Nothing You Can Do To Stop It. Allah Be Praised.](#)"; and a statement that reads "[If you cross the U.S. border illegally you get a job, a drivers license, food stamps, a place to live, health care housing & child benefits, education, & a tax-free business for 7 yrs ...No wonder we are a country in debt. Re-post if you agree!!!!](#)"

² Close to Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States. Southern Poverty Law Center. Feb. 19, 2013. <https://www.splcenter.org/20130218/close-slavery-guestworker-programs-united-states>

³ Construction workers that place concrete are classified as Laborers under Federal and state prevailing wage laws, and have been consistently designated as Construction Laborers by other area concrete contractors that employ H-2B workers. The applicable rates can be found in U.S. Foreign Wage Certification Data Center Online Wage Library "Mean Wage (H-2B)" listing for the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington Metropolitan Statistical Area: <https://fledatacenter.com/OesQuickResults.aspx?code=47-2061&area=33460&year=19&source=1>

company to pocket as much as \$7.91 for every straight-time hour and \$11.86 for each overtime hour worked by an H-2B visa worker.⁴

Stone Pro's H-2B Visa Certification documents indicated that the jobs would last from April 1 to December 20 and provide an average of 40 hours of straight time and 10 hours of overtime work per week. If the information provided by Stone Pro to the U.S. Department of Labor was accurate, each of the company's H-2B visa workers could have ended up being cheated out of up to \$16,500 in wages in 2019 alone.

Stone Pro's H-2B visa workers aren't the only victims of the company's evidently deceptive practices: the H-2B program requires employers to notify U.S. workers of job opportunities and hire qualified applicants before hiring guest workers. But Minnesota and Wisconsin workers clearly never got the notice because the jobs were listed under the wrong occupation at the wrong pay rates. If the company's filings are accurate, many Minnesota and Wisconsin laborers also lost the opportunities to earn as much as \$54,000 in wages each.

Stone Pro's mistreatment and exploitation of immigrant workers is not limited to those on H-2B visas. Worker testimony obtained by LIUNA alleges that the company's non-H2B immigrant workforce has also been subject to abusive treatment by supervisors cheated of wages owed, threatened with immigration enforcement for objecting to mistreatment.

A contractor who evidently wants America to "Build A Wall", complains about immigrants taking American jobs, and posts content that fans the flames of fear, hatred and Islamophobia on Facebook might think it's OK to cheat, exploit and abuse immigrant workers. But as a union that was founded by immigrant Laborers and represents hundreds right here in Minnesota, LIUNA is here to say that we won't let the abuses continue. For more information go to BuildBetterMN.org



⁴ Stone Pro's H-2B Visa Certification Form describes the job as helping carpenters "by carrying tools, wood, making simple wood cuts, nailing simple lumber pieces, positioning wood forms, cleaning up job site." That description bears little resemblance to the work of Stone Pro workers as observed and as described in worker testimony obtained by LIUNA. Instead, the primary work was described by one worker as "placing concrete," which is consistent with our observations of the company's work on the Springs at Cobblestone project in Apple Valley.