

Sister of Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner pitches investment-for-visa scheme in China

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The latest example of corruption, nepotism and bribery by the Trump administration is the revelation this week that the sister of top Trump advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner pitched a real estate scheme to wealthy investors in China in exchange for favorable consideration of visa applications.

According to reporters for the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, Nicole Meyer told investors at an event in the Beijing Ritz-Carlton Hotel on Saturday that they could qualify for an EB-5 visa if they committed at least \$500,000 to the billion-dollar One Journal Square project in Jersey City, New Jersey. The development is an upscale housing and office complex led by Kushner Companies. The meeting was hosted by Qiaowai, a Chinese immigration agency.

The EB-5 visa program was set up in 1990 to facilitate the granting of permanent residence permits to individuals who invest in projects supposedly leading to jobs for at least 10 US workers.

Meyer directly cited her family connections as an incentive for backing the project. The real estate deal "means a lot to me and my entire family," she said, according to the newspaper reporters, who were removed from the public event before it concluded. Meyer's pitch included an overview of her family relations, including with Jared Kushner.

Meyer's offer of an open door to wealthy investors in her family's business concerns comes as the Trump administration sets up even greater barriers to other forms of immigration, blocking refugees from entering the US and pledging to build a wall on the US-Mexico border. Preferential treatment is, of course, not available for the masses of Chinese workers who produce immense profits for American corporations.

The class basis of the Trump administration's savage anti-immigration policy, a component of its assault on

the working class, is underscored by the open door offered to the rich.

Richard Painter, former ethics adviser for George W. Bush, himself the scion of a wealthy, politically connected family, called the pitch "very, very close to solicitation of a bribe."

Kushner is married to Trump's daughter, Ivanka, and was until January the CEO and principal owner of Kushner Companies, a real estate conglomerate with investments throughout New York and New Jersey. Upon taking up a White House position as senior advisor, Kushner formally resigned his CEO position and transferred control to Meyer and her brother, Josh, along with Kushner's father, Charles.

The financial dealings of Meyer shed light on the incestuous and parasitic social layer from which the Trump administration emerged, a merger of Wall Street and real estate speculation, generously funded with taxpayer money.

One Journal Square is a two-building, \$900 million complex, slated for construction in 2018. It has already received two sets of tax credits from the state of New Jersey for \$93 million, though Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop indicated this weekend that the city might not approve an additional tax abatement requested by the developers.

The building would include 744 high-priced rental units and more than 200,000 square feet of retail and office space in the center of Jersey City, which has a poverty rate of close to 20 percent.

Meyer's husband is Joseph Meyer, the CEO of Observer Media, which was headed by Jared Kushner until he stepped down as publisher in January. Meyer also has a background in hedge funds, having worked for Elliott Management and MSD Capital.

Jared Kushner and his wife Ivanka have a combined

net worth of close to \$750 million, most of which derives from Kushner Companies, whose project Nicole Meyer was pushing. The company controls some 20,000 homes and apartments, mainly in New York City and New Jersey, along with 14 million square feet of office space. It was founded by Kushner's father, Charles, who was convicted in 2005 on 18 counts of tax evasion, illegal campaign contributions (to Democrats) and witness tampering, spending two years in prison.

In addition to serving as principals in Kushner Companies, Meyer and her brother Josh have also taken over formal control of all of Ivanka Trump's business operations, after Ivanka took a position in the White House in January.

Then, of course, there are the massive business interests of Donald Trump himself. In January, Trump said he would remove himself from day-to-day operations of the Trump Organization, though he remains its owner. Active management of the conglomerate, which has annual revenues of close to \$10 billion, has been turned over to Trump's two oldest sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump.

These business interests have now been shifted into the White House, resulting in a government that shamelessly combines personal profit and state policy. To top it off, Congress has allocated an additional \$120 million to cover the expenses associated with guarding the Trump family during its various business trips and vacations.

The social physiognomy of the Trump administration is the political expression of broader processes—the elevation of finance and speculation to the pinnacle of the American economy, the overt and unbridled domination of money over the entire political system, the unparalleled corruption of state officials, who are often, particularly in Washington, millionaires and multimillionaires.

This is a bipartisan affair. While the Trumps use their offices to increase their wealth, the Clintons have leveraged their prior tenure in the White House into a net worth of some \$80 million. Obama, for his part, has spent his first 100 days out of office vacationing with billionaires, organizing speeches for \$400,000 per appearance, and lining up book deals—all of which is estimated to net the former president close to \$250 million.



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