

## Visa standoff: opportunity lost



Unable to return to his seasonal job in Provincetown, Donovan Fraser has suspended work on his family's home in Culloden, Jamaica.

**Cape Cod Times/Paul Blackmore**

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Every year, about 5,000 temporary foreign workers come to the Cape on H-2B visas to staff the area's hotels, restaurants and landscaping companies. Their visas allow them to work for up to nine months, then return to their home countries.

Many are repeat workers, who come back to the same jobs year after year and develop strong ties with their Cape employers. As the guest worker program has developed over the last 15 years, the hopes of Cape Codders and Jamaicans have become inextricably entwined.

The symbiotic arrangement has allowed many Cape businesses to thrive, despite a volatile seasonal economy. It has helped countless Jamaicans build homes, educate their children and launch businesses of their own.

This year, however, thousands of Jamaicans found themselves unable to return to their regular seasonal jobs in the United States, their visas entangled in the knotty Congressional debate over immigration reform.

To investigate the effect of the loss, reporter Sarah Shemkus and photographer Paul Blackmore spent 11 days traveling Jamaica, speaking with former Cape workers. They also explored the consequences for employers and the economy here.

The reporting segment of the project was funded by the International Center for Journalists and the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation.

This three-day series is an examination of what these Jamaican workers and their Cape employers have lost, what they want, and what they hope for their futures.