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The H-1B Visa Controversy: Cheap Labor, Racism And The American Divide

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I tell stories about creating environments that empower everyone.

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WASHINGTON, DC - NOVEMBER 13: Elon Musk listens as U.S. President-elect Donald Trump addresses a ... [More](#)

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Following the re-election of Donald Trump, Trump [announced](#) the creation of a new initiative, nicknamed DOGE, which stands for the Department of Government Efficiency. The purpose of DOGE is to reduce federal spending and two billionaires, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, were appointed to lead the department. Recently both Musk and Ramaswamy have drawn the ire of many

Trump supporters after posts made on X. In one [post](#), Ramaswamy wrote “our American culture has venerated mediocrity over excellence for way too long,” and went on to explain that American culture’s admiration for the jocks and prom queens over the perceived “nerds” has led to a lack of top-tier engineers and went on to praise foreign-born and first-generation talent.

Many of the major tech companies like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Apple and Meta [rely](#) on foreign-born workers to remain competitive and the amount of employees holding [H-1B visas](#), which grant skilled workers from outside the U.S. the ability to work within the U.S., has [steadily increased](#) over the last eight years. Elon Musk has repeatedly proclaimed his support of these types of visas, as someone who was able [to stay in the country](#) on an H1-B visa and whose company, Tesla, is one of the [top employers](#) of H-1B visa holders. In a series of posts, Musk [shared](#) his support of H1-B visas, much to the anger and chagrin of Trump supporters. Amidst the feud between Musk, Ramaswamy and the many in Trump’s base who are against the hiring of foreign-born workers over American workers, Trump shared that he was [in support of](#) the H-1B visa program.

The support of H-1B visas by billionaires like Musk, Ramaswamy and others should come as no surprise. On the surface, these work visas seem like a win-win, allowing highly skilled workers in specialized fields to contribute to the U.S. labor force while being granted the ability to stay in the country. What isn’t talked about enough is the exploitation that these workers often experience. The Economic Policy Institute [reported](#) that a majority of H-1B workers are paid below median wages. Not only is paying employees lower wages advantageous for employers, but workers on H-1B visas may be less likely to report workplace harm and mistreatment due to fears of how the loss of an H-1B job could [drastically impact](#) their life. It’s not outside the realm of possibilities that because of what’s at stake, many H-1B workers are more compliant and less rebellious than American employees, which would naturally make them a more enticing hire.

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WASHINGTON, DC - DECEMBER 5: Tesla CEO Elon Musk (center right), Co-Chair of the newly announced ... [More](#)

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Immigration, in addition to the economy, was a [core issue](#) for American voters; Trump's stance on immigration and his promises of [mass deportation](#) likely contributed to his win. Research from the [Pew Research Center](#) from August

2024 indicated that compared to Harris supporters, Trump supporters were more in favor of mass deportations of immigrants living in the country illegally (88%) and far fewer Trump supporters, compared to Harris supporters, were in favor of admitting immigrants from all over the world to ensure a diverse immigrant population (29%). Trump recently shared that he was [in favor of](#) automatically granting green cards to international students who graduate college and according to the aforementioned Pew Research Center study, 63% of his supporters were in favor of this as well.

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