

CHANCE TO COME HOME

A Campaign to Reunite Families and Communities
& End Unjust Deportations

The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) is calling on the Biden administration to [create a central process](#) to allow unjustly deported people a meaningful chance to come home. In partnership with 10 courageous individuals fighting to return to the United States, NIJC is renewing the call to repair the harms of the U.S. immigration system and reunite families and communities.

GROWING MOMENTUM

Since its relaunch in 2023, the [Chance to Come Home campaign](#) has gained significant momentum, attracting attention and support from [both members of Congress and civil society organizations](#). Over 60 members of Congress — including Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey and Representatives David Trone of Maryland, Adriano Espaillat of New York, and Emanuel Cleaver of Missouri — signed a [letter](#) urging the Biden administration to establish a central system for reviewing requests from unjustly deported individuals seeking to return. Read more in [The Hill](#) about the growing congressional support.

The campaign has garnered media attention, such as a [New York Times op-ed](#) featuring deported advocate Leonel Pinilla and efforts to bring home individuals deported for marijuana-related offenses. The [Washington Post](#) highlighted the journey of deported U.S. veteran Howard Bailey, who became a U.S. citizen after a decade of exile in Jamaica. These stories underscore the urgent need for a systemic solution to address the challenges faced by unjustly deported individuals.

VANESSA VAQUIZ MENDOZA

“After surgery, I was not getting any answers”

Vanessa underwent unnecessary and nonconsensual gynecological procedures while in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention, ultimately leading to her deportation to El Salvador in 2020 after two decades of residing in the United States. Prior to her detention and subsequent deportation, she lived in North Carolina, caring for her three children, one of whom has a physical disability and relied on a wheelchair for mobility.



TINA HAMDI

“No mother should have to be without her kids”

Tina had Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status and lived in the United States for 20 years before ICE deported her based on a single conviction resulting from domestic abuse she suffered. She lived in Ohio and is separated from her two young children, who live partly in the custody of her ex-partner.



CARLOS SAUCEDA

“There is a lot of pain and suffering...not just for us, but our families as well”

Carlos spent over 27 years in the United States, serving a lengthy sentence he received as a child. After rehabilitation, the California parole board paroled him. However, in 2019, ICE deported him to Honduras, where he faced potential danger for renouncing his former gang. Despite winning his immigration case on appeal, he still resides in another country, unable to return for urgently needed medical care for his U.S. citizen wife.



GOURA NDIAYE

“To be in a country for almost 20 years and build your life, and one day, it stops”

Goura lived in the United States for 20 years, including nine years after he lost his asylum case, during which he periodically checked in with ICE as required. He had no contact with the criminal legal system. In 2018, without warning, ICE deported Goura to Mauritania, separating him from his four children in Ohio. After his deportation, he was forced to flee to Senegal to escape potential anti-Black persecution and the threat of being enslaved in Mauritania.



LEONEL PINILLA

“There is nothing in life that can replace being with your family”

ICE deported Leonel to Panama in 2012 primarily for marijuana possession, which is now legal under New York State law. He lived for over 30 years in the United States with a full life in New York City. Deportation separated him from his partner, daughter, and son.



IBRAHIMA KEITA

“I miss my two boys. I miss my wife. My dream is gone.”

Ibrahima lived in the U.S. for 20 years, seeking asylum after fleeing Mali’s dictatorship. Despite losing his asylum case due to inadequate legal representation, he remained in Ohio under supervision for a decade without any contact with the criminal legal system. In 2019, ICE suddenly deported him to Mali, leaving behind his wife and two young sons, one of whom has sickle cell anemia.



ASSIA SERRANO

“I feel so helpless. There are moments where I just want to scream because I miss them”

Assia is a domestic violence survivor who served 17 years of a criminal sentence in New York for actions taken under the coercive influence of an abusive ex-partner. A judge granted her release after passage of historic sentencing reform for domestic violence survivors, but ICE deported her to Panama in 2021. Deportation separated her from her son and daughter, who live in New York — where Assia had lived since she was 15 years old.



SAMUEL ANTHONY

“I don’t want to be one of the casualties of war”

Samuel lived in the United States for 40 years. ICE deported Samuel to Sierra Leone in 2019, despite Samuel’s significant rehabilitation from his drug addiction and the harsh sentence he served for drug convictions he received as a young Black man in Washington, D.C., at the height of the U.S. government’s “War on Drugs.” Deportation separated Samuel from his sister, brother, and mother, who passed away in 2021.



PAUL PIERRILUS

“It doesn’t sit well with me to know that I don’t belong here and the way I got here”

ICE deported Paul to Haiti in 2022 after 35 years in the United States, even though Paul was not a Haitian citizen and had never visited the country. A federal judge ordered Paul’s deportation after a prolonged legal fight. He lived in Spring Valley, New York, where he worked as a financial advisor. Paul misses his parents, sister, brother, and church community.



JUAN CARLOS ROMERO ESCOBAR

“The system that immigration has is not right. There is no help. What they want is to get you out.”

ICE deported Juan Carlos in 2015 after an immigration judge failed to inform him of a law that protected him from being deported to a country where his life would be at risk as a gay man. He had lived in California and Arizona for 30 years. Deportation separated Juan Carlos from his mother and younger siblings.



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For inquiries about the Chance to Come Home campaign or to connect with advocates working to bring home the people featured in this document, contact Nayna Gupta, NIJC associate director of policy, at ngupta@heartlandalliance.org.