

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave NW,
Washington, DC 20016

June 9, 2021

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The National Immigrant Justice Center, We Are Home campaign, and the 85 undersigned organizations urge you to establish a meaningful opportunity to return home for those unjustly deported. Across the nation and world, deported families and advocates echo this call through individual campaigns and hard-fought battles to return the unjustly deported to their families and communities.

For decades the United States immigration system has deported hundreds of thousands of individuals, permanently separating them from their loved ones and destabilizing communities. In some cases, people were deported despite having strong legal grounds for remaining in the United States. In other cases, the U.S. government has repeatedly abused its considerable discretion to decide whether, and when, to order deportation.

The unjustly deported includes thousands of U.S. veterans who served their country only to find themselves exiled. It includes young men and women who should have been eligible for protection under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), but who were deported to countries they have never known while the prior administration sought to end DACA entirely.

It includes individuals who despite decades of residency and livelihood in the U.S. found themselves deported because of contact with the U.S. criminal legal system--a system that disproportionately targets and discriminates against Black and Brown people. The unjustly deported also includes those eligible to receive lawful status through available pathways to status, but who were deported before they could avail themselves of those options.

We have seen in our communities how these deportations undermine community cohesion and public safety. We have seen how deportations of parents alter the trajectory of a child's future by undermining their health and economic security. We know that deportations--by depending on outcomes reached in the racially discriminatory and flawed U.S. criminal legal system--disproportionately harm and traumatize Black and Brown immigrant communities.

Although current law includes mechanisms for deported individuals to return home, in practice, these processes and procedures rarely work in their favor. **We urge the administration to utilize its broad legal authority to return those unjustly deported, and to take first steps to**

establish a centralized process that will expedite and facilitate a larger number of returns going forward.

For decades, the U.S. government has exercised its power by enforcing U.S. civil immigration laws aggressively--initiating removal, detaining immigrants, and conducting deportation proceedings that lack even minimal procedural safeguards against the entry of erroneous or unlawful deportation orders. Now is the time to turn the resources and power of the U.S. government toward repairing these harms. Just as criminal prosecution offices around the country have recently developed Conviction Integrity Units to review unjust prosecutorial decisions within their own offices, so too must the U.S. government create an internal accountability mechanism to review unjust deportations.

The Biden administration has promised to honor family unity and reckon with the racism and xenophobia of past immigration policies. One critical step toward keeping those promises is ensuring that people who were unjustly deported have a meaningful chance to return to their homes and families in the United States.

For children growing up without their parents, single mothers and fathers struggling to cope with the loss of a life partner, and communities robbed of a beloved member, each day that passes is a day too many. Community-based organizations, grassroots campaigns, and advocates across the country have called for deported individuals to be reunited with their loved ones. Building trust between the U.S. government and communities devastated by decades of unjust deportations must begin with a meaningful chance for families and communities to be made whole again.

Sincerely,

National Immigrant Justice Center
We Are Home Campaign
ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project
ACLU of Southern California
Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.
Advocating Opportunity
Aldea - The People's Justice Center
American Immigration Council
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Boston College Civil Rights Clinic
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Church World Service
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic
Congregational UCC
Connect Kankakee
Cornell University Asylum and Convention Against Torture Appeals Clinic
Courageous Resistance of the Desert
Deported Veterans Support House
Detention Watch Network
Esperanza Immigrant Right Project
First Focus on Children
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Freedom Network USA
GA Familias Unidas
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Heights Friends of Immigrants
Human Rights Watch
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Action Alliance
Immigrant and Non-Citizen Rights Clinic, CUNY School of Law
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Justice Network
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
Immigrants' Rights Working Group of Democratic Socialists of America
Immigration Clinic, University of North Carolina School of Law
Immigration Equality
La Resistencia
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Make the Road New York
Mariposa Legal
Migrant and Immigrant Community Action Project
Mijente
Mississippi Center for Justice
National Association of Social Workers
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Litigation Alliance
National Immigration Project (NIP-NLG)
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
Neighborhood Defender Service
New York Immigration Coalition
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
NWA New Sanctuary Network
NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic

Otros Dreams en Acción, ODA
Ohio Immigrant Alliance
PASOs
Prairielands Freedom Fund
Project Lifeline
RAICES
Rapid Defense Network (RDN)
Red Unidos
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
SPLC Action Fund
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Public Defenders Coalition for Immigrant Justice
The Rhizome Center for Migrants
Tulane Immigrant Rights Clinic
UCLA Labor Center
UndocuBlack Network
Union for Reform Judaism
United We Dream
University of Maryland Chacon Center for Immigrant Justice
University of Washington School of Law Immigration Clinic
UnLocal
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Witness at the Border
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights