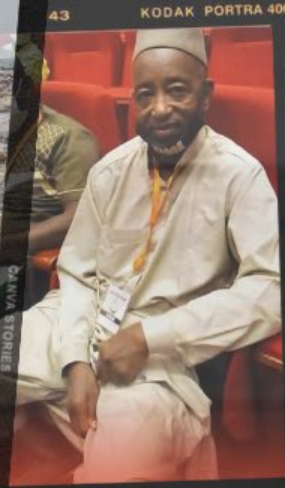


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# BROKEN HOPE

Deportation and the Road Home



Lynn Tramonte  
Suma Setty



# Broken Hope: CLASP 3rd Hour Presentation

February 28, 2024

Presenters: Lynn Tramonte, Executive Director, Ohio Immigrant Alliance and Suma Setty, senior policy analyst, immigration and immigrant families at CLASP

**CLASP**  
The Center for Law and Social Policy

**OHIO IMMIGRANT  
ALLIANCE**

Broken Hope shares the experiences of 255 people who were deported or left the country under deportation orders.

It weaves their stories with evidence on the harms of deportation and deportation trends and contextualizes their experiences in relation to the immigration system's racist origins.

# Demba Jobe's story

Demba Jobe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKF7godvTTE>



## Demba Jobe

“I’m still [in] love [with] my wife. Love my family, you know, and I wish to come back and stay with them, you know, and continue [the] life I was doing with her because she need[s] me. I need her. But the way things are working over there [in the U.S.], I think it’s not gonna [be] possible for me to return back to the country, you know, because they lie [about] everything against me, you know? And I don’t have no word[s] to say, I don’t have nothing to say because they don’t give me the chance, because everything was based on racism.”

# The Origins of #ReuniteUS

- Grassroots activism in the Morrow and Butler County Jails by immigrants detained in the facility shed light on their mistreatment and abuse.
- Black Mauritians who were previously activists in their home country banded together with others to help people of all backgrounds.
- The efforts of Saidu Sow, Bayong Brown Bayong, and Ahmed Adem, and others led to the closing of both jails.
- Still, many of those activists were deported. They got in touch with Lynn and Maryam to ask for their help and now they and others make up #ReuniteUS.
- #ReuniteUS is a campaign driven by the beloved people who have been deported, in collaboration with OHIA's Maryam Sy and Lynn Tramonte.
- The main aim of the campaign is to bring people who were deported back home.

# OHIA Organizing Model

- Support immigrant leadership and priorities; align short-term goals with values and long-term vision; use strategic communications to advance vision, values, and goals.
- Build and climb. #ReuniteUS started with people involved in individual anti-deportation campaigns. Then we moved into collective advocacy to stop deportations of entire groups (e.g. Black Mauritians, people who lived in US for decades). Then we organized to end ICE jail in Ohio.
- When some leaders were deported, we shifted to #ReuniteUS because that was their priority and they weren't being seen or heard in the national debate.

# Goura's fundraiser - on the brink of foreclosure

<https://secure.givelively.org/donate/ohio-immigrant-alliance/help-this-ohio-family-save-their-home>





## Goura Ndiaye

“It’s not easy to be in a country for almost twenty years and build your life and one day, it stops. It’s a long way to get experience in another country. To learn English. To go to school at nighttime. To learn. Go to work. Get the experience. And then one day they say stop. You don’t have it any more, you have to leave. The day [ICE] told me that — it was the end of the world for me.”

# Short, Middle, and Long Term Goals

- Short term goals = stopping individual and group deportations; legalization in various forms; closing ICE jails
- Narrative goals = migrants are people with full lives, dreams, and courage and agency; beloved community members; and make huge contributions; migration is as an intrinsic human experience and something to be embraced, not criminalized; deportation is EXTREME; racism is imbedded in current laws and policy; abolition of failed structures and a new paradigm for immigration law administration are required for an anti-racist future
- Long term goals = ending ICE jail as a concept; new paradigm for immigration administration that is about human needs, protection, and paths to “compliance” versus default criminalized treatment and extreme consequences for the basic human act of moving and attempting to build a new life.

# How did this turn into a book?

- Maryam Sy spent hundreds of hours interviewing 255 people who were either deported or left the country immediately before being deported, and their family members—most of whom are part of the WhatsApp group.
- The #ReuniteUS interviews were a chance for people at the center of this experience to talk it through with someone who understands their language and culture.
- People in #ReuniteUS opened up during these interviews and told the Ohio Immigrant Alliance, “Tell people about us. We are good people and we want to come home.”



“All of these people have something to say. Some people were deported and some people chose to leave because they were afraid of deportation. They were afraid of being taken back to horrible countries that they left in the first place. This book is about those stories. And it's about asking ourselves, what we can do to make a change. Because deportations unfortunately are still happening. And I believe that we can do something.”

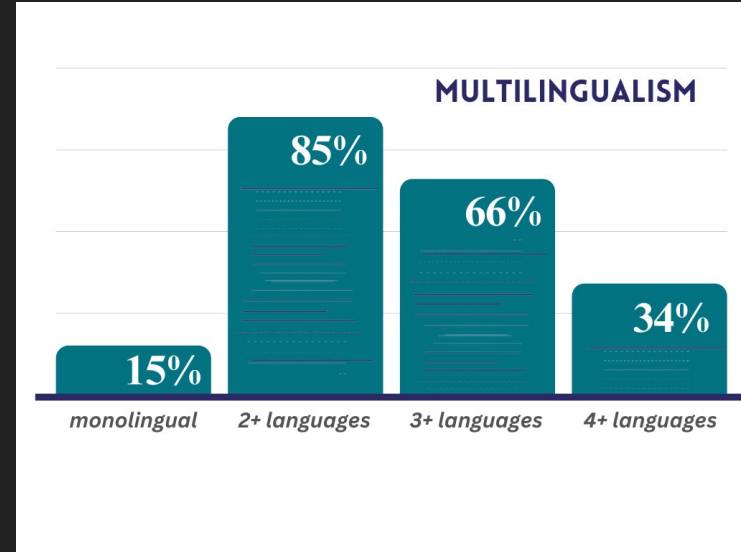
– **Maryam Sy, Organizer, Ohio Immigrant Alliance**

# The Approach

- The interviews
- Qual analysis of Excel spreadsheet with interview data
- Quant analysis of DHS deportation data
- Weaving the stories of others
- Literature review
- Immigration policy's racist origins
- Policy recommendations

# Who makes up #ReuniteUS?

- 255 people interviewed by Maryam and in the whatsapp group
- Only 4 were women
- Lived in twenty states
- Lived in the U.S. for a median of 17 years
- From 27 countries, mostly from African nations. 127 are from Mauritania.
- 7 people have been able to legally return to the US, one received asylum in France, and two have obtained legal status in Canada.
- 4 people died after being deported



# Individuals, families, and communities suffered due to the deportation of loved one

- Many want access to the social security benefits they accrued in their years of working in the US.
- People were separated from their families and communities.
  - At least 73 are parents of a child that still lives in the US
  - Have at least 66 US citizens in their immediate families, 9 spouses and 57 children
- Children of parents who were deported experienced educational setbacks, emotional harm, and developmental delays.
- All are acutely aware of the injustice of their deportations, and the devastating impact it has had on their families.

# Individuals, families, and communities suffered due to the deportation of loved one, continued

- They were appalled at the inhumane way in which they were detained and deported. They felt betrayed by the country they thought was safe and where they could live in dignity.
- Single men were separated from the only communities they had.
- Communities rallied around them to petition for their return.
- People were returned to harm and danger, adversely affecting their physical and mental well-being
  - At least 21 people were deported to countries with a Level 4 do not travel advisory including Mali, Burkina Faso, Somalia, South Sudan, and CAR.
  - 45 people were deported to countries with Level 3 advisories.
- Most people involved in #ReuniteUS want to return to the U.S.





## Saidu Sow

“The reason why I wanted y’all to have this video was to show to y’all guys ‘cause you help immigrants, maybe a decent individual could have a look at it. They probably might have a little heart about separating families because I’m a victim of that, and that thing will follow you. ‘Cause it follows me right now. Like, I’m emotional and I’m, I feel like sometimes there’s no hope, I feel like it’s over. The word is ending for me, you know?”

Saidu Sow, in his own words:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLWne\\_nsJU8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLWne_nsJU8)

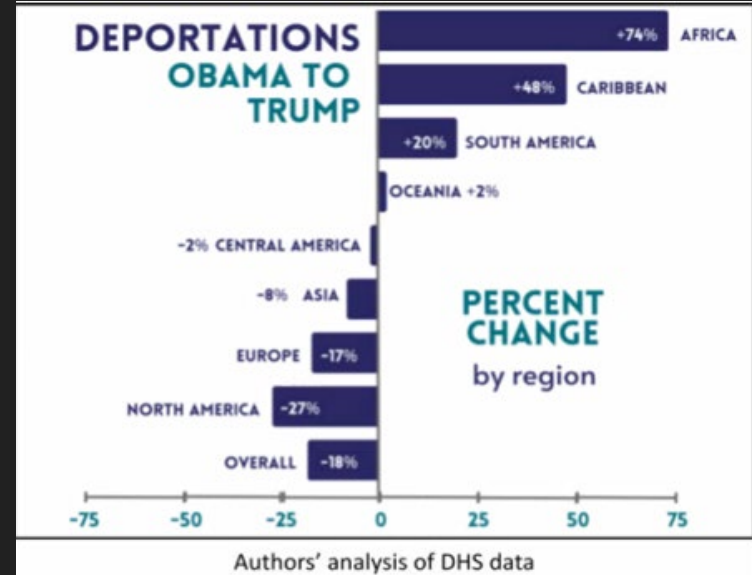
Saidu in Mauritania, 2021

# Immigration Policy and its Racist Origins

- Overstaying your visa is not a criminal offense, it is a civil offense. Yet we jail people for these offenses.
- Crossing the border was criminalized in the 1920s using racist justifications.
- The uneven enforcement of immigration laws and the disparate mistreatment of Black immigrants that happens to this day underscores the immigration system's racist motivations. This is obviously deeply tied to the prison industrial complex as well, and the criminalization of Black men, regardless of their country of origin.

# Disparate treatment of Black immigrants

- Average bonds for Haitian immigrants are 54% higher than average bonds overall. (\$16,500 versus \$10,500) (RAICES, 2020).
- 28% of abuse-related reports in detention came from people born in Black majority nations, even though they only represent 6% of the detained population (Goff, Mohamed, Claude, et al. 2022).
- While ave. annual deportations were overall higher under Obama's reign than Trump's, ave. annual deportations to African nations increased by 74% under Trump than under Obama, and by 48% to Caribbean nations.
- Deportations to Muslim-majority nations increased by 38% under Trump.
- The cruel policies continue. Biden recently deported people to Haiti late last year, a country that has been designated for TPS.



# Recommendations for Executive Action

- Create a centralized office to review final orders of removal
- Close immigration jails and end jail contracts
- Support motions to reopen/reconsider applications for asylum and immigration relief
- Make return after deportation more accessible
- Include interests of children in requests of cancellation of removal
- Assist deported people who are owed SS benefits
- Improve data collection and reporting
- End all deportation flights to Mauritania,
- Mauritanian- specific
  - End all deportation flights to Mauritania
  - Grant humanitarian parole to detained Mauritians
  - Allow wrongly deported Mauritians to return
  - Designate TPS for Mauritania

# Recommendations for Legislative Action

- New Way Forward Act
- Veteran Service Recognition Act
- Adoptee Citizenship Act
- Southeast Asian Deportation Relief Act
- Fairness To Freedom Act
- Reuniting Families Act
- Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act
- Reject proposals that expand the scope and reach of ICE's detentions and instead support funding for legal assistance programs, community-based ATD, and human-rights centered reforms.

# Recommendations for Advocates, Media, and Funders

- Look for ways to include people who were deported in advocacy asks.
- Redefine family separation.
- Report stories beyond the border.
- Use language and images that humanize migrants and migration.
- Allow people to appear as anonymous sources if they require it.
- Fund research to fill the gap about Black immigrants' experiences and invest in community leaders with lived experience.
- Compensate people advocating for policy change based on lived experience without administrative barriers.

# What reunion looks like

<https://youtu.be/UDfFrdMY5q8>



## Ibrahima Keita

“I cry a lot. I think about my two kids. Sometimes I can’t even talk about it because it makes me sad. I worked hard for everything I got. Very hard....I lost everything.... I’m a family man. I take care of my wife, my two boys. I work every day: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, seven days [a week]. I just want to take care of my two kids.”



They want to be seen.

They want to be heard.

# Family Photo Album

Meet our #ReuniteUS family! They belong in community and should be able to come home.



They want to come home.

Q & A