

A TOOLKIT FOR THE FIRST 100 DAYS

A GUIDE TO ENGAGING CONGRESSMEMBERS ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN DETENTION & DEPORTATION



This Toolkit was coordinated by the Khmer Anti-Deportation Advocacy Group (KhAAG), the Northeast Region Pardons Project, and the Southeast Asian Freedom Network (SEAFN).



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GOALS OF THIS TOOLKIT

As the nightmare of the Trump administration ends, the Southeast Asian detention and deportation crisis continues to be a reality for our community. Under the new Biden administration, those with criminal convictions continue to be vulnerable to detention and deportation. This is reflected in President Biden's memorandum to the Department of Homeland Security which pauses deportations

for 100 days beginning January 22, 2021. Even though this deportation moratorium **does not exclude** those with criminal convictions, it still allows ICE to **arrest** and **detain** incarcerated persons who finish their sentences, including those convicted of an "aggravated felony." Instead of allowing people to reunite with their loved ones, this memo reflects the on-going deep entrenchment of the US's unjust and racist immigration and criminal legal systems.



In anticipation of this transition, the Khmer Anti-Deportation Advocacy Group, Northeast Region Pardons Project, and Southeast Asian Freedom Network have been coming together since the fall of 2020 to strategize on a federal Congressional strategy. As President Biden's administration unfolds and we approach the 50th anniversary of the wars in Southeast Asia in 2025, our goals for the next 5 years are to align our community and our national electeds around ending deportations, addressing the harms of the failed refugee resettlement program, and defunding ICE.

More immediately, during the first 100 days, our goal is to engage Congressmembers as part of this long term national strategy. Through current and newer relationships between many of our groups and local Congressmembers, our goals are to push Congressmembers to become public champions of ending Southeast Asian deportations and to form a national Congressional bloc that is allied with us. Usually the first 100 days of a new administration is an opportunity for groups and communities to put their issues on the table and push the new President to take action. While most groups are focused on the President, there is the potential for us to pressure our local Congressmembers into becoming allies through this national strategy.

The goal of this toolkit is to support community members, organizers, and organizations in meeting with your local Congressmembers during the first 100 days as part of this strategy. This engagement will help us educate our local Congressmembers, build with them, and specifically do research on where our specific electeds stand and who we can work with to develop our proposals to end deportations. Following this first 100 we will follow up with further strategies as we continue to mobilize our community and increase pressure on our electeds.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides a guide, resources, and shared messaging on how to engage your local Congressman during the first 100 days of the new administration and Congressional term. While these dates vary for the President and Congress, we're marking the period from January 25th to April 30th, 2021 as the 100 day period for the purposes of this strategy.

The resources in this toolkit are intended to support you at every stage of engaging with your Congressman: from initially reaching out, to holding a meeting, to following up. This toolkit provides messaging so we can be aligned around the same framework and talking points. However, this toolkit should be adjusted based on your specific Congressman: what you know about them, where they stand on deportations, what your relationship with them is like, and whether they can be moved -- and we have provided varying guides and messages that you can refer to depending on the position of your Congressman.

Additionally, this toolkit includes a packet of materials that should be printed out or emailed to your Congressman and/or their staff, in closing out the meeting. The materials for this "leave behind packet" are included at the end of this toolkit.



TO SCHEDULE A MEETING

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Request for meeting to discuss Southeast Asian detentions and deportations

Email text:

Dear Congressman [Name],

On behalf of [Organization Name], we request the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the detention and deportation crisis facing the Southeast Asian community, and how we may partner together given the on-going threat that deportations pose to the community. [If you have an ask relating to an advocacy case, for example, requesting a letter of support for a community member seeking a pardon, lead with this ask.]

As an organization based in your district in [city], our organization [describe in 1-2 sentences your organization's mission, program areas, community that you organize/serve etc.]. Our work also involves responding to the deportation crisis within the Southeast Asian community. For the past several administrations, Southeast Asian deportations have consistently escalated, tearing apart our families, destabilizing our community, and adding further trauma to the violence and displacement already experienced by our people. Here in [city, state, or district], this unjust deportation machine has a particularly deep local impact. [insert information on local impact: is there a large SEA community? Have there been deportations? Are there community members with removal orders, who are on OSUP/doing ICE check-ins, etc.?].

Given the ongoing targeting of immigrants and refugees with criminal convictions, and our community's vulnerability to deportation, we request the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our goals for ending deportations, and how we may partner together. This meeting would be attended by [describe how many people and who will join, specifically indicating if any impacted community members and/or constituents will be joining].

We are happy to schedule a meeting based on your availability. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at [Name, email and/or phone number]. We look forward to meeting with you.

Best,
[Name]
[Organization]

TO SCHEDULE A MEETING

CALL SCRIPT

Notes: When calling the Congressman's office, you will likely not speak to the Congressman directly. Typically the Scheduler takes requests for meetings, so you should indicate that you're calling to request a meeting regarding deportations, and ask to speak with the Scheduler.

###

"Hi, my name is **[Name]**, and I'm calling from **[Organization Name]**. I'm reaching out to request a meeting with Congressman **[Name]** to discuss the detention and deportation crisis facing the Southeast Asian community. As an organization that is based in your district in **[city]**, our work involves responding to the detention and deportation of our community members, which has consistently escalated for the past 20 years. This unjust deportation machine has a particularly deep local impact here in **[city, state, or district]**. **[insert information on local impact: is there a large SEA community? Have there been deportations? Are there community members with removal orders, who are on OSUP/doing ICE check-ins, etc?]**

Given the on-going vulnerability of immigrants and refugees with criminal convictions, the Southeast Asian community will continue to be targeted for deportation. We request the opportunity to meet with Congressman **[Name]** to discuss the impact of deportations on our community, and how we may partner to fight deportations, as we mobilize our community and collaborate with other Congressional Members. We would be joined in this meeting by **[describe how many people and who will join, and specifically indicate if any impacted community members and/or constituents will be joining]**.

Is there a date and time when the Congressman can meet with us?"



TO SCHEDULE A MEETING

HOW-TO'S

How to Prep For Your Meeting

1. Before meeting with your elected official, have a prep meeting with the team
2. Go over the goals of the meeting
3. Do your homework. Research your Congressman including:
 - their position on immigration and criminal legal issues
 - what committees they are on
 - what bills they have supported in the past
4. Assign roles, including which persons will speak about which talking points
 - Note-taker
 - Facilitator
 - Point-of-contact person to follow up
5. Be prepared to make your ask. Based on your research about your Congressman, what you know about your Congressman's position on Southeast Asian deportations, and their response in your meeting, be prepared to make your ask based on whether they're:
 - Already supportive or
 - New to the issue or opposed, and need to be move



TO SCHEDULE A MEETING

How to Engage with Your Congressman



- ***Be prompt and prepared.*** Elected officials and their staffers meet with many constituents relating to different issues. They may be late but this does not mean they don't care.
- ***Don't assume your Congressman already knows about deportations and the Southeast Asian community.*** Unless you already have a relationship with them, most Congressmembers will need to be educated about the Southeast Asian community and the deportation crisis facing our community. Adjust these talking points based on your Congressman's level of understanding and your relationship with them.
- ***Root these conversations in your lived experiences.*** Policymakers want to hear from you, and how their laws affect their constituents. Speak your truth, but stick to your pre-decided roles to make the meeting go smooth. If you are being joined by an impacted person, provide them with the space to talk about the impact of this issue on their life. The lived experience of constituents is a critical strategy for moving our elected officials.
- ***Stick to the talking points.*** General talking points are provided below so we can have a united narrative and front, but you should feel free to ground these points in your lived experiences and the local impact.
- ***If you and/or your team do not know an answer to a question that's okay.*** Say you will get back to them with more information on that question. It is better to follow up than to give an incorrect answer.
- ***When speaking with electeds and/or their staff, do not take "no" for an answer.*** Most Congressmembers' staff will be creative, diplomatic, and provide next steps. You will need to be very clear. If they say no, reframe and clarify the ask.
- ***Set-up a clear follow-up.*** You should have a clear line of communication between staffers and the team to reiterate the conversation and to continue building the relationship.

TEMPLATE AGENDA

*If You're Reaching Out About a **GENERAL** Meeting*

- **Thank you and introductions**

- Thank the Congressman and/or their staff for meeting with you
- Go around and have everyone introduce themselves including names, pronouns, role, organization, and whether they're a constituent and/or impacted community member

- **Introduction to the issue**

- Describe the deportation crisis facing the Southeast Asian community, referring to the Talking Points document
- Discuss the local impact of deportations
- If there is an impacted community member who is joining the meeting, provide them an opportunity to share their story and how deportation has affected them

- **Request**

- If the Congressman is already with us, ask them if they will commit to the positions laid out in the "Commitments & Asks" document for **Champions**
- If the Congressman is newer to this issue/not supportive, ask them if they will commit to becoming more educated and engaging with us through the asks laid out in the "Commitments & Asks" document for **Allies**

- **Closing**

- Set up necessary follow up, and ask for contact info and expected response time
- Share the **leave behind packet** with the Congressman and/or their staff
- Thank them for their time and attention

TEMPLATE AGENDA

If You're Reaching Out About a Specific Advocacy Case

- **Thank you and introductions**

- Thank the Congressman and/or their staff for meeting with you
- Go around and have everyone introduce themselves including names, pronouns, role, organization, and whether they're a **constituent** and/or **impacted community member**

- **Introduction to the advocacy case and Southeast Asian deportations broadly**

- Lay out the advocacy case including who is impacted, whether they are a constituent and where they generally live, how this issue has harmed them and their loved ones, and the role the Congressman can play
- Connect this advocacy case to the broader deportation crisis facing the Southeast Asian community, referring to the **Talking Points document**

- **Request**

- Reiterate your ask for your advocacy case
- For Southeast Asian deportations broadly, request your Congressman's support:
 - **If the Congressman is already with us**, ask them if they will commit to the positions laid out in the "Commitments & Asks" document for *Champions*
 - **If the Congressman is newer to this issue/not supportive**, ask them if they will commit to becoming more educated and engaging with us through the asks laid out in the "Commitments & Asks" document for *Allies*

- **Closing**

- Set up necessary follow up, and ask for contact info and expected response time
- Share the **leave behind packet** with the Congressman and/or their staff
- Thank them for their time and attention

TALKING POINTS

1. War in Southeast Asia & Resettlement of the Southeast Asian Refugee Community

- **Deportations continue the cycle of violence, displacement, and family separation facing the Southeast Asian community.** Before our community arrived in the US, Southeast Asians experienced massive upheaval and violence that were shaped by US military intervention in the region. As a result of the War in Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, and the mass carpetbombing of Laos, Southeast Asian refugees were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in other countries like the US.
- **The US brought our community here through the Refugee Resettlement Program, but it failed to deliver on its promise to stabilize our community.** Our community was brought to the US as part of the largest refugee resettlement program in US history, which included over 1.4 million refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The US promised to “resettle” and stabilize our community, but instead it abandoned our community. Across the country, Southeast Asians were resettled in heavily disinvested and over-policed neighborhoods where our community struggled with poverty, poor school environments, and over-policing, which continue to affect our community now.



- **The “model minority” idea is harmful and does not represent the Southeast Asian community.** The idea that all Asians are successful does not apply to the Southeast Asian community; we are the myth in the model minority. Because of the disinvestment and over-policing of our community and the neighborhoods we live in, the Southeast Asian community continues to experience many barriers that include high levels of poverty, school drop-outs, chronic health issues, mental health, and criminalization. The “model minority” also masks the detention and deportation crisis facing our community for the past 20 years.

TALKING POINTS

2. Deportations and On-going Criminalization

- **Deportations are wrong, and they re-traumatize our families and communities.** No person should have to face deportation. Deportations are unjust and violent, and they re-traumatize the Southeast Asian community. Deportations further separate our families, who have already experienced the trauma of displacement. Deportations financially destabilize Southeast Asian families, who are often already struggling to make ends meet. Emotionally, deportations add further stress to families who often are struggling with mental health challenges such as depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Southeast Asian deportations violate the Constitutionally protected right against double jeopardy.** Deportations deny our community members a second chance. Many of our community members who face deportation joined gangs decades ago as teenagers, in order to find protection and support from the poverty, harassment, and xenophobia that many of our youth faced. As a result they became entangled with the law, and received convictions that are the basis for their removal. Many have already served their time, been out for decades, and have rebuilt their lives. Yet they still face deportation and separation from their loved ones. This violates the Constitutionally-protected right against double punishment.
- **The Southeast Asian deportation crisis forces our community members to return to countries that are foreign to them.** There are 16,000 Southeast Asians across the country who have removal orders. Most of our community members who face deportation are green card holders and have lived here in the US for most of their lives. They are being forced to return to countries they don't know; in many cases, they fled Southeast Asia as refugee babies or children, and have little to no connection to Southeast Asia now. In many cases, our impacted community members don't speak the language, have no family members, or support network. The US is their home- this where they grew up and this is where their families and everything they know are.
- **Southeast Asian deportations are a result of the US's unjust immigration and criminal legal systems, which intersect to criminalize our community, along with other poor immigrants and communities of color.** The immigration and criminal legal systems intersect to endlessly punish our people through deportations. Most of our impacted community members are green card holders, but they face deportation based on past criminal convictions. In many cases, they have already served their time, but they continue to face punishment in the form of deportation. In criminal court hearings, many Southeast Asians accepted plea deals without being informed of the immigration consequences that made them vulnerable to deportation.

TALKING POINTS

3. Deportations Under a Biden Administration

- **Our community continues to be vulnerable to detention and deportation under the new Biden administration.** For the past 20 years, Southeast Asian deportations have taken place under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The Biden administration is no different. Even though the 100 day pause on deportations does not exclude those with criminal convictions, it still allows ICE to arrest and detain those who finish their sentences. Instead of allowing people to reunite with their families, this temporary policy continues to target those who have already suffered through the criminal legal system.
- **We must end all detentions and deportations, and protect all immigrants and refugees.** Under President Biden's memo to DHS, DHS is instructed to conduct a review of immigration practices and announce a new policy in the next 100 days. As the Biden administration seeks to announce a new immigration policy, we urge the federal government to end detentions and deportations for all immigrants and refugees, including those with criminal convictions.



HOW TO USE THIS “COMMITMENTS & ASKS” DOCUMENT

- This document lays out the commitments and asks to present to Congressmembers before you close out your meeting.
- These commitments and asks should be adapted based on the position of your Congressmember; whether they're supportive and already with us, or whether they're newer to the issue or not supportive.

CHAMPIONS - Congressmembers who are already with us and supportive

Will they commit to:

- Supporting a moratorium on ALL detentions and deportations, INCLUDING for those with criminal convictions
- Opposing the proposed rule to ban work permits for immigrants with removal orders
- Supporting the release of our people who have been detained for 180 days
- Work with us on ways to defund ICE & the Department of Homeland Security

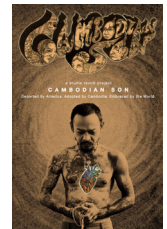


COMMITMENTS & ASKS

ALLIES - Congressmembers who are newer to the issue or oppose it

Will they commit to becoming more educated and engaging with us by:

- Meeting with local leaders to talk about SEA deportations.
- Meeting with impacted community members about SEA deportations (local groups/leaders should identify and recommend impacted community members).
- Hosting a town hall/community conversation about SEA deportations.
- Hosting a watch party with us or watching a film on SEA deportations.
- **Sentenced Home (Produced by David Grabias, 2016)**
This documentary follows three young Cambodian-Americans in Seattle - Loeun Lun, Many Uch, and Kim Ho Ma - as they move through the deportation machine.
- **Cambodian Son (Directed by Masahiro Sugano, 2015)**
“Cambodian Son” follows the journey of Kosal Khiev, a Cambodian refugee, from his incarceration at the age of 16 to his deportation to Cambodia, as he develops into an internationally renowned poet.
- **Fighting for Family (Directed by Lan Nguyen, 2019)**
This documentary follows, Chuh and Rex, a couple from the Montagnard tribe in Vietnam, as they raise their family apart while fighting to be reunited.
- **Keep Saray Home (Directed by Brian Redondo, 2020)**
“Keep Saray Home” follows the journey of three Cambodian and Vietnamese families from the outskirts of Boston as they face deportation and fight to stay together.
- **NBC’s Deported (Directed by Sahra V. Nguyen, 2017)**
This 5 part series presented by NBC follows the global fight to end the deportations of Cambodian refugees from the U.S.



DOCUMENTS TO PRINT:

- 1 pager on Southeast Asian Deportations
- Talking Points
- Commitments & Asks
(leave behind the “Commitments & Asks” document that corresponds to where your Congressmember stands)
- Champions: electeds who are already with us
- Allies: electeds who are newer to the issue or opposed, and need to be moved

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEPORTATIONS

Over 2.7 million Southeast Asian Americans currently live in the U.S. The biggest crisis that Southeast Asian communities are currently facing is deportations. Since 2017, Southeast Asian deportations have drastically increased.

HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIANS IN THE U.S.

Southeast Asian Americans, the largest refugee community in U.S. history, experienced decades of war, bombings, and genocide that uprooted their lives. The upheaval experienced in these countries forced many people out of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to seek refuge in countries like the U.S. After escaping to refugee camps and upon resettlement in the United States, Southeast Asian people faced many struggles including mental health issues, poverty, language barriers, poor school environments and over-policing. As a result, they were subjected to systemic marginalization, much like other communities of color in the U.S. The lack of structural support and systemic violence drove many Southeast Asians to commit crimes of varying degrees. For court hearings in these cases, many Southeast Asians accepted plea deals without being informed of the immigration consequences that made them vulnerable for deportation.

WHY ARE THESE DEPORTATIONS HAPPENING NOW?

Deportations can only occur if both countries agree to accept individuals back into the country. If a country does not accept people, then the U.S. also cannot detain them indefinitely. Instead, individuals who receive final orders of removal are put on Orders of Supervision so that they can check in regularly with ICE. Because they are not immediately removed, people rebuild their lives. They go back to school, have families, and reintegrate into their local communities. Agreements between countries establishing who is deportable are referred to as repatriation agreements. The U.S. only recently established repatriation agreements with Cambodia in 2002 and Vietnam in 2008. The agreement with Vietnam does not accept immigrants who entered the U.S. pre-1995. However, the current administration has re-interpreted the Vietnamese agreement such that some Vietnamese people who came to the U.S. pre-1995 have been deported. In 2019, the U.S. entered a handshake agreement with Laos, but it has yet to be formalized. Additionally, the current administration has heavily raised the number of Cambodians to deport each year.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEPORTATIONS?

Compared to 2017, there were... **279%** more Cambodian removals in 2018 **176%** more Cambodian removals in 2019

60% of detained immigrants do not have access to a lawyer

TALKING POINTS

1. War in Southeast Asia & Resettlement of the Southeast Asian Refugee Community

- Deportations continue the cycle of violence, displacement, and family separation facing the Southeast Asian community. Before our community arrived in the U.S., South East Asians experienced massive upheaval and violence that were shaped by US military intervention in the region. As a result of the War in Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, and the mass carpetbombing of Laos, Southeast Asian refugees were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in other countries like the U.S.
- The US brought our community here through the Refugee Resettlement Program, but it failed to deliver on its promise to stabilize our community. Our community was brought to the US as part of the largest refugee resettlement program in US history, which included over 1.4 million refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The US promised to “resettle” and stabilize our community, but instead it abandoned our community. Across the country, Southeast Asians were resettled in heavily disinvested and over-policed neighborhoods where our community struggled with poverty, poor school environments, and over-policing, which continue to affect our community now.

The “model minority” idea is harmful and does not represent the Southeast Asian community. The idea that all Asians are successful does not apply to the Southeast Asian community; we are the myth in the model minority. Because of the disinvestment and over-policing of our community and the neighborhoods we live in, the Southeast Asian community continues to experience many barriers that include high levels of poverty, school drop-outs, chronic health issues, mental health, and criminalization. The “model minority” also makes the deportation crisis facing our community for the past 20 years.

TALKING POINTS

2. Deportations and On-going Criminalization

- Deportations are wrong, and they re-traumatize our families and communities. No person should have to face deportation. Deportations are unjust and violent, and they re-traumatize the Southeast Asian community. Deportations further separate our families, who have already experienced the trauma of displacement. Deportations financially destabilize Southeast Asian families, who are often already struggling to make ends meet. Emotionally, deportations add further stress to families who often are struggling with mental health challenges such as depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Southeast Asian deportations violate the Constitutionally protected right against double jeopardy. Deportations deny our community members a second chance. Many of our community members who face deportation joined gangs decades ago as teenagers, in order to find protection and support from the poverty, harassment, and xenophobia that many of our youth faced. As a result they became entangled with the law, and received convictions that are the basis for their removal. Many have already served their time, been out for decades, and have rebuilt their lives. Yet they still face deportation and separation from their loved ones. This violates the Constitutionally-protected right against double punishment.
- The Southeast Asian deportation crisis forces our community members to return to countries that are foreign to them. There are 16,000 Southeast Asians across the country who have removal orders. Most of our community members who face deportation are green card holders and have lived here in the US for most of their lives. They are being forced to return to countries they don’t know; in many cases, they fled Southeast Asia as refugee babies or children, and have little to no connection to Southeast Asia now. In many cases, our impacted community members don’t speak the language, have no family members, or support network. The US is their home- this where they grew up and this is where their families and everything they know are.
- Southeast Asian deportations are a result of the US’s unjust immigration and criminal legal systems, which intersect to criminalize our community, along with other poor immigrants and communities of color. The immigration and criminal legal systems intersect to endlessly punish our people through deportations. Most of our impacted community members are green card holders, but they face deportation based on past criminal convictions. In many cases, they have already served their time, but they continue to face punishment in the form of deportation. In criminal court hearings, many Southeast Asians accepted plea deals without being informed of the immigration consequences that made them vulnerable to deportation.

TALKING POINTS

3. Deportations Under a Biden Administration

- Our community will continue to be vulnerable to deportation, even under a Biden administration. Even as the Trump administration ends, we don’t anticipate that South East Asian deportations will end. For the past 20 years, Southeast Asian deportations have taken place under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Immigrants with criminal convictions have always been one of the most vulnerable groups of immigrants. Given Biden’s commitment to prioritizing “families” for deportation, we anticipate that the Southeast Asian deportation crisis will continue.
- We have an opportunity to end deportations, and their unjust and violent impacts on our communities. In this new political landscape, we seek to push President Biden to reframe his immigration platform, and for Congress to play a critical leadership role in focusing on deportations stemming from criminal convictions so we can finally end this devastating legacy experienced by the Southeast Asian community.

COMMITMENT AND ASKS

Thank you for supporting the movement to end Southeast Asian deportations!

Will you stand with us in committing to:

1. Supporting a moratorium on ALL deportations, INCLUDING for those with criminal convictions
2. Opposing the proposed rule to ban work permits for immigrants with removal orders
3. Supporting the release of our people who have been detained for 100+ days
4. Work with us on ways to defund ICE & the Department of Homeland Security

COMMITMENT AND ASKS

Thank you for engaging with us to learn more about Southeast Asian deportations!

Will you commit to continuing to engage with this critical issue for our community by:

- Meeting with local leaders to talk about SEA deportations.
- Meeting with impacted community members about SEA deportations (local group leaders should identify and recommend impacted community members).
- Hosting a town hall community conversation about SEA deportations.
- Hosting a watch party with us or watching a film on SEA deportations.
- Sentenced Home (Produced by David Grabias, 2016) This documentary follows three young Cambodian-Americans in Seattle - Louan Lun, Many Uch, and Kim Ho Ma - as they move through the deportation machine.
- Cambodian Son (Directed by Masahiro Sugano, 2015) “Cambodian Son” follows the journey of Kosal Khiev, a Cambodian refugee, from his incarceration at the age of 16 to his deportation to Cambodia, as he develops into an internationally renowned poet.
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SEAFN
Southeast Asian Freedom Network



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HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIANS IN THE U.S.

Southeast Asian Americans, the largest refugee community in U.S. history, experienced decades of war, bombings, and genocide that uprooted their lives. The upheaval experienced in these countries forced many people out of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to seek refuge in countries like the U.S. After escaping to refugee camps and upon resettlement in the United States, Southeast Asian people faced many struggles, including mental health issues, poverty, language barriers, poor school environments and over-policing. As a result, they were subjected to systemic marginalization, much like other communities of color in the U.S. The lack of structural support and systemic violence drove many Southeast Asians to commit crimes of varying degrees. For court hearings in these cases, many Southeast Asians accepted plea deals without being informed of the immigration consequences that made them vulnerable for deportation.

FROM 1969 TO 1973,
THE U.S. DROPPED
2.7 MILLION TONS
OF BOMBS
ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN
COUNTRIES

MORE THAN
THE ENTIRETY OF
BOMBS DROPPED
DURING WORLD
WAR II

WHY ARE THESE DEPORTATIONS HAPPENING NOW?

Deportations can only occur if both countries agree to accept individuals back into the country. If a country does not accept people, then the U.S. also cannot detain them indefinitely. Instead, individuals who receive final orders of removal are put on Orders of Supervision so that they can check in regularly with ICE. Because they are not immediately removed, people rebuild their lives. They go back to school, have families, and reintegrate into their local communities.



60%

of detained immigrants
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Agreements between countries establishing who is deportable are referred to as repatriation agreements. The U.S. only recently established repatriation agreements with Cambodia in 2002 and Vietnam in 2008. The agreement with Vietnam does not accept immigrants who entered the U.S. pre-1995. However, the current administration has re-interpreted the Vietnamese agreement such that some Vietnamese people who came to the U.S. pre-1995 have been deported. In 2019, the U.S. entered a handshake agreement with Laos, but it has yet to be formalized. Additionally, the current administration has heavily raised the number of Cambodians to deport each year.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEPORTATIONS?

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TALKING POINTS

War in Southeast Asia & Resettlement of the Southeast Asian Refugee Community

- **Deportations continue the cycle of violence, displacement, and family separation facing the Southeast Asian community.** Before our community arrived in the US, Southeast Asians experienced massive upheaval and violence that were shaped by US military intervention in the region. As a result of the War in Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, and the mass carpet-bombing of Laos, Southeast Asian refugees were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in other countries like the US.
- **The US brought our community here through the Refugee Resettlement Program, but it failed to deliver on its promise to stabilize our community.** Our community was brought to the US as part of the largest refugee resettlement program in US history, which included over 1.4 million refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The US promised to “resettle” and stabilize our community, but instead it abandoned our community. Across the country, Southeast Asians were resettled in heavily disinvested and over-policed neighborhoods where our community struggled with poverty, poor school environments, and over-policing, which continue to affect our community now.



- **The “model minority” idea is harmful and does not represent the Southeast Asian community.** The idea that all Asians are successful does not apply to the Southeast Asian community; we are the myth in the model minority. Because of the disinvestment and over-policing of our community and the neighborhoods we live in, the Southeast Asian community continues to experience many barriers that include high levels of poverty, school drop-outs, chronic health issues, mental health, and criminalization. The “model minority” also masks the deportation crisis facing our community for the past 20 years.

TALKING POINTS

Deportations and On-going Criminalization

- **Deportations are wrong, and they re-traumatize our families and communities.** No person should have to face deportation. Deportations are unjust and violent, and they retraumatize the Southeast Asian community. Deportations further separate our families, who have already experienced the trauma of displacement. Deportations financially destabilize Southeast Asian families, who are often already struggling to make ends meet. Emotionally, deportations add further stress to families who often are struggling with mental health challenges such as depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Southeast Asian deportations violate the Constitutionally protected right against double jeopardy.** Deportations deny our community members a second chance. Many of our community members who face deportation joined gangs decades ago as teenagers, in order to find protection and support from the poverty, harassment, and xenophobia that many of our youth faced. As a result they became entangled with the law, and received convictions that are the basis for their removal. Many have already served their time, been out for decades, and have rebuilt their lives. Yet they still face deportation and separation from their loved ones. This violates the Constitutionally-protected right against double punishment.
- **The Southeast Asian deportation crisis forces our community members to return to countries that are foreign to them.** There are 16,000 Southeast Asians across the country who have removal orders. Most of our community members who face deportation are green card holders and have lived here in the US for most of their lives. They are being forced to return to countries they don't know; in many cases, they fled Southeast Asia as refugee babies or children, and have little to no connection to Southeast Asia now. In many cases, our impacted community members don't speak the language, have no family members, or support network. The US is their home- this where they grew up and this is where their families and everything they know are.
- **Southeast Asian deportations are a result of the US's unjust immigration and criminal legal systems, which intersect to criminalize our community, along with other poor immigrants and communities of color.** The immigration and criminal legal systems intersect to endlessly punish our people through deportations. Most of our impacted community members are green card holders, but they face deportation based on past criminal convictions. In many cases, they have already served their time, but they continue to face punishment in the form of deportation. In criminal court hearings, many Southeast Asians accepted plea deals without being informed of the immigration consequences that made them vulnerable to deportation.

TALKING POINTS

Deportations Under a Biden Administration

- **Our community continues to be vulnerable to detention and deportation under the new Biden administration.** For the past 20 years, Southeast Asian deportations have taken place under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The Biden administration is no different. Even though the 100 day pause on deportations does not exclude those with criminal convictions, it still allows ICE to arrest and detain those who finish their sentences. Instead of allowing people to reunite with their families, this temporary policy continues to target those who have already suffered through the criminal legal system.
- **We must end all detentions and deportations, and protect all immigrants and refugees.** Under President Biden's memo to DHS, DHS is instructed to conduct a review of immigration practices and announce a new policy in the next 100 days. As the Biden administration seeks to announce a new immigration policy, we urge the federal government to end detentions and deportations for all immigrants and refugees, including those with criminal convictions.



COMMITMENTS AND ASKS

For Champions



Thank you for supporting the movement to end Southeast Asian deportations!

Will you stand
with us in
committing to

1

Supporting a moratorium on ALL detentions and deportations, **INCLUDING** for those with criminal convictions

2

Opposing the proposed rule to ban work permits for immigrants with removal orders

3

Supporting the release of our people who have been detained for 180 days

4

Work with us on ways to defund ICE & the Department of Homeland Security

COMMITMENTS AND ASKS

For Allies

Thank you for engaging with us to learn more about Southeast Asian deportations!

Will you commit to continuing to engage with this critical issue for our community by:

- Meeting with local leaders to talk about SEA deportations.
- Meeting with impacted community members about SEA deportations (*local groups/leaders should identify and recommend impacted community members*).
- Hosting a town hall/community conversation about SEA deportations.
- Hosting a watch party with us or watching a film on SEA deportations.

- **Sentenced Home (Produced by David Grabias, 2016)**

This documentary follows three young Cambodian-Americans in Seattle - Loeun Lun, Many Uch, and Kim Ho Ma - as they move through the deportation machine.



- **Cambodian Son (Directed by Masahiro Sugano, 2015)**

"Cambodian Son" follows the journey of Kosal Khiev, a Cambodian refugee, from his incarceration at the age of 16 to his deportation to Cambodia, as he develops into an internationally renowned poet.



- **Fighting for Family (Directed by Lan Nguyen, 2019)**

This documentary follows, Chuh and Rex, a couple from the Montagnard tribe in Vietnam, as they raise their family apart while fighting to be reunited.



- **Keep Saray Home (Directed by Brian Redondo, 2020)**

"Keep Saray Home" follows the journey of three Cambodian and Vietnamese families from the outskirts of Boston as they face deportation and fight to stay together.



- **NBC's Deported (Directed by Sahra V. Nguyen, 2017)**

This 5 part series presented by NBC follows the global fight to end the deportations of Cambodian refugees from the U.S.

