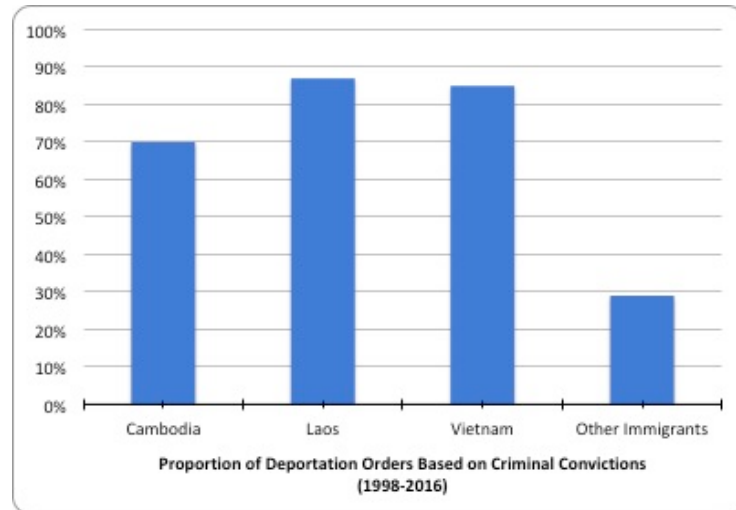


SEARAC Media Messaging Guide on Southeast Asian American Criminal Deportation: Basic Facts, Topline Messages, and Tips to Address Media Inquiries

Background

More than 200 Cambodian and Vietnamese community members were rounded up for deportation in 2017—the largest number in recent history. Most, if not all, of those detained were lawful permanent residents who came to the United States as refugees in the aftermath of U.S. aggression in Southeast Asia. They have been increasingly targeted under the Trump Administration’s crackdown on immigrants with criminal convictions, despite having transformed their lives. Deportations to Cambodia are expected to hit a record high in 2018.ⁱ Advocates are monitoring the likelihood of similar impacts in Vietnamese, Lao, and Hmong communities.



Some Statistics

Today, more than 2.7 millionⁱⁱ Southeast Asian Americans (SEAA) live in the U.S. Since 1998, over 16,000 community members have received final orders of deportation, and more than 13,000 of these were based on old criminal records (80% of total

SEAA deportation orders, compared to 29% of all immigrants with deportation orders).ⁱⁱⁱ Of these individuals, over 14,000 continue to live day-to-day in the country, not knowing if or when they will be deported.^{iv}

Topline Messages to Counter Southeast Asian American Criminal Deportation

IGNORES THE HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS OF DEPORTING REFUGEES

- Most Southeast Asian Americans vulnerable to deportation are refugees from the decades-long U.S. wars, bombings, and genocide.
- Many encountered challenges during their initial resettlement, including high rates of poverty, post-traumatic stress disorder, and poor educational outcomes.^v
- A majority have lived in the country for years as lawful permanent residents and have completed their time for old convictions. They have transformed their lives—growing their families, building their careers, and getting involved in their communities.

-
- These communities were displaced when the United States occupied Southeast Asian countries, creating a mass refugee crisis in the 1970s. Now, they are facing second-generation displacement by being forced back to the countries they originally fled. We must fight to stop the re-traumatization of our communities.

HURTS FAMILIES AND DOES NOT ADDRESS COMMUNITY SAFETY

- Individuals are deported only after they complete their full sentences or pay their fines and are ready to make a new start.
- Deportation breaks families apart, making them less secure and tearing at the fabric of our communities.
- Deportation causes economic insecurity, both for families who lose their primary breadwinners and for neighborhoods that lose business owners and skilled employees.

UNDERMINES AMERICAN VALUES OF FAIRNESS

- Overly broad enforcement policies^{vi} passed in 1996 created “one strike” laws, making deportation mandatory in many cases. Even when an immigration judge feels that deporting someone (a refugee, a mother, a community leader, etc.) would be unjust, her hands are often tied by these rigid laws.
- Criminal convictions alone should not define an individual. Deporting someone for a crime for which the person has completed his or her sentence is a cruel form of double punishment.

HOLDING GOVERNMENT LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE

- The Trump administration has repeatedly demonized immigrant and refugee communities. We call for leadership that respects the dignity and rights of all communities in the United States.
- Congress has the power to change unfair and outdated laws. We call on congressional leaders to fix bad policies that have disproportionately hurt our community for so long.

How to Speak with the Media

- Come prepared. Come with the three points you wouldn’t want anyone to miss: write these three points down (no more than one sentence per point).
- Concisely deliver your message. Lead with your message— the one thing people should know if they know nothing else. Keep your answers short. Avoid talking to fill the silence.
- Be honest. Talking about criminal convictions is an understandably sensitive topic, but don’t be afraid to be honest. Own past mistakes, take accountability, and focus instead on your transformation.
- Pivot. If the interviewer says something inflammatory or only wants to focus on the negative aspects of a crime, pivot to your point about moving past mistakes and highlight your love for family, your community, etc.
- Flagging. Use key words to flag the importance of key points:
 - “The bottom line is...”
 - “The one thing you need to know about this issue is...”
- Elevate personal stories. Reporters are usually interested in criminal deportation stories due to their emotional impact on families and communities. Because of this, they are typically interested in interviewing directly impacted people or their families. Try to connect them to spokespeople in your community or have a personal story you can share.

ⁱ Phnom Penh Post, December 6, 2017, “Largest ever group of Cambodian returnees in repatriation program due from US soon,” <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/largest-ever-group-cambodian-returnees-repatriation-program-due-us-soon>

ⁱⁱ American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 5-year estimates.

ⁱⁱⁱ Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “U.S. Deportation Outcomes by Charge, Completed Cases in Immigration Courts”: http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/deport_outcome_charge.php

-
- ^{iv} Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, "U.S. Deportation Outcomes by Charge, Completed Cases in Immigration Courts": http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/deport_outcome_charge.php & Department of Homeland Security (DHS) "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2013, Table 41": <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>
- ^v Southeast Asian Americans and the School-to-Prison-to-Deportation Pipeline: http://dev-searac.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SEAA-School-to-Deportation-Pipeline_0.pdf
- ^{vi} *The passage of the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) allowed for the rise in mandatory detention and deportation for lawful permanent residents in the U.S.*
-