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Petition Filed to Demand Release of Black Immigrant Incarcerated for Almost a Decade

GADSDEN, AL– Journalist Ademola Adegoke has been sitting in immigration detention centers for over 24 months after risking his life and safety cooperating with the FBI. UndocuBlack, a coalition that advocates for black immigrants, and Adelante Alabama Worker Center, a low-wage worker and immigrant rights center located in Birmingham, are working together to help secure his release. Today, Adelante filed a petition of *habeas corpus* on behalf of Ademola, which challenges unlawful detention.

In June 2010, Ademola was extradited to the United States from Ghana on charges of wire fraud. In exchange for a guarantee that he would not be deported and for a shorter sentence in federal prison, Ademola agreed to cooperate with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – giving them names of other wire fraud suspects.

His cooperation presented a number of risks – the risk of retaliation from the individuals he named, the risk of putting his family in danger, and the risk of being killed or targeted post-release. Despite these circumstances, Ademola decided to assist the FBI. At the end of his 102 month sentence in October of 2017, he expected to be a free man.

Instead, Ademola was immediately transferred into federal immigration custody. Before entering deportation proceedings, Ademola renounced his Nigerian citizenship, leaving the country unable to identify him as a citizen and produce travel documents. Currently stateless, Ademola has spent the last 24 months in various immigration detention facilities. As a stateless individual, the government is unable to deport Ademola, leaving him in detention while ICE decides his fate. He currently sits in Etowah County Detention Center in Gadsden, Alabama, which has been cited by various advocacy groups for its rampant human rights violations and has built a reputation for warehousing individuals, especially stateless detainees, longterm.

Ademola fled his home country of Nigeria to Ghana in 2006 facing arrest, detention, torture, and threats to his life for his journalism and political activism. Shortly after, his father was murdered in retaliation. Ademola remains terrified of deportation, stating, **“If I step my feet in Nigeria I will be killed...because persecution that is awaiting me back home because of my political opinion. I am afraid the same**

group that killed my father will kill me if I return to Nigeria or even Ghana.” In 2014 Amnesty International published a detailed report titled “ [‘Welcome To Hell Fire’ – Torture and other ill treatment in Nigeria](#)”. This report featured stories of Nigerians who were tortured at the hands of their government.

Ademola’s case reflects a large inequity in the criminal justice system – the idea that immigrants must serve a “double sentence” for their crimes. "In the U.S Black people are more likely to be criminalized (arrested, convicted and imprisoned) than the rest of the population, due to rampant anti-blackness and for Black immigrants the sentence doesn't end with criminal court proceedings, rather in immigration detention and deportation proceedings," states Deborah Alemu, a Community Organizer for UndocuBlack. The injustice is particularly visible in this case, as Ademola did not come to the United States willingly, but was brought here by U.S. officials. It also echoes the growing crisis of what to do with stateless immigrants. In December of 2012, the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and High Society Initiative](#) released a report citing stateless persons as “highly vulnerable to discrimination, abuse, and deprivation of essential human rights by the State in which they live.”

Adelante and UndocuBlack are calling for Ademola Adegoke to be immediately released.

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Adelante Alabama Worker Center unites low-wage and immigrant workers and their families in the Birmingham area to defend our rights, promote our dignity, and pursue justice for all

UndocuBlack Network (UBN) is a multigenerational network of currently and formerly undocumented Black people that fosters community, facilitates access to resources, and contributes to transforming the realities of our people, so we are thriving and living our fullest lives.