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Ethnopoetics: A Jamaican Deportee Tells His Story

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Expressions
**Ethnopoetics: A Jamaican Deportee Tells His
Story**

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Samuel arrived in the United States when he was 14 years old – in 1974. When he was 19, he was arrested and charged with attempted murder of a police officer. He believes he was wrongfully convicted. He spent 26 years in prison and was deported to Jamaica – his country of birth.

I was charged for attempted murder.
This is some of the things I hate to talk about. ...
It's just an unfortunate situation, you nuh.
I'm to be blamed of some of it because
the company or whatever. ...
I might have caused certain things. ...
I spent 26 years ...
half of my life was gone. ...

When everyone is locked up they always say "oh I didn't do it".
You nuh, it's a common joke.
But ... for a person who actually is there
and haven't done anything
it's not no joking matter.
Probably I don't explain myself properly
just to let someone really understand. ...
it's just painful for me. ...

Well I'll talk about it.
But you nuh
I just say it's like, here we go again.

~373~

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T. Golash-Boza / Societies Without Borders 7:3 (2012) 373-375

I was charged with attempted murder.
The people that I was hanging out with is friends, you nuh....
the night when I got arrested
I was in a stolen car
which I didn't know. ...

And we got we got stopped.
And that's where when I got arrested.
And after, then, that's how I know I was charged with attempted murder. ...

They found a weapon. ...
No prints were found.
They say that we don't take fingerprints from a weapon.

Samuel, Kingston, Jamaica, June 2009

According to US law, deportation is not punishment – it is an administrative procedure where the right to be in the United States is revoked. For Samuel, deportation is punishment. He points out that he missed his grandmother's funeral because he was in prison. Now, when his parents pass, he will not be able to attend their funerals because he has been deported. Samuel had a child before he went to prison, a child that has grown up without a father. Samuel's parents, both US citizens, have lost their son, first to prison, now to Jamaica. His siblings have lost a brother. And, Samuel, homeless in Jamaica, has lost nearly everything.

Tanya Golash-Boza is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Merced. She is the author of three books: 1) *Due Process Denied* (2012), which describes how and why non-citizens in the United States have been detained and deported for minor crimes, without regard for constitutional limits on disproportionate punishment; 2) *Immigration Nation* (2012), which provides a critical analysis of the impact that U.S. immigration policy has on human rights; and 3) *Yo Soy Negro: Blackness in Peru* (2011), the first book in English to address what it means to be black in Peru. She has also published articles on deportations, racial identity,

T. Golash-Boza/Societies Without Borders 7:3 (2012) 373-375

and human rights. Her innovative scholarship was awarded the Distinguished Early Career Award from the Racial and Ethnic Minorities Studies Section of the American Sociological Association in 2010. You can follow her on twitter at @tanyagolashboza and subscribe to her blogs: <http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/> and <http://www.stopdeportationsnow.blogspot.com/>.

~375~

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