CHAPTER 13

Afterword. Deportation: The Last Word?

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Deportation presents a paradox of namelessness. In his well-known ballad "Deportee," also known as "Plane Wreck at Los Gatos" (1948), Woody Guthrie's haunting lyric—*You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane/All they will call you will be "deportees"*—powerfully evokes the desultory disregard for the human individuality of persons whose lives are travestied by deportation, rendering them effectively anonymous. As ostensibly unwanted or undesirable non-citizens, their utter disposability appears to be finally and conclusively verified by deportation as a sovereign power's exercise in virtual "waste removal," a state's perfunctory and mundane act of "taking out the trash." Hence, it is no accident that, etymologically, the origins of the very word "deportation" would indicate a carrying away, a removal, a disposal (De Genova 2014). Guthrie was moved to lament the anonymity of deportees when a deportation flight crashed in California and was reported in New York with the four names of only the white (US citizen) crew and security guard, callously relegating the 28 deceased Mexican/migrant workers to a derisive namelessness even in the face of their tragic deaths.[1] In this example, like so many others, the social and juridical disposability of deportable migrants was evidently prefigured, as well as retroactively

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S. Khosravi (ed.), *After Deportation*, Global Ethics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57267-3_13

validated, by the racialised degradation of their human personhood. The deportees were casually represented as persons undeserving, even in death, of individuality, just as they were merely particular instances of an anonymous illegalised mass, a multitude of racialised migrant labourers, a virtual herd of beasts of burden. If their deportations resulted on this occasion in their untimely deaths, the actual eradication of the deportees' individual *lives*—their personal identities and life trajectories—emerged as a frightfully routine and prosaic fact of deportation, more generally. Here today, gone tomorrow. Out of sight, out of mind. Case closed. Thus, at least from the perspective of the deporting state power, deportation appears to be the final act, the proverbial last word.

From the perspective of the deporting state power, presumptively undeserving, unwanted, or undesirable—and therefore illegitimate and "illegal," if not "criminal"—deportees are pervasively figured as virtual human "rubbish," a kind of "garbage" of globalisation, nameless "losers" in the high-stakes global game of capital accumulation and bordering (De Genova 2016).[2] Thus, deportees are depicted as being "dumped" on the receiving states, in the words of a senior government minister quoted in the chapter by Leanne Weber and Powell (this volume). For their part, deportees readily liken the bitterness of their condition to "coming home to nothing," and "being stuck" with "nowhere to go" (Turnbull, this volume) and indeed, oftentimes, with nothing to do, "trapped" in a place that feels "like a prison away from prison" (Hasselberg, this volume). In a telling turn of phrase, Sarah Turnbull (this volume) likens the profound disruption of deportation to "being disappeared" from one's own life, and one of her deported interlocutors eloquently adds: "I don't live my life, I'm living someone else's." Predictably, for some deportees, the lived consequences of this sort of extreme alienation are a psychological trauma so severe that it may only come to finally be alleviated in suicide. In other instances, deported migrants are suspected of having originally fled the countries of their birth or citizenship as political opponents of authoritarian regimes (Alpes, this volume; Collyer, this volume; Lecadet, this volume), or are sent back to conflict zones amidst civil war, converting their deportations into de facto acts of *refoulement* (Collyer, this volume; Majidi, this volume), whereby return may subject them to persecution, extortion, rape, torture, and death.

Yet, the sociopolitical erasure and the symbolic namelessness of the deported within the *totalising* machinations of any deportation regime are nonetheless paradoxical because these more general socio-political conditions are very commonly contradicted by the fundamentally *individualising*

character of deportation within the fastidious bureaucratic functioning of administrative apparatuses of immigration control. As I have written previously, deportation presents a precise point of intersection and indistinction between totalising biopolitical procedures and modern governmental techniques of individualisation (De Genova 2010a, p. 34). Thus, although such generalisations may not always strictly apply in cases of mass expulsions (such as those described in this volume by Nassim Majidi for Iran's routine round-ups and deportations of "illegal" Afghans), it is generally true that deportation tends to always be applied in a rather targeted manner on particular individuals whose specific identities and circumstances are more or less documented and meticulously inscribed within the bureaucratic machinery of expulsion. Consequently, as borne out by the fine ethnography showcased in this volume, despite the deportees' *socio-political* anonymity and their erasure from the purview of many of the deporting states' citizenries, deportees are seldom nameless in fact, and paradoxically tend to be encumbered with a burgeoning of documentation that testifies to the administrative superintendence of what is widely euphemised as their "removal" and "return." While deportations are plainly debasing and destructive for individual deportees, their loved ones, and their wider communities, the bureaucratic rationality that coldly executes such severely punitive measures as "standard operating procedure," and the consequently heartless disregard for the veritable cruelty of deportation for those whose lives are thereby derailed, convert a systemic violence into the simple and banal functionality of a presumptively efficient governmental apparatus. It is in this respect that I have elsewhere (De Genova 2014) suggested that Hannah Arendt's ([1963] 2006) idea of the "banality of evil" is instructive when we confront and seek to challenge such otherwise routine "administrative" punishments as deportation. It was indeed the dehumanising reduction of individuals into "functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery"—as well as the reduction of others into the mere *objects* of its power—that Arendt deemed to be not only "the essence of totalitarian government" but also, remarkably, "perhaps the nature of every bureaucracy" (Arendt [1963] 2006, p. 289).

Here, it is perhaps helpful to recall that the banality of the deportation evil is ordinarily not the exclusive unilateral affair of a single deporting nation-state but rather tends to involve international cooperation and coordination between at least two states. Thus, as Shahram Khosravi underscores in his Introduction to this book, deportation provides a key site from which to problematise the methodological nationalism that has

long been endemic to social science and specifically to much of migration studies. Indeed, it is in this spirit that Nathalie Peutz and I (De Genova and Peutz 2010) have proposed that deportation entails the entrenchment and expansion of a veritably *global* regime (cf. Walters 2010). To shift our critical scrutiny from the more customary contexts of deporting states to those states entrusted with overseeing the *reception* of deportees, as the contributions to this volume do, supplies an absolutely crucial empirical and analytical framework for deepening our understanding of precisely these transnational, intercontinental, post-colonial configurations of the deportation regime. Nathalie Peutz (2006/2010) issued the programmatic call for "an anthropology of removal," arguing in part for the necessity to investigate what happens *after deportation* and to ethnographically document the lived experiences and perspectives of the rapidly escalating number of people around the world who have been subjected to the deportation power, whether directly or as the proverbial "collateral damage" of such devastating processes of rupture and dislocation. Peter Nyers (2010) memorably characterised the abject reverse diaspora of deportees as a "*deportspora*" and Daniel Kanstroom (2012), specifically discussing the intensification of the US deportation regime, similarly invoked the image of a "new American diaspora." Of course, neither is it the case that deportation ever ceases to produce enduring ramifications in the places from which deportees have been expelled, where their abrupt dislocation and absences continue to be palpable (Dreby 2012, 2013; Drotbohm 2015; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013). Hence, further elaborating Nyers's idea of "transnational corridors of expulsion" (Nyers [2003] 2010, p. 1070), Heike Drotbohm and Ines Hasselberg (2015) have more recently proposed the concept of the "deportation corridor," and similarly Shahram Khosravi (2016) has suggested the concept of a "global circuit of deportation," to elucidate how this regime creates a complex web of spatial and temporal interconnections across the planet through which migration and deportation increasingly entail a succession of serial multi-directional mobilities and repercussions.

In spite of the sheer violence of the disjunctures and ruptures inflicted though deportation, notably, ethnography confirms that those who have been rendered the objects of this power persistently reassert their own subjectivity. In Alice Gerlach's research in Jamaica (this volume), a deported woman memorably complains that the stigma of deportation supplants her identity even when people know her actual name, branding

her simply as "deportee," and thereby extending and reconstituting the namelessness that deportation works to impose on the deported, long after their "return." Little surprise, then, that in Sarah Turnbull's chapter in this volume, many of those who have been deported repudiate being depicted as mere "deportees," rejecting the notion that they should be represented as "victims" (cf. Plambech, this volume). This book admirably represents the genuine consolidation of a burgeoning scholarship around this vital new area of critical inquiry that has coalesced over the ensuing decade since Peutz's intervention (Bhartia 2010; Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Coutin 2010, 2015; Dreby 2012, 2013; Drotbohm 2011, 2015; Drotbohm and Hasselberg 2015; Galvin 2015; Golash-Boza 2012, 2013, 2015; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Hasselberg 2015, 2016; Hiemstra 2012; Kanstroom 2012; Khosravi 2009, 2016; Lecadet 2013; Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2015; Zilberg 2004, 2007, 2011). Such ethnographic insights into the lived struggles of the deported (as well as their loved ones and communities) restore names and identities to those who have been subjected to deportation's techniques of eradication, elucidates the enduring subjectivity of those who have been made the objects of such sovereign acts of state power, and illustrates the stubborn incorrigibility of human life against the myriad forces that would seek to enforce its precarity and disposability.

Many of the chapters in this book provide an excruciating tapestry of exactly what Susan Coutin (2010), in her depiction of the post-deportation condition in El Salvador, has memorably characterised as an outright "inviability of life." Hasselberg (this volume) rightly makes a poignant intervention by cautioning against the prospect of an ethnography of (post-)deportation degenerating into "a pornography of suffering." Nevertheless, it is indisputable that deportation inflicts a pernicious cascade of hardships and, commonly, a truly Kafkaesque multiplication of unfathomable punishments (Bhartia 2010). Time and again, the research showcased here verifies anew that the deported, upon their "return" to the countries of their ostensible citizenship, commonly confront new formations of suspicion, criminalisation, detention or imprisonment, police abuse and sometimes brutality, prolonged surveillance, stigmatisation, hostility, marginalisation, destitution, and compounded precaritisation. As Maybritt Jill Alpes (this volume) highlights, the dramatic externalisation and outsourcing of border controls in recent years, particularly on the part of the EU, ensures that would-be migrants come to be illegalised as "non-admissible" long before they ever arrive in their

destinations, subjected to "exit" controls by the very states from which they seek to depart. In Cameroon, Alpes shows, aspiring migrants are criminalised, despite their ostensible citizenship, for the peculiarly post-colonial offense of "attempting to emigrate illegally," and for their very non-admissibility in the states of the Global North—an inadmissibility that is largely co-equal with their Cameroonian citizenship and nationality. As a result, retroactively, deportees are presumptively guilty for having violated the borders of faraway lands by daring to leave the confines of their natal country without proper authorisation and with alleged recourse to subterfuge or fraud. Alpes astutely asks, therefore, whether the mere fact of juridical citizenship in many states should ever be presumed to signal safety, protection, or rights.

Not only do many deportees come to be re-criminalised after deportation, they are often effectively re-constituted in the countries of their putative citizenship as newly undocumented persons and virtual foreigners. The newly undocumented condition of many deportees is memorably illustrated by Tanya Golash-Boza and Yajaira Ceciliano's discussion (this volume) of the Dominican "letter of good conduct" (*carta de buena conducta*), a police certificate verifying one's lack of any recent criminal record, which is a costly requirement for access to work in the formal labour market but which is only available to deported returnees after a long probationary period, and nonetheless permanently brands them as deportees and ensures the likelihood of their exclusion from such employment in any case. In many instances, as Coutin (2010) and Elana Zilberg (2004, 2007, 2011) demonstrate with regard to the deportation from the USA of Salvadoran "criminal aliens" who themselves never in fact migrated—having crossed state borders only as infants or young children and subsequently having spent their lives entirely in the USA, while yet juridically inscribed as (deportable) non-citizens—the veritable inviability of the deportee condition often entails a process of their "migrantisation," their "becoming migrant" (Tazzioli 2014; cf. Garelli and Tazzioli 2016, forthcoming; Riedner et al. 2016). As Evin Rodkey (this volume) notes for the analogous case of the Dominican Republic, such "deportees neither settled in the USA by choice, nor returned to their country of birth by choice." Deportation into a condition of virtual illegality, exile, and abandonment in their ostensible "home" countries frequently compels them to seek avenues for migration back to their true homes in the places from which they have been expelled (even when prospects for such return migration trajectories are

highly implausible). Strikingly similar processes of (re-)migrantisation are evident in analogous work on Jamaica (Golash-Boza 2013, 2015; cf. Gerlach, this volume) and the Dominican Republic (Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Golash-Boza and Ceciliano, this volume; Rodkey, this volume), as well as in related scenarios such as Somalia (Peutz 2006/2010), Samoa (Weber and Powell, this volume), Cape Verde (Drotbohm 2011, 2015; Hasselberg, this volume), but notably, also in research in substantially different contexts of deportation, such as the repeated mass deportations of Afghans from Iran (Majidi, this volume) or of Zimbabweans from Botswana (Galvin 2015). Expulsion serves in many cases to merely produce temporary interruptions and spatial diversions for migrants' projects, which then compel the deported to re-mobilise as soon as possible (Khosravi 2016; see also Majidi, this volume; Plambech, this volume). These dynamics of post-deportation migration are even more compelling for those who are deported to so-called "third countries," where they have neither the semblance of belonging nor citizenship, as in the example of asylum-seekers subjected to the EU's Dublin III Regulation (Khosravi 2016; Picozza, forthcoming). "By now," Ines Hasselberg (this volume) remarks incisively, "we know better than to take deportation as the end of migration."

A parallel process of (re-)migrantisation is similarly evinced by the ordinarily very tenuous efforts (when they exist at all) toward deportees' "reintegration," whereby these ostensible citizens come to be treated, upon return, as virtual foreigners. Of course, in the case of deportees who have spent nearly all of their lives elsewhere, as is often true in the Salvadoran example, deportees are actual foreigners in the countries of their birth and juridical citizenship (see Kanstroom 2012). The very notion of "reintegration," Sarah Turnbull (this volume) reminds us, incorrectly presupposes that deportees were "integrated" in the first place. Given the common affiliation of deportees with the stigma of criminality, moreover, such apparently magnanimous notions of "reintegration" become conflated with more disciplinary ideas of "rehabilitation" (Hasselberg, this volume; Weber and Powell, this volume). Thus, deportees come to be subjected to procedures and programmes (both governmental and non-) that reinforce their more general marginalisation and their construction as cultural contaminants, corrupting influences, social deviants, or genuine menaces to social order (cf. Drotbohm 2011, 2015; Khosravi 2016; Peutz 2006/2010; Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2015; see also Hasselberg, this volume; Majidi, this volume;

Rodkey, this volume; Weber and Powell, this volume). Rather than a return "home," then, many deportees find themselves in what Khosravi has depicted as "a transnational space of expulsion, oscillating between redeparture and redeportation" (Khosravi 2016, p. 178; cf. Schuster and Majidi 2015). Indeed, as Majidi (this volume) adds, "remigration"—increasingly experienced as obligatory and inevitable—begins to plainly exude many of the key features of "forced migration."

Another formation of deportation presents itself in the form of "assisted voluntary returns." In these instances, the neoliberal inducement for deportable migrants to consent and collude in their own otherwise obligatory and inescapable "return" tends to reduce "reintegration" to a series of rather meagre cash payments (Collyer, this volume; Plambech, this volume). Remotely supervised by the deporting state, particularly in the case of those whose deportations may be legitimated through the humanitarian logics of "protection" for the "victims" of "trafficking," such "reintegration" formulas extend the deportees' subjection to the power of the deporting state by sustaining a relationship of dependency. In Sine Plambech's chapter in this book, Nigerian migrant sex worker women expose the duplicity of the humanitarian rationales of "assisted voluntary return," which require them to perform the role of "the good victim" in need of "rescue" in exchange for quite modest monetary compensation. Notably, for many of these women, the debt and effectively indentured labour that facilitate their migration ensure that sex work belongs to a continuum of other varieties of distinctly gendered migrant labour, from housekeeping to childcare to home care for the elderly, as well as other less pronouncedly feminised types of labour, from street vending to farm work. Remarkably, these women explain, it was deportation—inasmuch as it signified the "failure" of their migratory projects and, consequently, downward social mobility for themselves and their families—that presented "a bigger problem for them than the sex work, and that it was more embarrassing for them to be deported than to be former sex workers." As a result, their post-deportation eligibility for "reintegration" funds subjects them to a protracted condition of anxious waiting and dependency upon unreliable and capricious sources of financial support, purportedly intended to mitigate the very destitution and precarity that deportation itself has inflicted upon them. Similarly, Collyer (this volume) finds that such "pay-to-go" schemes of voluntary deportation tend to culminate in predictably ineffective "development" programmes, such that fatuous promises of

"development" are revealed to be simply a legitimating fig leaf for one or another deportation regime, while actually ensuring that the "reintegration" of deportees is likewise assured to fail. In a parallel but different instance, "development" is invoked as the hallowed ideal of post-colonial cooperation between France and Cameroon, in exchange for which the junior partner in enforcing the externalised borders of Europe must exhibit a demonstrable commitment to combatting the "fraud" of its own would-be migrant citizens (Alpes, this volume). Such heightened vigilance against fraud, however, merely multiplies the conditions of possibility for the extortion of bribes and thus contributes to the exacerbation of corruption and impunity. Unsurprisingly, such a compounding of vulnerabilities for the deported tends to merely aggravate further the predicaments that make their post-deportation condition inviable, and re-animate the desire or compulsion to migrate.

Hence, we are confronted with a global deportation regime in constant eruption. In its convulsions of expulsion, on an ever expanding scale, this global regime has generated ever-increasing multitudes of deportees—illegalised migrants, rejected refugees, as well as "criminal" denizens—who may be subjected by the deporting states to governmental procedures of eradication and seeming anonymity, and who may likewise be castigated anew by receiving states, but who nevertheless persist—often against egregious odds, as the vital ethnographic work of this volume amply demonstrates—in their efforts to re-make their lives and reconfigure the stakes of their aspirations and ambitions. Such examples of endurance and perseverance ought not, however, to be reduced to mere "resilience" (a rather compromised fetish of the neoliberal lexicon if ever there was one). Instead, the persistence of deportees must be recognised as yet another instance of migrant *struggles* (Tazzioli et al. 2015). These struggles may not ordinarily assert themselves in the customary idioms and forms of collective political mobilisations, and may remain largely imperceptible to state power. However, as Clara Lecadet (this volume; cf. 2013, forthcoming) demonstrates, deportees have also repudiated their social anonymity and their political erasure, re-appropriated their experiences of the humiliation, degradation, and brutality of deportation, and emerged as newly organised and articulate political subjects. In this respect, erupting from within the global corridors of expulsion, the deported—manoeuvering between nameless undesirability and audacious self-assertion and collective opposition—have begun to identify and name what Lecadet calls "a hiatus between states" in order to

reclaim a space for their distinctly transversal struggles. Notably, in the enunciations of the Togolese deportees that Lecadet documents, this meant promoting a conception of freedom of movement that would be capacious enough to encompass not merely a freedom to leave but also to remain. Thus, in the post-deportation condition, we confront anew the elementary and elemental human freedom of movement (De Genova 2010a), and the incorrigibility of the autonomy and subjectivity of migration (De Genova 2010b). Much as the autonomy of migration instigates a contest in which state power never has the first word, what we may now conceive as *the autonomy of deportation*—an autonomy and subjectivity of the deported within and against their predicaments of deportation—similarly ensures that state power never has the last word, either. Thus, inasmuch as deportation is never reducible to a single act or event, we should likewise underscore that deportation seldom signals a genuine closure, is never truly a conclusion, and never signifies the last word.

Notes

1. At least 9 of the 32 passengers were witnessed leaping from the plane to their deaths. Twelve of the 28 Mexican workers were never identified. See Three Rocks Research, on the Wayback Machine Internet Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20140320011329/http://www.picacho.org/interest/dc3-site.html. Accessed 7 Feb 2017.
2. It is important here to emphasise that I am referring to the hegemonic ideological rendering of people as virtual "waste," and that this proposition ought to be rigorously distinguished from the rather uncritical rhetorical recourse of one such as Zygmunt Bauman, who cynically recapitulates this discourse even as he presumes to critique it, by more bluntly equating migrants and refugees ("humanity on the move") with a "managerial" problem of "human waste disposal" (Bauman 2007, p. 30): "A fatal, possibly the most fatal result of modernity's global triumph, is the acute crisis of the 'human waste' disposal industry, as each new outpost conquered by capitalist markets adds new thousands or millions to the mass of men and women already deprived of their lands, workshops, and communal safety nets…. The volume of humans made redundant by capitalism's global triumph grows unstoppably and comes close now to exceeding the managerial capacity of the planet; there is a plausible prospect of capitalist modernity (or modern capitalism) *choking on its own waste products* which it can neither reassimilate or annihilate, nor detoxify (there are numerous signals of the fast rising toxicity of the rapidly accumulating waste)…. We

have not as yet arrived anywhere near seeing through to and grasping in full the far-reaching effects of the growing masses of *wasted humans* on the political balance and social equilibrium of human planetary coexistence" (Bauman 2007, pp. 28–29; emphases in the original). The theoretical tensions and discrepancies between Bauman's and my own positions may be instructively attributed to Bauman's more abstract theoretical and speculative emphasis on (capitalist) "modernity" in contra-distinction with my more focused interest in the tactics and technologies of (capitalist) state power.

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After Deportation

Ethnographic Perspectives

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Global Ethics
ISBN 978-3-319-57266-6 ISBN 978-3-319-57267-3 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57267-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017944109

Cover illustration: © Carleen van den Anker
Cover design: Jenny Vong

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland