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For immediate release

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Deported Activist Jean Montrevil Returns Home to the U.S.
Family and community call upon the government to #KeepJeanHome

New York, NY – Jean Montrevil, a long-time leader of the immigrant rights movement in New York City, has returned to the United States, more than three years after his deportation to Haiti in January 2018. He was greeted upon his arrival at John F. Kennedy International Airport by his family, members of his congregation at Manhattan’s Judson Memorial Church, and supporters. Mr. Montrevil, who filed a [federal lawsuit](#) against federal immigration officials for deporting him in retaliation against his constitutionally protected activism, has been granted a 90-day period of special interest parole, permitting him to enter the country while he pursues longer-term avenues to remain with his family in New York as conditions continue to deteriorate in Haiti. A former lawful permanent resident and father of four, Mr. Montrevil spent decades advocating for more humane immigration policies after a 1990 Virginia drug conviction led to a deportation order in his case. Virginia Governor Ralph Northam [recently pardoned](#) Mr. Montrevil, giving him the opportunity to seek to reopen his case and regain his legal status.

“I’m very excited to be with my family. Thank God, I got a chance to come back to the U.S. to live a normal life. In Haiti, with the gangs, I couldn’t even go outside. I’m happy to be back in a safe environment. Other than that, I’m excited just to be with my kids. That’s what I always wanted. A chance to watch my kids grow and be around them. Now that I got that chance, I have a lot of people to thank. Thank you to everyone who made this possible.” — **Jean Montrevil**

Mr. Montrevil has been a leader in the immigrants’ rights movement since January 2005. Before his deportation, he was an active member of Judson Memorial Church and Families for Freedom and the co-founder of New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City. In January 2018, federal immigration authorities abruptly revoked Mr. Montrevil’s permission to live in the U.S. as part of an operation that [targeted high profile immigrant rights activists](#). A [petition](#) by the Montrevil family to stop his deportation gained nearly 40,000 signatures, but immigration officials nonetheless deported him to Haiti, a country in crisis where he had not lived for over 30 years.

“Thank you to everyone who didn’t give up on my dad or my family, this has been a long treacherous fight. We know it’s not over but the work has not been left unnoticed. We have had many victories, that only led us to the biggest one of them all. And if we made it this far I know we can reach our end goal. The fight doesn’t stop and we are ready.” — **Janiah Heard**, Mr. Montrevil’s daughter

“It’s like a dream come true. I grew up without my dad. I never wanted my children to endure the pain of not having both of their parents within reach. Words can’t really describe how happy I am that Jean is receiving a second chance at life in America with his children. Thank you. Thank you.” — **Jani Cauthen**, Mr. Montrevil’s ex-wife and the mother of his children

Mr. Montrevil came to the United States from Haiti as a lawful permanent resident more than 30 years ago, at age 17. ICE first detained him for deportation in 2005, on the basis of decades-old criminal convictions he had received as a young man. Since Mr. Montrevil’s deportation in 2018, family members, alongside Mr. Montrevil’s congregation at Judson Memorial Church, launched a campaign to [Bring Jean Home](#). This included efforts to advocate for a pardon from Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, which was granted earlier this summer. He and his campaign supporters are now asking the government to join his immigration case, so that he can seek relief from deportation, regain his status as a permanent U.S. resident, and apply for naturalization as a U.S. citizen.

“As moderator of Judson Church, I know that Jean is one of us. The congregation has been incomplete without him, so we rallied, marched, and prayed toward this glorious day. We thank all the people and powers for bringing our brother home where he belongs. Praise God.” — **Keen Berger**, Moderator, Judson Memorial Church

“Tears in my eyes. Tears of gratitude that my country finally came to its senses and that Jean can be restored to his church and his family and children.” — **Rev. Donna Schaper**

Mr. Montrevil’s return home from Haiti comes amid a deepening crisis in the country. The assassination of the Haitian president this July resulted in a power vacuum and sparked widespread violence. Then, in August, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake killed over 2,000 people and destroyed over 137,000 homes, compounding the already severe instability, growing violence, and kidnappings. With thousands of Haitian immigrants seeking safe haven on the U.S. border in recent weeks, the situation in Haiti remains dire. Mass expulsions and [abuse of Haitians at the border](#) have led to increasing scrutiny of anti-Haitian and anti-Black immigration policies. The Haitian government, leaders in the immigrants’ rights movement, and human rights organizations have made clear that Haiti is not able to receive deportees, and they continue to plead with the U.S. government to halt deportations to a country in crisis.

“The injustices that Jean and his family have had to face are reprehensible and it is long past time that DHS corrected them. The fight to bring Jean home has been very long. We are all beyond happy that he can finally be home with his family, friends, and community.” — **Fanta Fofana**, Senior Organizer, Families for Freedom

Mr. Montrevil’s return also comes amid a growing recognition of the need to protect the First Amendment rights of immigrant rights activists. Numerous organizations and elected officials condemned the targeting of Mr. Montrevil in 2018. The Democratic Party condemned retaliation in immigration enforcement as part of its 2020 platform, and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas stated in [his most recent guidance](#) for immigration enforcement that “[a] noncitizen’s exercise of their First Amendment rights also should never be a factor in deciding to take enforcement action.” The New York University (NYU) School of Law Immigrant Rights Clinic has documented more than [1000 instances of retaliation](#) against immigrant rights activists in recent years.

“Jean’s advocacy for immigrant rights inspired a movement. When he was deported, that movement continued, and fought for his return. No one should be deported for speaking out about the cruelty of the immigration system. We celebrate the return of Jean Montrevil as a first step towards righting these wrongs.” — **Alina Das**, Co-Director of the NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic, and one of Mr. Montrevil’s attorneys.

Mr. Montrevil is represented by the NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic and WilmerHale. His return has the support of numerous immigrant rights organizations (including [Just Futures Law](#) and the [National Immigrant Justice Center](#) which issued statements and reports this year in support of his return), members of the clergy, and elected officials, including Mr. Montrevil’s representatives in Congress, Representative Gregory Meeks and Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand. Earlier this year, Congressmembers Meeks, Nadler, Velázquez, Higgins, Clarke, Rice, Ocasio-Cortez, Bowman, and Torres wrote to DHS Secretary Mayorkas seeking Mr. Montrevil's return.

Members of Jean’s family, defense community, and community will gather at Judson Memorial Church on Sunday, October 24 at 11:00 a.m. for a celebration of Jean’s return home to his beloved family and community. For more information on Jean’s case and his efforts to pursue relief, visit <https://www.bringjeanhome.org/>.

Additional quotes:

“Jean, his family, friends and team have been fighting restlessly for years on his case. He belongs with his beautiful children. Status should not be a means for the separation of families. I look

forward to the day he is returned back to the United States and united with his loved ones.” — **Bintou Fofana**, Organizer, Families for Freedom

“In over 25 years of government service I have seen very few instances of injustice that could compare with ICE’s abuse of Jean. His temporary parole is long overdue and he should be granted permanent status immediately.” — **Craig Kuehl**, U.S. Consul General (retired) and member of Judson Memorial Church

“This is an amazing triumph for Jean, his family and friends. It truly is beautiful to see what can be accomplished when people come together and fight for justice.” — **Jeanette Torres**, Bilingual Organizer, Families for Freedom

“I am thrilled that Jean can finally come home to his beloved family where he belongs.” — **Mary Russell**, member of Judson Memorial Church

“Jean is a strong helper of those in need and a devoted father. We cherish his return.” — **Ed Powers**, member of Judson Memorial Church