

Governor Pardons Six Immigrants Facing Deportation Over Old Crimes

The New York Times

December 7, 2010 Tuesday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 25

Length: 719 words

Byline: By KIRK SEMPLE

Body

Gov. David A. Paterson announced pardons on Monday for six immigrants facing deportation because of old criminal convictions, including a financial administrator at the City University of New York.

The governor said the pardons addressed "shortcomings in our federal immigration laws relating to deportation."

Mr. Paterson began a special clemency process in the spring with the principal aim of helping permanent legal residents -- green card holders -- who were at risk of deportation because of long-ago or minor convictions.

"Federal immigration laws," he said, "are often inflexible, arbitrarily applied and excessively harsh, resulting in the deportation of individuals who have paid the price for their crimes and are now making positive contributions to our society. These pardons represent an attempt to achieve fairness and justice."

Mr. Paterson convened a so-called pardon panel last May. In the past several weeks, its five members have been sifting through about 1,100 petitions for clemency, referring promising cases to the governor's Executive Clemency Committee, which has recommended cases to the governor for final determination.

Officials say the governor may issue another batch of pardons before his term ends this month.

The administrator who was pardoned, Mario Benitez, 58, is a Dominican immigrant and the current assistant director of finance for CUNY's Graduate School and University Center. He pleaded guilty to selling a controlled substance in 1988 and served three years in prison, according to a statement from the governor's office.

The statement praised Mr. Benitez's achievements since his release, particularly his rise "to jobs with higher levels of responsibility" and his community activities in the Bronx, including mentoring.

Efforts to reach Mr. Benitez for comment were unsuccessful.

Another pardon recipient was Kevin Auyeung, 32, a Chinese immigrant who, at age 17, was convicted of robbery. While he was in prison, his impoverished father bought him a manual on computers and a Chinese-English dictionary, the statement said.

Mr. Auyeung went on to earn a G.E.D. and form his own cellular communications services company. In 2006, despite determining that it would be "inhumane to deport him," immigration officials detained him, a news release said.

Though Mr. Auyeung was eventually released, the governor's office said, the detention cost him his business. "Nonetheless, Mr. Auyeung has managed to maintain steady employment and has consistently volunteered as an interpreter for elderly persons in Chinatown," the office said.

Governor Pardons Six Immigrants Facing Deportation Over Old Crimes

The **governor** also **pardoned** Deborah Salako-Nation, 41, a Nigerian **immigrant facing deportation** for one larceny conviction and two forgery convictions. In the decade since the convictions, officials said in the statement, Ms. Salako-Nation "has worked steadily in order to support her college-age son and her 6-year-**old** autistic son."

Also **pardoned** was Marlon Oscar Powell, 36, a Jamaican **immigrant** who was being held in an immigration jail in New Jersey on Monday, **facing deportation** for a misdemeanor drug possession conviction when he was 15, the **governor's** office said.

While most of the **pardon** recipients had green cards, one, Sanjay Broomfield, was a legal **immigrant** whose past conviction had blocked his application for a green card.

Mr. Broomfield, 28, a Jamaican **immigrant**, was convicted of criminal possession of a weapon in 2005 after he shot and killed a burglar trying to break into his home in Suffolk County, officials said. While he was serving three years' probation, he married an American citizen and applied for a green card.

But even though a district attorney had concluded that the shooting was justified, immigration authorities rejected Mr. Broomfield's application, because, they said, his illegal possession of a weapon had resulted in a death.

Immigration officials "may take no account of the New York State criminal justice decisions," **Governor** Paterson said, "but I do."

The **governor** also **pardoned** Darshini Ramsaran, 25, a citizen of Guyana and Trinidad who was **facing deportation** for her participation four years ago in a robbery, officials said. Mr. Paterson's office said that if Ms. Ramsaran were to be **deported**, her life would be in danger from two men who were **deported** after she testified against them.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: IMMIGRATION (92%); **DEPORTATION** (91%); CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS (90%); **PARDONS** (90%); **GOVERNORS** (90%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (90%); UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION (90%); CORRECTIONS (89%); IMMIGRATION LAW (89%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (78%); LARCENY & THEFT (78%); JAIL SENTENCING (78%); GUILTY PLEAS (73%); CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (73%); PETITIONS (73%); GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (72%); ROBBERY (61%); SENIOR CITIZENS (58%); COUNTERFEITING & FORGERY (50%); AUTISM (50%)

Industry: GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (72%)

Person: DAVID PATERSON (79%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (79%)

Governor Pardons Six Immigrants Facing Deportation Over Old Crimes

Load-Date: December 7, 2010

End of Document