

Noah's Story

“[Noah] is actually not a citizen of Cameroon. Our Cameroon Ambassador in the Ivory Coast attests to this fact. I wish that I had been in possession of this knowledge at the time I was asked [by ICE] to issue this Laissez-Passer in May of 2013.”

- Dr. Charles Greene

Noah was denied asylum and had no other pathway to pursue U.S. citizenship. However, an Immigration Judge granted him withholding of removal, which means that Noah cannot legally be returned to the country of his citizenship, the country he fled from, due to fear of persecution. Ordinarily, getting a withholding of removal allows a person to stay in the United States legally, even if they cannot ultimately become a U.S. citizen.

A withholding of removal, however, did not guarantee Noah any security. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) continued to pursue Noah's deportation, and obtained a travel document for him to Cameroon, a country to which Noah has no ties, has never been to and is not a citizen of.

How did ICE end up with a travel document to Cameroon? Dr. Charles R. Greene, III, a full-time Methodist minister in Texas who is not

a Cameroonian citizen and has spent less than a month in Cameroon, issued Noah's travel document. Dr. Greene stated in federal court that the Cameroonian embassy appointed him as an “honorary consul of Cameroon” in 1986 after the Shell Petroleum Company and Lewis Hoffacker, a former U.S. ambassador to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, nominated Dr. Greene for the position.

Under oath, Dr. Greene explained the difference between an honorary consul and a consulate: “According to the Vienna code,...[honorary consuls] are limited by our scope of immunity, as well as our duties.” Dr. Greene stated that because his duties are restricted to Texas, he had no authority to issue travel documents for persons from outside of the state. Dr. Greene considers his primary duty as honorary counsel to involve issuing laissez-passers to Cameroonian citizens residing in Texas, who need to return to Cameroon for pressing reasons, but who do not have travel documents.

ICE officers called Dr. Greene and asked him to issue Noah a travel document, informing him that Noah was located “to the north of here.” Dr. Greene interpreted to mean “north of here” to mean Texas State Penitentiary, located to the north of Houston, where Dr. Greene was residing. Under this assumption, Dr. Greene issued Noah a Cameroonian laissez-passers on May 21, 2013. ICE failed to inform Dr. Greene that Noah was actually detained in York County, Pennsylvania, during this time.

Dr. Greene's travel document issue to Noah included inaccurate information about Noah. The travel document inaccurately stated that Noah was a “citizen of Cameroon,” who was born in 2013. Noah is not a citizen of Cameroon and was not born in 2013 – in fact, if he was, Dr. Greene would be issuing travel documents to deport a toddler. Dr. Greene's travel document for Noah included a photograph of someone other than Noah.

Noah contacted many organizations to contest the validity of the travel document Dr. Greene had issued him. Families for Freedom wrote to the Cameroonian Embassy to inquire about the

validity of Dr. Greene's travel document but did not hear back. The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy, and Labor also conducted an investigation of the travel document. On October 24, 2013, Joseph Bienvenu Charles Foe-Atangana, the Cameroonian Ambassador to the U.S., wrote to Dr. Greene stating, "Please be advised that [Noah] and his associates are making too much noise about this matter, claiming that [Noah] is not a citizen of Cameroon."

Months later, Dr. Greene wrote a letter to the Cameroonian embassy stating, "[Noah] is actually not a citizen of Cameroon. Our Cameroon Ambassador in the Ivory Coast attests to this fact. I wish that I had been in possession of this knowledge at the time I was asked [by ICE] to issue this Laissez-Passer in May of 2013. [Noah] therefore is to return to the Ivory Coast."¹

Dr. Greene's rescindment of the travel document he had issued to ICE came too late. Noah had already been deported to Cameroon. His current whereabouts are unknown. If he is still in Cameroon, he is likely facing significant barriers to accessing basic rights and services, since he entered the country without valid travel documents.

1 Letter from Dr. Charles Greene, Honorary Consul of Cameroon, to Jerry Lynch, Esq. (May 14, 2014) (on file with author).