

Abstract

NO HOME FOR THE BRAVE:
Understanding America's Veteran Deportation System

by

Andrew Steinberg

Brown University

The term “deported veteran” seems like an oxymoron. However, the US has created a legal regime which exiles thousands of ex-servicemembers who served honorably in its Armed Forces. This paper investigates the complex history and policies facilitating this system and demarcates the three legal arenas in which the US government forsakes its noncitizen veterans. First, the government fails to naturalize eligible servicemembers, leaving them vulnerable to future deportation. Second, punitive immigration laws and limited judicial discretion force many ex-servicemembers out of the country. Third, the government’s unwillingness to provide legally-mandated healthcare constitutes a moral abdication unbecoming of any nation. The segmented and linear chronology of these “three failures” put forward by this paper can help advocates explain the legal, social, and political factors contributing to veteran deportation. The piece also suggests legal remedies to resolve these problems and argues that a multi-pronged approach is necessary for immigrant servicemembers to achieve their country’s promise and live with dignity during and after their service.