



**IMMIGRANT  
DEFENSE  
PROJECT**

**PARDON**NY  
IMMIGRANT CLEMENCY PROJECT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Hochul Pardons 9 New Yorkers Facing Harsh Immigration Consequences and Grants 4 Commutations**

*The time is now for the Governor to make good on her promise to exercise a historically underused executive power*

**December 21, 2022**

**ALBANY, NY** – Today, Governor Kathy Hochul granted 9 pardons to immigrants who have made significant contributions to New York, yet face severe immigration consequences because of their convictions. While we applaud the Governor’s announcements to grant these 9 pardons and to commute the sentences of 4 others, thousands of New Yorkers are still waiting on clemency decisions from the Governor and will remain separated from their families and communities this holiday season.

One of the pardon recipients is Paul Antoine, a former green card holder who first came to the United States at the age of 5 and was deported to Trinidad and Tobago in 2010. Mr. Antoine has been separated from his family and community in New York for over a dozen years, including his mother who has undergone medical treatments without him. The pardon makes Paul eligible to reopen his immigration case and pursue relief which could finally make it possible for him to return home to the United States.

**Paul Antoine** said, “We all make mistakes. It can be a blessing at times or it can be a sharp pain in your soul. It all depends how you overcome your battles and the choices you make. I would like to thank Governor Hochul from the bottom of my heart for granting me a pardon for the actions I regret making fourteen years ago. I also want to thank the Immigrant Defense Project for helping my dreams come to reality. As I write this, I’m still in shock and overwhelmed with tears of excitement and joy. Being deported changed my outlook on life in so many ways. I’ve become a better person and have devoted my time going to church and mentoring youth in Haiti. The person I am today is absolutely a 360 version of what I was 14 years ago. My mother and my family members are extremely happy and also want to say thank you for giving me the chance to redeem myself back to society.”

In 2021, the Governor committed to dedicating additional resources to be able to grant clemency not just once a year, but on a rolling basis throughout the year and to increasing transparency and communication with applicants. Just as we celebrate today’s announcement, we will hold the Governor to her commitments.

“Governor Hochul has brought relief to 13 New Yorkers who faced a lifetime of punishment for past convictions and taken steps towards more transparency in the clemency process,” said **Yasmine Farhang, Director of Advocacy with the Immigrant Defense Project**. “Yet, we know that the Governor can use this power more broadly and consistently - granting clemency throughout the year, unlike her predecessor. Families who are separated during these holidays either by incarceration or deportation, or who remain at risk of separation, cannot wait another year in hopes of another shot. The time is now for urgent action and IDP will continue to call on the Governor to follow through on this commitment.”

Clemency is a powerful but underused tool that offers recipients the second chance that is routinely denied by the overly punitive criminal and immigration systems. Pardons and commutations are a means for the Governor to address the unfairness of excessive sentences as well as harsh immigration consequences that never expire. For example, the immigration system assigns the punishment of deportation without taking into consideration the whole of a person’s life. Because ICE can detain and deport someone with a criminal conviction for the rest of their life, regardless of how much time passes, a Governor’s pardon helps keep families and communities together and relieves people of the heavy burden a criminal record carries into perpetuity under draconian immigration law. New York’s governors have historically granted far fewer clemencies than other states.

In 2018, IDP launched the Immigrant Clemency Project, an initiative to help immigrants access pardons and push back against policies that disempower and marginalize people with criminal histories. The program was piloted in New York State, under PardonNY, and included coordinating advocacy for applications submitted by IDP and partner organizations to the Governor’s office on behalf of individuals, most of whom have decade-old convictions. For more information on PardonNY, please visit [ImmigrantPardonProject.com](http://ImmigrantPardonProject.com).

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### **About the Immigrant Defense Project**

The Immigrant Defense Project (IDP) is a New York-based nonprofit that works to secure fairness and justice for immigrants in the racially-biased U.S. criminal and immigration systems. IDP fights to end the current era of unprecedented mass criminalization, detention and deportation through a multi-pronged strategy including advocacy, litigation, legal support, community partnerships, and strategic communications. Visit [www.immigrantdefenseproject.org](http://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org) and follow [@ImmDefense](https://twitter.com/ImmDefense).