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LANDMARK VICTORY FOR SUBU VEDAM:
COURT REJECTS GOVERNMENT'S BID TO DEPORT MAN
WHO SERVED 43 YEARS IN PRISON FOR CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT

Immigration Judge Says Allowing Vedam To Remain In Country "Is In the Best Interest of the United States"; Vedam to Remain in Detention, Pending Bond Hearing

A federal immigration court Thursday ruled that a Pennsylvania man who spent 43 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit — only to be seized and detained by ICE one day after he was exonerated — is entitled to remain in the United States.

The decision by Judge Adam Panopoulos protects Subramanyam "Subu" Vedam against the threat of deportation and brings long-awaited relief to a man who was forced to forfeit his freedom over the past four decades to a seemingly intractable stranglehold of injustice.

In his ruling, Judge Panopoulos concluded that "it is in the best interest of the United States" to waive Vedam's threatened removal from the country.

Since he was wrongfully imprisoned in 1983, "the choices [Vedam] did make consistently point to a man who has good moral character," Judge Panopoulos said, culminating a decision he read from the bench. "He felt compelled to act in response to what he saw were injustices in the system. He dedicated himself to his family. He consistently read and studied to sharpen his mind. He is a person of good moral character."

Vedam will remain a permanent legal U.S. resident. The federal government has 30 days to determine whether it will appeal Judge Panopoulos' ruling. Vedam's attorneys will seek his release from federal detention during that time at an ensuing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled. Vedam has been confined in a federal detention facility in Philipsburg, PA where he has been held since October.

"We're profoundly grateful to Judge Panopoulous not only for affording Subu the justice he had been deprived over so many decades, but also for seeing him as the honorable, compassionate, conscientious man – he has always been," said Saraswathi Vedam, Subu's Vedam's sister. "We

had dared to dream that this day would come, sharing Subu's belief that the truth would prevail. Even through 44 years of setbacks, Subu never let it defeat his spirit. Though sentenced wrongly to life without parole, he lived an exemplary life of service and education.Today's decision was possible because the judge took the time to review his record with care, so he could understand how Subu Vedam transcended injustice to leave such a positive imprint on those around him."

Vedam was admitted to the United States as a legal permanent resident when he was nine-months-old. He lived continuously in State College, PA until he was arrested in 1982 and held in connection with the death of Thomas Kinser of Boalsburg, PA. Charged with murder, based on circumstantial evidence that was later discovered to be fraudulent, Vedam was wrongfully convicted of the crime and sentenced to life without parole in a maximum security Pennsylvania prison.

In 2022, records surfaced showing that the prosecutor who had charged Vedam with the crime had unlawfully manipulated his wrongful conviction by concealing critical evidence that could have substantiated his innocence. That subterfuge violated Vedam's constitutional rights, according to the Pennsylvania court that vacated his wrongful conviction last August

Shortly after that court decision, on October 2nd, local authorities finally dropped charges against Vedam. Though he was authorized for release, the state prison officials cooperated with ICE agents to intercept and whisk him into a federal detention center in Philipsburg, PA, based on an ancient deportation order associated with his wrongful murder conviction and a nonviolent drug offense. Later that month ICE relocated him to Louisiana in an apparent attempt to unilaterally deport him without legal authorization until the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals and a Federal Circuit Court both intervened to bar his removal.

In February, the BIA ruled that Vedam was entitled to have his immigration case re-opened, characterizing his case as an "exceptional situation" that warranted review by an immigration court. That decision led to Wednesday's decision by Judge Panopoulos.

Vedam's challenge invoked a near-extinct provision of immigration law, known as Section 212(c), that permits a judge to exercise discretion and allow an immigrant to remain in the US after taking into account the balance of their history. Vedam asked the court to consider the glaring injustice he suffered during his 43 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit; his exemplary record of charitable services, tutoring he provided to fellow inmates, and advanced college degrees he earned while unjustly confined in prison; as well as the support of his large universe of family and community members who are United States Citizens.

Vedam, himself, was only days away from taking his oath of U.S. citizenship when he was wrongfully arrested and subsequently convicted, creating the impetus for the deportation order that was nullified by the Board of Immigration Appeals.

During his wrongful imprisonment, Vedam designed and led a prison literacy training program; raised money for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program; tutored and mentored hundreds of inmates to help them earn educational diplomas, tangible skills, and legal relief; and earned three university degrees with high honors and journeyman-level tradesperson status, himself. He also became the first person in the nearly 150 years of his correctional institution to earn a master's degree while behind bars.