

# Ghana Must Go, 40 Years on

## Building Solidarity against Xenophobia in Africa

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This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria, and 44 years since the earlier expulsion of Nigerians from Ghana. Ideas and practices of exclusion based on citizenship and nationality have become tools by which States in Africa sometimes manage populations and socio-economic crises. States in the West African sub-region have mostly inherited these tools from the colonial assignment of belonging and have since gone on to apply them on whatever population appears vulnerable. This practice came to a peak in 1983 when an economic crisis in Nigeria was blamed on immigrants, the majority of whom were from Ghana.

What lessons can we learn from these difficult histories of retaliatory anti-immigrant policies in order to create harmonious, peaceful and welcoming societies in Africa that are opposed to all forms of xenophobia? As part of our ongoing work on [Migration for Development and Equality \(MIDEQ\)](#) which spans over 12 countries in the Global South, it has become abundantly clear that migrant worker rights are routinely abused across the globe on a regular basis. There have been many efforts to address these indignities. These include micro level efforts such as identity-based associations that migrants form to address the many oppressions they face, meso-level activities such as unionization

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and macro level efforts such as protests. Citizens sometimes offer support in this regard such as in cases where they organize protests at which migrant associations can voice their unique needs and hence get heard.

We find these forms of solidarity particularly powerful because they recognize the common humanity of us all. Whether citizen or migrant, each individual has basic human rights that must be respected and promoted at all times. Similarly, citizenship status does not make one immune from experiencing second class citizenship status as an immigrant. While individuals may be located in their countries of origin, given that they may either migrate one day or have relatives who are (potential) migrants, the needs of migrants must thus be of concern for citizens and migrants alike. This is a message that some groupings understand well, and we wanted to instill such a view in the younger generation. The fortieth anniversary of the Ghana must go episode in Ghana's history provided a perfect opportunity for sharing such a message.

We wanted to revisit this episode in Ghana's history as an opportunity to teach lessons about migrant solidarity and the dangers of anti-migrant mobilization. To do it in a manner that would have a lasting impression on the Continent, we are therefore organizing an [exhibition](#) focusing on hope, community, and solidarity across borders in a world where migration is being criminalized. In a sense, our intention is to use various forms of arts and [exhibitions](#), history, and research in order to counter a growing anti-immigrant sentiment in Ghana as well as other parts of Africa. How can we build a future in African communities and states without another "must go"?