

# Deportability and deportation in Africa-China migrations: Probing the lifeworlds of Nigerian “deportspora”

## Abstract

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How do the manifestations of deportability in everyday life, and deportation experiences, constitute Nigerian migrants into a “deportable diaspora” in South China? Despite the scholarly attention paid to the migration of Africans to China, questions of deportability and the return flows through their deportation are under-explored. This presentation will examine this critical gap in Sino-African migrations scholarship by exploring the lifeworlds of Nigerian migrants in relation to their experiences of deportability and deportation in Guangzhou City. The discussion combines data generated from two separate studies: the first was conducted among Nigerians residing in Guangzhou (2017) while the second study involved Nigerian male deportees from China (2020-2021). I will argue that Nigerian migrants in Guangzhou, who are mainly undocumented men, fall into the category of deportable diasporas or “deportspora” (Nyers 2003). Under massive state surveillance and anti-black policing practices, they are exposed to “illegalisation”, experience deportability threats and become vulnerable to arrest and possible re-dispersal as deportees. I will arrive at this claim by describing how lived experiences of police evasion through running, and brutalisation of Nigerian male bodies are grounded in state-level production “triple illegals”. Once arrested and processed for deportation, Nigerian migrants are further rendered invisible and disconnected from the world outside. Reflecting on the structured nature of “sending back” rituals and relationality of about-to-be-deported Nigerians, I suggest the existence of African “deportspora”, in addition to African diaspora, in China. The presentation advances critical debates in deportation studies, especially in the under-researched context of Sino-African migrations.

## Author Bio

**Kudus Oluwatoyin Adebayo** is a Research Fellow in the Diaspora and Transnational Studies programme of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow of the ARUA/Carnegie Early Career Fellowship at Wits’ African Centre for Migration and Society, Johannesburg, South Africa and was a Postdoctoral of the ACLS/African Humanities Program (AHP). His recent articles, which appeared in *Migration Letters*, *Migration Studies* and *International Sociology*, examined Nigerian migrations to China, with specific engagement with issues of settlement, race, interracial family dynamics, child upbringing and return. His research is at the intersection of international migration and diaspora, knowledge production, and urban studies.