# Choose Your Deport Option! ™

A Ten-Minute Play

**by Margaret O'Donnell**

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# Choose Your Deport Option! TM

**Synopsis:** Day after dreary day, immigrants in US immigration court are driven on an express lane through the justice system. But it's not fast enough! Until now. Department of Justice bureaucrats have developed the novel, the efficient, the due-process free *Choose Your Deport Option! TM* and are testing it out in court. If the pilot succeeds, the DOJ will deport immigrants in numbers higher than its wildest dreams. And it will succeed! Unless of course, some joker throws a wrench into the works.

**Characters**:

Immigration Court Clerk/Ex-Clerk
Guard/Judge/Ex-Guard
Immigrant One/ Immigrant Judge
Immigrant Two/ Immigrant Guard.

**Setting**:
Immigration court room in the United States.

**Time**:
The present.

*At rise, Immigrants are seated on one side of the stage as if in a courtroom. They are nervous and dejected. Each wear a lanyard with the word Immigrant. Guard, wearing a Guard lanyard, stands beside the Immigrants. Clerk, wearing a Clerk lanyard, enters busily, carrying a clipboard with papers and a pen.*

CLERK

(*to the immigrants*) Well, hello there! And welcome to immigration court! (*pause as they survey the group, wags a finger at them)* I know what you're thinking. You don't know why you're here, right? Right!

*An immigrant raises a hand.*

CLERK

A question! Glad you tried to ask that, whatever it is. Because this is where I say: hold your questions to the end. And the end (*chuckles*) will come when you get back to wherever you came from, or some other place, somewhere, wherever/

IMMIGRANT

Don't we have the right to an attorney?

CLERK

You don't have an attorney? Well, boo-hoo. Only twenty percent in immigration court do. Ask yourselves, what makes ME so special? Besides, today is your lucky day!

IMMIGRANT

Huh? Is this a joke?

*Guard moves towards Immigrant, hand on weapon.*

CLERK

(*sighs loudly*) It's okay. Normally, Guard here would toss you in solitary for a couple of weeks so you could cool down. But not today! Why? Remember what I said? Anyone?

IMMIGRANT

Because today is our lucky day?

CLERK

Bingo! Today, we're testing a new way to speed up court proceedings AND give you a say in your own destiny! You can now Choose Your Deport Option™. And, heeere's the form! (*picking up the forms from the table*) Guard, let 'em have it.

*Guard hands one form to each immigrant. Immigrants study the form.*

CLERK

Okay, let's go through this together. Choose your story and check the outcome you prefer. And presto, you're done!

IMMIGRANT

I have a question about the form.

CLERK

Well? Make it snappy! This is the speedy trial option. No gumming up the system, got it?

IMMIGRANT

Got it. Uh, none of these stories fit me. I mean, none of these are my name or country, or anything/

CLERK

Duh! That's the whole point of speedy. We standardized the immigrants along with the process. It doesn't matter who you choose! No more listening to endless sob stories! No more messy details. Check off anyone you've secretly longed to be. Have fun with this!

IMMIGRANT

My form only has four options. Was the option to win our cases left off by mistake?

CLERK

HaHaHaHa! The government does not make mistakes. What kind of country do you think we are? Please. So let me go through this very slowly. Staying in the US with legal status is NOT a Choose Your Deport Option™. That's why this is called Choose Your Deport Option ™. You get to choose how you are deported. Get it?

IMMIGRANT

Oh. Can I get out of this pilot?

CLERK

You don't want to participate in the pilot? Fine. I'm authorized to deport you immediately. You will be loaded onto a plane to Eswatini tonight. No more Mr. Nice Guy. Guard! We got another one.

*Guard moves towards Immigrant, handcuffs out.*

IMMIGRANT

No! I mean, I was just asking! I do want to be in the pilot.

*Guard stops, looks to CLERK for guidance.*

CLERK

(*to Immigrant*) You think this is easy? Do you? Do you?

IMMIGRANT

Uh, no, I don't. I'm sure you have a hard job.

CLERK

Criticism! Constant criticism. It hurts when people you are trying to help are so unappreciative. Can you understand that? No, of course you can't. All you can think about is your own paltry affairs. No one, not even one gives a hoot in hell for the poor guy who has to stand up here, day after day, and take this constant criticism! Look, I didn't come up with this pilot. I'm just the sap who has to administer it. But do you care? No. No one cares.

*Clerk cries, dabs their face with a tissue, blows their nose. Everyone sits still for a few beats.*

IMMIGRANT

I'm sorry you have such a hard job.

*Clerk continues to cry.*

IMMIGRANT

Do you want a hug?

*Clerk nods. Immigrant gives Clerk a hug, and Clerk hugs back.*

IMMIGRANT

There, there. Feeling better?

*Clerk nods and blows their nose again. Immigrant returns to their seat*

CLERK

Thank you. Now, where were we? Right. Good choice. No more delays, no more uncertainty. No need to scrape together twenty thousand for a bond. No applications, no appeals, no money for lawyers. Clean, fast, efficient, and due process free.

GUARD

Hey, can we get on with it? I gotta get the next lot in here. They're standing cheek to cheek in the waiting room.

CLERK

*(glares at Guard)* You are NOT the boss of me! I can talk as long as I want. *(to Immigrants)* Confidentially, guys, if all goes well with this pilot roll-out (*leaning in, with a stage whisper*) my boss'll promote me to judge!

*Clerk clearly expects congratulations. Immigrants and Guard are silent.*

CLERK

Well? (*pause*) I thought you cared. (*begins to sniffle*)

IMMIGRANTS

Congratulations, Clerk!

GUARD

(*snidely*) Yeah. Clap. Clap.

CLERK

(*fake smiles at Guard and wags a finger*) Jealousy, jealousy. Maybe if you behave, you'll get to be a clerk someday. Or maybe not. They only take the best for this job. (*to immigrants*) Remember to choose wisely. Your choice is irrevocable. My heartfelt good wishes and best of luck to you!

*Clerk waves jauntily and exits. Immigrants sit still, staring at their forms, then filling them out. Guard takes off his Guard lanyard puts on a judge's robe, puts the Judge lanyard around his neck, and takes a seat behind the judge's bench. Immigrants look up in surprise.*

JUDGE

All rise!

*Immigrants stand.*

JUDGE

You may be seated.

*Immigrants sit.*

IMMIGRANT

You're the judge, too?

JUDGE

Resource conservation.

IMMIGRANT

But the clerk said they/

JUDGE

Yeah, what a sap. They already got me in the job. HaHaHa!

*Immigrants titter uneasily.*

JUDGE

Silence in the court! Keep order or I'll have to come over there, cuff you, and gag you until I can wrestle you down to detention. Understood? (*beat*) Speak when you're spoken to!

IMMIGRANTS

Yes!

JUDGE

Yes, *Judge*!

IMMIGRANTS

Yes, Judge!

JUDGE

Okay. Now where was I?

*Immigrants sit silently.*

JUDGE

I said, where was I!

IMMIGRANT

You were talking about wrestling us, Judge.

JUDGE

I was not!

IMMIGRANT

You were about to hear our cases, Judge.

JUDGE

Was I? Hmm. Let's see here. (*shuffling through papers on the table*) Oh yes! The form! Guard, collect the forms!

*Judge takes off their robe and lanyard, puts on the Guard lanyard, leaves the bench and collects the forms from each immigrant, then returns to the bench, mimes handing them to the judge, puts on the judge's robe and lanyard, and sits.*

JUDGE

*(calling out)* Alien number 101.

*Immigrants look at each other, and shrug.*

JUDGE

Alien number 101!

*Immigrants sit silently.*

JUDGE

Guard! Find Alien 101!