

# Unshakable Optimism

In April 2022, Syed Jamal will face an immigration judge, again.

Jamal, a Donnelly College faculty member, will stand in what is now an unfortunately familiar setting for him, a courtroom, surrounded by his wife, children, friends, colleagues and supporters, as his attorney pleads a case for visa renewal and tells of Jamal's 33-year history in the United States as a student, researcher, teacher, family man and valued community member.

In 2010, due to a paperwork error, Jamal fell out of compliance with the visa he had possessed since 1987 when he came to the United States to study after having become targeted as a controversial journalist in Bangladesh. It was then, during his first journey to the United States mainland from Hawaii, that Jamal got his first taste of American culture when he heard and fell in love with the pop music of the era by performers such as U2, Starship, Whitney Huston and Bruce Springsteen. It was a sign—the first indication to Jamal that he would belong in his newly adopted country.

After three decades in the United States, Jamal's future is uncertain. His case has been well documented in the press, both locally and nationally. His story of being detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials on his driveway while his children watched resulted in a Change.org petition with more than 110,000 signatures and garnered the attention of his congressional representatives who co-sponsored a bill to extend protection to him and his family.

Jamal spent almost two months in jail and was in the process of being deported when he was given a reprieve. Just before he heard that he could return home to his family to await his next hearing in 2022, Jamal found comfort in an unusual place. He was once again on an airplane, but this time he was flying from Los Angeles to Hawaii, away from the mainland, on his way back to Bangladesh in the custody of immigration officials. It was on that trip,



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**Syed Jamal**  
Adjunct Professor

just before the call came to turn the plane around, that he heard over the loudspeaker some of those same 1980s pop songs he had heard while flying to the mainland some 32 years prior.

For Jamal, a man of faith and overflowing optimism, it was an unmistakable sign that he would soon return home. And soon he did. Now he awaits his day in court. “Good triumphs over evil,” Jamal said, “and if you do good things, good things will happen to you.”

Jamal teaches Anatomy and Physiology, Chemistry and Nutrition at Donnelly College. **D**