



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Letter to President Biden in Support of Haitian refugees at the US-Mexico Border

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL September 24, 2021

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Dear President Biden:

We are writing to you out of extreme concern for the Haitian migrants attempting to enter the United States near the U.S. Mexico border, where video footage shows Border Patrol whipping their reins at them. This is a clear violation of human rights and domestic and international law. The actions on that video is not an example of how Americans, particularly those in power, should treat their fellow human beings.

The last time we saw white men whipping black people in such a public horrendous fashion was during the Jim Crow era and the subsequent separation and dehumanization that followed. Later during the first half of the twentieth century, blacks were separated from whites in ghettos to control their growing population in what is considered American Apartheid. Now, not much has changed. The images are very much the same.

These immigrants traveled to the United States because you promised them that they would be safe here. Respectfully, you went back on your word. It was only a few months ago that you said our country would welcome the Haitian people when the Department of Homeland Security designated Haiti for temporary protected status, a designation given when there are conditions of extreme political upheaval, conflict, or natural disasters. Our government said point blank that Haiti was not a safe place.

Temporary protected status was extended and expanded for Haitians just five weeks ago, but now 14,000 Haitians are being expelled, almost the same number at the Del Rio encampment, citing Title 42 of the Constitution - removals by the U.S. government of persons who have recently been in a country where a communicable disease was present. We understand the health concerns, but these people can be vaccinated and quarantined before entering the United States.

We are a country of immigrants with many of those of Haitian descent live in the districts we represent. Our Haitian brothers and sisters are desperately trying to flee the poverty, violence and political turmoil in their own country, and deserve to be treated with respect. They are still recovering from an earthquake and the assassination of their President.

On August 14, 2021 a devastating earthquake struck Haiti, leaving more than 650,000 people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. This comes as the island nation is still trying to recover from a massive earthquake in 2010 that displaced more than 1.5 million people. Many left and headed for South and Central America, but now employment opportunities are drying up in Latin America as the pandemic continues and Haitian migrants are seeking asylum in the United States.

These tough and resilient people have been struck down so many times yet they continue to seek a better life for themselves and their families only to be met by whip wielding border patrol when they get to the United States. Can you imagine the devastation and humiliation they must have felt?

President Biden, we ask that the Haitian people be treated with the same care and compassion as the Afghan refugees entering our country are receiving. We respectfully request that you revoke Title 42, a policy that allows the United States Border Patrol and U.S. Customs to prohibit the entry of persons who potentially pose a health risk despite their dire situation.