

United States: Haitian migrants brutalised and deported at US-Mexico border

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United States president Joe Biden continues to show his government's true face in the mass deportation of Haitian migrants.

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In mid-September, nearly 15,000 Haitian migrants, peacefully camped under a bridge on the Mexico-Texas border, were rounded up by US border patrol agents on horseback, some using their reins as whips.

They were dragged onto buses and planes and deported without due process.

Haitian migrants simply want a chance to live and work in the US. They arrived as word spread that the Biden administration would extend special immigration status to Haitians inside the US, following the recent earthquake. There are already 100,000 Haitians with this status inside the country.

Stay out!

However, they were mistaken. The US policy towards new migrants and asylum seekers is, simply, "stay out".

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported that it flew 2000 migrants back to Haiti in one week. Thousands more have been deported since. Most did not know where they were going, until they landed in the capital, Port Au Prince.

Haiti suffered a magnitude 7.2 earthquake on August 14. A month earlier, Haitian president Jovenel Moise was assassinated. While Haiti's new government is unstable and seen as illegitimate, the Biden administration has given it support.

Hiding behind a "health mandate" used by former president Donald Trump, the DHS has the power to exclude all migrants and asylum seekers from the US.

A federal court has ruled the imposition of this mandate is a violation of US law. The Biden government has appealed that ruling and continues to apply the exclusions arbitrarily.

Trump blamed the country's woes on so-called "illegals", as well as legal immigrants, particularly

Brown and Black people. Biden refers to migrants crossing the border as “non-citizens” — and would have us believe this reflects a more humane response.

However, the cruelty at the Texas border exposes how meaningless a word change can be.

Nerlin Clerge, a Haitian migrant who was at the camp with his wife and their two young sons, told Reuters: “The government of the United States has no conscience.” He is now considering applying for the right to stay in Mexico.

The brutality and speed of the deportations exceeded the Trump and even Barack Obama administrations.

Outrage

The outrageous footage of agents on horseback brought to mind old photos of white slave owners going after runaway slaves. While some commentators dispute the use of whips, a vicious hit by reins can be painful and potentially deadly.

Cat Brooks, an Oakland-based activist, playwright and co-founder of the Anti-Police-Terror Project, wrote an opinion piece in the San Francisco Chronicle on September 23, which expresses the anger and disbelief of the scenes under the bridge: “Over 12,000 Haitians trekked thousands of miles, across countries and continents, through horrific conditions, including starvation, sickness, rape, and sodomy to get to the US for sanctuary.

“The wealthiest and most resourced country on the planet told them to go home.

“Not just told them — screamed it at them — laced with vile, race-based obscenities, manifesting in arguably the largest and fastest mass deportation since the last time we expelled Haitians.

“The last thing America wants is more Black people.

“The images are grotesque. Black folks being herded like cattle. Like dogs. Whipped with horse reins. Charged by cops on horses. Huddled under a bridge. Sweltering in 104-degree heat.

“Humans seeking asylum and the American dream.

“What a nightmare.”

Systemic racism. That is the truth of Biden’s immigration policy: “Don’t come here. You are not welcome.”

Pressure is mounting from immigrants’ rights groups that want Haitians to be treated like the new refugees from Afghanistan.

Afghan refugees must be interviewed and vetted. They must also be quarantined then vaccinated. They are slowly being relocated to communities around the country. Army veterans who served in Afghanistan are organising for more to be settled in the US.

Yet, few Haitians and other asylum seekers and refugees are given that same pathway. Historically, Black migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum have been treated worse than non-Black migrants.

Haiti is in deep political and economic trouble. The US and United Nations have provided little aid.

The thousands of people deported to Haiti have few opportunities and many hold papers from other Latin American countries and are planning to leave. Some lived and worked in Brazil, Chile and other countries suffering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and deepening economic problems.

Most of these Haitians left after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, in which a quarter of a million people died.

Black Americans outspoken

The immigrant rights movement is pressuring the Biden administration to follow the law and stop the deportations and police brutality at the border.

African Americans are the most outspoken against Biden's immigration policy. The Black Wall Street Times editor Nehemiah Frank explained that this opinion is so strong because "Black Americans share a common bond with all Black people in the African diaspora that is composed of North and South America and the West Indies."

It is more than identity and solidarity. It is an acknowledgement that the type of police brutality against Black people is common — as the Black Lives Matter movement showed last year.

What happened to Haitians at the Texas border is, unfortunately, not unusual.

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P.S.

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<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/haitian-migrants-brutalised-deported-us-mexico-border>