



Peace and Justice Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
February 8, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Peace and Justice Commission
Submitted by: George Lippman, Chair, Peace and Justice Commission
Subject: Resolution in Support of Justice for Haitian Refugees

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution calling for an end to all U.S. government deportation efforts against Haitian refugees.

Send a letter with the enclosed resolution to President Biden, Senators Feinstein and Padilla, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

BACKGROUND

On September 19, 2021 images emerged “which appear to show border agents on horseback driving migrants [from Haiti] back to a river;”¹ according to the BBC, and “Border Patrol agents on horseback [hounded] Haitian migrants near the US-Mexico border, more than 14,000² of whom were camped under the Del Rio bridge....” according to Vox.com.

According to Vox.com, “Haitians have sought asylum at US borders for decades, but every presidential administration since the 1970s has treated Haitians differently than other migrant groups, rejecting asylum claims, holding them longer in detention, and making it harder for them to settle down in safety.”³

At its regular meeting of October 4, 2021, the Peace and Justice Commission unanimously proposed the attached resolution for the City Council to condemn the policy and tactics of deporting Haitian immigrants underway on American soil.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58637116>: “The pictures taken by AFP photographer Paul Ratje show Haitians going back and forth across the border to get food for their families, and finding themselves blocked by the horses.” <https://www.vox.com/22689472/haitian-migrants-asylum-history-violence>: “The uniformed men swung their long horse reins — which many interpreted as whips — to keep the migrants from crossing into Texas. In one photo, an agent grabbed the T-shirt of a migrant, while another shouted in a video, “Get out now! Back to Mexico!”

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/23/us/haitian-migrants-texas-camp.html>

³ <https://www.vox.com/22689472/haitian-migrants-asylum-history-violence>

M/S/C: (Tregub/Rodriguez)

Ayes: Gussman, Jacquelin, Lee, Lippman, Maran, Meola, Morizawa, Perry, Rodriguez, Tregub

Noes: None.

Abstain: None.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal staff time associated with the sending of a letter.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Haitian refugee crisis is rooted in recent as well as historical events. The current wave of migrants is fleeing a nation that just this summer experienced both a magnitude 7.2 earthquake and storm that killed approximately 2200 people and the assassination of Haiti's former president, which exacerbated violence and instability, all while the nation has yet to recover from a 2010 earthquake that affected three million people and irreparably destroyed infrastructure.⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no identifiable direct environmental impacts or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Both the Peace and Justice Commission and City Council have a long history of standing up for the rights of refugees, and the City of Berkeley has been proud to be designated a sanctuary city since the 1970s. Regardless of which presidential administration is in power, this recommendation is consistent with numerous resolutions and letters sent by the City of Berkeley on similar subject over the course of several decades.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

⁴ <https://www.vox.com/22689472/haitian-migrants-asylum-history-violence>

CONTACT PERSON

George Lippman, Chair, Peace and Justice Commission.

Okeya Vance-Dozier, Peace and Justice Commission Secretary, City Manager's Office,
(510) 529-5376.

Attachments:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

SUPPORT OF JUSTICE FOR HAITIAN REFUGEES

WHEREAS on September 19, 2021 images emerged “which appear to show border agents on horseback driving migrants [from Haiti] back to a river;”^[1] according to the BBC, and “Border Patrol agents on horseback [hounded] Haitian migrants near the US-Mexico border, more than 14,000^[2] of whom were camped under the Del Rio bridge...” according to Vox.com; and

WHEREAS according to Vox.com, “Haitians have sought asylum at US borders for decades, but every presidential administration since the 1970s has treated Haitians differently than other migrant groups, rejecting asylum claims, holding them longer in detention, and making it harder for them to settle down in safety;”^[3] and

WHEREAS the wave of Haitian migrants is fleeing a nation that just this summer experienced both a magnitude 7.2 earthquake and storm that killed approximately 2200 people and the assassination of its Haiti’s former president which exacerbated violence and instability, all while the nation has yet to recover from a 2010 earthquake that affected 3 million people and irreparably destroyed infrastructure.^[4]

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City of Berkeley condemns the policy and tactics of deporting Haitian immigrants that are underway on American soil, is pained at the parallels between the images that came to light on September 19, 2021 and the tumultuous and traumatic past of American slavery, and questions the stark contrast between the treatment of migrants from Haiti and those seeking asylum from many other countries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley shall send to President Biden, Senators Feinstein and Padilla, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee a copy of this resolution along with a call to cease all deportation efforts against our fellow humans and respect their right to seek asylum in this country.