



The Biblical tradition is one that instructs its followers to welcome strangers – as we welcome the stranger, we welcome Jesus himself.

But you must defend those who are helpless and have no hope. Be fair and give justice to the poor and homeless.

-Proverbs 31:89

BACKGROUND

Haiti has experienced significant flows of out-migration for several decades, particularly to the U.S. and Canada. A number of factors, such as the desire to be with family, have access to resources or escape harsh conditions, have compelled people to take the tremendous risk of emigrating without proper documentation.

While a natural disaster does not necessarily generate increased flows of out-migration, the severity of the recent earthquake coupled with pre-existing economic hardships in Haiti, as well as loose enforcement of human rights standards and rule of law, is causing many to seek refuge outside the country.

In such a situation, it is important for foreign governments to treat all immigrants and refugees, whether legal or undocumented, with dignity, compassion and respect for their human rights. Additionally, government policies should reflect both the immediate needs of individual Haitians and the best long-term interests of their families, communities and the country as a whole. Immigrants and refugees living outside of Haiti, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, can work and send money back to Haiti, which contributes to both short-term relief and long-term development of their home communities.

TODAY

- The U.S. government has granted “humanitarian parole” for adoptions already in process and nearly finalized, whereby visas for these children are being expedited.
- Advocacy groups are raising serious concerns about long-term separation from home communities and about erecting an immigration detention center outside of the U.S. where individuals would not have habeas corpus rights.
- In the wake of a natural disaster, there is always increased risk of child exploitation by kidnapers and human traffickers. This is a concern that MCC and partner organizations are seeking to address.
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a temporary immigration status granted by the United States to countries whose residents are unable to safely return to their home country because of ongoing conflict, environmental disaster or other extraordinary conditions. Before the earthquake, remittances from Haitians legally working in United States constituted Haiti’s principal source of income, totaling nearly three times the figure received annually in international assistance.
- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security designated Haiti for TPS on January 15, 2010. As a result, Haitians who were residing in the United States before the earthquake can remain in the United States and legally work for 18 months. Now, TPS will allow an estimated 100,000 - 200,000 more Haitians in the U.S. to send money back to Haiti, providing much-needed financial aid to their families and making a significant contribution to the reconstruction process. However, the TPS application process is both expensive (fees can total as much as \$470) and time-consuming. Many Haitian immigrants are unaware of their rights and of the qualifications for TPS.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

MCC IMMIGRATION SERVICES

These programs in New York and South Florida provide high quality immigration services including, legal advice, adjustment of status, and TPS documentation at minimum fees.

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Call on the Obama Administration to:

- Treat all those seeking refuge on U.S. shores humanely and with dignity.
- Consider allowing some of Haiti's most vulnerable – children, the elderly and the sick – who have lost caregivers in Haiti, but who have relatives in the U.S., to immigrate legally.
- Provide adequate assistance to those released from the hospital into local communities; extend Temporary Protected Status to this population; and provide transportation back to Haiti for those who wish to return.
- Discourage efforts to remove large numbers of children from Haiti through inter-country adoptions.
- Waive TPS fees for low income applicants.
- Release Haitians being held in detention centers for immigration violations so that they can apply for TPS.
- In all cases, ensure that international statutes and obligations combat human trafficking are rigorously applied and enforced.

HOW?

- Go to <http://washington.mcc.org/congress> to find your Member of Congress. Write a letter, call, or visit to share your views.
- Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Pray for wisdom in the halls of power as policy-makers determine how to continue responding to the needs of Haitian immigrants.
- Contribute to and volunteer for an organization in your area that supports Haitian refugees.
- Contact an MCC immigration office for a fact sheet that will help Haitians in your church or community know whether or not they qualify for TPS and how to apply.

A swift and efficient recovery and reconstruction response is needed in order to discourage large numbers of out-migration. If basic needs are being met and progress is visibly being made toward a better future, Haitians will be more likely to stay and rebuild rather than face the difficult challenges inherent in becoming an uprooted person. For the long-term development of the whole country, it is important that Haitians with energy, knowledge, and physical capacity stay in Haiti to help reconstruct their communities.

For more information, contact the MCC Washington Office : talexander@mcc.org (202) 544-6564 x113
or the MCC Haiti Advocacy Program : alexiserkert@haiti.mcc.org