

New Haiti policy may stem the refugee tide

In yet another change of policy, the Clinton administration announced on Tuesday that Haitian refugees picked up on the high seas while fleeing their troubled Caribbean nation will no longer be allowed to enter the United States, even if they qualify for political asylum.

Instead, those political refugees — refugees who are deemed likely to suffer persecution if returned home — will be sent to safe havens in Panama and elsewhere in the Caribbean where they will await a new and more stable government in Haiti. Economic refugees, or those deemed to be leaving for economic reasons only, will be sent back home.

While the United States' new policy on Haiti represents a more pragmatic and humanitarian approach than previous policies — including a Bush-era plan to send all refugees back to Haiti, political or no — it rests an inordinate amount of faith on the prospects for a new government in Haiti.

The countries that have consented to be safe havens have made it clear that they will not be permanent resettlement sites for the refugees. They have only agreed to shelter the refugees for six months.

What this means is that the military dictatorship in Haiti, which replaced the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in a violent 1991 coup, must also fall in six months.

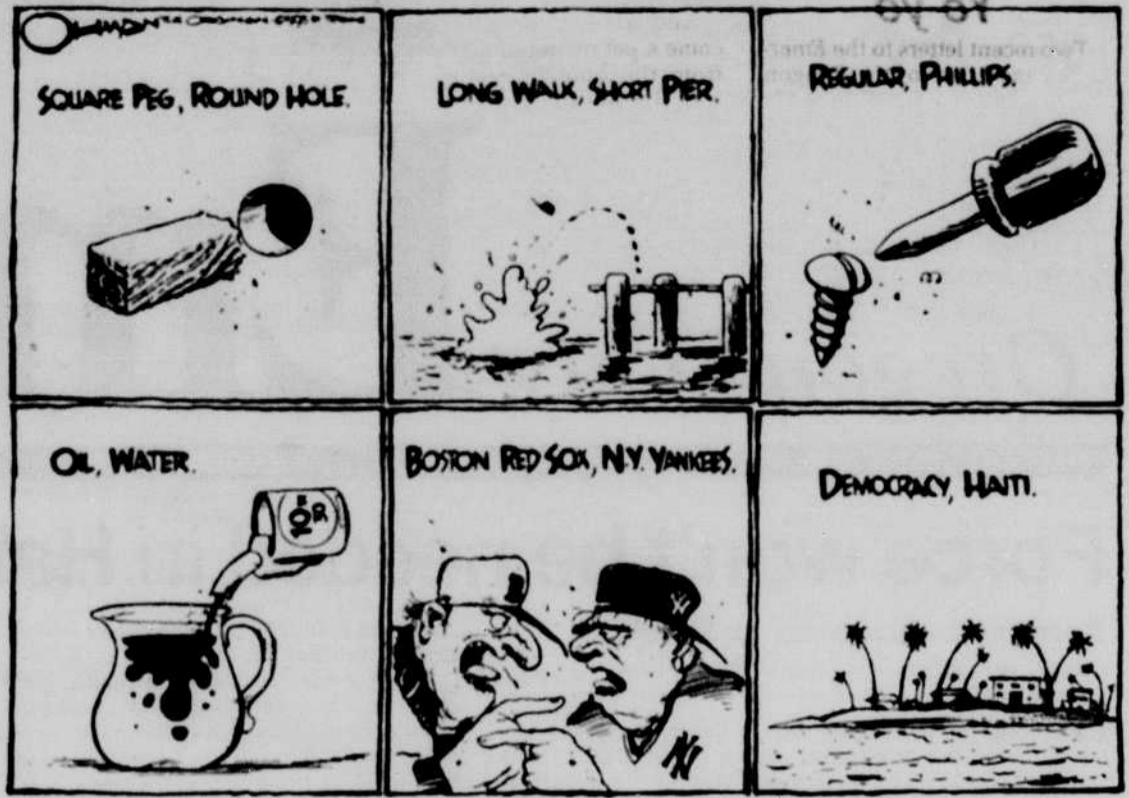
To help bring down that government, the Clinton administration has already leveled a series of economic sanctions against Haiti, which Clinton has said he believes "are having an impact." But the possibility of successfully forcing Haiti's dictators to step down through purely economic measures is doubtful at best. The U.S. has imposed sanctions against Fidel Castro's Cuba for decades, with still no movement from the dictator's chair. And Saddam Hussein has remained in power in Iraq, despite similar economic efforts.

Clinton has left open the option of military intervention, and although his special adviser to Haiti has said that an invasion is "not imminent," with "imminent" being defined as "within the next few days," he has also said that "the coup leaders will not be allowed to stay in power."

The removal of those coup leaders through military force is not a particularly desirable option, but given the limited effectiveness of sanctions, it may be the only option available. Clinton has handicapped himself somewhat, however, by giving himself a de facto deadline of six months. It would have been better to find a more permanent location for the refugee camps, recognizing the possibility that sanctions may not work that quickly and a military invasion may be more effective if delayed.

But the current solution, however temporary, is a significant improvement over Clinton's previous policy, which allowed political refugees to come to the United States. That policy resulted a serious upswing in the number of refugees, with more than 12,000 being picked up by the U.S. Coast Guard in the last 12 days, many in overcrowded, unseaworthy boats. More than 100 Haitians were killed when one such boat capsized.

The administration hopes that sending refugees to temporary camps outside the United States will discourage them from attempting more dangerous ocean crossings. If the new policy succeeds in this mission, and if the government of Haiti does step down in six months, Clinton will have achieved a major foreign policy success. If not, he will have to define yet another Haiti policy, and the United States will suffer yet another setback on the international stage.



OPINION

What's the appeal of the '60s?



Gayle Forman

Ahh, summertime in Eugene. If you breathe deeply, you can almost smell the '60s.

It starts in the spring when the Saturday Market rolls back into town. A few months later Saturday Market invades the campus when the Street Fair sets up shop on 13th Avenue.

Then in June we get the Willamette Valley Folk Festival. The spinners really start crawling out of the woodwork, and the scent of patchouli wafts through the spring air.

And then of course the patron saints of the '60s, the Grateful Dead, bless Eugene with their presence, bringing scores of deadheads with them.

If your thirst for the '60s has not been satisfied, never you mind. This weekend, the zenith of all '60s events, the gigantic hippie fest to end all hippie fests: The Oregon Country Fair.

The 1960s are now 25 years behind us, yet places like Eugene and other pockets throughout the country continue to hold on to that lost decade with all their might.

And my question is: Why?

Maybe it's because I just missed the '60s altogether. I was born in 1970; I didn't even breathe '60s air. My parents missed the '60s by a hair. They rode in on the tail-wind of the 1950s. By the time student activism was taking off on college campuses, they had graduated from college, spawned a kid and were working steady jobs. Amid all the turmoil, they like many Americans were trying to achieve the American Dream. I have grown up estranged from '60s romanticism.

So I come to Eugene aware of the history and the music, but otherwise clueless to an entire culture dedicated to reliving the

1960s.

The really baffling part is that it is not those who lived the "60s experience" who are keeping the decade alive here. It is people who, like me, were not even alive during the '60s.

Walk around the campus. You'll find yourself in a sea of tie-dye and long hair. Everyone is wearing sandals, listening to bands that were being played on the radio 30 years ago and of course, getting stoned.

And the music. There is the Dead, and then we have the Dead cover bands and the Dead sound-a-like bands. And the new children of the '60s continue to make 30-year-old bands richer and richer. This place is a cultural time warp.

I really don't get the appeal of the '60s.

But I don't mean all of that decade. So much that happened then has radically changed society today. The civil rights movement, the women's movement and student activism shook the very foundations of American society. All of this falls along the wayside here in Eugene. When we remember the '60s here, we are choosy; our nostalgia is very selective.

Here in Eugene, we remember the hippie movement. Particularly enticing to folks here seems to be the drug scene, resplendent now and resplendent then.

I asked a friend of mine what the Country Fair was like. She told me that it was like Saturday Market only everyone is wasted.

That stopped any plans I had of ever going.

I asked another friend who is a Grateful Dead fan to explain to me the appeal of the shows, of the scene in general. He told me that the music complimented drug use perfectly.

I've also been told how "free" the atmosphere is at these places, how accepting it is. But I wonder if a preppie Republican boy set foot into any of these places, looking ostensibly out-of-place, how welcoming the atmosphere would be.

Well, my personal ax is ground enough. I admit that I hid in my house during the Dead shows. But my concern

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goes beyond my personal views.

I worry about my generation. The media is falsely tagging us as the Generation X — a brood of lazy slackers.

I strongly disagree with the stupid Gen X myth, but I wonder about the recycling of decades. The '60s happened. A lot was achieved and a lot failed. But they are over. The '60s have not been over long enough to bring back already.

Perhaps it is the vitality of the decade that is so appealing to young hippies. Maybe the social movements draw many into '60s nostalgia. These are all things that can be translated into our generation, right here into the 1990s.

But I know that the drug scene also has large appeal. I'm not telling anybody to "Just Say No." The fuss over drugs has been blown out of proportion by both the government and the users. But do you really want drugs to be the defining force of your life? They can't be that important.

Our generation is so often accused not making any significant cultural statements. I look around me and see all sorts of statements. A new kind of feminism is emerging, a music scene is boiling, a new kind of self-made magazine is popping up and will hopefully give the industry a run for its money. All of this is happening right here in Eugene.

Except it is overshadowed by the great rainbow cloud of '60s nostalgia. Eugene is a '60s kind of town, and I don't deny this is a nice place to live.

But if our heads are constantly swiveled back toward the past, how can we see what is happening right in front of us?

Peace.

Gayle Forman will be a columnist for the Emerald in the fall.

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