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OPINION

A Cruel Holiday Gift for Haitian Immigrants

Season is filled with fear and uncertainty

BY JESSICAH PIERRE

Two months after experiencing the devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010, my dad finally made it back home to Boston. What had started as a holiday vacation turned into weeks of sleeping outside the family home in Haiti, fearful that it would collapse on anyone sleeping inside.

My family members lived that way for weeks, as daily aftershocks kept them reliving the traumatic experience that rattled the country's capital. They never knew whether the next aftershock wouldn't kill them as the quake had killed their neighbors nearby.

This devastating natural disaster took nearly 316,000 lives and displaced 1.5 million Haitians. Many of these victims



sought refuge in the United States — legally, under a classification called Temporary Protective Status.

Now again, in this holiday season — eight years after the quake — they're reliving this fear and uncertainty. The Trump administration has moved to end the program, causing many Haitians to face deportation after July 2019.

For these Haitian immigrants, Temporary Protective Status offered a chance to start fresh and build a new life — an opportunity that's hard to come by in Haiti, a country that's spent decades struggling with widespread poverty.

Widespread poverty that the U.S. has contributed to both economically and politically.

See, the U.S. has a long history with Haiti, dating back to the early 1800s when Haiti defeated France in the world's first successful slave rebellion, leading Haiti to become the first independent black nation.

While black people around the world celebrate this moment in history, this vic-

tory didn't come without costs.

After the 1804 revolution, France found a way to gain economic control of Haiti, forcing the new country to pay back 150 million francs for the enslaved Haitians that were freed after the war.

In order to pay this debt, Haiti was forced to take out a major loan from the young U.S., which didn't recognize Haiti for another 60 years. This debt wasn't paid off till 1947, at a current value of over \$20 billion.

Haiti's economic dependency on the U.S. didn't end there, though. From 1957 to 1986, Haiti's government was run by two U.S.-backed dictators, "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

"Duvalier stole millions from Haiti and ran up hundreds of millions in debt that Haiti still owes. Ten thousand Haitians lost their lives," longtime Haiti human rights advocate Bill Quigley explained in the Huffington Post. "Estimates say that Haiti owes \$1.3 billion in external debt and that 40 percent of that debt was run up by the U.S.-backed Duvaliers."

Although this era had a ripple effect of negative consequences that the people of Haiti still face, the U.S. continues to play a big role in Haitian economics and politics, including efforts to rebuild the nation after the earthquake.

But instead of using relief funds to provide some much needed assistance to the country, the Red Cross used half a billion dollars to build just six permanent homes in Haiti.

Now, the Trump administration's decision to terminate Temporary Protective Status will force up to 60,000 Haitians back to a country that's still facing food shortages, widespread homelessness, and lack of access to schools and medical facilities to say the least.

This isn't only wrong — it's inhumane. The U.S. should use this as an opportunity to reverse the damage it's done to Haiti.

Jessica Pierre is the inequality media specialist at the Institute for Policy Studies. Distributed by Otherwords.org.

A Year that Awakened and Energized America

We cannot and must not lose our momentum

BY MARC H. MORIAL

"You see, we may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated. It may even be necessary to encounter the defeat, so that we can know who we are," — Dr. Maya Angelou, American author and civil rights activist.



Without any fear of exaggeration, it can be said, and has been—repeatedly—that the final result of the 2016 presidential election came as a devastating blow to many Americans. The numbers bear out this truth. Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by nearly three million votes, but in the end, failed to secure the win.

So as the reality of an American future under Trump began to sink in, many anticipated the worst and lost hope. But as this year comes to a close, it occurred to me that the election outcome has awakened and energized millions of Americans.

Each unprecedented challenge to everything from immigration policy to the freedom and relevancy of the press, has nurtured a common sense of purpose among Americans from all walks of life. From sea to shining sea, those committed to building and sustaining a better and

more equitable America, conclusively demonstrate an often-repeated truth: democracy is no spectator sport.

To be clear, there was never—and never will be—a right time to sit and watch from the comfort of the sidelines.

A democracy deprived of the active, vocal and voting engagement of its citizens is a democracy in name only. Rather than stand by complacently as the current administration volleys direct assaults on our nation's most vulnerable and attempts to wipe out the incremental civil

Roem became the first openly transgender person to be elected to the state's legislature; and Justin Fairfax won the lieutenant governor's race, becoming the second African American to win the post.

And there are more victories where those came from. Black women—who are substantially showing up and showing out at the polls—are also getting elected into many of these offices. African American women stand at the helm of the cities of Charlotte, Atlanta, New Orleans, and more, as their mayors. And

gathered at airports around the country to protest the ban's obvious unfairness, and courts of law continue to legally challenge the ban. Today, the third iteration of the ban has been allowed to go into effect by the Supreme Court, but the legal challenges remain alive and well.

We cannot—and must not—lose our momentum.

The National Urban League will remain at the forefront of the battle to protect our hard-fought-for rights and progress. Especially now, when the all-out

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and economic and social gains we have made with the casual stroke of a heartlessly wielded pen or the decrees of uninstructed policies, we have traded hopelessness for the engagement, despair for activism, and defeat for victory.

The results speak for themselves. Doug Jones's recent win in deep-red Alabama will send to Congress the state's first senator elected by a multi-racial coalition. Voters of color also were largely responsible for Ralph Northam's victory in the Virginia governor's race; Danica

the wins don't stop at the ballot box.

Despite the best and dogged efforts of Congress and the president, everyday Americans, enraged that their healthcare would be taken away or used as bargaining chip to make the math work for the GOP's tax reform bill, rallied, flooded phone lines and protested in congressional offices to keep the Trump administration from dismantling the Affordable Care Act.

Trump's travel bans consistently met with immediate resistance. Thousands

assault on American ideals and values is the norm, you can become a key part of our mission-driven work by getting involved, volunteering, or supporting our movement.

You have a critical role to play in the resistance and should never doubt or become complacent about the power of your call, your vote, your signature, or your voice.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.