

OPINION

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A Pattern of Hostility toward People of Color

The debts we owe Haitians

BY OSCAR H. BLAYTON

More than 500 Haitian soldiers fought alongside French troops on Oct. 9, 1779 to aid the Americans in trying to force the British out of Savannah, Ga. in order to open its port for the colonists' use.

The attack was unsuccessful, but it has been noted that the Haitians played a significant role in providing cover for the French soldiers who had to retreat from their positions on the battlefield. But even though Haitians shed blood for American independence, the United States in its foreign policy has always held a deep-seated hostility towards Haiti, despite denials to the contrary.

Haiti was born of a slave revolt that began on the French half of the island of Hispaniola and resulted in a revolution costing 200,000 Black lives.

When the Haitians threw off the French yoke of oppression to become the independent Republic of Haiti, France demanded recompense for the loss of its slaves. This demand for payment was backed up by the threat of an invasion, with the French navy laying off the Haitian coast. This forced payment, totaling more than \$21 billion over the years, began Haiti's slide from being France's wealthiest colony to one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere.

When Haiti gained its independence, Southern slaveholders in the United States were horrified by the liberation of enslaved black people by their own efforts. And in response, the U.S. government did



not recognize the black nation until 1862, when the United States was in the throes of its own brutal and bloody war over the perpetuation of slavery and the Southern states had seceded from the Union.

But recognition never meant respect. And ever since its creation, Haiti has had to battle against American hostility, with the United States keeping its heel on Haiti's economy and domestic politics. This included a U.S. invasion in 1914 that precipitated a military occupation lasting until 1934.

The U.S. military occupied Haiti again in 1994, the year Haiti's democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, returned from exile after fleeing from

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a coup by the Haitian military. When Aristide was re-elected in 2000, the U.S. military, in combination with the Haitian military, forcibly removed him from the country and sent him into exile again, this time in South Africa.

It is important to point out the irony of how badly the United States has treated Haiti, given the presence of a statue standing in Savannah's Franklin Square. This statue was erected in 2007 to honor the Haitian soldiers that came to the aid of American revolutionaries 240 years ago in 1779.

But this statue is not the first recognition of America's debt to Haitians. In April

1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had Secretary of State Cordell Hull deliver a commemorative plaque to a cathedral in Haiti that reads, "Today we pay tribute to the courage and spirit of those Haitian Volunteers who in 1779 risked their lives for the cause of American Liberty." The placement of Roosevelt's plaque and the assistance given by the Haitians is unknown to most Americans. And even a 10-foot monument standing in a busy downtown square of a major U.S. city does not bring this piece of our history to the attention of most Americans.

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verge of becoming "illegal aliens" by the stroke of Trump's pen. But a monster like Trump has neither empathy for, nor any sense of obligation to, people of color whose ancestors helped to birth and build this nation. People of color can expect no consideration from this despicable, disgusting bully who wants to "make America white again."

The White House also is planning to terminate TPS for people of color from other countries whose conditions have necessitated our compassion and offers of refuge because hostility towards Haitians is simply a part of the pattern of widespread American hostility towards people of color.

Just as ancient barbaric people created narratives that gave animals human form and characteristics in an anthropomorphic attempt to conform them to the familiar, Trump and his supporters are pursuing a eulopomorphic attempt to mold America into a European form that is familiar to them. In short, he is attempting to make all Americans look as much like European Americans as possible. As ancient barbarians wanted to conform their world to their own image, these present-day barbarians want to conform America to their own image.

It is up to right-thinking Americans to stand up to Trump and the cynical, cowardly senators and congressional representatives who cater to his attempts at despotism. It is time to stand up and say "No!" to the deportation of Haitians and others living in the United States with Temporary Protected Status.

We must have compassion for our fellow human beings, even if the disgusting tenant in the White House does not.

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activist who practices law in Virginia.

Transgender Ban is about Bigotry and Distraction

A twisted way to thank our service members

BY JILL RICHARDSON

The Supreme Court just paved the way for Trump's ban on transgender people serving in the military to move ahead, at least pending other court challenges. The ban will harm the military and help no one, while doing nothing to address the nation's real problems.

I'm neither transgender nor in the military, but I count several trans people, including trans vets, among my closest friends. I can't speak for them. I can, however, speak as their friend — and as a sociologist who teaches about gender at the college level.



Trump cites the cost of medical care for transgender people undergoing transition as the reason for his ban. Yet many transgender people never have surgery, and those who do may wait until after they're finished serving in the military to do it.

Hormone treatments and gender confirmation surgeries for all transgender service members together are estimated to cost \$8.4 million annually at most — that's five times less than the military spends on Viagra. And it's nearly 200 times less than the Department of Defense spends on health care and lost days of work due to smoking.

And yet service personnel are allowed to smoke. In fact, service members at many commands often have an entire culture built around enabling tobacco use, despite all of the costs. If this were actually about the cost of military health care, perhaps a smoking cessation program would be a better option than a transgender ban.

Neither of my friends were aware that

they were transgender when they enlisted in the military. They just wanted to serve their country.

Neither transitioned while they were serving, and one didn't even realize she was trans until after she'd left the Marines. (She still works in the national security field as a civilian.) The other realized she was transgender while in the Navy and opted not to reenlist so she could transition without fear of being discharged.

Even with a ban, transgender people who haven't yet realized or come to terms with being trans will continue to enlist and serve. A ban would mean wasting resources recruiting and training service members, only to discharge qualified personnel once they came out as trans or were outed.

Kicking trans service people out of the military wouldn't only be extremely hurtful to the estimated 150,000 transgender people who have served, including 8,800 who are currently on active duty. It would also be a waste of money and disruptive to

the entire military.

The transgender ban in the military has nothing to do with military readiness or cost — and everything to do with bigotry and transphobia. Trump is using the ban purely to provoke the left, throw red meat to his base, and distract us all from the real issues in our nation, like the government shutdown which continues to drain resources.

Transgender people in the military put their lives on the line (and sometimes lose their lives) to protect their fellow Americans. Excluding them because of their gender identities is a twisted way to thank them for their service.

It's time to stop perpetuating hatred and distracting from real issues — and to stop using transgender people as a national scapegoat.

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