

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE DEPORTATION AND INHUMANE TREATMENT OF  
HAITIANS SEEKING ASYLUM AND REFUGE IN THE UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA**

**By Detroit City Council Member Raquel Castañeda-López**

**WHEREAS**, Immigrants from the Caribbean region, including Haiti, have been settling in Michigan since the 1800s. The earliest arriving families found lodgings in the established black neighborhood of the Lower East Side, known as Black Bottom. They were parishioners at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church - deemed the “*West Indian Church*”, Bethel AME, and St. Cyprian. They work in our community as healthcare providers, teachers, engineers, business owners, and the full range of local employment endeavors; and

**WHEREAS**, The Detroit community and the Detroit City Council unequivocally denounces the inhumane treatment of Haitians seeking asylum at the southern border of the United States, as is their legal right under international law; and

**WHEREAS**, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers met tired, hot, hungry migrants on horseback, using reins to lash and whip human beings seeking shelter at our border, conjuring up images of savage slaveholders. It is imperative that these Haitian refugees who have made the dangerous trek from their ravaged homeland to seek refuge in the U.S. be subject to fair and equal treatment rather than the continued struggle typical for black migrants; confronting racism as further punishment at the U.S. border must not stand. All immigrants must be treated the same regardless of the color of their skin or the country from which they are seeking asylum; and

**WHEREAS**, The Collective Community of the Haitian Network Group of Detroit (HNGD), The African Bureau of Immigrant and Social Affairs (ABISA) and the Caribbean Community Service Center (CCSC) in collaboration with other grassroots community advocates held a “CALL TO ACTION” at Spirit Plaza, 2 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI on Sunday, September 25, 2021, to demand that Haitian asylum seekers be treated with dignity and respect; and

**WHEREAS**, Michigan members of Congress, Rashida Tlaib and Brenda Lawrence, representing residents of the metropolitan Detroit area, published an opinion in the Detroit Free Press on October 6, 2021, reiterating the evidence of the ongoing history of racism in our country’s immigration system, citing “the deeply rooted culture of anti-Blackness and extremist thinking within our immigration system that is leading to intolerable human rights abuses;”<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, The Detroit City Council concurs with the sentiments expressed by its Congress members; and further, affirms the importance of promoting awareness and understanding of the roles Haitian immigrants have played in the City of Detroit and applauds Haitian nationals for the services they provide in the growth and development of the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan. City Council encourages residents of all ages in the City of Detroit to commemorate

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2021/10/06/customs-border-patrol-racism-immigration-system/5991352001/>

and celebrate the mission, vision and purpose of the Caribbean led organizations to support, empower, and advocate for Caribbean nationals in the Americas. **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, The Detroit City Council reaffirms its commitment to providing a welcoming and safe environment to Haitian asylees and refugees that enter our country, and ultimately, our city; and **BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED**, The Detroit City Council calls on the United States government to reaffirm its support for the Caribbean region and its citizens to create a sustainable welcoming environment for them and their families; and further, to immediately terminate the unjust and brutal application of Title 42 of the 1944 Public Health Service Act to block asylum seekers under the false pretense of stopping the spread of disease, a policy that is being discriminatorily used to expel and deport Haitian asylum seekers; and **BE IT FINALLY**

**RESOLVED**, The Detroit City Clerk is directed to send copies of this resolution to Mayor Mike Duggan, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, President Joseph Biden, and Michigan's Congressional delegation.

October 7, 2021