

# HAITIAN REFUGEE PROJECT

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P R E S S    R E L E A S E

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## PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES CHALLENGED ON DOUBLE STANDARD FOR HAITIAN REFUGEES

A coalition of black, hispanic, religious, civil rights and labor organizations along with congressional offices from Florida and other states, announced their intention to "take to the streets" to command the attention of the president and the presidential candidates on the issue of political refugee status for 13,000 Haitians who have fled Haiti and are now in South Florida.

60 Haitian refugees will arrive in Washington to participate in a march on May 4. Haitian refugees who have testified in US Federal District Court in Miami will hold a press conference at 1:30 p.m. at the C Street entrance of the State Department. They will tell of testimonies of persecution, torture and jailings of Haitians returned from the US to Haiti.

The rally will start at the State Department at 2:00 p.m. with the march. Rally and vigil at Lafayette Park starts at 4:00 p.m. Speakers include: The Honorable Walter Fauntroy, Ms Isabel Letelier and Brother Cyprian Rowe.

Over 2,000 supporters will march and rally and vigil to focus on the fact that May 15 will be the last day the president can grant refugee status to Haitians. After that date, their seven year old claims for asylum will be processed case by case, taking another seven years of hardship and legal limbo.

The coalition maintains that US government has not taken seriously the refugees' legitimate claims of political fear for their lives if returned to Haiti.

HAITIAN REFUGEES--Continued

The coalition and a delegation of Haitian refugees from Miami will provide evidence that the refugees would face persecution and even death if returned to Haiti.

The coalition also asserts that the refugees have suffered seven years of discrimination because of their race, economic status, and the friendship of the US government because of their race, economic status, and the friendship of the US government with the right-wing dictatorship in Haiti.

The irony of the situation is that for the past twenty years this same parole authorization has been used to grant political refugee status to hundreds of thousands of Hungarians, Cubans and Indochinese.

Marches, rallies and public hearings will confront the candidates and the president with the question of refugees and to seek the only honest and just solution to their plight--parole for political refugee status.

The 60 Haitian refugees will vigil throughout the week at Lafayette Park from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. daily

On May 10, a National Demonstration with speakers from New York, Montreal, and Miami as well as Washington DC will be held in front of the White House from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. with a rally at Lafayette Park at 3:00 p.m.