

National Immigration Forum

FAX MEMORANDUM

March 31, 1998

To: Haitian Working Group

Fr: Jocelyn MaCalla
Christina Foley

Re: **Reminder of "Share the Cost" Conference Call Friday, April 3, at 2:00p.m. (Eastern Time); Reminder to Send Names to be Added onto Conference Call; Washington Post Editorial and other Clips**

Please call Qamar Abdi, (202) 544-0004 ext. 43, if you do not receive 8 pages

CONFERENCE CALL REMINDER

The next Haitian Working Group conference call will be Friday, April 3, at 2:00p.m. (Eastern Time).

To get on the call, dial (703) 736-7308 and ask for the National Immigration Forum conference call.

To join the call you must have an account code. Please call Qamar Abdi at (202)544-0004 ext. 43 by 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 2, to get an account code or if you have forgotten your code. You will not be permitted on the call without a code.

SEND IN NAMES

On the last conference call, we decided to broaden the list of folks on the call. Don't forget to send names of individuals you feel should be added to the call. You need to get the information to Christina Foley by the close of business on Wednesday so we can invite them and so they will have time to set up an account code. Please call Christina at (202) 544-0004 ext. 41, email her at cfoley@immigrationforum.org, or fax her at (202) 544-1905. Please be sure to include their name, organization, phone number and fax number.

ARTICLES ATTACHED

Attached are additional articles on the Haitian rally and legislation. Included are editorials from the *Washington Post* and the *Miami Herald*.

THE HERALD, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 1998

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Haitians deserve equity

The South Florida Haitians who rode in seven buses to Washington, D.C., to stage a lunchtime rally on the capitol steps Monday are fighting the cause

of their life. They are asking Congress to give them hope for a future in the country where they work, pay taxes, and have raised children, some for a decade.

About 1,500 Haitians rallied, asking Congress to let them apply for green cards — and thus open the door to seeking citizenship. Last fall Congress opened that door for thousands of Central Americans who in the 1980s fled communism and civil strife. Congress excluded Haitians, to the dismay of U.S. Rep. Carrie Meek, D-Miami.

In December 1997 President Clinton signed a directive that prevents for a year the deportation of about 40,000 Haitians who either have been paroled into this country or who applied for asylum before 1996, while Congress worked on the issue. That was welcome but left out about 100,000 Haitians who lack regular immigration status, says Ms. Meek. She has introduced a bill that would grant amnesty to all Haitians.

FROM CONGRESS
Give longtime Haitian immigrants same legal status as Hispanics.

Florida's U.S. Sens. Bob Graham, Democrat, and Connie Mack, Republican, are sponsoring a measure that would give amnesty only to most of the 40,000 Haitians

affected by the President's directive. Ms. Meek thinks that her bill has no chance, but she's counting on the Senate.

The Graham-Mack measure would provide some relief but still deny an estimated 100,000 Haitians, many in South Florida. They will face deportation. Some grew up here. Their language is English, their cultural ties American. Under old immigration rules, they might have been able to apply for citizenship after living here seven years. No more; Congress switched the rules on them and other aliens thanks to a pervasive new anti-immigrant mood.

Deporting long-time Haitian residents could cripple Haiti, already impoverished and politically unstable. Haitians here send up to \$500 million to Haiti yearly, aiding its economy. It's nonsense — from humane and diplomatic standpoints — to deny so many who call the United States home a fair chance to make that sentiment legal.

A plea for amnesty

Haitians demonstrate in Washington for green cards

By CAROL ROSENBERG
Herald Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Eighteen-year-old Cynthia Dessin moved to Miami at age 3. Today, the high school graduate is forbidden from putting her education to work because she is also an illegal immigrant, lacking either a proper visa or work permit.

So, with her eye on the prize, the recent graduate of Design & Architecture Senior High School joined hundreds of other Haitians from across the nation Monday on the back steps of Congress — demanding immigration amnesty for themselves and their country-

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men.

"I don't want to go back because I don't know anybody there. I barely speak the language. It's a country I don't know. I feel like an American already," said the young woman who lives with her

grandparents, legal residents in Miami. "My father died; I don't know where my mother is."

An estimated 1,500 Haitians, including seven busloads from South Florida, staged the lunchtime demonstration. It was meant to show support for legislation that would grant green cards, the symbol of legal permanent residency, to 40,000 to 120,000 Haitians living in this country, depending on the bill.

A Senate version, sponsored by Florida's Bob Graham, the Democrat, and Connie Mack, the Republican, would give amnesty

PLEASE SEE HAITIANS, 3B

M.H. P. 3B 3/24/98
**Haitians rally in D.C.
for legal residency**

HAITIANS, FROM 1B

to any Haitian who was legally in the United States or had applied for amnesty by Dec. 31, 1995. Port-au-Prince-born Dessin would not be among them. More sweeping legislation, proposed by Rep. Carrie Meek, D-Miami, would give green cards to a much wider group of Haitians, including Dessin, both documented and illegal.

"Power to the Haitian people," Meek shouted to the cheering crowd. "We give green cards to Nicaraguans and Cubans and other Central Americans. We must have amnesty for the Haitians."

Meek and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus unsuccessfully sought to include Haitians in a measure masterminded last session by Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, R-Miami. That act gave green cards to 153,000 Nicaraguans and Cubans and spared other Central Americans from deportation.

Haitian advocates argue that they ought to be entitled to protection from deportation, too. President Clinton has issued a limited protection, called Deferred Enforced Departure, to give Congress time to consider the different bills.

In interviews at the demonstration, Meek candidly admitted that her bill was unlikely to reach the House floor, because Immigration Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Smith, R-Texas, opposes it. But, she said, she was hopeful that, with the support of Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., the Graham-Mack measure could be accepted by the Senate, sent to the House and modified to help more than the 40,000 Haitians the Senate version covers.

The signs carried by the crowd, who sometimes chanted in Creole, sought to make their collective case: "To my neighbor, I'm a per-

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Miami congresswoman

son. To Congress, I'm an Alien," read one. "Did Columbus need a green card?" asked another. A huge banner said: "Equal Treatment for Haitians."

A woman named Judith, 24, who asked that her full name not be used because she is here illegally, said she has lived in South Florida for nine years, including her first five months in this country at the Krome Detention Center.

She didn't understand, she said, why she wasn't entitled to permanent residence.

"I've been working hard, paying taxes," said the part-time security guard and part-time maid, who came to Washington with her 8-year-old American-born daughter at her side. "I don't know why I can't have my green card."

Dessin was asked whether she thought the trip — on a bus from South Florida overnight Sunday, back to Miami on an overnight bus trip Monday — was time well spent.

"Well, if some congressman or another is listening," she said, gesturing to the Capitol's white washed dome. "But, if there's no one listening or watching," she said reflectively, "it's just like yelling at a wall."

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M.H. P.18 3/31/98

Haitians rally to gain rights to residency

By RICK JERVIS
Herold Staff Writer

Hundreds of Haitians climbed onto buses and vans in Little Haiti on Sunday with the united cause of raising awareness about thousands of their countrymen and women who they believe were left out of recent immigration laws.

Destination: Washington, D.C.

About 500 people left Miami in a caravan of seven buses and 15 vans for the 22-hour bus ride. They will pick up another 500 Florida Haitians and advocates on the way before joining thousands of others at a rally on Capitol Hill today to demand that lawmakers grant Haitians extended permanent residency — as Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans and some Cubans received last year.

Among those who left Sunday were lawyers missing trials and business leaders closing shops, joined by their children and hoping to send this country's leaders a message.

"We need equal treatment," said Marieine Bastien, president of *Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami* (Haitian Women of Miami), one of the groups that helped plan the trip. Bastien couldn't make the trip herself because of business.

"Families who have lived here for years should be able to stay here and contribute to this great society we have," she said.

The mass gathering will begin at 1 p.m. on the Capitol's west lawn and include congressional speakers, including U.S. Sen. Bob Graham and U.S. Rep. Carrie Meek, both D-Miami, who have sponsored bills that would grant Haitians residency rights equal to other immigrant groups.

The Miami Haitians will be joined by others from Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, New York and other cities across the country.

It's a second attempt to spotlight the exclusion of Haitians from legislation that granted 150,000 Nicaraguans permanent residency and provided deportation relief to more than 250,000 Nicaraguans and some Cubans. In November, several dozen Haitians, mostly from South Florida, staged a smaller rally in Washington.

If nothing comes of today's rally?

"We will continue to fight," Bastien said. "We were never handed anything on a silver platter in this country. The fight will go on."

Dow Jones InteractiveSM

HAITIANS TO RALLY FOR BENEFITS

IMMIGRANTS - Newsday (NDAY)

STORY 238

NEWS

HAITIANS TO RALLY FOR BENEFITS

Merle English

979 Characters

03/21/98

(Copyright Newsday Inc., 1998)

Seeking equal treatment, Haitians from around the country will rally in Washington on Monday to demand immigration benefits given to Nicaraguans and Cubans. The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act Congress passed in 1997 made Nicaraguans and Cubans eligible for permanent residency if they were in the United States before Dec. 1, 1995. "Like Nicaraguans, Haitians fled political strife and persecution," said Jocelyn McCalla, executive director of the New York-based National Coalition for Haitian Rights. "They have obeyed U.S. laws and made great contributions to American society." Between 20,000 and 40,000 Haitian asylum seekers and immigration parolees need the relief, McCalla said.

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HAITIANS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST IMMIGRATION DISCRIMINATION

IMMIGRANTS - The Seattle Times (SETL)

STORY 107

NEWS

HAITIANS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST IMMIGRATION DISCRIMINATION

WILLIAM E. GIBSON

SUN-SENTINEL, SOUTH FLORIDA

1748 Characters

03/24/98

(Copyright 1998)

WASHINGTON - Thousands of Haitians streamed to the steps of the U.S. Capitol today to show their political muscle and shout for equal treatment under immigration law.

Alarmed by turmoil in their homeland and angered by what they consider discrimination in this country, the demonstrators demanded that Congress create a general amnesty for those who fled Haiti before December 1995. An estimated 100,000 Haitians are potentially subject to deportation unless Congress acts.

The immigration controversy has become a rallying point in the Haitian-American community, inspiring pride and anger among established citizens, not just those who live in legal limbo.

"If the Haitian people do not receive equal treatment, which we believe we deserve, we who are citizens of the United States will vote out some of the congressmen," said Jean Renelus of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Haitians watched in frustration last year when Congress bypassed their pleas and enacted a law that granted legal residence to Nicaraguan immigrants who had fled the leftist Sandinista regime. That law also allowed thousands of Guatemalans and Salvadorans to remain in this country.

Haitians claim they should be given the same treatment.

The Senate Judiciary Committee will consider a bill next month that would allow about 40,000 Haitians to remain in the United States legally while seeking asylum. The bill is sponsored by Florida Sens. Bob Graham, a Democrat, and Connie Mack, a Republican.

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