

Mr. Trump, It Is a Mistake To Revoke Protected Status for Haitian Refugees

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Immigration advocates rally in New York on Tuesday, Nov. 21, 2017, to protest the decision from the Department of Homeland Security to terminate Temporary Protected Status for people from Haiti. The Homeland Security Department said conditions in Haiti have improved significantly, so the benefit will be extended until July 2019 to give Haitians time to prepare to return home. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

Sparking a bit of outrage, but most of it still flying under the radar, the Trump administration is preparing to revoke the protected status of tens of thousands of Haitian refugees who escaped their country after a disastrous earthquake decimated the island in 2010.

This would be a mistake.

Haiti is not a nation filled with people who wish to see the United States suffer. It is not a hostile nation. It is impoverished, largely due to both inside and outside political scum leeching off the people. It is a nation that, economically, is barely surviving.

Sure, the world says that Haiti is “recovered,” but that is a word that doesn’t mean much when you take in the reality of the situation. Haiti has major population centers (Port Au Prince is probably the most recognizable), but it is also teeming with small, poor villages that struggle with basic amenities and which survive — and in a few cases thrive — with the outside help of private charity and mission groups.

Tens of thousands of refugees from Haiti have lived in America since fleeing their destroyed homes. They have built new lives, better lives, and crime rates among that population do not register on our radar.

The Trump administration back in May called for a “tally” of Haitian refugee crime rates, a clear signal of what was coming.

The Temporary Protected Status program is just that – temporary. There have been recommendations to let it expire and to give those in the system until January to leave or risk deportation. However, I am of the firm belief that it is a mistake to do so.

The Trump administration has a chance to do a good humanitarian deed right now, should it choose to do so. It can extend the protected status until after the midterm elections (the current plan extends it to July 2019, but you could extend it to December 31 of that year), but then push for Congress to reform the immigration system and include these refugees. The wall can even be built, but in exchange, and with a clear, transparent system of vetting, the Trump administration should give the Haitian TPS community a clear path to citizenship.

They have been here for seven years. There is no observable trend of rampant crime in the Haitian community. But there is a chance to show that America is still a land of opportunity. This is a great chance for Trump to show a softer side, a side that seeks to keep a campaign promise but offers a real solution to people currently stuck in the system.

The most vocal opponents of this idea will be those who oppose letting in virtually any immigrants at this time and those who worry about the size and scope and the amount of spending in our welfare system. For the latter, it is not that hard to create work incentives for a people who are trying to create or maintain a better life. The welfare system is supposed to be a safety net that seeks to help the down and out and get them back on their feet.

It is still my hope that we can create a welfare system that focuses on work requirements and incentives, but that doesn't mean we stop caring about those in need in the process.

I hope that President Trump sees the opportunity he has here and makes the right decision. There is nothing back in Haiti for many of these people. America has been their home for seven years. Let us give them a chance to make that home permanent and show the world we have a heart.