

## **Critical Thinking Forum: Haitian Refugees at the Texas Border**

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### **Authors Note**

The state of Texas followed through with implementing Senate Bill 8, and it has remained in effect ever since September of 2021. This dangerous law officially bans abortions after six weeks of gestational age and continues to invite private entities to file lawsuits against anyone aiding with abortion access after that permitted period of time as well. Regardless of the American Medical Association's clear disapproval of the Texas six-week abortion ban, it was ultimately upheld by the United States Supreme Court on Dec. 10, 2021 (Spitz, 2022). It has also provided several other states with the blueprint to enact their own anti-abortion legislation.

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Media outlets truly influence the way we think about various political topics. They can also potentially have an impact on how we choose to communicate those opinions with others. Misinformation, and severely alternative statements, can subconsciously dictate more than what we are aware of. An example of this is reading about the 2021 surge of Haitian refugees at the Texas border. This increase within the immigrant population was merely non-citizens, coming to America, seeking asylum. This phenomenon was completely legal, and was an internationally recognized human right to seek aid. After reflecting on multiple news articles from a variety of diverse media outlets, it is clear there was political propaganda being projected onto the American people to maintain the stigmas surrounding the immigration process. This concept was seen with the language and specific terminology media outlets used when explaining this ongoing crisis. Therefore, some might still question: why are undocumented individuals and asylum-seeking individuals so ostracized within our society?

The answer is simple: It is the direct result of structural racism in America. However, both currently and in 2021, the media is not the only tool currently being used to continue and strengthen the pattern of structural racism. Structural racism can be described as: “A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity” (The Aspen Institute, 2016). When discussing the other outlets used to enforce structural racism, it is important to highlight historical instances. An illustration of this is the millions of White immigrants who illegally migrated here from the 1900s and onwards who were faced with little threat of apprehension or deportation (Kamasaki, 2021). Within the past century, White immigrants were legally employed by businesses and were eligible to receive a multitude of public assistance programs regardless

of their legal status in America (Kamasaki, 2021). One might ask: Where are those initiatives for Haitians and other people of color both previously and currently at the border?

Helping non-citizens pave the way to achieve their American dream is somehow unheard of now. Today, with the recent influx of refugees, instead of job offers and public benefit programs, they are being homed under international highway bridges. These ‘homes’ are constructed with giant reeds that refugees are seen sitting on paint cans while their area is cluttered with overflowing trash and plastic bottles (Ruiz-Grossman, 2021). Condoned by the Biden administration, this practice is inhumane and endangering Haitian immigrants. This situation could have been much different if the public policy better assisted the people instead of putting them in positions where they could become seriously injured and sick due to the conditions. On the other hand, forcibly sending refugees back to their country countries can put them in dangerous situations, and they also find themselves more vulnerable to violence, poverty, and displacement (Ruiz-Grossman, 2021). Not only is the current treatment of asylum seekers inhumane, but the mass expulsion of Haitian and other immigrants within itself is cruel and counterproductive.

Another method that helps perpetuate structural racism is institutional practices. A prime example of this is the first-hand experiences of refugees receiving abusive treatment from the Texas border patrol. In 2021, the Department of Homeland Security recently suspended the use of horse patrol in Del Rio after a video leaked of Texas Border Patrol agents aggressively swinging their long reins at non-citizens attempting to cross the border (Alvarez, 2021). Not only was this instance a clear case of the continuation of structural racism, but it was simply modern-day White supremacy being enforced with the brutalization of people of color. This instance reinforces the notions of structural racism through cultural representations and other social

norms, in order to further perpetuate racial group inequality. Regardless of the alarming influx of immigrants at the border, there is no excuse to use excessive force, especially against people of color given our violently racist American history.

This humanitarian crisis is not a simple fix either. Structural racism within the American immigration system cannot be solved with band-aid solutions like the Biden administration continues to enforce at the Texas border. We must address the root causes of this issue, as well as how we can expel racism within our immigration process. Immigration being stigmatized through the media, the lack of assistance programs to non-citizens, the institutional practices of the Biden administration, and the usage of physical force and intimidation towards Haitian and other peoples at the border, are just a few aspects contributing to structural racism and why immigrants seeking aid are so ostracized within our society today.

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