



Black Immigrant Organizations File FOIA and PIA Requests Demanding Transparency Around Treatment of Haitian and other Migrants at the Border

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA), UndocuBlack Network (UBN), and African Communities Together (ACT) filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Texas Public Information Act (PIA) requests today demanding transparency from the the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the State of Texas, respectively, around the horrific treatment of Haitian and other migrants fleeing political violence and environmental disaster. While the encampment at Del Rio, TX has been cleared, deportation flights continue, returning children and families to the exact danger from which they fled. Since September 19, 2021, more than 6,000 Haitian migrants have been expelled back to Haiti, and many others felt compelled to return to Mexico due to the cruel actions by the U.S. government.

The organizations urgently seek information pertaining to reported civil rights violations including CBP officers verbally and physically harassing migrants, preventing migrants from accessing food and medical attention, using horses and motorcycles to intimidate them, and the use of whips or whip-like devices to assault migrants. The requestors also demand transparency from agencies on the use of law enforcement to close any Texas ports of entry or closure of the international bridge between Del Rio and Ciudad Acuña, Mexico, as well as the manipulation of water flows by government actors through the Rio Grande River that endangered lives.

Notably, the FOIA underscores the racist, anti-Black violence inflicted by federal and state agencies against migrants at the border. While this is not the first mass expulsion of Haitian and other Black migrants, the FOIA notes, it is “the first accompanied by images that evoke the era of slavery” and is a “mass expulsion of thousands of women and children conducted under Title 42 summary expulsion policy,” employed by the federal government in Del Rio just one week after a federal district court ruled the policy was likely unlawful and, at a minimum, should not be applied to families with minor children.

Justice Action Center, Haitian Bridge Alliance, Innovation Law Lab, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, and Texas Civil Rights Project are serving as counsel for these requests.

[Add quote from HBA]

Guerline Jozef, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Haitian Bridge Alliance said:

"We are saddened by the ongoing events occurring under the Biden Administration. On the campaign trail, President Biden went to Little Haiti in Miami, FL and assured the Haitian community that he will be a friend and an advocate. From September 19 to today, 57 expulsion flights have been sent to Haiti. This is not how friends should treat another seeking refuge and safety. While on the ground last week in Del Rio, it was clear from speaking with the very few that were paroled that severe human rights violations took place. The same can be said for the many that were pushed back to Acuna that could not properly exercise their rights to seek asylum. With this request, we hope to be one step closer to shining light on the anti-blackness sentiments embedded in the immigration system.

Breanne Palmer, Interim Policy and Advocacy Director of the UndocuBlack Network said:

"Although the rapid news cycle means coverage has died down, we continue to be outraged by the anti-Black atrocities happening to Haitian and other Black migrants at the border. We will see the Biden administration and DHS held accountable for their heinous actions, including the continued use of the reprehensible and unsound Title 42 policy. Given yesterday's horrific news that Title 42 expulsions can continue while litigation proceeds, we are discouraged but undeterred. These information requests will help us determine exactly what DHS did to the thousands of Black migrants who gathered in Del Rio seeking protection and assistance in September 2021. This is just the next step in our efforts to end the war on Black immigrants."

Diana Konaté, Policy Director of African Communities Together said: "To ask for transparency around the horrific treatment of migrants at the border, in particular towards our Haitian sisters and brothers, is to ask for the bare minimum. DHS and the State of Texas owe migrants and the American public much more than that. For years, the plight of Black migrants at the border and throughout the U.S. has been left in the dark and without real solutions. We demand that leadership center the safety and security of Black migrants and take these steps towards laying the groundwork for a safer, more humane future for our communities."

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[Haitian Bridge Alliance](#) (HBA) is a nonprofit community organization that advocates for fair and humane immigration policies and provides migrants with humanitarian, legal, and social services, with a particular focus on Black migrants, the Haitian community, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and survivors of torture and other human rights abuses. Since 2015, HBA has

provided services to asylum seekers and other migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, in U.S. detention, and during U.S. immigration proceedings.

UndocuBlack Network is a multi-generational network of currently and formerly undocumented Black people that fosters community, facilitates access to resources, and contributes to transforming the realities of our communities, so that all people are thriving and living their fullest lives. www.undocublack.org

African Communities Together is an organization of African immigrants fighting for civil rights, opportunity, and a better life for African families in the U.S. and worldwide. ACT connects African immigrants to critical services, helps Africans develop as leaders, and organizes African immigrant communities on the issues that matter. www.africans.us