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DAILY NEWS

STATE

Trump's return to presidency sparks fear within Haitian community. This is why

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Dec. 23, 2024, 7:12 a.m. ET

BOSTON — Experts say the Haitian community is grappling with anxiety and uncertainty as President-elect Donald Trump returns to office, citing fears about the future of [Temporary Protected Status](#) while their home country is wracked by lawlessness.

“It is a widespread fear among our immigrants, especially among Haitian immigrants, since Donald Trump won the election,” said Dieufort J. Fleurissant, [senior pastor at Total Christian Ministries](#) and [president of True Alliance Center](#), both in Boston.

[Temporary Protected Status](#) is granted by the [secretary of the Department of Homeland Security](#) to eligible foreign-born individuals unable to return home safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling the return.

'We want a better life': [Haitian asylum seekers share their experiences in Framingham](#)

“When I came here, I came here for a better life — socially, economically and mentally — for myself as well as for all members of my family,” Fleurissant said. “Haiti is so dangerous, Christians congregants can't even go to their churches. As a matter of fact, many Haitian churches are closed every Sunday because they've been vandalized by gangs and they couldn't do that.”

False claims of 'illegal aliens' eating pets in Ohio

Trump and Vice President-elect J.D. Vance heightened those fears during their campaign, falsely claiming Haitians in Springfield, Ohio — who Vance falsely declared were “illegal aliens” who were “granted amnesty” — were eating pets and committing crime.

In fact, they had been welcomed there.

“Absolutely, I’d revoke it,” Trump said in October to questions about the status of Haitians. “You have to remove the people, and you have to bring them back to their own country.”

Haiti was first designated for Temporary Protected Status on Jan. 21, 2010, following a devastating earthquake. As of 2022, more than 350,000 Haitians remain in the United States under the program, including about 13,000 in Massachusetts.

Immigrant says Haitians are 'resilient' and 'hard workers'

Fleurissant arrived in the U.S. from Haiti in 1981 as a tourist without legal papers. He often juggled three to four jobs simultaneously to support he and his wife while attending night school.

“It is very hard,” he said. “But Haitian people are resilient and they are hard workers. They don't mind doing two or three jobs because they know they have to care financially for members of the immediate family here, and they need to support financially parents, siblings left back home.”

While Trump repeatedly claimed immigrants are “stealing jobs,” Haitian American and former state Rep. Marie P. St. Fleur, D-Boston, countered that these workers often take on low-wage positions that many Americans decline.

“If you want these jobs you can have them,” she said, referring to positions typically held by Haitian immigrants.

'You have to sacrifice': Aging population, modest pay leads to shortage of home health aides

Statistics suggest Haitian immigrants are quietly underpinning critical segments of the U.S. workforce, particularly in health care and education.

As of 2021, about **103,000 Haitian health care workers** served as nursing assistants, personal care aides and home health aides, ensuring essential care for elderly and chronically ill patients. Between 2018 and 2022, **15.3% of employed Haitian-Americans** also contributed to the education and social services sectors, filling roles that many Americans overlook.

Former state rep: Deportations will create large workforce gaps

St. Fleur warns that mass deportations would leave critical sectors — hospitals, hospice care, social services and agriculture — struggling to fill workforce gaps.

"Go anywhere in America today and take a look at the complexion and the ethnicity of the people who are taking care of the elderly across our country," she said. "What happens when a lot of those folks are deported? Somebody's got to do it."

"There's been fear when you don't know what's going to happen to you," said Mona Louis Jacques, a Haitian mother with two children living in Boston. "We do have a lot of people that do not have papers, and a lot of them have children."

"If you imagine a family of six, and then the mom and dad don't have papers, and the children have papers, so the mom would leave the children behind. Who's going to be taking care of those children? By deportation, it's like sending us to a place where a lot of us don't know — especially our children, they don't know the lifestyle there."

Trump previously sought to end Haiti's TPS designation in 2017 and 2018, but federal courts blocked those attempts, citing insufficient evidence and inadequate review procedures.

If Trump attempts to terminate TPS for Haitian migrants under his new administration, he will face a more rigorous legal process than when the status was first granted, according to [Mary Holper, a clinical professor at Boston College Law School](#).

"Any move to end TPS now requires a thorough, evidence-based review of conditions in Haiti to show that the reason why we designated TPS in the first place is gone, and it's now safe for people to go back," she said. "Apparently, Haiti isn't."

Holper added that "you can't just take it away without doing something a little bit more searching to see whether that's a good decision."

"Your deliberation and your searching review of that has to actually be a searching deliberative review and not a predetermined conclusion that you're like, 'Get me to this result,'" she said.

State, local governments are poised to push back

State and local governments are preparing to push back against potential federal action.

Boston, which has a large Haitian community, has already declared it will not cooperate with federal immigration officials. [Mayor Michelle Wu reaffirmed that Boston police officers will not inquire about immigration status](#) or assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement in routine deportation operations.

"The Boston Trust Act puts strict prohibitions on local law enforcement from being pulled into becoming the enforcement arm for the whims of whatever the sort of approach of the federal immigration law might be." Wu said.

'Fear mongering': [Amid heavy criticism, Natick board OKs immigration policy](#)

Immigration advocacy groups are also gearing up to oppose any TPS termination, citing the program's importance in allowing migrants to fully participate in their

community's social, economic and civic life, work legally and contribute economically.

Haitian migrants in the U.S. have become a vital part of industries like health care, construction and hospitality, particularly in Florida and Massachusetts.

If TPS is revoked, tens of thousands of Haitian migrants could lose their legal work authorization and face deportation. Large-scale deportations could create logistical challenges and exacerbate Haiti's ongoing political instability, gang violence and humanitarian crises.

"No matter whether you're legal or not legal, there's no such thing as legal or illegal people," St. Fleur said. "It's a narrative that we've created in this country. The world is owned by a higher power, and we need to stop the nonsense.

"This is where we are, and so we're creating fear."