

# **NATIONAL HAITIAN AMERICAN ELECTED OFFICIAL NETWORK**

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November 14, 2011

Valerie Jarrett  
Senior Advisor to the President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: Requesting for A Hearing On Haiti

Dear Ms. Jarrett,

As members of the National Association of Haitian American Elected Officials (NAHEO), we respectfully write to request a meeting with you to discuss U.S. policy toward Haiti and the Haitian people since the earthquake in January 2010. It has been nearly two years since the earthquake. A number of us have had conversations with President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama about "not letting Haiti fail." Yet we are concerned that several important issues have fallen off the radar screen.

As the United States enters another important election cycle, the Haitian-American community would like to know that our collective voice has been heard. Estimates vary, but there are close to 156,000 Haitian-Americans in New York City, 100,000 in the Miami-Dade area of Florida, and 80,000 near Boston, Massachusetts. Although interests vary by state and across political views, we are united by agreement upon the followings:

First, we want to ensure that the diaspora in the United States is engaged in reconstruction efforts. The State Department recently held a forum on Partnering for Haiti's Future, taking steps to increase transparency about the U.S. strategy toward Haiti and how to do business with the U.S. Government in Haiti. This was a good step. However, more frequent consultations across a full spectrum of issues are needed.

Second, we want to know why the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has repeatedly ignored requests from the community and congressional leaders to reconsider its position on several immigration issues. This includes the resumption of deportations to Haiti at a time when the Haitian government does not have the capacity to adequately absorb people back into society. We also question why DHS has not used their

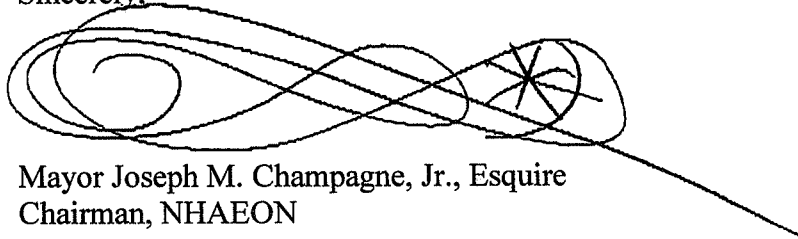
administrative discretion to parole Haitians with approved visas into the United States. While the decision to grant temporary protected status (TPS) to Haitians was welcome, it is ironic that the re-designation of TPS permits those Haitians who entered the U.S. after the earthquake to remain while those who applied for visas through the formal channels could wait as long as 4 to 11 years for their visa numbers to become available. Senators wrote to the President at the anniversary of the earthquake about this issue, and none of their offices have received a response from the administration. Several members of the House of Representatives have also weighed in on the issue, again without an answer.

Third, we have also recently learned from a report by the Center for Global Development (CGD) that Haiti is not on the list of countries eligible for H2A and H2B low skill worker visas. This is again an administrative decision after consultation between the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security. Low skill worker visas are predominantly for the agricultural and service industries in the United States, both of which continue to see a demand for overseas workers. Haitians could use these visas to bring new skills back to the agricultural and hospitality sector in Haiti, resulting in growth. Haitians do not have to wait for comprehensive immigration reform for this option to become available to them. With your help, it can be done today.

As you know, remittances to Haiti from within our community are greater than the total sum of all U.S. foreign aid to Haiti, and they result in a direct transfer of funds to families in need. As Haiti works to rebuild and strengthen its democracy, the United States must consider the diaspora and regular migration as an asset that can bring additional capital and knowledge back to Haiti.

We look forward to hearing when your schedule is amenable to a meeting. We can be reached via the contacts referenced above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a circular flourish on the right side. The signature is written over a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Mayor Joseph M. Champagne, Jr., Esquire  
Chairman, NHAEON