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United States' Policy Towards Haitian Refugees

Julia Match

Binghamton University--SUNY

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U.S. Policy Towards Haitian Refugees

Author: Julia Match

BACKGROUND:

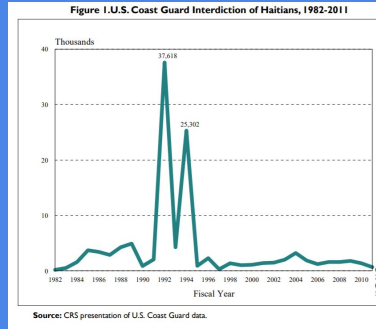
The United States experienced an increase in Haitian refugees attempting to enter the country during the 1990s.

Haiti entered a period of instability when their democratically elected president was ousted by a military coup.

The United States considered Haitians seeking asylum in the United States to be “economic refugees”, and turned away most Haitians intercepted at sea.

However, in Haiti, supporters of the previous regime were under threat of violence, integration, and jailing. Especially those who had attempted to flee and were returned.

The Supreme Court ruling *Sale vs Haitian Centers Council, Inc.* allowed the turning back of Haitian refugees to continue under the claim they were not under threat in their home country, and that U.S. laws protecting refugees in U.S. territory did not apply as they had not reached land. However, reports found that many were the victims of police intimidation and interrogation in Haiti, and international refugee law state any country shall not return any person to a land where they are under threat.



Graph showing a rise in U.S. interdiction of Haitians following overthrow of democratic government at the end of 1991.

From: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21349.pdf>

<i>1990 (During implementation of democratic government)</i>	Amount of refugees:	
Haitians:	1,200	
<i>Six month time period after September 1991 coup</i>	Amount of refugees:	Allowed to pursue asylum claims:
Haitians:	30,000	10,747

Correlation in rise in Haitian refugees following regime overthrow.

Source: <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/gavigane.html>

An often used comparison to highlight racist treatment of Haitian refugees is how much easier it was for Cuban refugees to enter and receive permanent residency during the same time period.

Cubans admitted 1990-1994

61,200

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cuban-migration-postrevolution-exodus-ebbs-and-flows#:~:text=Between%201990%20and%201994%2C%20some,Cubans%20near%20the%20Florida%20coast.>

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