

# Bush failing on policy for Haitian refugees

By Bill Fletcher Jr.  
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What does it take to get the Bush Administration to open its eyes? Several recent reports out of Haiti point to the deteriorating situation and the impotence of the post-coup, so-called interim (actually puppet) government. Political killings of pro-Jean Bertrand Aristide/pro-democracy advocates have increased, in some cases, with the apparent connivance of the Haitian police. On June 1, the French honorary consul for Cap-Haitien, Paul Henri Mourral, was shot to death as he drove near the Port-au-Prince airport. The Canadians, French and now the USA have issued travel warnings.

The U.S. travel warning reads in part:

"Due to the volatile security situation, the [State] Department has ordered the departure of non-emergency personnel and all family members of U.S. Embassy personnel. (Quoted from "Travel Warning," United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Washington, D.C. 20520, Wednesday, June 1)."

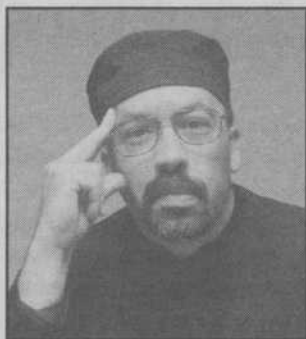
Confronted with this horrific state of affairs, that is now internationally recognized, the Bush administration continues its reckless and immoral policy of denying entrance to the U.S. of Haitian refugees or offering them Temporary Protective Status, even in

light of the situation in Haiti. Despite the more than one year of propaganda favorable to the so-called interim government of Haiti advanced by this administration, even they are now forced to admit that the situation is rapidly unraveling, so much so that U.S. citizens must leave the country. Yet, this has not, in any way, led to a rethinking of the administration's policies with regard to Haitian refugees.

The Bush administration's approach toward Haitian refugees has always been at odds with international law, precedent and morality. Over the past several years, the position taken by the Bush administration has astounded most independent observers, and even some administration supporters.

In 2003, the then-Ashcroft-led Justice Department announced that Haitians would not be permitted into the U.S. as refugees — contrary to Cuban refugees, for example — because of fear that Al Qaeda terrorists might pose as Haitian refugees.

Irrespective of expressions of outrage in the face of such an absurd position, the Bush administration held firm. In the weeks leading up to the February 2004 coup against democratically elected President Jean



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Bertrand Aristide, as all indications pointed to the possibility of civil war, the Bush administration announced a de facto blockade of Haiti in order to prevent any Haitian refugees from leaving the country and coming to the U.S. The administration announced that any refugees successful in penetrating the blockade and reaching our

shores would be immediately returned, all of this in blatant disregard of international law and precedent.

So, today, in a badly deteriorating situation where several nations are warning their citizens to either leave or stay away from Haiti, we have no indications of a reversal in policy by the Bush administration. In the face of the horror of potential formal or informal civil war, there is nothing but silence from the White House.

Contrast this with the willingness of this administration to offer Temporary Protective Status to non-Haitian refugees facing civil wars and natural disasters. One can also obviously contrast this with the willingness of the administration to, virtually, open the doors to refugees from Cuba, including apparent terrorists such as Cuban exile Luis Posada

Carriles.

The racial and political cynicism of the Bush administration is sickening to the point of being outrageous. While Secretary Rice orchestrates meetings with Black religious figures to discuss the Bush administration's supposedly compassionate policy towards Africa, an immediate policy issue facing a population of African descent is being overlooked — and no compassion, understanding or humanity is evident on the part of the White House.

Had the U.S. not had such a shameful history when it comes to its relationship with Haiti, the current Bush refugee policy would be bad enough. When one adds to the blatant immorality of this policy the lengthy history of U.S. blockades, support of coups and dictators, and destabilization efforts against political opponents, the situation goes over the top.

The choice is clear, and must be demanded by all people of conscience, but especially by African-Americans: further loss of life in Haiti when the U.S. is both directly culpable for the chaos, and when according to international law and precedent, it should be offering asylum, is simply unacceptable.

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## Lynching

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states. But the Senate failed to pass even one piece of legislation that could have, in my view, prevented these unjust killings."

According to records Tuskegee University in Alabama, which has extensively documented lynchings for years, nearly three-fourths of the victims were Black and 99 percent of those accused of lynching were not punished.

By all accounts, Tuskegee was able to document only the known lynchings; the deaths of thousands of others are believed to have gone undocumented.

The resolution states in part: "The Senate apologizes to the victims of lynching for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching legislation; expresses the deepest sympathies and most solemn regrets of the Senate to the descendants of victims of lynching, the ancestors of whom were deprived of life, human dignity, and the constitutional protections accorded all citizens of the United States; and remembers the history of lynching, to ensure that these tragedies will be neither forgotten nor repeated."

The Senate's long overdue apology was laced with political shenanigans. Approximately 85 of the 100 senators signed on as co-sponsors of the anti-lynching resolution. Rather than having a roll-call vote, which would have revealed the position of each

member of the body, it was agreed that the Senate resolution would be passed by unanimous consent, a voice vote that does not record individual votes. Those opposing the measure were conveniently absent and, therefore, cannot be accused of voting for or against the resolution.

Not among the co-sponsors were former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), former chair of the Judiciary Committee.

The apology was prompted by the publication of the book, "Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America," by Hilton Als; Jon Lewis; Leon F. Litwack and edited by James Allen. It is a graphic pictorial documentation of lynchings across America.

Although the Senate failed to act until now, decades after lynchings were rampant, African-Americans, such as journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, launched anti-lynching crusades, placing their own lives at risk. The NAACP was founded in 1909 largely in response to the lynching of Blacks, many of whom were innocent or were accused of frivolous offenses, such as accidentally brushing up against a White person or saying something considered disrespectful.

Lynchings usually took place during the day in a festive atmosphere. Many were held in the center of town to signal to African-

Americans what could happen to them, and lynchings were often assisted by law enforcement officials.

Sometimes photographs were taken and turned into postcards that were mailed throughout the nation. James Cameron, 91-years-old, almost became a candidate for one of those postcards.

According to Cameron, he was 16 when he survived an attempted lynching in Marion, Ind., almost 75 years ago. He had been with two friends that decided to rob a man in a parked car. One of his friends gave him the gun, but when Cameron saw that the White man, Claude Deeter, was a friend that he knew and even had shined his shoes, he gave the gun back and bolted. Cameron said he heard shots as he fled. It wasn't until later he found out what had happened; police arrested him and charged him with killing Deeter. They also said that Deeter's girlfriend had been raped.

All three suspects were in separate jail cells until a mob, led by the Ku Klux Klan, kidnapped them one at a time. The first two, Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, were lynched.

According to Cameron, the mob then came back for him and shoved, kick and beat him all the way to the town square, where they placed rope around his neck. He said an unidentified woman in the crowd stated that Cameron had nothing to do with the murder and demanded that he be let go. And he was.

Ball, the girlfriend, later testified that Cameron had fled before the killing and that she had not been raped. Cameron remained in prison for four years. Indiana Gov. Evan Bayh pardoned Cameron in 1993.

Cameron, a long time civil rights leader of Milwaukee, Wis., was on hand when the Senate passed a resolution apologizing for never having outlawed lynching.

"A lynching is when two or more people take the law into their own hands, according to their racist views. We're still being lynched," says James Cameron, "We're not

equal. We're just being tolerated." Senator Landrieu says she hopes the official apology will educate the public about lynching.

"Most of them occurred in town squares; most of them were conducted with the whole town in attendance; they were not just lynchings. But they were a public form of torture and humiliations, sometimes lasting eight and nine hours of torture before death," Landrieu says.

"Some churches were let out so people attend the lynching. Sunday schools were let out so people could attend the lynching. It was a form of terrorism practiced by Americans against Americans," she further explained.

As Allen and Landrieu marshaled support for the Senate resolution, their civil rights records have been examined, especially their votes on the latest round of controversial judges nominated by President Bush. Landrieu, a Democrat who regularly gets an A grade on the NAACP Report Card, joined Republicans in supporting the confirmation of Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen for the Fifth Circuit U. S. Federal Court of Appeals, who was adamantly opposed by civil rights leaders.

In a statement, she says she voted for Owen "out of respect for her qualifications and experience as exemplified by the American Bar Association's unanimous, well qualified rating for her."

She was also one of 14 senators involved in a deal with Republicans to allow Owen and two other judges to be voted on rather than filibustered.

She opposed the other two judicial nominees, Janice Rogers Brown and William Pryor. But they were still confirmed.

Allen, who regularly gets Fs from the NAACP, voted for all three Bush nominees.

Cameron was mildly pleased that the Senate has at least apologized for not interceding to prevent the lynchings.

He says, "It's probably too late. But, it's better late than never."

## Clingman

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Are we free if we allow our children to be mis-educated by teachers who only teach our children to grow up and work for their children?

Are we free when we settle for minority programs, pass-through contracts, and 20 percent allocations for subcontracts, rather than development and control? Are we free if we allow our most heralded leaders, especially our supposed moral leaders, to traipse after immoral acts and attach themselves to

immoral people?

When you celebrate freedom this year, ask yourself, "Is it for real this time?" If it's not, commit to doing something to get your freedom. Gordon Granger died in 1876; he will not be returning with new general orders for our freedom. We must write our own general orders, and start our march, albeit very late, toward true freedom.

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