**The migration crisis**

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Through his administration’s recent policies towards Haiti and Haitian migrants, President Joe Biden is carrying out a crime against humanity. Unfortunately, this represents continuity in a decades-long, bi-partisan policy toward Haiti.

Biden recently ordered the breakup of a camp of 15,000 mainly Black Haitian migrants under a border bridge in Del Rio, Texas. The migrants – many of whom had traveled thousands of miles – had fled to the US in the hopes of being granted asylum from the horrific oppression and exploitation they face in Haiti, Chile, Brazil, and other states in the region.

In scenes that evoked the history of US slave catchers, Border Patrol agents on horseback used their reins as whips to beat the refugees they chased down and captured. Eager to join the racist frenzy, Texas Governor Greg Abbott ordered the National Guard and Texas police to form a miles-long ‘steel wall’ of patrol cars and military vehicles to block migrants from escaping Biden’s dragnet.

When these horrific scenes were caught on camera, Biden had the gall to condemn the Border Patrol for carrying out the orders he had given. But he did not rescind his policy to expel and deport the encamped Haitians based on Title 42, which Trump had previously invoked to close US borders to all migrants during the pandemic. In fact, this was another in a series of actions that exposed the lies of Biden’s pre-election promises to establish a ‘humane migration system’ and combat ‘systemic racism’.

From the Del Rio encampment, Biden expelled 8,000 migrants to Mexico, deported 7,000 to Haiti (many of whom had not been in the country for a decade), and admitted about 12,000 from the camp and Mexico into the US. Many migrants remain detained and others have been chained with tracking devices while they apply for asylum.

They will likely be denied for being so-called economic migrants, not political refugees, or for having residence in a third country, and then face deportation. Once the camp was cleared of human beings, the bridge was reopened for commerce.

Biden carried out this racist repression to send a signal to tens of thousands of Haitians, who are making their way north through the Darien Gap between Panama and Colombia, that the border is closed to migrants. The Mexican state collaborated every step of the way, clearing out the encampment on its side of the border in Ciudad Acuña, deporting many to Haiti, shipping others back to southern Mexico, and promising to stop Haitians from reaching the US.

The manifold crises driving Haitians from their country are not natural or some quirk of history; they were caused in large part by US imperialism. Instead of helping Haitians overcome those crises, the Biden administration is compounding them, shoring up the morally repugnant elite that runs Haiti, and blocking migrants’ escape routes with Washington’s racist, regional border regime.

The mainstream media present the crises in Haiti that are driving migration – its poverty, so-called natural disasters, political corruption, and gangsterism – in sensationalized fashion with ritualistically repeated and neutered phrases like “poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.” They pathologize the country as if there is something inherently wrong with it.

In fact, blame for most of these crises lies with the US and other imperialist powers’ intervention in the country. From the Haitian Revolution right down to today, these powers have waged an unrelenting attack on the Haitian people’s struggle for liberation, democracy, and equality.

When the enslaved Africans overthrew their French oppressors in 1791 and declared Haiti’s independence in 1804, the great slave-holding powers of the time – France, Spain, England, and the newly independent US – did everything in their powers to destroy the new Black republic. France, Spain, and England all deployed armies in a vain attempt to prevent the revolution’s victory.

After their defeat, they moved to isolate Haiti and stop it from becoming a precedent and inspiration for revolutionary risings of the enslaved in the region. France only recognized the country’s independence in 1825 on the condition that Haiti repays their former masters in reparations for the loss of their ‘property’, that is, their land and enslaved human beings.

To pay this ‘debt’, Haiti had to take out loans at usurious interest rates from French and US banks, stunting its economic development. In today’s money, they shelled out $21 billion for recognition by the great powers. Even then, the US did not acknowledge Haiti’s independence until the middle of the Civil War in 1862.

The imperialist powers of the 19th century shackled Haiti with debt until its last payment in 1947, isolated it from the world system, and blocked its independent development. They made the country pay an enormous price for its liberation – poverty and structural adjustment from its birth.

After the US rose as a new imperial power at the end of the nineteenth century, it viewed the Caribbean as an ‘American lake’. It aimed to prevent its European rivals from encroaching on its fiefdom and treated the region’s states as vassals to be commanded and, when insufficiently obedient, subjected to military intervention and occupation.

Haiti was one of its prime targets, with devastating consequences for that country’s politics and economy throughout the twentieth century and to this day. Woodrow Wilson sent in the Marines to occupy Haiti from 1915 to 1934, seizing control of the country’s financial and economic assets as compensation for the government’s failure to make loan payments. Wilson also wanted to ensure that US corporations, and not those of Germany, would control the country’s economy.

The US handpicked the country’s leaders, imposed forced labor on peasants, brutally repressed the Cacos rebellion, and, under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, ripped up the country’s revolutionary constitution and imposed a new one that allowed foreign ownership of the country’s land. To ensure ‘order’ when it left, the US created and backed the dreaded Haitian military, the Forces Armees d’Haiti, whose only function was to repress the country’s people.

During the Cold War, the US backed the brutal dictatorship of Francois ‘Papa Doc’ Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude ‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier as an anti-communist counterweight to Fidel Castro’s Cuba. The Duvaliers ruled from 1957 to 1986 through state terror carried out by its murderous paramilitary, the Tonton Macoute. With Washington’s tolerance, if not encouragement, the father-son dictatorship killed as many as 60,000 people, especially socialists and advocates of democracy and social reform.

Excerpted: ‘The Haitian Migration Crisis: Made in the USA’