

FORCED *to* FLEE



A TIMELINE *of* HAITIAN MIGRATION

PHOTOGRAPH
BY
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STERN

Haitians flooding Mexico's borders made world headlines in 2021. Decades of poverty, political instability, natural disasters, and extreme violence have intensified the number of Haitians passing through the shelters and other relief programs we partner with in Mexico. However, Haitians have been on the move for centuries.

The year 1791 served as a pivot point. That's when Haitian slaves revolted against their white colonial planters. France's most lucrative colony won its independence in 1804, becoming the first independent, Black-led nation.

Because Haiti was the first nation to abolish slavery, countries whose economies relied on slavery refused to trade with it. The embargo caused Haiti, once the biggest sugar producer in the

world, to lose most of its market share. Today, Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1825, French King Charles X demanded that Haiti pay reparations to former slaveholders for the loss of their plantations and slaves. In return, France would recognize Haiti and trade with it. Haiti offered 10 million in gold francs, equal to the cost of the (much larger) Louisiana Purchase, but France ordered 15 times that amount. King Charles sent 14 gunboats armed with 500 guns each to Port-au-Prince to enforce his demands.

Those 150 million gold francs equaled 10 years of Haiti's revenue, yet with 7,000 guns pointed at it, Haiti accepted. Haiti paid off the loan in 1887 but had to borrow more money from French and US banks to repay the interest, which didn't happen until 1947. For 122 years, Haiti could only invest minimally in infrastructure, health care, and education. In today's money, the reparations paid to France equal \$20-30 billion.

European and US powers have exploited Haiti since her independence, making the country poor and turbulent. In response, 16% of her people have fled in search of safety. ♦

1804

Slaves win independence from France in 1804 and change the island's name from Saint-Domingue to Haiti. French plantation owners flee to the US with their slaves.

1912-20

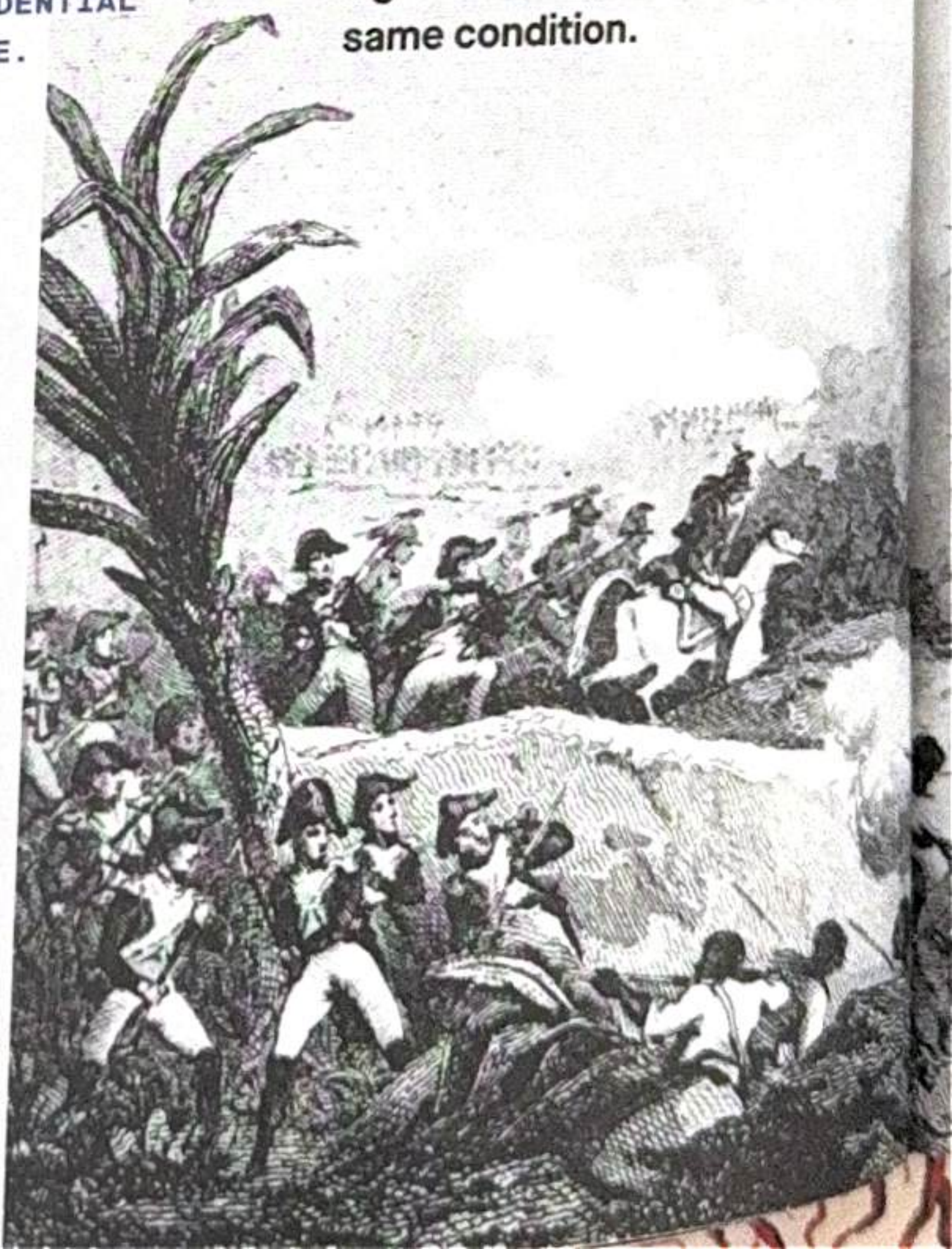
70,000 Haitians migrate to Cuba as contract or guest workers to work in US-owned sugar factories.

IN THE 1810s AND 1820s, HAITI INTERCEPTED SHIPS CARRYING ENSLAVED PEOPLE AND FREED THEM.

DURING ITS 1915-1934 OCCUPATION OF HAITI, THE US INSTALLED PRO-US GOVERNMENTS TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS-AND APPLIED ITS JIM CROW RACIAL CASTE SYSTEM BY ALLOWING ONLY LIGHT-SKINNED HAITIANS TO HOLD PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE.

FIGHTING AGAINST SLAVERY

Haiti worked to end slavery worldwide and offered safe haven to revolutionaries and formerly enslaved people. Haitian president Alexandre Pétion supported rebellions such as Simon Bolívar's 1816 fight to liberate Gran Colombia (present-day Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela) from Spanish rule. His condition: Bolívar would abolish slavery once the countries were independent. That same year, Haiti agreed to aid Mexico in its fight for independence on the same condition.



1957-71

20% of the population emigrates outside Haiti in political or economic exile. Many move to Canada, drawn to a shared French cultural heritage.

1972-77

200,000 Haitians immigrate to South Florida—specifically to the neighborhood of Little Haiti, where Haitian-owned and -operated businesses thrive.

1980s

40,000 Haitians immigrate to the US, fleeing persecution and seeking political asylum.

1991-98

38,000 Haitians flee in boats bound for the US after a coup ousts the democratically elected President Aristide. Another 30,000 people flee to the Dominican Republic. Between 1995 and 1998, 50,000 Haitians obtain legal status in the US.

US Intervention

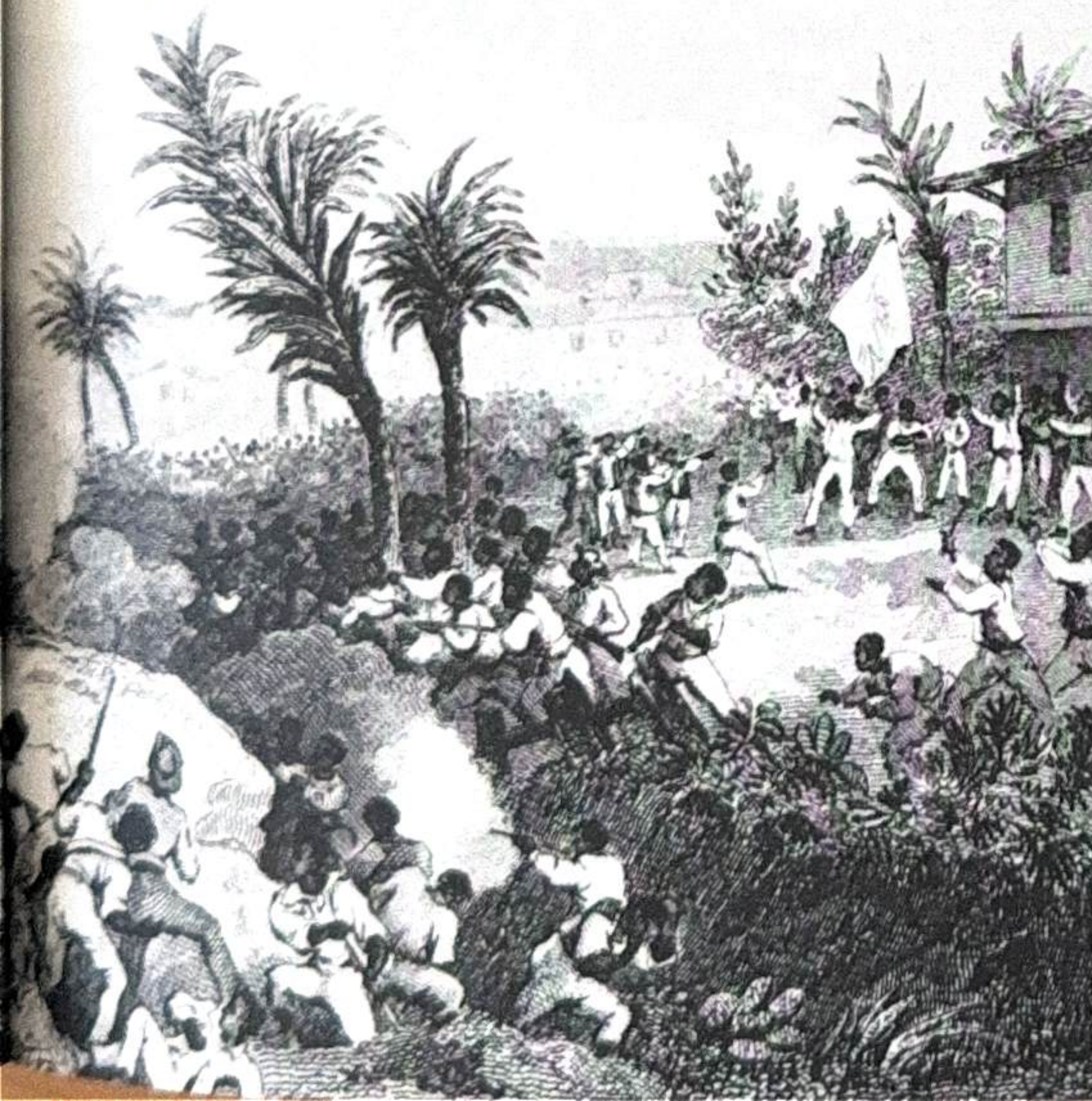
In 1914, the US Marines stormed the island and took half of Haiti's central bank's gold reserves to guarantee that Wall Street banks received debt payments. In 1915, after Haitian President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was murdered, the US invaded, occupying Haiti until 1934. The US altered the Haitian constitution so foreigners could become landowners. The US also siphoned off 40% of Haiti's national income until Haiti fully paid off its reparation debt in 1947.

IN 1964, PAPA DOC DECLARED HIMSELF "PRESIDENT FOR LIFE." UNDER HIS 14-YEAR REIGN, 90% OF HAITIANS WERE ILLITERATE AND SUFFERED FROM CHRONIC SKIN INFECTIONS, TUBERCULOSIS, AND MALNUTRITION.



TURBULENT LEADERSHIP

In 1957, François Duvalier, also known as Papa Doc, was elected president of Haiti in a rigged election. Two years into his term, Papa Doc created the Tonton Macoutes, a paramilitary group with impunity to torture and kill political opponents, which went on to murder over 60,000 Haitians. After Papa Doc died in 1971, his son, Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) became president. His regime tortured and killed more Haitians, and poverty increased. Jean-Bertrand Aristide became president in 1991. The Haitian military, working with the CIA, overthrew him in September of that year for his anti-imperialistic and nationalistic views. Bill Clinton had Aristide reinstated as president in 1994; in return, Aristide agreed to allow foreign farm products into Haiti, which benefited US farmers but destroyed the Haitian economy. Aristide became president again in 2000, but France and the US instigated a coup to overthrow him in 2004.



2010-17

85,000 Haitians migrate to Brazil to work in construction in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. Another 48,000 arrive seeking asylum.

2015

12,000 Haitians arrive in Chile after the jobs boom in Brazil slows. Chile, considered politically and economically stable, allows Haitians to enter without a visa.

2017

As Brazil's economy stagnates, political corruption increases, and anti-immigrant sentiment grows, Haitians leave Brazil. Over 103,000 immigrate to Chile.

2018

Haitian immigration to Chile slows to 27,000 in total after Chile's new president Sebastian Pinera requires Haitians to obtain a visa.



IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS SOMETIMES PUSH HAITIANS BACK INTO GUATEMALA AT NIGHT WITHOUT CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS, VIOLATING THE RULES OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES.

4.5 MILLION OF HAITI'S 11.6 MILLION-PLUS CITIZENS SUFFER FROM ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY AMID GROWING INFLATION, FUEL SHORTAGES, AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY.

SOURCE: UN News, March 22, 2022

HAITI TODAY

In the aftermath of President Jovenel Moïse's 2021 assassination, Haiti descended into apocalyptic violence. More than 90 gangs fight for control of the country, using rape and murder to terrorize neighborhoods. Moms and dads risk their lives doing everyday activities such as going to work or taking a child to school. According to the UN World Food Programme, 4.5 million of Haiti's 11.6 million-plus citizens suffer from acute food insecurity amid growing inflation, fuel shortages, and political instability.

DANGER ZONES

Imagine covering yourself in mud so criminal gangs will think you are too dirty to assault. Rape is but one of the dangers migrants face when crossing the Darien Gap—a 100-mile stretch of jungle separating Colombia from Panama. Not only do migrants cross this jungle on foot, often carrying newborns, but they also negotiate rushing rivers with flash flooding, steep and muddy mountains, and unannounced, jagged cliffs. Traffickers, robbers, and armed gangs further menace the journey. In their dangerous search for safety, people who are not murdered might die from snakebites, heart attacks, drowning, or falling.

HAITIANS OUTSIDE HAITI

705,000
UNITED STATES

Countries hosting the most Haitian immigrants

SOURCE: Migration Policy Institute, 2020

496,000
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

237,000
CHILE

146,000
BRAZIL

101,000
CANADA

85,000
FRANCE

2019

Increased fuel prices, a lack of jobs and health care, and frustration with government corruption lead to widescale protests and violence in Haiti. 17,000 Haitians arrive in Brazil.

2021

Increasing numbers of Haitians travel north through South and Central America to reach the US. Of the 15,000 Haitians who camp under the Del Rio bridge at the US-Mexico border, the US sends 8,000 back to Mexico and deports 2,000 to Haiti.

Mexico receives 131,000 asylum applications in 2021. Nearly 52,000 of asylees are Haitians and 6,970 are their Chilean-born, Haitian children.

2022 HAITIAN MIGRATION CHALLENGES

Mexico's asylum system requires applicants to be processed at their point of entry, so many Haitian migrants become stuck in Tapachula, at the southern Mexico-Guatemala border. The wait time for processing, once three to six months, can now last as long as 18 months, according to the International Rescue Committee. During this wait, migrants lack access to medical care, are targeted by traffickers, and face persistent racism.

AP IMAGES



Natural Disaster and Disease in This Century

Haiti's lack of solid infrastructure, poor construction, dense population, extreme poverty, and absence of quality health care exacerbates the impact of natural disasters.

SEPTEMBER 2004	Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne strike eight days apart, causing serious flooding that displaces 300,000 people.
2005-2009	Tropical storms, hurricanes, and heavy rains destroy critical infrastructure.
JANUARY 2010	Magnitude 7.0 earthquake kills 200,000-plus people, injures 300,000 more, and leaves 1.5 million homeless. UN peacekeepers bring cholera into Haiti, infecting over 819,000 people.
OCTOBER 2012	Hurricane Sandy leaves 200,000 people homeless.
OCTOBER 2016	Hurricane Matthew destroys 200,000 homes, leaving 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian aid.
AUGUST 2021	On the heels of the president's assassination, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake rocks the country, causing \$1.5 billion in damages (amounting to more than 10% of the country's GDP) and leaving over 650,000 people in need of humanitarian aid.