



Haitian-American Policy Agenda 2021

Reflections from South Florida



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INTRODUCTION

Most Haitian immigrants living in the United States arrived before the 2010 Haiti earthquake (1). (source) They have established robust communities in Florida, New York, and Massachusetts where more than two-thirds reside.

Haitian immigrants account for under two percent of the U.S. foreign-born population, with their numbers increasing by 17 percent from 2010 (587,000) to 2018 (687,000). After the 2010 earthquake, which caused over 250,000 deaths and displaced more than 1.5 million, the U.S. government extended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to certain Haitians already in the United States, providing beneficiaries with temporary work authorization and relief from deportation. As of 2017, an estimated 46,000 Haitian immigrants have TPS (2).

Looking farther back the Haitian immigrant population has more than tripled in size from 1990 to 2018 (see Figure 1). In 2018, Haitians were the fourth-largest foreign-born group from the Caribbean in the United States, following immigrants from Cuba (1,344,000), Dominican Republic (1,178,000), and Jamaica (733,000) (3).

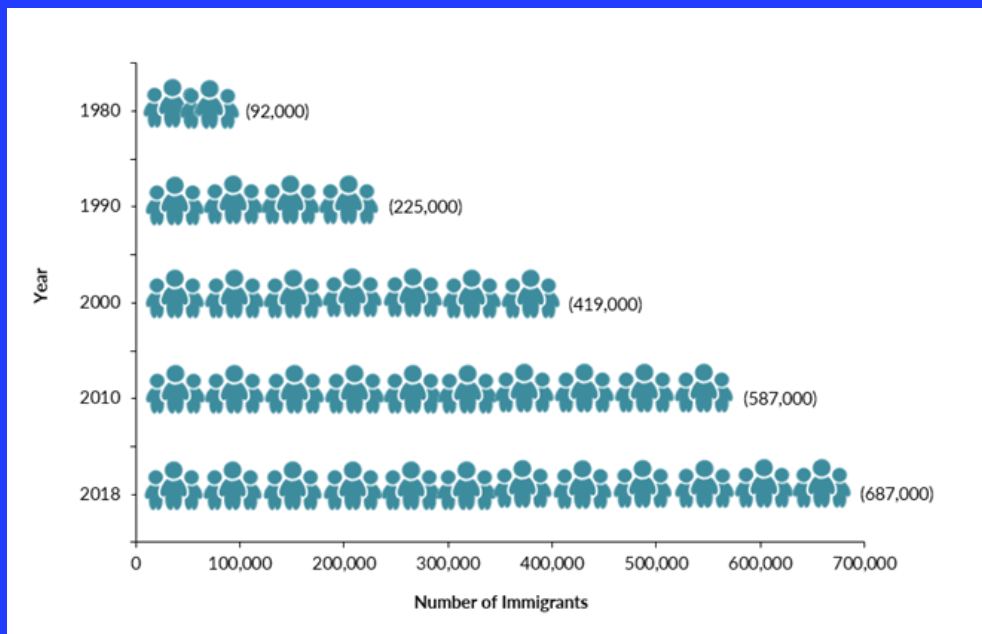


FIGURE 1: GRAPH DISPLAYING 40 YEARS OF HAITIAN IMMIGRANT GROWTH IN THE UNITED STATES

Among Haitian immigrants ages 16 and older, 71 percent participated in the civilian labor force, compared to 66 percent of the overall foreign-born population and 62 percent of the U.S.-born population. Haitian immigrant women were also more likely to be in the labor force than the overall female immigrant population (66 percent compared to 57 percent) (3).

Haitian immigrants were more likely to be employed in service occupations and less likely to be in management and related occupations than both foreign- and native-born populations (see Figure 2).

INTRODUCTION

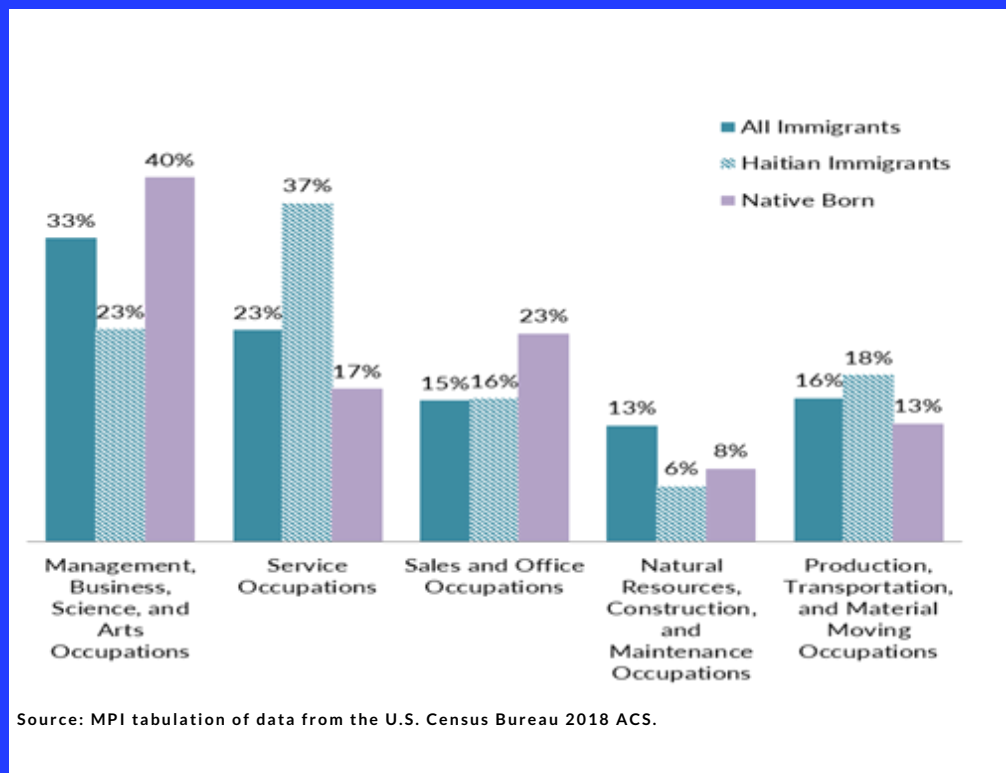


FIGURE 2: GRAPH DISPLAYING DISTRIBUTIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FIELD FOR US IMMIGRANTS INCLUDING HAITIANS

This Haitian American Policy Agenda is the result of conversations held during the Haitian-American Community Agenda Conference of February 2020 in Miami, Florida, and also reflects discussions with various stakeholders, in Haiti and around the U.S. The policy paper was developed in Miami and is not necessarily inclusive of all of Haitian communities in the U.S. However, we believe that the main areas highlighted in this agenda cut across our various communities throughout the U.S. It should be noted that most of the comprehensive data needed for this report are often consumed under racial categories and not by ethnicity and thus some of the information in this report draws from the existing data on Blacks in the U.S.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On behalf of a number of Haitian-American organizations, we are pleased to present the 2021 South Florida Perspective Haitian American Public Policy Agenda.

This agenda is a result of meetings, discussions, and roundtables wherein Haitian-American leaders, community advocates, and community members addressed many critical issues pertinent to the Haitian and Haitian-American community. These issues include economic development, housing, education, immigration reform, foreign policy and healthcare.

Persons of Haitian descent living in the United States consist of over 1 million people. This is a combination of approximately 600,000 persons of Haitians born outside of the US, now residing in the United States, and just over 400,000 of their children born in the United States. This is more than triple the estimated population from 1990.

A majority of Haitians born outside of the United States, who now reside in the U.S., are naturalized US citizens. Haitian-American civic participation played a central role in the 2020 general elections, especially in the swing state of Florida, particularly in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Orange, Lee and Florida's west coast. Florida has an estimated 533,000 residents of Haitian descent. Already, parties and organizations recognize the increasing influence and importance of the Haitian-American vote. Candidates' respect for the Haitian and Haitian-American community and addressing its needs is critical to ensuring Haitian political support.

This 2021 Policy Agenda for the Haitian-American community represents our collective aspirations for the future. We aim to work with the U.S. government (across all levels), political parties, community-based organizations, and most importantly, the public to make the goals of this agenda a reality. The Haitian-American community exists as an interconnected part of this nation. Haitian-American priorities are, by definition, the priorities of the United States.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

From the halls of government to the C-suite and on to striving blue-collar workers, persons of Haitian descent are professionally involved and contribute positively to every aspect of life in the United States. They are essential parts of the fabric that make up the communities in which they reside across America. While successful assimilation into American society is ongoing, examples include Haitian-Americans elected to positions as high as the U.S. Congress (see former Utah Congresswoman Mia Love), along with other state and local government elected positions, judicial appointments, numerous academics, lawyers, military veterans, medical, and other professional fields, the gains of this originally immigrant group are precarious.

Similar to many communities across America, progress in the Haitian American community is being undermined by the 2020 recession. According to the US Census Bureau, the median income for Haitian households in the US, is \$57,451, as of 2019. The median household income for the United States, in general, is \$68,703, as of 2019 (4). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights already pre-existing inequities also found in the broader African American community, under which this group is generally classified.

While there are zip codes with the majority of persons being of Haitian descent, particularly in the state of Florida, these are not necessarily Haitian-only enclaves. Haitians in the U.S. typically have other Caribbean Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and non-Hispanic White Americans as immediate neighbors. They shop at the same venues of business and their children go to the same schools. In other words, the economic well-being of Haitian American households' manifests in economic development for the broader American community in the U.S.

The same documented structural underpinnings that continue to undermine economic progress in the broader African American community are ever present for Haitians in the U.S.

The recommendations below are not an exhaustive list for economic development for the Haitian American demographic, nonetheless, if implemented, they provide for inclusive socioeconomic progress not just for Haitian Americans, but America as a whole.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy Recommendations

- Provide greater access to capital for entrepreneurs to start and grow small businesses, as well as preserving and growing opportunities for Haitian owned businesses to access federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities through
 - Increased funding for the MBDA for the purposes of expanding its capacity to address the startup and growth needs of Black entrepreneurs and other minority groups who historically are disproportionately unable to receive traditional grant and loan capital financing due to issues including not meeting personal capital matching requirements
 - Increased federal funding to community banks and credit unions to issue loans that are targeted for investing in underserved communities with significant numbers of Haitian-American residents
- Expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides tax credits to employers who hire from targeted disadvantaged groups by expanding it to include all other members of an underserved community.
- Improve access to workforce development training, apprenticeships and adult and civics education, services for youth, veterans, and individuals with low educational and English language attainment, including migrant workers.
- Incentivize the hiring of licensed Haitian-American owned contractors for prime contractor and subcontractor work involving federally funded infrastructure projects including neighborhood rehabilitation and revitalization.
- Create jobs through major public investments in rebuilding neighborhoods and transit systems through legislation beyond the reauthorization of the federal transportation law.
- Provide technical assistance and capacity building training for minority owned small businesses
- Strengthen worker protections by defending the right of public and private sector workers to collectively bargain, and bolstering the capacity of federal agencies to enforce basic worker protections.
- Support gender equity in the workplace by enacting the Paycheck Fairness Act and implementing strong measures to prevent and prosecute quid pro quo sexual harassment, hostile environment sexual harassment, and sexual assault and rape in the workplace.
- Enact the Healthy Families Act, allowing workers at businesses with 15 or more employees to earn paid sick days.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy Recommendations

- Review and modify Food Assistance Program (SNAP) requirements to meet the demands presented by the 2020 recession.
- Renew Empowerment Zones tax credits until 2030.
- Incentivize hiring of licensed Haitian-American owned construction trade companies as prime contractors and subcontractors for conducting relevant works at federal Opportunity Zones related construction projects.
- Establish a relevant federal interagency taskforce to review and recommend synergies across federal agencies for addressing the historically disproportional lack of access to business capital for disadvantaged minority entrepreneurs for 2020 and beyond
- Review undercount discrepancy from US Census 2020 decennial count for rectification to ensure disadvantaged Census tracts receive their fair share of support that is affected/dependent on US Census Bureau data

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

For years, the issue of affordable housing in major cities has been the subject of most agendas; however, to this day housing continues to be a significant issue in many communities, especially low-income communities. These housing challenges have gotten significantly worse with the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent 2020 report in the Miami Herald indicated the following:

Miami's housing affordability crisis is an "existential threat" that has rendered Miami the least affordable large city in the U.S., with 57 percent of its households (94,638) paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, and more than 33 percent of renter households (39,112) spending more than half their income on rent. "We are losing people who just can't afford to live here anymore," said Ned Murray, associate director of the Metropolitan Center and principal investigator and contributing author of the master plan. "Paying more than 50 percent of your income on housing is not sustainable. It eats away into the quality of life."

Read more here: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article238954388.html#storylink=cpy>

Ensuring that individuals have a safe place to call home should not be a privilege and is one of the foundational needs of any individual. Although many cities such as Miami, have created plans for ensuring that homes are more affordable to the residents, these ideas must be put into action. In addition to addressing the issue of affordable housing, measures should be taken to increase the Haitian-American homeownership rate. A recent study showed that in Miami, only 30% of the homes are owner occupied and that two cities in the United States, Newark and Jersey City in New Jersey, had lower levels of home ownership than Miami. The need for affordable housing is not unique to Miami and is an area that needs attention in all of the areas throughout the United States, and particularly in regions with significant numbers of Haitian-Americans.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

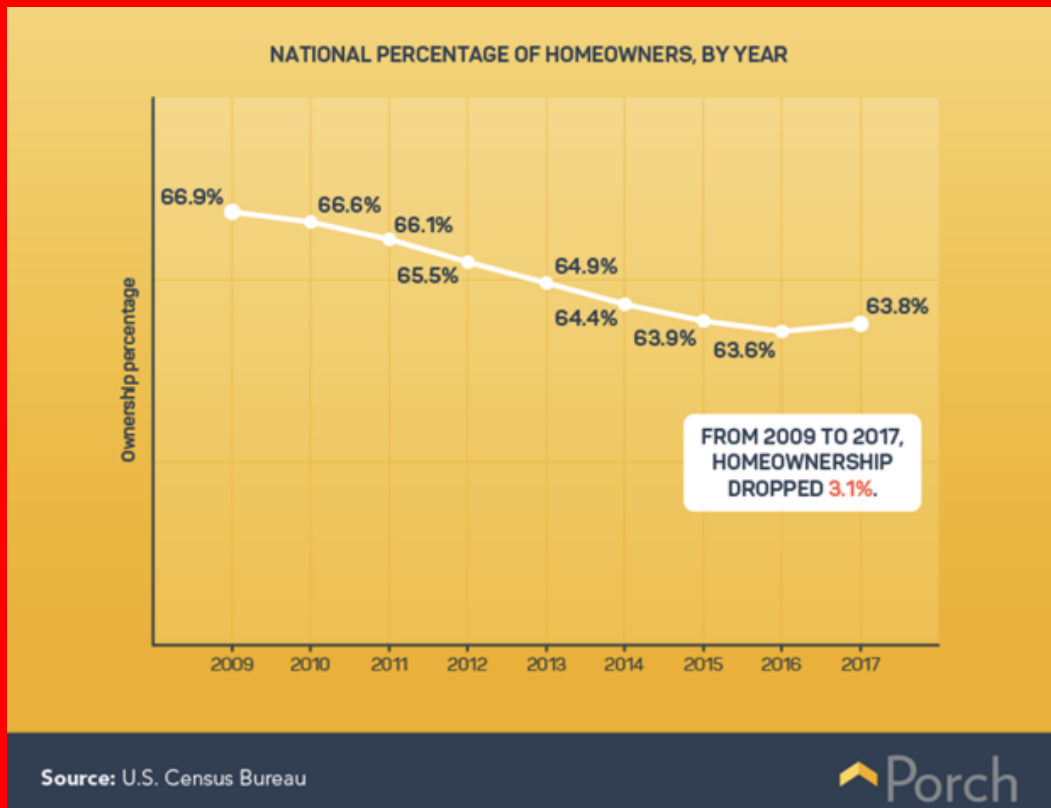


FIGURE 3: GRAPH DEMONSTRATING DROP IN HOMEOWNERSHIP IN THE US FROM BEGINNING OF THE LAST DECADE (5)

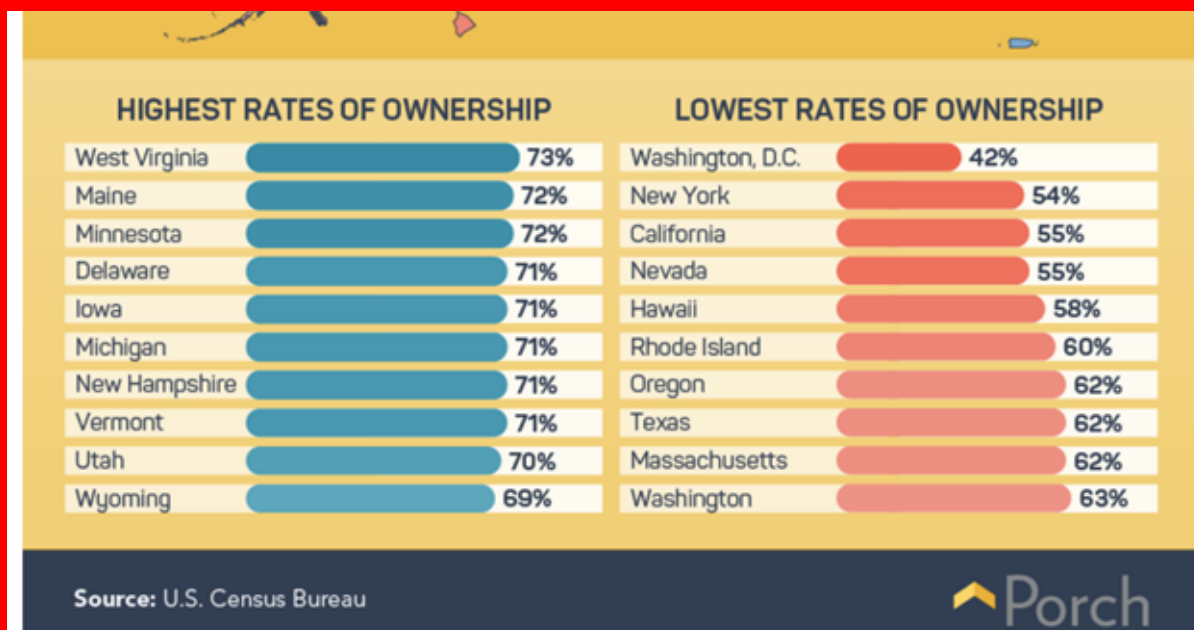


FIGURE 4: GRAPHIC DEMONSTRATING COMPARISON OF HOMEOWNERSHIP BY STATES ACROSS THE US (5)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Policy Recommendations

- Increase funding for Housing Counseling.
- Support principal reduction through the Federal Housing Finance Agency.
- Apply metrics to ensure the Mortgage Credit Market is equitable and accessible.
- Support and strengthen the role of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to educate consumers and crackdown on predatory lending practices.
- Increase funding for Section 202 Public Rental Assistance Contract housing, the only federal housing program specifically for older adults.
- Encourage and facilitate inclusion of Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO) affordable housing efforts for input and collaboration in Opportunity Zones real estate projects
- Ensure proposed mixed-use developments are accessible and inclusive of the community by requiring economically comprehensive beneficiary plans to cost-burdened residents and businesses, and alleviating the impact of climate gentrification.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration policies ought to respect the dignity of individuals. The criminalization and marginalization of immigrants is a significant concern of the Haitian-American community. Of the significant number of Haitian-Americans in the United States, the majority are immigrants from Haiti and thus immigration law and policy is a top priority for the Haitian-American community. Since 2010, at least 46,000 Haitians have applied for and obtained TPS, finding jobs, enrolling in schools, marrying U.S. citizens and having children—all the while reapplying for the special status in six - to 18-month intervals. TPS holders from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti contribute a combined \$4.5 billion in pre-tax wages or salary income annually to the United States' gross domestic product. The total Social Security and Medicare contributions of those individuals is estimated at more than \$6.9 billion over a ten-year span. Due to the intense and continued litigation surrounding TPS beneficiaries are living with anxiety and uncertainty. With no real pathway to a legal status, they are being forced to contemplate an impossible choice on the horizon—return to countries they have not seen in decades or remain undocumented in the United States. And, for those with U.S. citizen children, the decisions are even more difficult.

Policy Recommendations

- Enact comprehensive immigration reform that offers undocumented immigrants, and those with temporary status, an earned path to permanent lawful status and citizenship.
- Curtail the use of state and local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws, which inevitably lead to racial profiling and unnecessarily strained relations between police and Haitian communities.
- Invest in cost-effective alternatives to detention for those who do not pose a risk to public safety or present a flight risk.
- Strengthen policies that reunite families and allow workers to enter with the rights and protections that safeguard our workforce.
- Expand the number of visas, in all categories, made available each year.
- Revisit per country caps unfairly slowing down the orderly adjustment of Haitian immigrants.
- Decrease the financial impediment to lawful permanent residents who apply for citizenship by rescinding the naturalization fee increase.
- Include the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act (AgJOBS) in comprehensive reform to provide farmworkers with a path to adjust their immigration status and protect them from exploitative working conditions.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

“Our federal government functions best when it is equipped with qualified individuals who meaningfully reflect and represent the country they serve.” --Vanita Gupta, President and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Diversity in the federal government enhances problem-solving ability by introducing new and diverse ways of thinking and is tied to mission effectiveness. Additionally, federal employment has been a significant factor in the development of a stable middle class. Projected mass retirements in the federal workforce present government departments and agencies with the opportunity to change the numbers. Haitian-Americans desire representation that reflects the population in federal employment.

Policy Recommendations

- Substantially and affirmatively increase the number of Haitian-Americans, to reflect the population, in the federal workforce, including senior positions, through expanded recruitment and staff development, creating a pipeline of candidates for all levels of federal employment.
- Publicly disclose demographic data for federal flagship programs, such as the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program.
- Intentionally increase recruitment and placement of Haitians in the Presidential Management Fellows Program representation in this program.
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EDUCATION

**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”
– Nelson Mandela**

Population data clearly highlights the shifting in the demographics of this nation and this is reflected within the population of students. Data indicates that more than 50% of the students in U.S. classrooms are Latino, African American, Asian American, and Native American, and biracial or multi-racial. Specifically, according to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of U.S. school-age children who were White decreased from 62 to 51 percent, and the percentage who were Black decreased from 15 to 14 percent. In contrast, the percentages of school-age children from other racial/ethnic groups increased: Hispanic children, from 16 to 25 percent; Asian children, from 3 to 5 percent; and children of Two or more races, from 2 to 4 percent. The percentage of school-age Native Americans/ Alaska Natives remained at 1 percent and the percentage of Pacific Islanders remained at less than 1 percent during this time.

Students of color are now the majority in the classroom and, given that Haitian-Americans represent one of the largest immigrant groups, Haitian-American student educational achievement is crucial to the economic prosperity of the U.S. Data indicates that, in 2018, about 77 percent of Haitian immigrants were of working age (18-64) while 16 percent were ages 65 and older.

Focusing on education from early childhood will ensure a higher rate of high school and college completion, which will translate into higher economic potential and a strong economic society at large. We rarely have data specifically focused on Haitians, but the limited data on education and Haitians indicate the following:

In 2018, 79 percent of Haitians ages 25 and over in the United States had a high school degree or higher, compared to 78 percent of the overall Caribbean immigrant population and 73 percent of the total foreign-born population. The share of Haitian immigrants with a bachelor’s degree or higher was 19 percent, compared to 32 percent of the total foreign-born population.

EDUCATION

The data on education among ethnic populations in the U.S., as well as information from our own community organizations, highlights the need for a comprehensive education plan that considers: early education, elementary and secondary education, higher education, adult education, and quality teachers, administrators and counselors. Ultimately, a focus on these main areas in the Haitian community will ensure success in our communities throughout the U.S., which will lead to a more prosperous nation. Achieving such success requires commitment from the federal, state, and local governments to improving the educational system for all of our citizens, including those of Haitian descent.

Early Childhood Education

Providing a solid foundation must begin early, but the data indicates that this is not the case in this country. For example, a study in 2016 found the following: 29 percent of children under six years old who were not enrolled in kindergarten regularly received center-based care as their primary care arrangement; and, the percentage of children who regularly received center-based care was 32 percent for Blacks. A similar trend is observed in Haitian communities. Research indicates that children who are enrolled in early childhood education are better prepared for elementary school and are therefore more likely to advance to higher grades and ultimately success in employment.

Policy Recommendation

- Institute universal pre-school that meets national standards.
- Expand and increase financial support for Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Establish support for schools of education and teacher colleges to establish teacher education programs in culturally and linguistically competent early childhood instruction that addresses the educational and developmental needs of Haitian and English Learner (EL) students,
- Support and increase the ability of school officials to communicate effectively with parents with limited English proficiency.

EDUCATION

Elementary and Secondary Education

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), an extension of the initial 1965 civil rights bill on equal access to quality education for every child, was met with a level of hope and optimism for a decrease in education disparities among ethnically diverse populations. However, the current data is indicating that we are far from achieving the goals of this law. Recent research highlights the following:

Between fall 2000 and fall 2015, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools who were White decreased from 61 to 49 percent. The percentage of Black students also decreased during this period from 17 to 15 percent. In contrast, there was an increase in the percentage of students enrolled in public schools who were Hispanic (from 16 to 26 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander (4 to 5 percent) during this time period.

The issue does not get better as you look ahead to the high school years and college enrollment rates. Thus, more needs to be done to ensure that children are receiving the best education in the most formative years of their lives.

Policy Recommendation

- Ensure that all Haitian students have access to high academic standards that are statewide and prepare students for college and career.
- Require states, districts, and schools to collect and make available disaggregated data on schools subgroup to allow community organizations to better respond to the gaps.
- Provide culturally appropriate curricula that is aligned to the state's college and career readiness standards
- Adhere to culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments of student progress
- Fund community-based educational programs that include tutoring and after-school assistance to students
- Provide comprehensive education on higher education, including vocational careers and opportunities.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

One of the major achievements in the Black community for the last decade has been the increased rate of Black students enrolling in college.

Policy Recommendations

- Make public two- and four-year institutions tuition-free and expand Pell Grant funding to go toward additional college costs like housing, transportation, food, and books.
- Work with Haitian community-based organizations to deliver extended learning opportunities, including mentoring, tutoring and wrap-around services that keep students in school and on track to graduation with college- and career-ready skills.
- Support the College for All Act by eliminating tuition and fees at all public four-year colleges and universities, as well as make community colleges, trade schools, and apprenticeship programs tuition- and fee-free for all.
- Maintain lower interest rates on federal student loans and expand student loan forgiveness programs for those in public service.
- Enact the DREAM Act to, in part, allow undocumented students to qualify for federal financial aid.

Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators

Black students are projected to be 15 percent of all public-school students in 2024, which is a slight decrease from 16 percent in 2012. Although students of color represent the majority of students in the class, such diversity is not reflective in the teachers in their classroom.

“Without question, when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act. We’ve got to understand that all students benefit from teacher diversity. We have strong evidence that students of color benefit from having teachers and leaders who look like them as role models and also benefit from the classroom dynamics that diversity creates. But it is also important for our white students to see teachers of color in leadership roles in their classrooms and communities. The question for the nation is how do we address this quickly and thoughtfully?”

Education Secretary John B. King, Jr., Speaking at Howard University, March 8, 2016.

*Data for years 1987–88 through 1999–2000 are only roughly comparable to data for later years, because the new category of two or more races was introduced in 2003–04.

EDUCATION

NOTE: Excludes pre-kindergarten teachers. Data is based on a head count of full-time and part-time teachers rather than on the number of full-time-equivalent teachers reported in other tables. The detail may not sum to totals because of rounding, missing data, and cell suppression. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. The Other category represents the sum of Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Two or more races.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 1987-88 through 2011-12. See Digest of Education Statistics 2013, Table 209.10, Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987 - 88 through 2011 - 12, available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_209.10.asp

Closing this significant gap is paramount to ensure that Haitian students are receiving culturally informed education and requires a significant investment in supporting teachers preparation in most universities (public and private) and minority serving institutions.

2022

HEALTH

The health experience of the Haitian immigrant population is not fully captured in research or epidemiological data. Community centered healthcare polices and interventions that are culturally sensitive and adaptable to the needs and concerns of underserved immigrant populations around the nation are critical.

https://med.stanford.edu/content/dam/sm/schoolhealtheval/documents/FPierre_HaitianAmericans.pdf

Health Coverage

The Haitian-born population held health insurance at roughly the same rate as the overall immigrant population (83 percent compared to 81 percent). A larger share of Haitian immigrants had private health insurance than public coverage, at similar rates as the total foreign-born population.

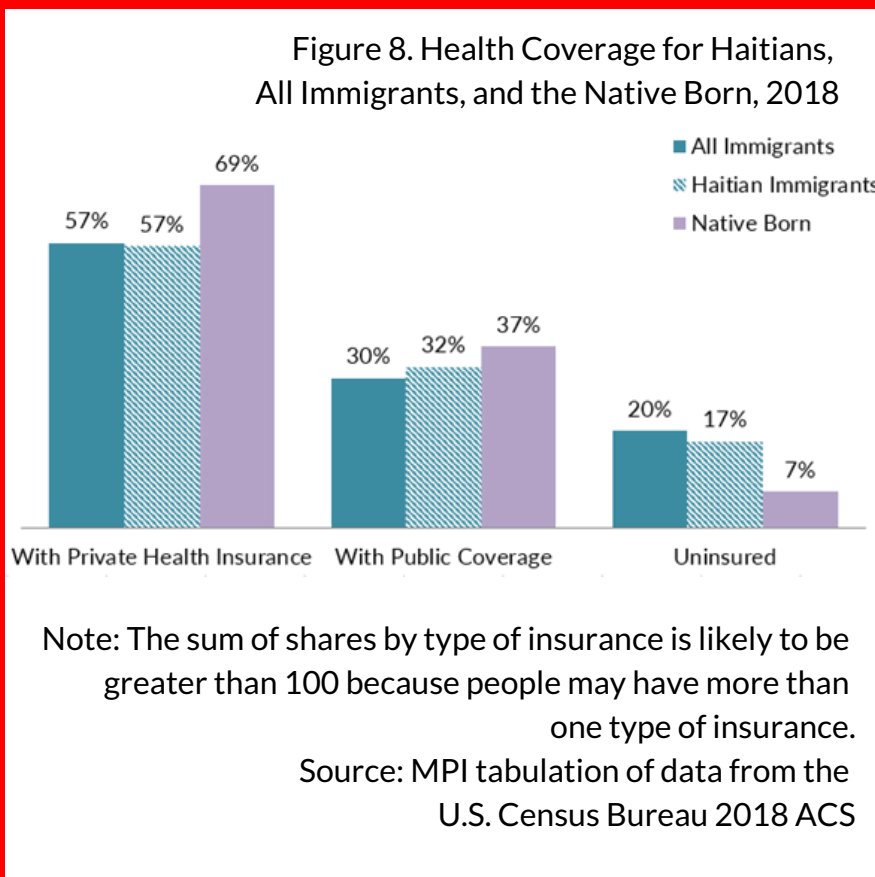


Figure 5. Health Coverage for Haitians, All Immigrants, and the Native Born, 2018

HEALTH

Policy Recommendations

- Maintain the expansion of Medicaid in the ACA to those up to 133 percent of the poverty line.
- Expand enrollment period for ACA allowing additional opportunities for special enrollment
- Oppose any effort to include a waiting period for accessing health programs in the DREAM Act or related legislation.
- Provide sufficient funding for the effective implementation of the ACA.
- Encourage collection of racial and ethnic identification in health care data.
- Ensure cultural and linguistic competency in health education, policies, and care facilities.
- Aggressively enforcing existing public health and environmental laws, including those protecting farmworkers and domestic workers.
- Provide comprehensive health care to every man, woman and child in our country that includes mental, dental, hearing and vision care.



FOREIGN POLICY

Despite the fact that the Republic of Haiti has historically opened its doors to the international community, (including Jews fleeing the Holocaust; support of Simon Bolivar for the Latin American wars for independence; fought and died alongside colonial troops against the British in the American Revolutionary War;) international policy, especially that of the United States toward Haiti has historically been disjointed and often counterproductive to the hopes and dreams of the Haitian people and eventually to America's long term interests. The United States disbursed approximately \$6 billion dollars to Haiti since the 2010 earthquake, yet there is little to no development to date [5-6]. The largest amounts of United States foreign development assistance to Haiti is typically appropriated to the following sectors:

1. Global Health (includes HIV/AIDS)
2. Maternal & Child Health
3. Security (Includes Haitian National Police)
4. Government & Civil Society
5. Agriculture
6. Basic Education
7. Other (includes Energy sector)

What are the end results of these investments? 60% of Haiti's population lives on \$2.41 or less per day with 25% living on \$1.23 dollars per day or less [6-7]. Such wretched economic circumstances is exacerbated by consumer price inflation at 17% for 2019 and 22% for 2020 [7-8]. This is compounded by chronic political instability and its geographic location making it prone to natural disasters. These data, and more provided below, reflect that overall, a significant paradigm shift is needed.

After the 2010 earthquake, estimates were that Haiti would consistently need double digit growth rates for it to have the ability to become an emerging economy by 2030. This Haiti would be inclusive to meet the needs of all of its people [8-9]. The 2030 target date will obviously not be met. At current rates, this will not be achieved even by 2050. Meanwhile the broad Haitian Diaspora is an essential, yet informal foreign development partner. Why not involve greater integration of the Haitian Diaspora? The Haitian Diaspora are more risk tolerant regarding investing in Haiti. Indeed this increased direct investment into the Haitian economy catalyzes Haiti into becoming an emerging country within a reasonable timeline.

FOREIGN POLICY

Haitian Diaspora remittances far exceed official foreign development assistance disbursed to Haiti from the United States and other foreign partners. Unfortunately, the broad Haitian emigres community in the US is not invited by the United States government to evaluate and recommend US foreign policy approaches to Haiti at the scale required. With a majority of the diaspora also being Americans, this reminds us that not only does the diaspora send billions of dollars of remittances to Haiti every year, but its taxes to the US federal government are also expended in foreign assistance to Haiti.

The Haitian Diaspora consists of over 600,000 people in the United States with a majority being naturalized US citizens. If their children born in the United States are included, there are approximately over 1 million Americans in the US who are of Haitian descent. Yet again, with 1 million persons of Haitian descent residing in the United States, providing over half of what has become \$3 billion dollars per year in remittances to Haiti, the US government does not strategically and actively involve this broad community when formulating US foreign policy as it pertains to Haiti.

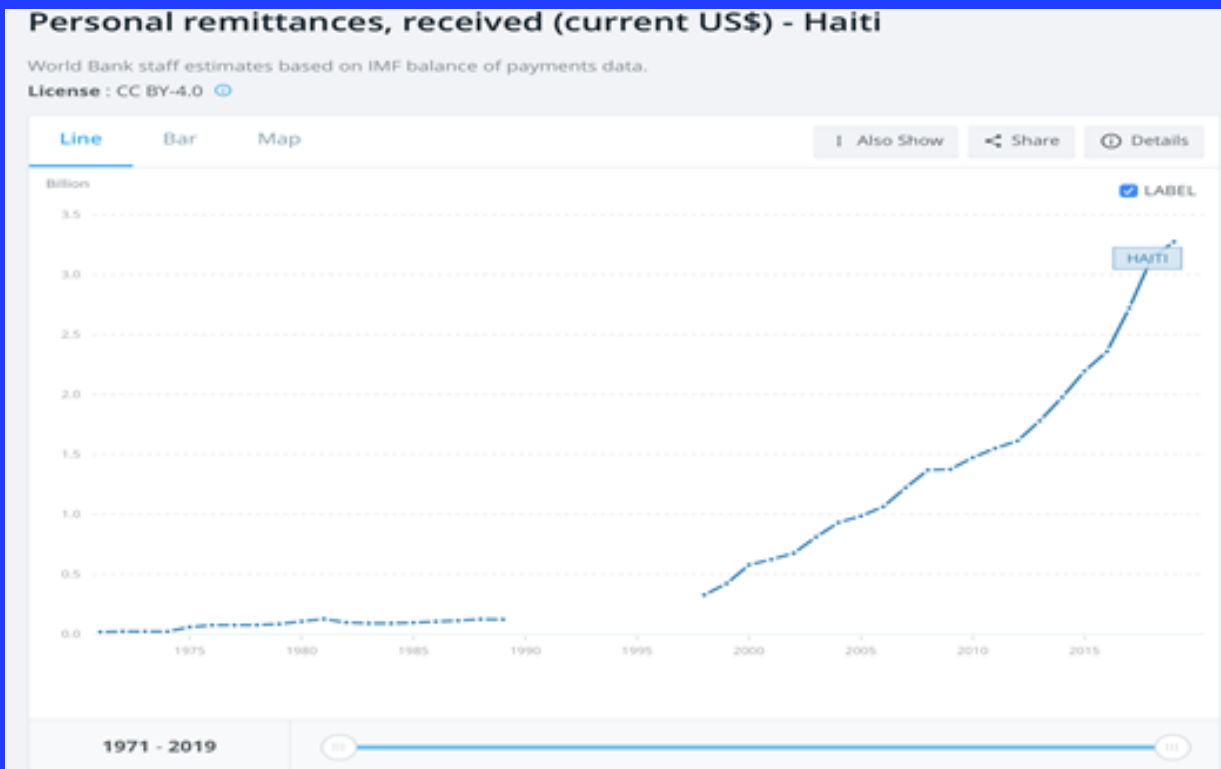


FIGURE 6: GRAPH DEMONSTRATING YEARLY RISING PERSONAL REMITTANCE SENT TO HAITI. SOURCE: WORLD BANK (10)

FOREIGN POLICY

Developing a plan that includes strong, reliable democratic institutions and a sustainably growing economy, inclusive to all of its people, is paramount for the future of the country. Such an evaluation must include Haiti's broad emigres community. This has been attempted to some degree with US government programs assisting diaspora investments towards sectors in the Haitian economy identified for high growth potential [8-9]. The Leverage Effective Application of Direct Investments (LEAD) program, from USAID, targeted diaspora investments to catalyze the creation of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) [11]. It has supported a number of SMEs in the agriculture sector. Haiti INVEST, another USAID sponsored program, leveraging diaspora support, has a focus on the Haitian agriculture sector and with partners also affordable housing [10-12] These are not ill-thought initiatives. Yet they remain to have pilot-scale reach and are the sole purview of international development private contractors. This model will not achieve its intended transformative effects. At best these initiatives are addressing some but not the full magnitude of diaspora engagement required.

Haitian Diaspora interests are in agreement with overall US interest for the Western Hemisphere region. These interests include: (1) promoting social and economic prosperity, (2) ensuring the safety of the hemisphere's citizens, and (3) strengthening effective institutions of democratic governance. Outside of the foreign development assistance to Haiti allocated for global health along with child & maternal health, these U.S. tax dollars are mostly going to waste. As mentioned prior, these tax dollar expenditures have not created the desired effect. This is prevented by imposed barriers that undermine this potential to come to fruition.

Here we list some of the barriers and what others in the diaspora community agree that undermine the necessary increased participation of the diaspora at the scale required for Haiti's transformative development [11-13]. These barriers prevent Haitian-Americans from meaningfully engaging as a partner and therefore Haiti from achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. While this is not an exhaustive list, removal of these barriers brings with it an increase of necessary Haitian Diaspora direct investment in the country.

FOREIGN POLICY

1. The U.S. State Department Travel Advisory Haiti - Level 4: Do not travel to Haiti due to crime, civil unrest, kidnapping, and COVID-19. U.S. Foreign Policy hyper focus on Port au Prince. The level 4 travel advisory does not allow for Haitian-American business leaders and owners to travel to Haiti, thus losing on investments, job creation, and the business potential of micro and small businesses in Haiti. The level 4 travel advisory prevents travelers from going to the country when the hot zones are specific pockets, mostly in the capital, and neighboring cities throughout the country are relatively calm.
2. Haiti is used as a transshipment point for South American narcotics en route to the U.S. An ancillary of the drug trade is the proliferation of gangs and high-powered weapons that have flooded Haiti. While the threat of narco-terrorism has not been a major issue for Haiti, more recently the guns-for-drugs trade has increased between Haiti and Jamaica. It fosters corruption in the police, courts, and customs; fuels weapons trafficking; finances armed gangs; breeds insecurity; and hampers pillars of economic development by discouraging investment including tourism. Again, this prevents Haitian-American business leaders from protecting their assets and facilitates political instability in the county.

Haitian-Americans have been meeting in various Haitian diaspora communities all across the United States. The Haitian-American community, in principle, supports the engagement pillar concepts of U.S. foreign policy to Haiti. Nevertheless, U.S. foreign policy to Haiti requires co-creation with Haitian-Americans for it to become effective at buttressing Haiti as a stable and emerging economic partner of the United States. Indeed, for it to become definitively effective, it requires input from the Haitian American community in the United States.

We believe that the U.S. must use our tax dollars, wisely and strategically. The recommendations provided below are impactful, smart and targeted policies that support Haiti as an independent, prosperous strategic regional nation. This fits the economic and national security interests of the United States as well.

FOREIGN POLICY

- A full and extensive review of U.S. foreign policy to Haiti with implemented advisory input from the Haitian-American community in the United States
- The US must repair the harm done to Haiti's capacity to reach food sovereignty. The US has largely contributed to the collapse of national rice production and has deliberately brought Haiti to its current state of total dependency.
- Reinstate and expand the US/Haiti Building Capacity Program, formerly Konekte (its Creole acronym) whereby qualified Haitian-American professionals will work in Haiti towards improving governance practices at all levels of the Haitian government and its pertinent institutions. The program includes advisory councils and assistance to the executive, parliamentary and judicial branches; as well as to various pertinent government institutions such as the Conseil de Modernisation des Entreprises Publiques (CMEP) and the Commission Nationale des Marchés Publics (La CNMP). The goal is private sector development for job creation; to assist in liaising with the various local and international actors, and to facilitate and contribute to streamlining program and project implementation and promoting political stability. Haiti qualifies for an exception to the Bumpers Amendment which includes food-security activities and research activities in acutely indigent countries like Haiti.
- Facilitate access-to-credit mechanisms to small and medium-sized businesses
- Includes providing financial & technical support to creation and implementation of Leveraging Effective Application of Direct Investments (LEAD) version 2.0 with input from Haitian-Americans.
- The United States should reorient its arms sales policy to ensure that sales provide strategic benefits and to avoid producing negative unintended consequences.
- Examine and revise completely the issue of illegal arms trafficking in Haiti. Please refer to the following journalist's investigation <https://cepr.net/state-department-awarded-contract-to-politically-connected-security-firm/>
- Review with a broad coalition of the Haitian-American community the consideration and enactment of an updated Haitian-American Enterprise Fund Act (S Rept. 112-67)
- Facilitate Haitian-American direct investment in Haiti with tools including equity, grant, and loan guarantees provided by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to Haitian-American firms that invest in Haiti, particularly in agriculture, energy, infrastructure, and tourism to create jobs in Haiti and the U.S.
- Includes synergy with the updated Haitian-American Enterprise Fund Act that is enacted
- Support the Haitian Diaspora in their demands for transparency from the Haitian government on the taxes taken on diaspora transfers and phone calls

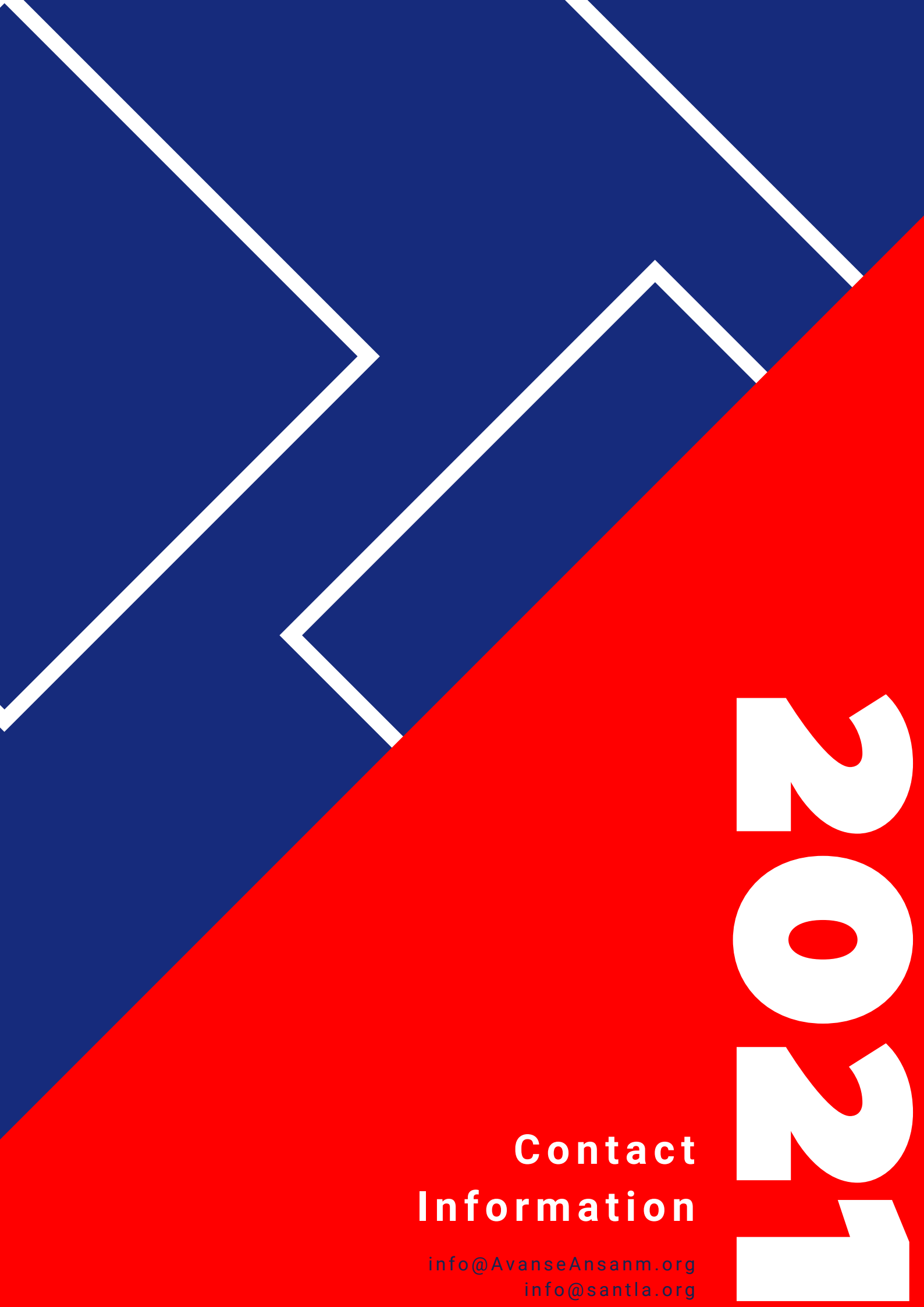
FOREIGN POLICY

Policy Recommendations

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ENDNOTES

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**Contact
Information**

info@AvanseAnsanm.org
info@santla.org