

Statement on ending TPS status for Central Americans and Haitians

February 2018

Through the recent repeal of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 200,000 Salvadorans, 46,000 Haitians, and 2,550 Nicaraguans and with 57,000 Hondurans with TPS status waiting in the wings, the Trump Administration has accelerated its attack on family unity and demographic and economic diversity in the United States. There are currently an estimated 325,000 migrants from 13 TPS-designated countries residing in the United States. TPS beneficiaries have an estimated 273,000 children who were born in the United States.¹

Salvadoran TPS recipients who live in the United States have 190,000 U.S. citizen children, most studying in U.S. schools and universities. Forcing TPS recipients to leave the United States will divide families, cause suffering and hardship and have a major impact on the U.S. economy in many regions. The labor force participation rates for TPS recipients from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti is 81-88 percent.²

In addition, forcing people to return to El Salvador and Honduras forces them back to countries where hundreds are fleeing on a daily basis. Central Americans from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador continue to flee economic inequality, youth gangs, drug cartels and their government's ineffective and abusive approaches to combatting crime.³ These conditions are behind the wave of women and children who fled through Mexico into the United States from 2014 to the present.

Fundamentally shifting the frame on immigration, the Trump administration seems determined to undo the 1965 and 1986 immigration laws that removed overtly racist components of immigration laws that had shaped U.S. policy since the 1920s and have reshaped U.S. racial geography in the past 50 years. Reforms of immigration law from the past century resulted in about 50 percent of migrants who have arrived since 1965 being from Latin America and one quarter being from Asia. No one racial or ethnic group will constitute a majority and Latinos will constitute 24 percent of the overall population by 2065 and Asians will be 14% of the total by that same date.⁴

Earlier immigration waves from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century were almost entirely made up of people from Europe. The backlash to this ongoing dramatic demographic shift has gone from the political margins to the political center and is becoming normalized, with the U.S. President maligning immigrants from countries with Afro-descendent and indigenous populations.

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional Association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 12,000 members, nearly 60 percent of whom reside outside the United States, LASA brings together experts on Latin America from across the globe and from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors.

As scholars and educators, we find that ending TPS status and the consequences that follow for immigrant students and their families to be unacceptable. Having lived for almost two decades with uncertainty tied to their temporary status, it is time to offer a path to citizenship for TPS recipients. Polls have consistently shown that current U.S. citizens believe that long-term undocumented residents with significant ties to the U.S. (like citizen children) should have the opportunity to become citizens.⁵

We call on the U.S. government to restore TPS status to Central Americans, Haitians, and others who have lost it and to further establish a program of comprehensive immigration reform that will allow TPS recipients and others who are unauthorized to earn a path to citizenship.

1 Robert Warren and Donald Kerwin. 2017. A statistical and Demographic Profile of the U.S. Temporary Protected Status Populations from El Salvadorans, Honduras, and Haiti. *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5 (3): 577-592.

2 Ibid.

3 Miranda Cady Hallett and Leisy J. Abrego. NACLA, November 17, 2017. <https://nacla.org/news/2017/11/16/seeking-permanent-protected-status>

4 All statistics in this paragraph from Pew Research Center. 2015. Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065. September 15, 2015. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>

5 Hallett and Abrego, 2017.

About LASA

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 12,000 members, over 65% of whom reside outside the United States, LASA is the one association that brings together experts on Latin America from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors, across the globe. LASA's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and its people throughout the Americas, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and public debate.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or lasa@lasaweb.org.

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