



# WHILE THE DOGS AND CATS OF SPRINGFIELD, OH ARE SAFE, THE HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS ARE NOT

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**By Cyrus D. Mehta and Kaitlyn Box\***

This past week, Trump and J.D. Vance have gone viral for some particularly bizarre rhetoric, alleging that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were eating people's pets. On September 9, 2024, J.D. Vance [posted](#) on X: "Months ago, I raised the issue of Haitian illegal immigrants draining social services and generally causing chaos all over Springfield, Ohio. Reports now show that people have had their pets abducted and eaten by people who shouldn't be in this country. Where is our border czar?" Trump repeated these claims in his September 10, 2024 [debate](#) with Vice President Kamala Harris, stating "In Springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in. They're eating the cats. They're eating -- they're eating the pets of the people that live there." These allegations were widely recognized as entirely baseless, including by Springfield, Ohio mayor Bob Rue, who in an interview [called](#) Trump and Vance's statements "just untrue" and assured residents that their "pets are safe in Springfield, Ohio". These anti-immigrant sentiments come after Laura Loomer, a far-right activist and internet personality, stated in a [post](#) on X "If @KamalaHarris wins, the White House will smell like curry & White House speeches will be facilitated via a call center and the American people will only be able to convey their feedback through a customer satisfaction survey at the end of the call that nobody will understand."

Unfortunately, xenophobic statements like these can have real world negative consequences. In Springfield, Ohio, credible [bomb threats](#) related to Trump and Vance's comments forced schools and offices to close. Haitian immigrants in the area, many of whom are Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients, [report](#) feeling unsafe and even being [targeted](#) for property damage as a result

of this hostility. Notwithstanding the harm caused to communities in Ohio, the Trump campaign has doubled down on its anti-immigrant rhetoric, with J.D. Vance [stating](#) in a CNN interview, “I’m still going to keep on talking about what the migrants have done to Springfield, Ohio, and what Kamala Harris’ open border has done to Springfield, Ohio”. Vance also had the audacity to state that “If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that’s what I’m going to do.”

Trump’s animus towards immigrants is hardly new. In 2018, he infamously [referred](#) to migrants from Haiti and elsewhere as “people from shithole countries” and has [stated](#) that Haitian migrants “all have AIDS”. Sentiments like these no doubt contributed to the Trump administration’s efforts to terminate TPS designations for Haiti, Sudan, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, a decision that was challenged by TPS beneficiaries and their U.S. citizen children in federal court in [Ramos v. Nielsen](#). The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California found that Trump’s animus towards “non-white, non-European” immigrants had influenced the decision to end these TPS distinctions, cataloguing a series of anti-immigrant remarks he has made since 2015, including characterizing Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists, and calling for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.” The court ultimately struck down the Trump administration’s effort to rescind these TPS designations, holding that the decision was made “without any explanation or justification in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act”, and that it may have been “influenced by the White House and based on animus against non-white, non-European immigrants in violation of Equal Protection guaranteed by the Constitution”. The court’s decision to issue a preliminary injunction was later overturned by the [Ninth Circuit](#), which upheld the Trump administration’s TPS rescissions, and the designations were ultimately [restored](#) under the Biden administration. Despite the Ninth Circuit’s decision to overturn the preliminary injunction and the Biden administration restoring TPS, the litigation is not [entirely resolved](#). The en banc Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals granted Plaintiffs’ petition for rehearing and vacated the opinion of the three-judge panel. Plaintiffs filed an opening brief opposing the motion to dismiss.

Although the pets are safe, the rhetoric advanced by Trump and Vance proves that the immigrant community is decidedly not. Baseless anti-immigrant sentiments have the potential to sow discord and violence, as illustrated by

recent events in Ohio communities. Moreover, Trump's antipathy toward immigrants shaped policy decisions while he was president, including the rescission of TPS protections for vulnerable populations.

Indeed, Trump has promised to deport Haitian immigrants in Springfield, OH by again attempting to rescind their TPS status. Trump has [repeatedly stated](#) that his administration will create a deportation force that would deport 15 million undocumented immigrants. Radley Balko's newsletter on substack, [Trump's Deportation Army](#), provides chilling details on how this deportation would be executed, which would be an unmitigated disaster for families, the US economy and the standing of the United States. The Trump immigration plan would be the second largest forced displacement of human beings in human history, on par with Britain's disastrous partition of India, and second only to total forced displacement during World War II,"Balko states.

In light of the second assassination attempt on Trump at the time of going to press, his [supporters accuse](#) critics of allegedly creating a climate that encourages people to perpetrate such acts of violence. Although there is no place for political violence in America, and all political differences, however heated, must be settled through ballots and not bullets, Trump should also realize that his baseless claims against Haitians immigrants result in violence towards them too, even if they may whip up votes in his favor. There is no excuse for politicians like Trump, and Vance, who is also the sitting Senator from Ohio, to instigate violence against people here in the US whom they have a solemn duty to protect. Notwithstanding any sympathy that Trump may be generating after the assassination attempts, his dangerous rhetoric towards Haitians who are legally in the US has crossed an unacceptable line and he fully deserves to be completely and frontally defeated in this election.

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