

# Trump's campaign of political terror against immigrants in Springfield, Ohio

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The campaign of political terror initiated by Donald Trump and the Republican Party against thousands of Haitian workers in Springfield, Ohio, marks a turning point in the crisis of the American political system.

Trump, Republican Vice Presidential candidate J. D. Vance and the Republican Party have whipped up a climate of violence that has shut down public functions in a working class city of 60,000. Trump's aim in the run-up to the November election is to transition toward paramilitary-type violence, in effect changing the order to his far-right supporters from "stand back and stand by" to "forward, march." On Sunday, Trump announced plans to travel to Springfield in the immediate future.

The exact origins of the slander against Haitians are hazy, but sometime in early August local neo-Nazis promoted the lie that Haitian immigrants were eating dogs and cats in Springfield, and Trump or Vance's operatives picked up on it soon thereafter. Trump elevated the issue to the center of the political stage during last Tuesday's debate when he said, "Look at what's happening to the towns all over the United States. Don't go to Springfield. In Springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in. They're eating the cats. They're eating the pets of the people that live here."

Following the debate, the Trump campaign deployed Vance to give the fascist attack on immigrants a phony "pro-worker" veneer. On Friday, Vance published a statement on Twitter/X saying the situation in Springfield "drives home" why he supports Trump: "Housing costs skyrocketing. Communicable diseases on the rise. Car accidents, crime, and insurance premiums moving up. Citizens complaining for months (or longer) and mostly ignored." This demagogic statement, which draws on over a century of

xenophobic race-baiting, has now been viewed 37 million times.

In response to Trump and Vance's appeal, far-right elements have now inundated the city of Springfield with threats of violence, promising to bomb schools and engage in mass shootings of Haitian workers and school children.

The city government, which had previously clarified there were no reports of missing house pets, was forced to close Springfield's City Hall and Department of Motor Vehicles, while bomb threats forced multiple schools and hospitals to go on lockdown and evacuate on Friday. The region's two colleges, Clark College and Wittenberg University, announced that classes and events would be cancelled due to ongoing threats.

Of the 12,000-20,000 Haitian immigrants who live in the area lawfully and work in its factories and warehouses, many have told reporters they fear leaving their homes. One high school student whose school was evacuated Friday told the *New York Times*, "Everybody is completely on edge, it's really stressful. I feel that something big is about to happen, but I don't know what it is."

In response to the bomb threats, Trump and Vance have turned up the volume of their attack against Haitians and immigrants. On "Meet the Press" Sunday, Vance effectively admitted the issue of "pet-eating" was concocted: "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," Vance said, before saying Haitians had increased "disease rates" and were to blame for workers' rising housing, healthcare and car insurance costs.

On "Face the Nation," Vance told Margaret Brennan, "You have a thousand children now in a small district who don't speak English, so now the kids who are in

that school district are not getting a good education. The local health services have become overwhelmed. This is a terrible tragedy.” When asked about the bomb threats, Vance blamed the media for ignoring citizens’ concerns about immigration for too long: “Why is somebody calling in a bomb threat, Margaret? It’s because they want attention.”

This endorsement of fascist violence is in step with the decision by Trump and the Republicans to bring the attack on immigrants further to the forefront and to use increasingly violent language. Speaking at a rally in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Saturday, Trump said, “[o]ur country is under invasion just like an army” and that “we have thousands and thousands and thousands of terrorists coming into our country.” He said towns like Springfield, Ohio, and Aurora, Colorado—where Trump has promoted a false claim that Venezuelan gangs are responsible for poor living conditions—need to be “liberated.” He repeated his false claim that immigrants are preparing to vote illegally in the upcoming election.

According to an account of the rally from the *Nevada Current*, Trump’s campaign presented a series of new images on large screens: “On video screens flanking the stage, the campaign displayed images connecting immigrants to crime. In one, labeled ‘The Harris plan for sex traffickers,’ a red carpet leads to open gates at the U.S. border. Another read ‘no one is safe with Kamala’s open borders’ and featured a man with a weapon lurking behind a woman in a dark alley. A third showed a group of tattooed Latino men and read ‘your new apartment managers if Kamala’s re-elected.’”

The near-total silence of the Democratic Party in response to this fascist campaign gives Trump free rein to escalate further. Kamala Harris, who has purchased TV advertisements presenting herself as tough on immigration, has not made a single statement opposing Trump’s promotion of lies against Haitians. Not once during Tuesday’s debate did she point out that Trump’s statements about Haitians eating pets were false, instead stressing that she supported a bill backed by “some of the most conservative members” of Congress to crack down on immigration.

Biden made a perfunctory statement on Friday saying “there is no place in America [sic], this has to stop.” In reality, the Biden-Harris administration has paved the way for Trump’s scapegoating of Haitians by engaging in relentless attacks on the rights of Haitian immigrants.

This April the administration re-started deportation flights to Haiti despite the ongoing economic, social and political crisis in the country.

It was under Biden’s presidency in 2022 that Border Patrol agents were deployed on horseback and armed with whips to block Haitian asylum seekers from entering the country at the southern border with Mexico. As a result of measures the Biden-Harris administration has taken to deter immigration from Haiti, hundreds have been killed attempting to enter the country in recent years. On July 17, 2024, 40 Haitians died attempting to travel to the US when their boat caught fire off the coast of Cap Haitien.

Trump is promoting and the Democrats are collaborating in the fascist provocation against immigrants because they fear the threat of a united movement of the working class.

In opposition to this attempt to divide the working class, workers in Ohio, throughout the US and internationally must come to the defense of their class brothers and sisters. This is a strategic necessity in the fight for the international unity of the working class against capitalism and for an end to the nation-state system.



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