

STATE

Haitians in U.S. hesitant to seek protected status

By Georgia East
Sun Sentinel

Suze Lubin spent five years in hiding, unable to apply for most jobs or even a driver's license, and in constant fear of being deported to Haiti, where her son had once been kidnapped.

Then the earthquake that devastated her homeland on Jan. 12 transformed her life in North Lauderdale.

Citing humanitarian reasons, President Barack Obama allowed undocumented Haitians already here to apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), as long as they have no criminal background. The program is reserved for selected undocumented migrants from countries disrupted by natural disasters, armed conflicts or other emergencies.

"Everything is OK now," said Lubin, 40, whose family embraced the long-sought amnesty, which allows TPS recipients to live and work here

RELUCTANT TO APPLY?

Only about 60,000 Haitians of the 100,000 believed to be eligible nationwide have applied for Temporary Protected Status because of last year's earthquake in Haiti. The deadline to apply is Jan. 18.

- Advocates list several reasons for the low numbers:
- A fear of letting authorities know where they are.
 - The cost. There's a \$470 fee to apply.
 - The hope that more comprehensive immigration reform may eventually be approved.
 - The decision last month to resume the deportations of people with criminal backgrounds also is expected to dampen applications.

legally until July and possibly longer with extensions.

So far, about 60,000 Haitians have applied nationwide for the program, said Ana Santiago, a spokeswoman with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. But that's far fewer than the 100,000 believed to be eligible and the deadline to apply is Jan. 18.

Advocates list several reasons for the low numbers: a fear of letting authorities know where they are; the \$470 cost to apply and the hope that more

comprehensive immigration reform may eventually be approved. The decision last month to resume the deportations of those with criminal backgrounds is also expected to dampen a last-minute push to get people to apply.

"Immigration and Customs Enforcement have preyed on the Haitian community in the past, by picking up families at 3 and 4 a.m. and deporting parents," said Ellison Toussaint, of Miami, a local community organizer. "A lot of people still don't

trust immigration."

After the earthquake killed about 250,000 and left more than a million people homeless, advocates pushed for TPS, saying it would help the rebuilding of Haiti. With work permits, undocumented immigrants could earn a better living and help family members left in Haiti, they said.

South Florida in particular has been a lifeline for Haitians, with a significant share of remittances to Haiti coming from this region, according to experts. Remittances account for one fifth of Haiti's economy.

Anti-immigration groups blasted TPS, claiming it would prompt a mass exodus of people from Haiti. About a year later, however, the U.S. Coast Guard said that did not happen. Crews in 2010 intercepted 1,377 Haitian migrants at sea, down from 1,782 in 2009.

Then there was concern over the cost to taxpayers.

According to Hiram Ruiz, director of refugee services for the Florida Department of Children & Families, "there is no cost to the department, or the state, or the country" because TPS recipients are not eligible for Med-

icaid and Social Security benefits.

Undocumented immigrants are already entitled by law to free K-12 public school education and emergency health care.

"The benefit (of TPS) is that they're working legally and maintaining their families," Ruiz said.

PUBLIC COMMENT NOTICE

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM (NSP)3 APPLICATION

St. Lucie County will be applying for NSP 3 funding in the amount of \$1,947,657 provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to stabilize neighborhoods whose viability has been, and continues to be, damaged by the economic effects of properties that have been foreclosed upon and abandoned.

St. Lucie County intends to make application for the following projects:

Principal buy down assistance	\$214,669
Acquisition and rehabilitation of foreclosed upon homes for resale	\$1,100,000
Acquisition and rehabilitation of foreclosed upon homes for rental	\$438,223
Grant Administration:	\$194,765
Total Grant Application:	\$1,947,657*

*Includes Activity Delivery Costs

There are no other County funds utilized for these improvements. Please also note that the budget amounts are estimates and are subject to change as the application is developed.

Any resident wishing to know more about the proposed projects should contact Mrs. Jessica Parrish, Housing Manager, St. Lucie County, 2300 Virginia Avenue, Ft. Pierce, FL 34982 or telephone 772-462-1290 as soon as possible. Comments from the public will be accepted and reviewed. A comment period of January 10 to January 25 is necessary in order for St. Lucie County to receive comments for consideration. Information relating to the proposed project and application is available for review between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at the address listed above. The NSP 3 application is also available online at <http://www.stlucieco.gov/community/nsp.htm>.

The proposed NSP 3 application is located in a handicapped accessible location. Any handicapped person requiring an interpreter for the hearing impaired or the visually impaired should contact Mrs. Parrish and an interpreter will be provided. Any non-English speaking person wishing to review the NSP 3 application and submit comments should contact Mrs. Parrish and a language interpreter will be provided. To access a Telecommunication Device for Deaf Persons (TDD) please call 1-800-955-8771. Any handicapped person requiring special accommodation should contact Mrs. Parrish.

Five suspected illegal immigrants caught with drugs, officials say

By James Kirley
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SOUTH HUTCHINSON ISLAND

Five suspected illegal immigrants came ashore Sunday morning in southern St. Lucie County near Jensen Beach and were apprehended with two duffel bags of what law enforcement officials said contained about 110 pounds of marijuana.

The suspects were spotted by someone who called 911 about 7 a.m. from the Courtyard by

Marriott hotel, 10978 S. Ocean Drive, just north of the Martin County line, a St. Lucie County Sheriff Office official said.

They were dripping with water and carrying the two duffel bags, St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara said.

The five, all adults, included two Jamaican men and one woman; one Haitian man; and a Bahamian man, said Nicole Navas, spokeswoman for the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

The agency retained custody of the marijuana and turned the five suspects over to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency, she said.

The suspects' names and other information were not available Sunday and Navas said the investigation is ongoing.


A 23-foot open, center-console boat in which they landed on South Hutchinson Island was recovered by the Martin County Sheriff's Office. It also has been turned over to federal authorities.

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