



## The State of Welcoming Immigrants One Year into the Biden Administration

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The rising trend to cast blame on immigrants continues to be at the heart of U.S. politics and is growing across the globe. As we approach the State of the Union address and reflect on the last year, we realize that the Trump anti-immigrant era has left a residual effect on the entire country, including the Biden administration's own immigration policies.

Although President Biden has created relief from deportation for many people claiming sanctuary to keep their families together, his administration has kept many Trump policies in place, such as the weaponization of the Title 42 public health code and the pandemic to block and expel hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers at the border, denying them due process in violation of U.S. and international law. Haitians and Africans at the border are experiencing anti-Black discrimination by other migrants and when attempting to claim asylum, they face institutional racism by both Mexican and U.S. officials. [Thousands of Haitians are now being deported](#) back to unsafe conditions. The Biden administration had promised to end private detention, but the number of people detained by ICE has [increased by over 50 percent](#) since he took office. Nearly one hundred United Church of Christ faith leaders recently [signed a letter](#) to tell Biden to end the inhumane detention of migrants.

Much of Biden's immigration stances appear to be a response to the Republican party's political strategy, which utilizes immigration to stoke fear and incite a sense of White nationalism. For example, the Governor of Texas, Gregg Abbot, signed an executive order that [criminalizes asylum seekers](#) and has attempted [to blame them for the state's rise in COVID cases](#), even after he failed to implement mask wearing policies or robust vaccination efforts.

The erosion of the asylum and refugee programs over the last five years is part of the larger threat to democracy. A true democracy has the moral responsibility to create safe refuge for people fleeing life-threatening persecution because of their ethnicity, social group, or religion. It is also a key tactic to confront

authoritarianism and human rights abuses abroad. Right-wing hate groups are behind the White nationalist propaganda that stokes xenophobic fervor and are the same groups, such as the “Proud Boys,” that helped organize the January 6th insurrection.

At the mainstream level, a pathway to citizenship for essential workers and farm workers polls well, with [over 70 percent](#) of people supporting it. Yet, Republican Senators are using the filibuster to block any path to citizenship, forcing Democrats to utilize provisions in the reconciliation process to pass immigration reform in the Build Back Better legislative package. However, the Senate Parliamentarian, who has her own history of working to deport immigrants at [two different detention centers](#), has recently ruled against the proposed immigration reform provisions. The United Church of Christ is asking constituents to [contact](#) their Senators to demand a pathway to citizenship.

The tragic crisis that unfolded in Afghanistan led to the evacuation of over 80,000 people seeking refuge. The U.S. government has done an excellent job working with refugee resettlement agencies and faith communities to stand up the Afghan Placement and Assistance program, but has recently issued blanket humanitarian parole denials to those who are left behind while Congress delays passing the Afghan Adjustment Act to create a pathway to citizenship.

At the root of xenophobic policies is racism, White supremacy, and the attempt to limit the increasingly diverse landscape of American culture. As people of faith, we must continue to locate our mission and purpose in confronting institutional racism and how it impacts our ability to welcome the immigrant in our midst and treat our neighbors with the equity and dignity that all people deserve.

Learn more about [how to become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation](#) and [how to welcome newly arriving refugees](#).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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