

Statement from WWD to read at Title 42 Anniversary Events

On the 2 year anniversary of Title 42, U.S. government actions highlight: it was always about racism

Regarding the new exception for Ukrainian Asylum-Seekers from Title 42 expulsions

On March 11 the Department of Homeland Security issued a [memo](#) authorizing Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to exempt Ukrainian nationals from Title 42 on a case-by-case basis. Ukrainians seeking safety should be welcomed with compassion. But today we raise a mirror to the U.S. government and ask, “Why is it so hard to muster the same compassion for people fleeing Haiti, Cameroon, El Salvador, Syria, México and other countries also facing war and instability?”

In practice, what this policy looks like is white asylum seekers being granted access to a system that has been shut down for many thousands of Black and brown asylum seekers. It looks like white families arriving at the border being permitted to reunite with relatives in the U.S., while Black and brown families who have been trapped in Mexico for two years still have no way to access asylum. Ukrainians do not deserve to endure the violence of Title 42. But no one else does, either.

There has never been any doubt that Title 42 was designed specifically to prevent Black and brown refugees and immigrants from entering the U.S. Under Title 42. Over 20,000 people, including children and babies, have been expelled to Haiti, despite the country reeling from a presidential assassination, widespread political violence, and devastating natural disasters. The Biden administration’s decision to continue Title 42 for Black and brown people, while opening the door for white Ukrainians, is just the latest chapter in a long history of racist U.S. immigration policies.

We have seen politicians and pundits in Europe and the U.S. respond to the war in Ukraine by lamenting the suffering of “[people like us](#).” Implicit in these statements is that places like Haiti, Central America, and African countries are naturally more volatile, and that this is unrelated to centuries of violent colonialism and exploitation. The message is that the suffering of Black and brown people is par for the course, while Europeans experiencing war and displacement are “exceptional” and more worthy of our concern.

When we say “Welcome with Dignity,” we mean that everyone deserves to be safe and free. That the right to seek asylum belongs to any person who is no longer safe in their country of origin. Our political leaders cannot applaud European countries for welcoming millions of Ukrainians, while continuing to turn away Black and brown people seeking refuge on our nation’s own doorstep.