



April 2018

DOMINICAN  
REPUBLIC

## Social Services of the Dominican Churches (SSID)

- Working in DR since 1962
- Ecumenical organization with large networks
- Help with development of communities, especially in rural areas

## What can I do?

### Learn

Watch the Caribbean Initiative's April 13, 2018 webinar with Mr. Lorenzo Mota King Jr, SSID Executive Director

Read news stories and newsletters from mission co-workers

### Pray

Remember churches, communities, and families who are affected

### Connect

Link to networks or mission partnership with SSID

### Advocate

Write letters and lobby US and Dominican officials

### Support

Mission partner programs aid marginalized communities and families

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# Haitian-Dominican Migration

## Introduction

The stories of migrants are similar regardless of where they come from or where they migrate to. They might have different specific reasons for leaving, but they have all left their homes in search of a better life. For decades, Haitians have crossed the border into the Dominican Republic. Some have legal documents, but most do not. They find a new place to live and work and, in many cases, they have children. These children grow up in the Dominican Republic and feel as if they have their feet in both cultures, but identify the Dominican Republic as their home.



## Background

The Dominican Republic grants citizenship to all those who were born on its territory (with exceptions for children of diplomats and people "in transit"), just as the United States does. However, in 2010 the Dominican Constitution was rewritten to exclude the children of undocumented migrants from gaining citizenship, even if they were born in the Dominican Republic, and a 2013 Supreme Court decision applied the law retroactively to 1929, the year that the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic was formalized.

This meant that 210,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent were made essentially stateless as they do not hold Haitian citizenship and, in most cases, have never been to Haiti. An already marginalized group of people suddenly couldn't legally own property, vote, or work formally in the private sector. Nor could they send their children to school past the fourth grade.





Those who could prove they were born in the Dominican Republic were re-granted their citizenship, approximately 64,000 people. However, many undocumented Haitian migrants don't have the births of their children registered with the government, for many reasons. They fear deportation, Dominican authorities refuse to give records to people of Haitian descent, they don't give birth in hospitals, and/or they have a language barrier, among other reasons. For those whose birth was not recorded, the law to re-instate their Dominican citizenship (2013 National Regularization Plan) requires multiple identification documents, notarized testimonies of Dominicans who were present at their birth to vouch for their birthplace, and a two-year wait to apply for citizenship.

The window to apply for citizenship under the 2013 law was closed in July 2015 and since then, those who haven't applied or registered as foreigners are liable for deportation. In the south, border towns were overwhelmed and tent cities have sprung up to house those deported. The mass deportations by the government that were feared shortly after the law came into effect didn't happen, but gangs of vigilantes harassed Haitians and forced many to flee. The harassment and attacks have slowed since 2015, but there are now large groups of Haitian-Dominicans living just across the border in Haiti in tent cities with limited access to food, water, sanitation, and permanent housing. The Haitian and Dominican governments have done little to address the situation at the border.

On top of these legal issues, Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent face daily discrimination and racism. Prejudice in both countries dates back to the first French and Spanish colonies and has intensified as Dominican leaders throughout the decades have portrayed Haitians as inferior to those with Spanish and indigenous roots and have even encouraged violence against them. In 1937, Rafael Trujillo, the Dominican dictator, ordered tens of thousands of Haitians killed in what is known as the Parsley Massacre. Dominicans of Haitian descent have remained economically disadvantaged for decades, but most feel they are better off in the Dominican Republic, Latin America's fastest-growing economy, than in Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.



*Embrace the Spirit*  
The Caribbean Initiative

[www.globalministries.org/caribbeaninitiative](http://www.globalministries.org/caribbeaninitiative)

## Get Involved

### For more information

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