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Introduction

The problems created by waves of illegal immigrants leaving Haiti for the Bahamas are very real. Every succeeding year sees an increase in the amount of those caught while trying to get into the Bahamas. Coming from a life of poverty and despair would cause anyone to search for a better life, a life in which there is a belief that all things are possible. This is the belief Haitians have about the Bahamas. They believe that our growing economy would provide them with the opportunity that their life in Haiti has not. They think of the Bahamas as a place where they can find a job and live a better life than that of Haiti. Long, hard, tedious and with many struggles, this is what life is like for many Haitians living in their impoverished homeland (COB). Most of these immigrants migrate searching for work and the opportunity to live a better life. In 2001, Haiti's per capita gross domestic product was \$460, which placed it among the world's poorest nations (COB). Even though this is an unfortunate circumstance for Haitians, too many of them are migrating to the Bahamas and if this trend continues then we ourselves will be placed in a financial and economical dilemma. To show the effects that this problem has on the Bahamas a cross – sectional study on the impact of immigration in New Providence for the period of Spring Semester 2008 was compiled and researched by Christina Anderson, Dion Jones and Valendrea Rahming. The aim of this study is to educate and inform the reader on the many impacts that illegal immigration has on New Providence. In this study we circulated a total of seventy surveys throughout the New Providence community and interviewed a variety of different people like Sloan Smith, Zeldreda Adderley from the Department of Immigration, to provide the readers with factual information from prominent organizations.

After a review from the surveys and interviews we found that illegal immigration in New Providence have a myriad impacts and contributions on the New Providence community, that affect and impact different areas in different ways. These include overpopulation, School and Healthcare systems, welfare, economy and other Bahamian funded social entities. We hope that after you read this paper that your knowledge of The Impact of Immigration in New Providence will become more current and you will realize that this is truly a problem faced in our society today.

The Impact of Illegal Immigration on the Education System in New Providence

In New Providence Illegal Immigration has a variety of different impacts on the Education system. To find out more information on the impacts on the education system, we interviewed Mrs. Zeldreda Adderley, a teacher at the S. C. McPherson Junior High School. She elaborated on the many social issues/problems that teachers and students encounter as a result of illegal immigration. We discussed six impacts that illegal immigration has on the Education system.

1. The first social issue is the **Language barrier**. When you have an illegal Haitian migrant coming into a Bahamian classroom where the teachers and the students speak English and their Haitian native tongue is Creole and French, a language barrier between the student and teachers arises. As a result the teacher has to slow the class down to accommodate and relate the lesson being taught to the Haitian student because he or she cannot understand what the teacher is saying. As a result of this other students in the class tend to suffer because since the class has to be slowed down for this student, other students are neglected and sometimes they can't complete curriculum. Therefore when

classes don't complete curriculum when exams like the BGCSE's, BJC's, and GLAT's come around student aren't prepared. As a result at the end of the year, the national grade average is a D+.

2. The second social issue is **Culture crisis**. Every country has its own unique culture and whenever people migrate they take some aspects of their culture with them. For example, illegal immigrants bring their religious beliefs like voodooism with them. In a class where a Bahamians teacher is trying to teach religious studies from a Bahamian perspective (teaching about different religions in the Bahamas) it is hard to teach a student who has entirely different beliefs. For example if you have a Haitian student who believes in voodooism, the child might be offended or threatened if a teachers starts teaching about Jesus because they might feel the teacher is demeaning their religion. Or on the other the teacher might not want the Haitian student to express or show other student about voodooism at the school because it might create conflicts with the student's parents. Moreover people from different countries come to New Providence and bring their Religious beliefs, Hygiene beliefs, Food beliefs, etc.
3. Another issue is some illegal immigrant might suffer from an **Identity crisis**. When you first reach to another country you don't want to stand out as an illegal immigrant, you want to fit in so that you aren't labeled as the Haitian. This is what we mean when we talk about identity crisis. When illegal immigrants come to New Providence they want to fit and act like Bahamians so they lose all meanings of self "to fit in" with the Bahamian public or their Bahamian peers. They do this by dressing, acting, and talking like Bahamians. They do this to avoid stigmas in the Bahamian society about illegal immigrants, like because you're a Haitian or Jamaican you don't belong here in the

Bahamas and because some of their Bahamian peers might express that they think their better than them because they are Bahamian.

4. The fourth social issue that arises due to illegal immigrants is increased **Violence** at school. Haitian and Jamaican illegal immigrants have a tendency to be more violent and aggressive than Bahamian students. This is because they feel as though they have to fight to survive in the New Providence community. Also as we found in our survey is that lower class people are most likely to migrate to the Bahamas in search of a better standard of living. Therefore, most illegal immigrants are from poverty stricken home and sometimes bring their personal problems with them to school, which makes them most likely to be violent than other students at school.
5. The fifth social issue is **Discrimination and Segregation** in schools. Here in New Providence there are many stigmas towards people who are illegal immigrants like Haitians and Jamaicans. Bahamians discriminate against and have prejudices toward Haitians and Jamaicans. This is seen when a Haitian students goes to school and is treated differently from other students by peers and sometimes even teachers because of their nationality. As a result groups start to form because these students who are discriminated against who are from a particular country want to stick together because they can relate to one another and support one another. For example they sit together in class, they are all in the same clubs and they hang out together during recess periods. As a result sometimes gangs start to form as a support system for these students.
6. As we know, the majority of the Bahamian population resides in New Providence, thus the majority of Bahamian students attend school in New Providence. As a result of the increase of illegal immigrant populations, there is increased **Overcrowding** in New

Providence schools. Mrs. Adderley discussed that as a result of overcrowding in school students have less one on one session with teachers, which would therefore lead to lower grades and test scores. This does not only impact the grades or education of the Bahamian students but also the Haitian or Jamaican student that goes to that particular school as well. Moreover, overcrowding puts a financial strain on the Government and Education system because more provisions have to be made to accommodate the increasing number of students who are here illegally. For example, new schools have to be built for more space and more teachers have to be hired to teach the students.

Impact of the Immigration on the health care system Nurse Karen Burrows

There are many problems that develop in connection to illegal immigrants and the health care system. Three pressing problems there are language barrier, expenses and room. Language barrier is a problem because when the doctors and nurses do not understand what people who have migrated from other countries illegally are saying, often times than most, many of the illegal immigrants are misdiagnosed and receive the wrong treatments which can then lead to further complications. Secondly, expenses is also a major issue, because money has to be spent on treatments and other materials that may be needed, for example, needles, on both the illegal immigrants and legal residents of New Providence. Money also has to be spent on food to feed everyone who is admitted to the hospital as well. Lastly, the space that is available in the hospitals and clinics. There is limited amount of space available in the hospitals and clinics, therefore, many people either do not receive proper healthcare because after they receive treatment they may be sent home to heal so that beds may be available for someone else. Room is a problem because if there are a lot of illegal immigrants in the hospital, they have to be attended to because you cannot refuse or turn down a person from receiving healthcare, thus

resulting in legal residents being deprived or delayed in receiving immediate attention which many argue is unfair.

Impact of Illegal Immigration on the economy

The Bahamas just like any other country is faced with social and economic issues. But looking at society today, it can be said that illegal immigration continues to cause a huge strain for the Bahamas as a small developing nation. This is a problem because and although the government is able to apprehend most of these illegal immigrants, some still manage to evade authorities and escape onto our shores and into society where they begin to reproduce, squat on vacant land and ultimately create a problem and burden our economy.

“The number of Haitians leaving their country to seek a better way of life is steadily increasing, and the government is redoubling its efforts to address the problem. In January 2005, authorities apprehended 362 illegal immigrants, 293 interdicted at sea and 69 on land. 328 of these immigrants apprehended were Haitians, these were found off the waters near New Providence. The government spent \$67,735 repatriating them.

(Symonette)

“Haitians have....a powerful ambition to escape their country’s eternal economic and social woes,” (John, Marquis). After becoming a part of society they start off doing jobs that Bahamians would not do then progress as Bahamians become comfortable with them. They gain access to our schools and healthcare system thus creating a burden on our economy, because these are services that are for Bahamians.

This causes a decrease in these essential services being available for Bahamians. Because of the overpopulation from these immigrants the schools are not being able to accommodate Bahamians students. “It is generally accepted that there are at least forty thousand Haitians illegally in this country. (Carrol, Norris). This claim is also backed up from a survey do in New Providence that shows thatHealthcare mention earlier is negatively impacted because of an increased population which leads to ridiculous delays in obtaining services. Disputes over land possession now becoming more apparent as the Government now seeks to claim back the land and remove squatters. If this is to be the case twenty five years from now what do u think will happen to future generations of Bahamians.

Significance of immigration Problem in New Providence

There is virtually a national consensus that illegal immigration is a problem and in The Bahamas there is no exception. Illegal immigration into New Providence in particular is a problem that should be stopped, as it is unfair to Bahamians. We here in New Providence take on most of the shortfalls, that illegal immigration causes, having to deal with the abuse of social services by non-citizens, plummeting of the common lifestyles, and the overall threatening the quality of life in certain communities. These immigrants are using welfare, education and other social services, whose costs are increasing services for everyone. Illegal immigrants do not contribute financially to anything, so they are not justified in using social services, such as welfare, health care, and other services. Schools are forced to teach lessons multi-lingual to accommodate those children who aren't even supposed to be here. Just imagine having to take twice as long to teach something because it must be repeated in many languages. Illegal immigration also contributes to the problem of unemployment. Immigrants come to New Providence, and they find a place to stay, squatting on the land. They cannot live unless they have jobs because they need money to

pay for food and shelter so they apply for a job. They take the jobs that must be done that Bahamians do not want for themselves or believe are somehow below them, such as the service industry works: food service, janitorial, domestic, construction and agricultural labor. While we don't deny this it is an encouragement for these immigrants to continue to migrate here because we are providing them with a source of revenue that they can provide for there families. Also illegal immigration tends to bring down the standard of living in areas where they are concentrated. So if we are to uphold our reputation as being a tourist destination this cannot be allowed to continue. Whether they compromise our standard of living or burden our social services, the continued influx of illegal immigrants to New Providence promotes disrespect for the law and seriously limits our ability to control out our immigration policy. With that said, how can this not be an important social issue that needs to be addressed by the Government and in fact all Bahamians.

Analysis

Recommendations

- Teachers and other educators should learn a second language like, Creole, Spanish, French and Greek.
- Teachers should discourage segregation and discrimination in the classrooms by letting students work together. As a result they will see how much they have in common and this will help in the eradication of prejudices in our society.
- Teachers shouldn't discriminate against students of another nationality, they should be model citizens and example to the students. Teachers found discriminating against students of another nationality in their class should be fined or released.
- Teachers should encourage students to be themselves regardless of their nationality and also to be proud of where they come from and their culture.
- The Department of Immigration should regularly monitor known places where Haitians and other illegal immigrants squat and reside.
- There should be greater penalties on illegal migration in New Providence like that one that was already recommended where offenders of the law would have to pay a fine of \$10,000. Harsher penalties will deter them from coming to New Providence and make some other place more attractive for travel.
- When Haitians are caught and detained during Apprehension Exercises they should be educated on the dangers and risks that they take in trying to smuggle themselves into the country.
- Try to get more translators who can be permanently stationed at the hospital in case of an emergency to solve the language the language barrier problem.

- Because the law states that people cannot be refused healthcare, another hospital should be built to accommodate a large population, thus offering more rooms.
- If healthcare officials are aware of patients who are in the hospitals or clinics illegally, they should report them all to help combat the problem of having illegal immigrants in the Bahamas.
- It needs to be made clear and placed into law that any Bahamian found aiding these illegal's in obtaining a job should be fined.
- Popular squatting grounds of illegals needs to be monitored on a weekly basis and then raided if and when others decide to squat there.

Conclusion

The Government needs a program to end illegal immigration ensuring that people who enter illegally or overstay cannot obtain employment, public benefits, public education, housing, or any taxpayer funded benefit. Illegal immigrants are a problem to the Bahamas. Therefore they shouldn't come here illegally just to get a job to make money or go to school just to get a higher education. They should come here legally to get that stuff that they need. It is not our burden to baby-sit the world. There's no reason that we should have to clothe, feed, and shelter every-one that feels oppressed in his or her country, because if we do, we'll end up crowded and overpopulated to say the least.

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Appendix