

## [Fabricated claims against Haitians in Springfield must be challenged | Opinion](#)

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The outrageous accusations snowballing through social and mainstream media against Haitians in Springfield, Ohio, are not just malicious, obvious fabrications. They are part of a dangerous plan pulled from a well-worn playbook that, throughout human history, has allowed manipulative leaders to convince people to inflict horrific real-world harm on their neighbors. But we do not need to let the playbook work.

The accusations that Haitians in Springfield are harming the town's pets fall squarely in the tradition of the 1994 Rwandan genocide perpetrators calling ethnic Hutus and their Tutsi allies "cockroaches" or Adolph Hitler accusing Jews of threatening non-Jews in Germany.

This false and [dangerous speech](#) demonizes whole groups of people and inflames its audience's fears.

The speech may not immediately produce physical attacks. Still, the leaders hope that if they repeat it, enough people who should know better will put aside their inherent human decency and either join in horrific attacks themselves or tolerate them.

The latest version of the dehumanization playbook started with a post Monday on the X social media platform (formerly Twitter). [The post picked up speed when leaders such as Republican vice presidential candidate Ohio Sen. JD Vance](#), Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and anti-immigrant activist Jason Miller promoted it.

The claim went viral when presidential candidate [Donald Trump repeated them during Tuesday night's presidential debate](#). The moderators debunked the accusations.

This week's fabrications are part of a broader plan to demonize Haitian immigrants—and by extension, all immigrants, especially immigrants of color.

In January 2018, for example, President Trump rejected a bipartisan immigration deal negotiated in Congress because it allowed immigration from Haiti and African nations, which he called "[shithole countries](#)."

The following November, the administration ordered the cancellation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which was allowing Haitians in the U.S. to stay in the country and work, safe from dangers in Haiti that [continued to escalate](#) six years later.

The TPS cancellation risked the real-world consequences of thousands of Haitian families forced back to violence, dire poverty and extreme vulnerability to natural disasters.

These risks were horrific enough that career officials in both the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security strongly recommended continuing TPS. Haitians, joined by religious and political leaders from throughout society, much of the [media](#) and organizations around the country, stepped up and refused to let the dehumanizing attacks work. They denounced the dangerous speech, organized protests, and filed [lawsuits](#). TPS is still protecting Haitians today.

Then on Saturday, Trump promised to resume removing immigrants from the U.S., and that doing so “will be a bloody story.” The dehumanizing playbook is a powerful tool, and we can all name [examples](#) where it has worked to horrific effect. But basic human decency is even more powerful, and most of the time efforts at dehumanization and violence are defeated by people coming together and refusing to let the attacks work.

The process of defeating the Springfield fabrications has already started. The town’s [leadership](#) and [South Florida Haitian leaders](#) refuted and denounced the fabrications, the media has widely reported their falsity, and there has been fierce public pushback against Sens. [Vance](#) and [Cruz](#) for promoting them.

The response from the human decency front has also included [broad recognition](#) of the benefits that [hard-working](#) Haitian families — many forced from their country by violence and repression — are bringing to Springfield’s struggling economy, its churches, and its neighborhoods.

But the people promoting the fabrications against Haitians are not backing away from them, no matter how many times the claims are discredited. And manipulative leaders will fabricate new false attacks against other groups next week.

So the rest of us will need to keep stepping up, to insist on respect for the truth and for the humanity of all of our neighbors. We will need to do so in the press and on social media, but more importantly in our churches, our schools, our neighborhoods and our families.

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