

National Coalition for
Haitian Rights

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FUND CREATED TO ASSIST HAITIAN DETAINEES

New York and Miami, November 21, 2002 -- Televised scenes of Haitians scrambling overboard in a desperate attempt to reach Miami's shores last month won't be easily forgotten. But the plight of these Haitians currently in INS detention will be unless we do something immediately.

Thanks to a group of concerned leaders from the Haitian, legal, business, and religious communities, we are proud to announce the creation of the **Haitian Legal Aid Fund (HALAF)**. The Fund has a two-fold agenda. One is a coordinated effort to ensure that all Haitian detainees obtain free legal representation. A list of pro bono lawyers from various law firms, bars and nonprofit legal advocacy agencies is already in formation.

The second objective is to attend to the financial needs of the detainees. Because we are working to provide all the detainees with pro bono services, HALAF funds will not be used to hire lawyers but rather to respond to other immediate needs of the detainees, such as bonds, filing fees or other related expenses.

The New York based *National Coalition for Haitian Rights* has generously agreed to serve as HALAF's fiscal agent free of charge. All money donated to the fund will be used directly to support the detainees.

Haitian communities in Chicago, New York, Atlanta and Boston are already mobilizing in support of the Fund, with some cities setting up local drop-off centers for donations at Haitian community-based organizations.

Concerned individuals, foundations, law firms and other interested parties can show their support by offering pro bono legal services and/or making donations to the Haitian Legal Aid Fund. **To volunteer your services or for more information, call 212-337-0005 ext. 20.** Tax deductible donations can be made online at www.nchr.org or by check, made out to NCHR, and mailed to:

HALAF
c/o NCHR
275 7th Ave., 17th Floor
New York, NY 10001

There is no question that now is the time to act. For far too long Haitians have been victims of an unjust and illegal immigration policy. We can do something to change that. With support from immigrant advocates and ordinary citizens around the country, we will make our voices heard.