

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2018

Donald J. Trump
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write to express our outrage over this Administration's abuse of African immigrants in Department of Homeland Security (DHS) custody. There have been numerous reports that immigrants from Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, and other countries have experienced extreme physical, verbal, and mental abuse at the hands of government employees and/or federal contractors. The depravity and persistence of this abuse stems from a culture in which the lives, safety, and security of Black immigrants are devalued. We believe this Administration has perpetuated a destructive anti-immigrant narrative that is rooted in racism and the abuse of Black immigrants combines the very worst aspects of anti-immigrant and anti-Black racism.

In one tragic example, 92 Somalis were shackled at their wrists, waists, and legs for two days aboard a plane in Dakar, Senegal.¹ The prisoners were denied food, water, and the use of bathrooms. A class action complaint alleges that, "When the plane's toilets overfilled with human waste, some of the detainees were left to urinate into bottles or on themselves."² Some of them were also reportedly physically abused, with one being thrown to the ground headfirst and others were "kicked, struck, or dragged ...down the aisle of the plane."³ Such deplorable treatment is inhumane.

In yet another case, 80 men from Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and other African nations were allegedly subjected to extreme verbal, physical, racial, and sometimes violent abuse at the hands of corrections officers at the West Texas Detention Facility in Sierra Blanca, Texas. According to a request for investigation to the DHS Office of Inspector General, the prisoners were beaten, pepper sprayed, and demeaned with racial slurs. One prisoner was punched in the face four times by the warden. When he asked the nurse if she was going to let it happen, she responded that she did not see anything. Another prisoner reported that guards pointed a gun at him, despite already being pepper sprayed and bound. Still another prisoner had his genitals fondled as he was pressed up against a wall. Other prisoners were called "boy," "monkey," and "nigger." The clear racial biases motivating this abuse are disturbing and unacceptable.

We reject the flawed perception that immigrants to the United States are comprised of a particular racial group, or come from a particular part of the world. We reject the assumption that

¹ Amanda Holpuch, *Somalis were shackled for nearly 48 hours on a failed US deportation flight*, [The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/19/somalis-shackled-48-hours-failed-us-deportation-flight) (December 19, 2017) available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/19/somalis-shackled-48-hours-failed-us-deportation-flight>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

U.S. immigration policy only affects certain communities. The reality is that our U.S. immigration policy has profound impacts on the Black community, and the continued anti-immigrant agenda of this Administration has been particularly harmful to our communities.

Black immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America make positive contributions to the United States, but they are at greater risk for arrest, detention, and abuse because of racial profiling and racial bias. In fact, a recent study from the Black Alliance for Just Immigration demonstrates that Black immigrants from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean are overrepresented in immigration detention and criminal deportation proceedings by five times their proportion in the undocumented community.

It is clear that the abuse of Black immigrants in DHS custody is not an exception, but rather is part of a pattern in which the lives of Black immigrants are steeped in a system of institutionalized racism. In our view, this all stems from the very top. When you as President of the United States use terms such as “shithole” to describe African, Latin, and Caribbean countries, it sends a signal to the rest of the federal government and federal contractors that racism towards Black immigrants is acceptable and condoned.

We call upon you to personally ensure these matters are thoroughly investigated and those who engaged in such abusive actions are punished to the fullest extent of the law. We also call on your Administration to take proactive steps to ensure that immigrants, Black or otherwise, are not subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment.

To follow up on this letter, please contact Harry Baumgarten in Representative Yvette Clarke’s office at harry.baumgarten@mail.house.gov or by phone at (202) 225-6231.

Sincerely,



Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress