New Beginnings:
Immigration Policies Support a Fresh Start

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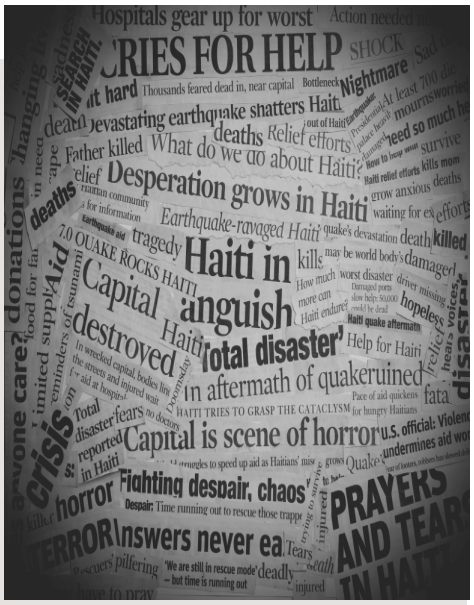

On January 12, 2010, a devastating earthquake shook the very core of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. This catastrophe took the lives of over 200,000 Haitians and left survivors with next to nothing. Heartbreaking images of injured children, bodies in the streets, and a city in ruins were both startling and humbling for people throughout the world.

To support the relief efforts in Haiti, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is now being extended to Haitian immigrants living in the U.S. TPS is an immigration policy granted by the Secretary of Homeland Security to eligible nationals of certain countries who have experienced armed conflict, environmental disasters, or other temporary conditions which prevent these individuals from returning home safely or prevent their country from handling their return adequately. This type of immigration policy is designed to help support and protect people in need. By applying for TPS, eligible immigrants can live and work in the U.S. for a given amount of time until they can safely return home. Other countries, such as El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Somalia and Sudan are also on the TPS list.

Flexible immigration policies, such as TPS, are a crucial step in helping immigrants from Haiti and other countries that are currently faced with extreme hardship. In addition to TPS, there are several other U.S. immigration policies which have been established to help immigrants in times of distress or extreme circumstance. These policies include asylum, refugee, and violence against women protections.

Immigrants who are facing persecution in their home countries can apply for asylum or refugee status, thereby allowing them to temporarily live and work in the U.S. Asylum status can be granted if the individual is already physically present in the U.S., meets the definition of a refugee, and is not barred by law from applying for such status. Immigrants can also apply for Refugee status if the individual is located *outside* the U.S. and is unable to return to their native country due to fears of abuse or because their life or freedoms would be endangered. Policies that allow for Asylum and Refugee status have no doubt helped thousands of immigrants who would have otherwise faced life-threatening obstacles by returning to their native lands.

Yet another important protection offered to U.S. immigrants involves granting legal status to women who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and other similar crimes. In 1994, the U.S. Congress enacted the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to allow these victims to attain legal status without having to rely on the support or testimony of their abusers. VAWA has been described by advocacy groups as "the greatest breakthrough in civil rights for women in nearly two decades."

Immigration polices designed to protect victims have played a critical role in helping people who are faced with dire circumstances. Such policies enable immigrants to both create a new beginning and support rebuilding efforts abroad. Understanding these policies requires an experienced and licensed legal professional who is capable of advising applicants on the proper procedures involved in obtaining temporary legal status. For more information on TPS, Asylum or Refugee status and other timely immigration policies, please contact Grzeca Law Group at (414) 342-3000 or visit our website at www.grzecalaw.com.

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