



May 16, 2024

# Understanding the Journey of Cuban and Haitian Entrants

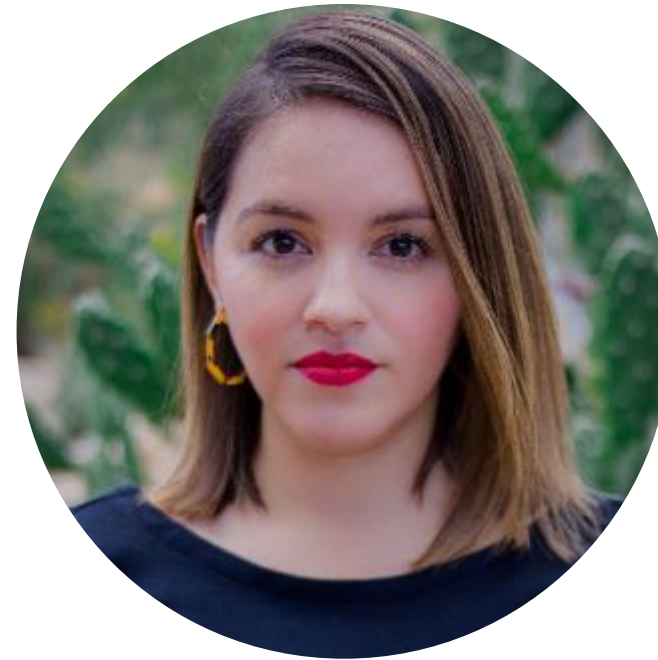
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**switchboard**  
connecting resettlement experts





# Today's Presenters



**Edith Tapia**

Speaker

IRC Technical Advisor,  
Cross Border and  
Asylum



**Kitty Picker**

Q& A

IRC Senior Technical  
Advisor, Immigration

# Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

## EXPLAIN

the combination of drivers causing people to seek asylum at the U.S. Southern Border

2

## DESCRIBE

the challenges asylum-seekers face on their journeys, at the U.S. border, and upon their arrival in the US, with particular attention to Cuban and Haitian Entrants' experiences

3

## APPLY

trauma-informed approaches in serving recently arrived Cuban and Haitian Entrants



1

# Drivers of Forced Displacement

Faced by Individuals Seeking Protection,  
Including at the U.S. Southern Border

# Envisioning Asylum Seekers: What Often Comes to Mind



Credit: The Time/Polaris



Credit: Reuters

Boats, life jackets, fences, threat, danger, death, violence, patrols...

# Asylum Seekers are Also...



A family in NYC, credit: Robin Hood



Credit: Feast for Freedom

Asylum seekers can be from all walks of life and from anywhere in the world.  
Forced displacement can impact anyone.

# Drivers Causing People to Seek Protection



At the U.S. Southern Border

## Economic

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Low income/wages

## Environmental

- Exposure to hazards
- Natural disasters and other climate-related factors



## Political

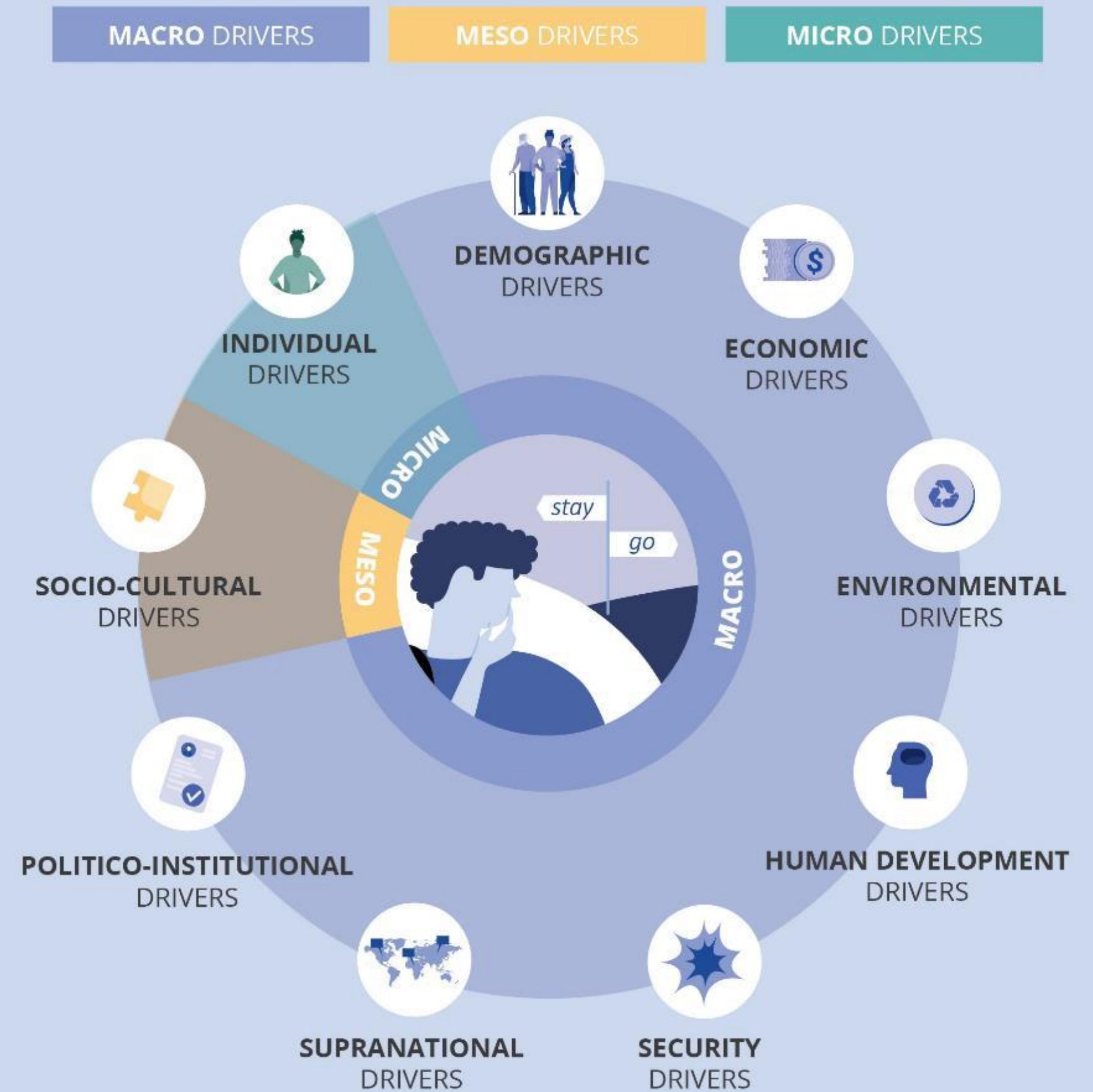
- Governance with few freedoms, and high discrimination and persecution
- High conflict, insecurity, and violence

## Social

- Lack of a safe framework for building and raising a family
- Group affiliation

# Compounding Drivers

Lead to Further Vulnerability





# Current Affairs Impact Displacement



CBP Migrant Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border, by Country of Origin

Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022	2021-2022
Mexico 297,711	Mexico 655,594	Mexico 808,339	+23%
Guatemala 48,054	Honduras 319,324	Guatemala 231,565	-18%
Honduras 41,543	Guatemala 283,035	Cuba 220,908	+471%
El Salvador 17,165	El Salvador 98,690	Honduras 213,023	-33%
Cuba 13,410	Ecuador 96,150	Venezuela 187,716	+286%
Ecuador 12,095	Brazil 56,881	Nicaragua 163,876	+227%
Brazil 7,161	Nicaragua 50,109	Colombia 125,172	+1,918%
Other 7,047	Venezuela 48,678	Other 110,699	+435%
Haiti 4,535	Haiti 47,255	El Salvador 97,030	-2%
Venezuela 2,787	Cuba 38,674	Haiti 53,910	+14%
Nicaragua 2,291	Other 20,707	Brazil 53,457	-6%
China 1,768	Colombia 6,202	Peru 50,662	+1,485%
India 1,120	Russia 4,103	Ukraine 25,364	+3,652%
Peru 484	Romania 4,067	Ecuador 24,060	-75%
Russia 467	Peru 3,197	Russia 21,763	+430%
Colombia 404	India 2,588	India 18,308	+607%
Romania 276	Turkey 1,409	Turkey 15,445	+996%
Turkey 109	Ukraine 676	Romania 5,992	+47%
Ukraine 93	China 450	China 2,176	+384%

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection <https://bit.ly/3LMNYWJ>

# Forced Displacement Drivers for Haitians



Since 2010

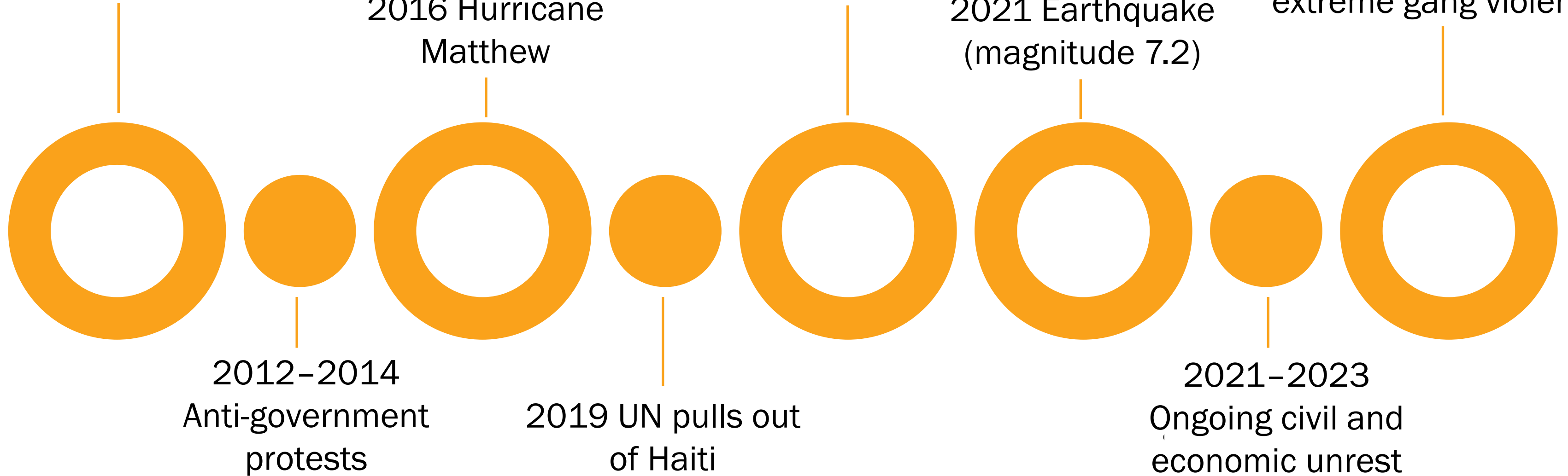
2010 Earthquake  
(magnitude 7.0)

2016 Hurricane  
Matthew

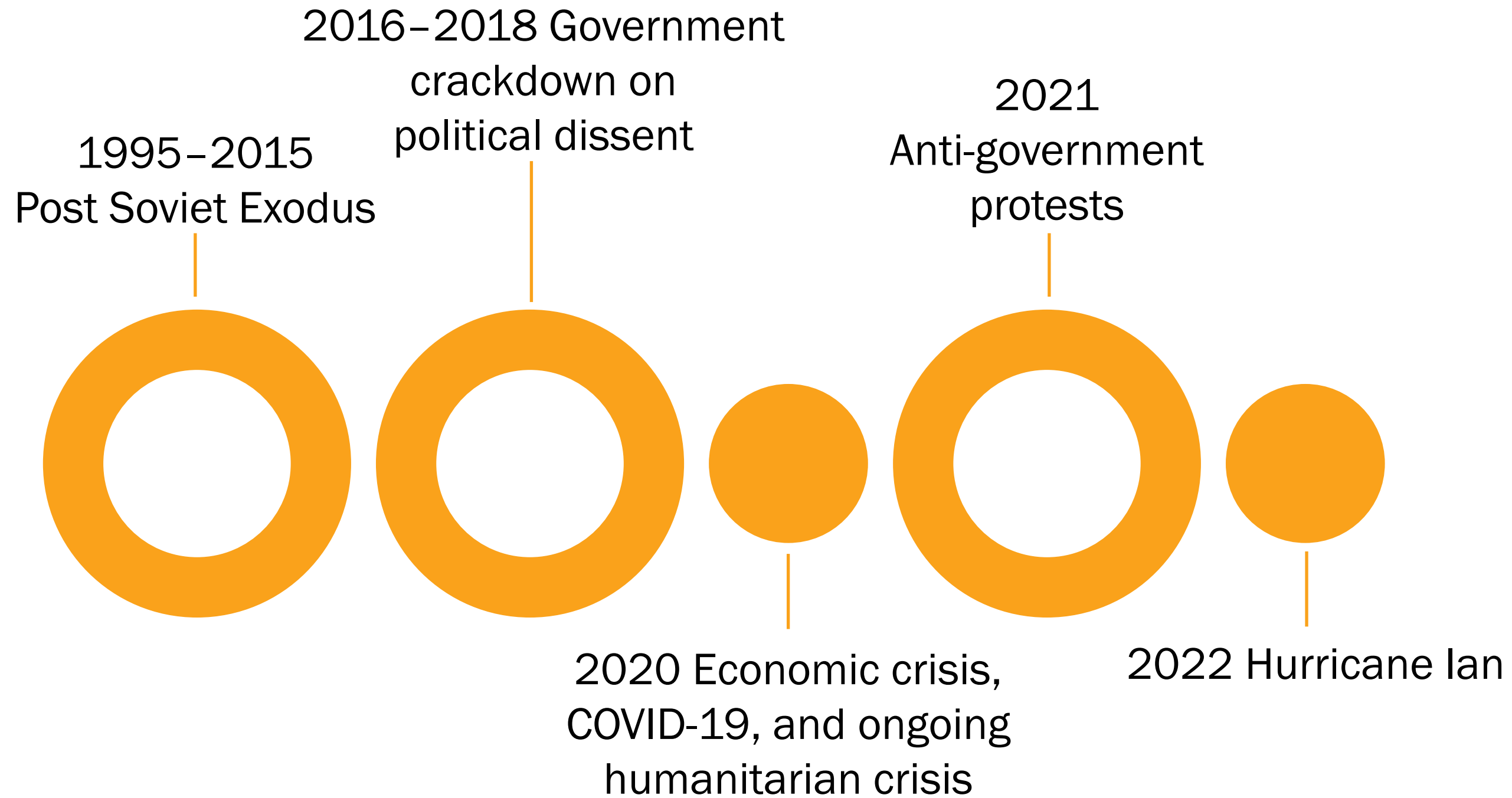
2021 President  
Moïse killed

2021 Earthquake  
(magnitude 7.2)

2024 President Henry  
resigns, leading to  
extreme gang violence



# Forced Displacement Drivers for Cubans



# Case Scenario: Esther

Esther is a Haitian woman who left Haiti in 2016 following Hurricane Matthew. In addition to losing her home after the hurricane, Esther's abusive husband threatened to kill her. Amidst the chaos of the hurricane aftermath, Esther took her children and mother to another town. A few days later, Esther's husband killed her brother for helping them leave. After hearing this news, Esther's mother became ill and died. Esther then fled to Brazil with her children.

In 2018, Esther's husband contacted a relative in Brazil. The relative started threatening Esther and her children and tried to kidnap Esther's daughter.

No longer feeling safe in Brazil and unable to return to Haiti, Esther and her children fled once again.

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Which drivers do you identify in Esther's story?

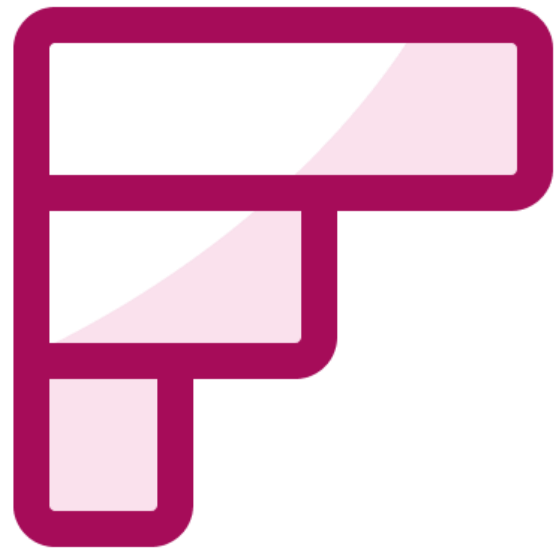


2

# **Challenges Asylum Seekers Face**

on Their Journeys, at the U.S. Border, and Upon Arrival in the U.S.

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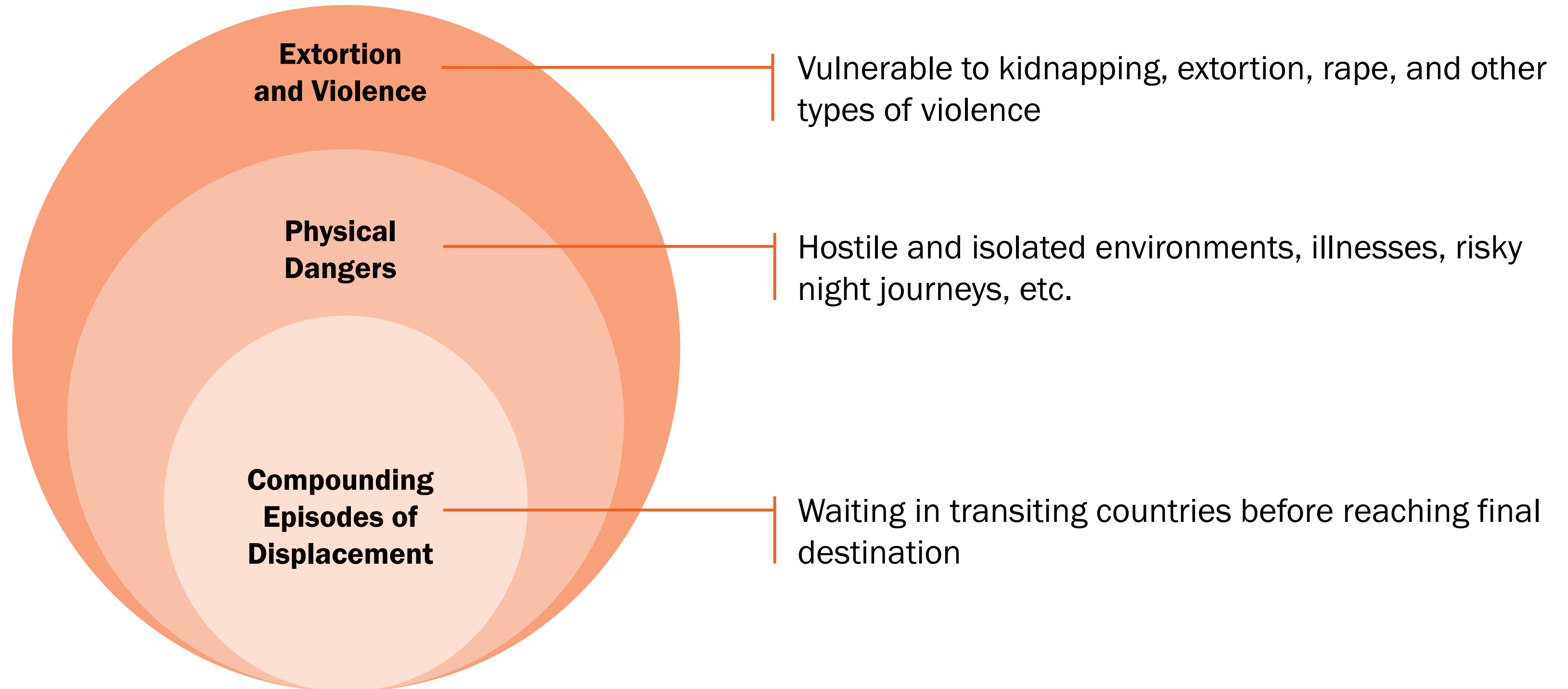
**Based on your conversations with clients, what is the most dangerous part of the journey?**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Challenges of the Journey



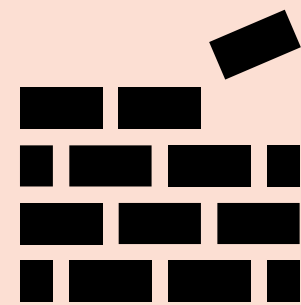
## Overview







# Compounding Displacements



- Asylum seekers may endure several displacements before reaching the U.S.
- Each displacement increases their vulnerability

# Physical Dangers

## Crossing the Darién Gap



Photo Credit: REUTERS



# Physical Dangers

Riding freight trains, including La Bestia in Mexico

- Falls
- Injuries, amputations
- Risk of being attacked by armed groups
- Sexual violence



Photo Source: Riding La Bestia, Zuma Press/Alamy



Photo Credit: NBC News

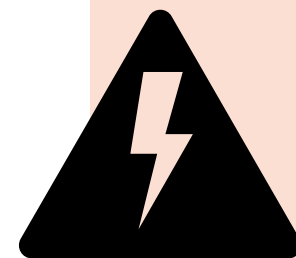
# Physical Dangers

## Maritime Disasters

- Drownings, boats capsizing
- Injuries, hypothermia
- Disappearances



# Extortion and Violence



- **1,300 reported cases** of torture, kidnapping, rape, extortion, and violent attacks on asylum seekers at the Border **in only six months** (2023)
- **53%** of people interviewed by the UNHCR **faced a protection incident** in transit prior to entering Mexico (2024)



# Reports of Discrimination Against Black Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers in Mexico

# Case Scenario: Esther, continued

Esther and her children trekked through the Darién Gap for almost a week. After two more weeks, they arrived in southern Mexico. Before they could make their way north, they were stranded in Tapachula for several days. Eventually, the family arrived in Matamoros, a border town in northern Mexico across from Brownsville, Texas. As soon as they got off the bus, they were kidnapped and extorted by local organized crime targeting asylum seekers.

Esther and her children were eventually released and presented themselves at the U.S. port of entry. CBP officers said they did not have the capacity to receive them at that time. Esther and her family had nowhere else to go. According to Esther, traveling through Mexico was one of the worst experiences for them, and she could not envision doing it again. So, she and her children waited in Matamoros while living in an encampment across from the port of entry.

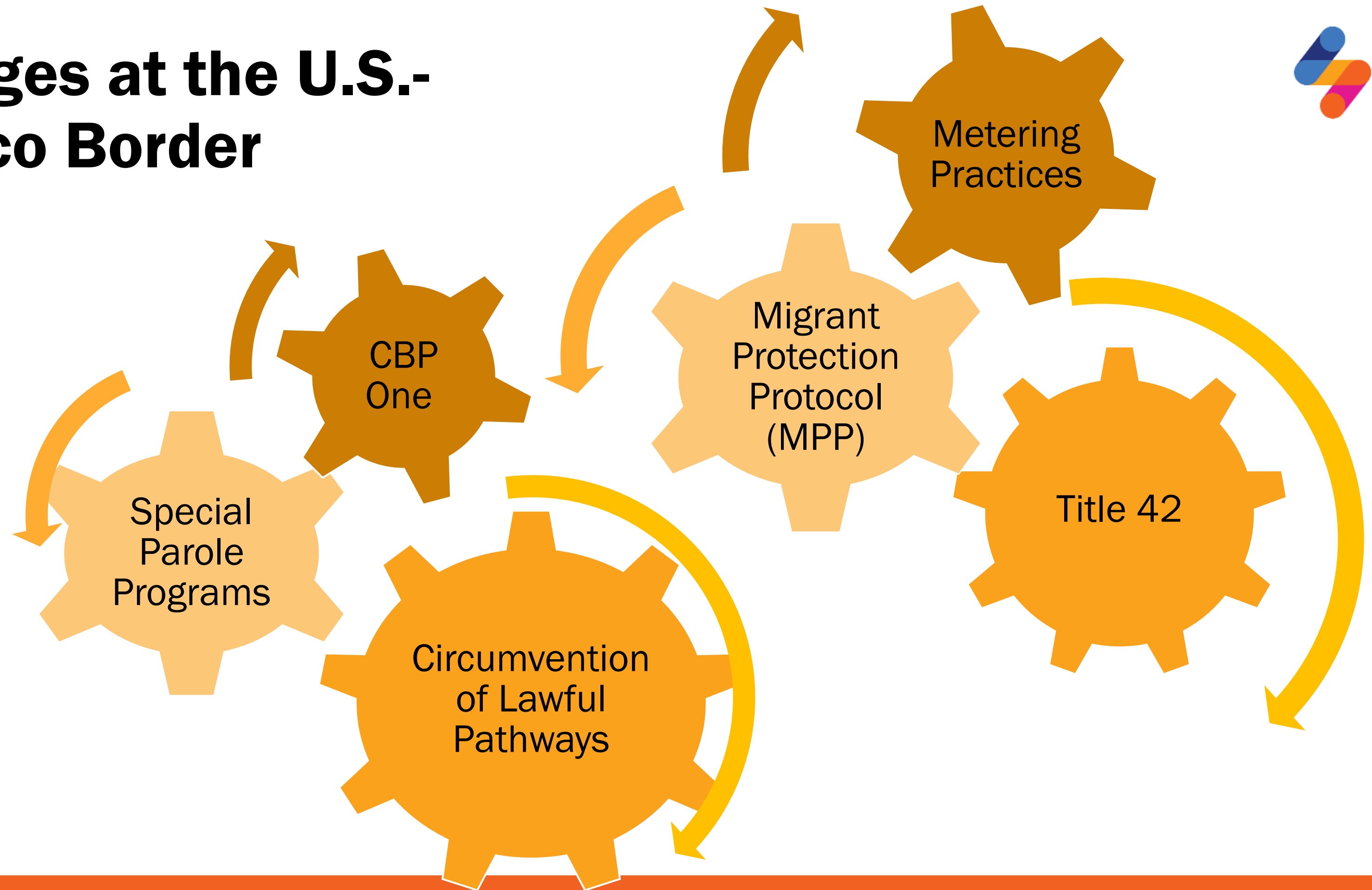
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**Which risk(s) that Esther and her family faced surprised you?**



# Changes at the U.S.- Mexico Border



# Processing at the Border

- CBP officers have a lot of discretion, so processing varies
- Most people are placed in removal proceedings
- Some may be placed in ICE detention
- Some are paroled at the border or may be paroled upon release from detention

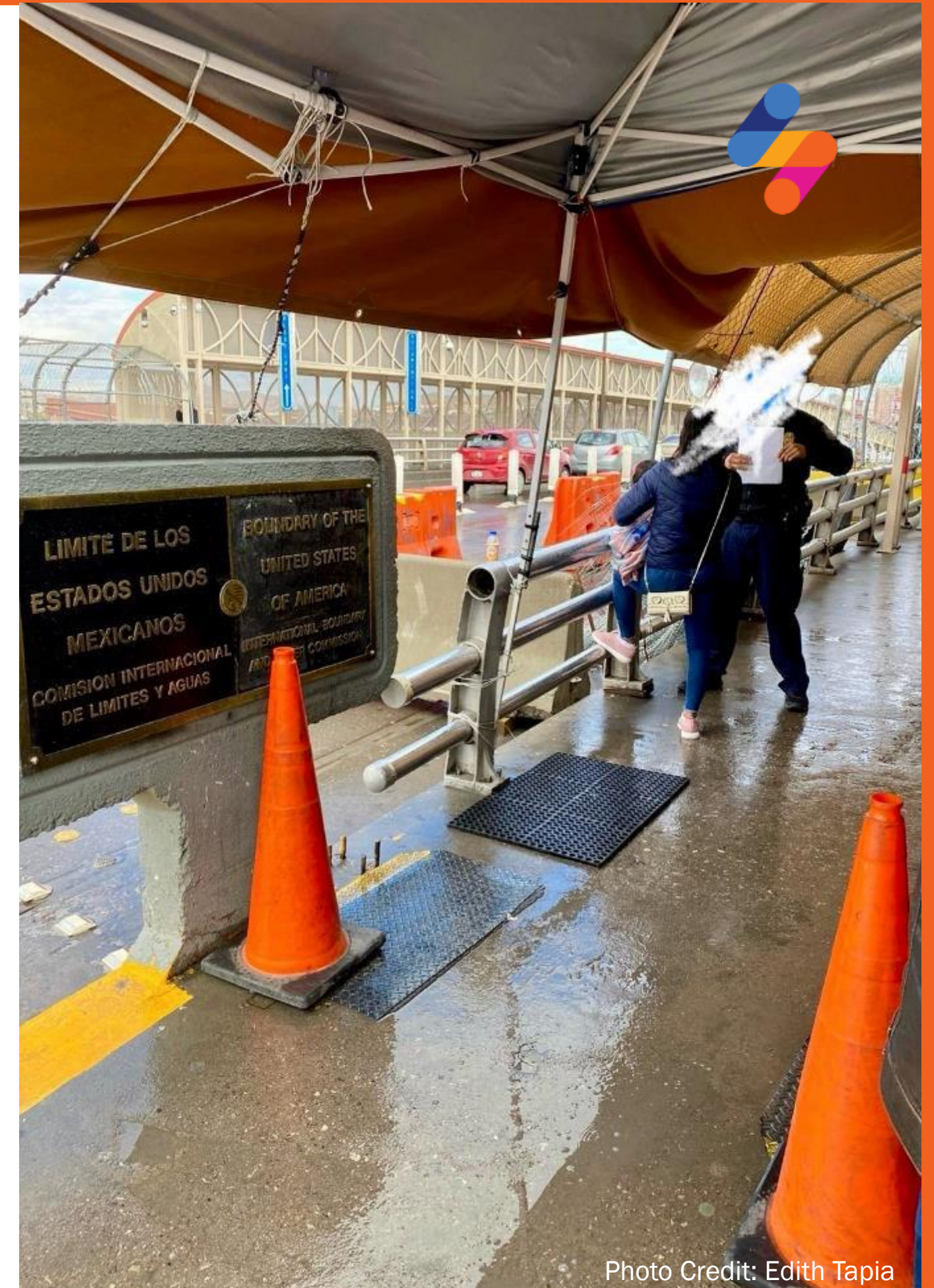


Photo Credit: Edith Tapia

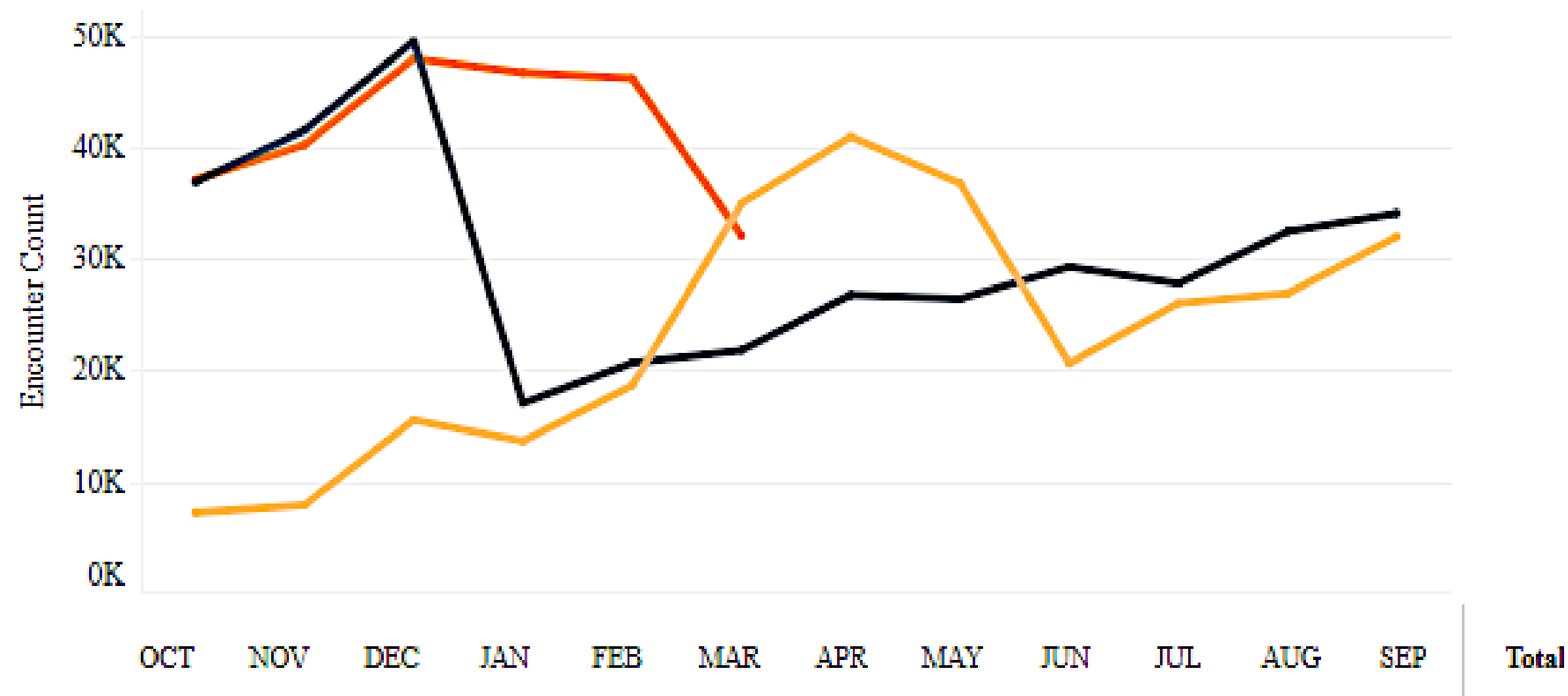
# Cuban/Haitian National Encounters

FY22 to FY24



FY      2022      2023      2024 (FYTD)

FY Nationwide Encounters by Month





# Requirements for Designation as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant

One must be a Cuban or Haitian national who:

- Has been granted **parole**,
- Is in **removal proceedings** or has a pending **asylum application**
- Has **not** been subject to a final order of removal (also known as a deportation order)

# Which Benefits Can Cuban/Haitian Entrants Receive from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)?



**Refugee Cash Assistance**



**Refugee Medical Assistance**



**ORR Matching Grant Program**

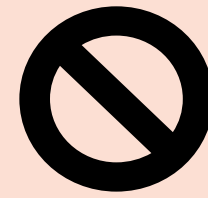


**Employment Assistance via Refugee Support Services**



**Some additional specialized programs**

# Key Points About Cuban/Haitian Entrants (CHEs)



CHE is **not a legal immigration status** in the U.S. It is a designation for ORR benefit eligibility.



They are often **vulnerable to deportation** until they're granted a form of immigration legal status.



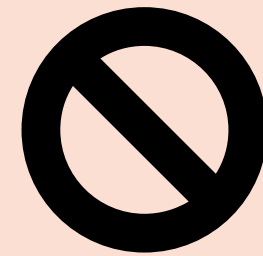
Some may be in immigration court removal proceedings.



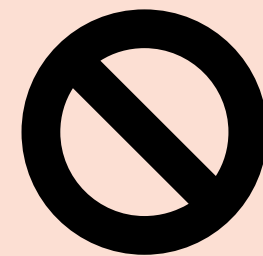
Prioritize consultation with an immigration attorney or fully accredited DOJ representative to explore their legal options and ensure they understand their legal situation.



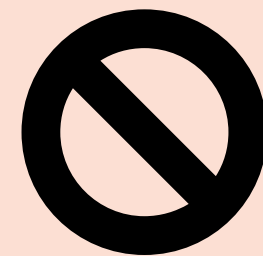
**Non-lawyers/  
Non-DOJ-Accredited  
Representatives  
Should NOT Provide  
Legal Advice**



Unauthorized practice of immigration law (UPIIL) includes advising someone about their legal options, helping them complete an application for an immigration benefit, or even telling them what form to file.



UPIIL can result in criminal or civil liability for organizations or individual staff members.



UPIIL can harm clients by giving them inaccurate information, causing them to lose access to legal benefits or lose money spent on fees, or even place them at risk of deportation.

# Challenges in the United States

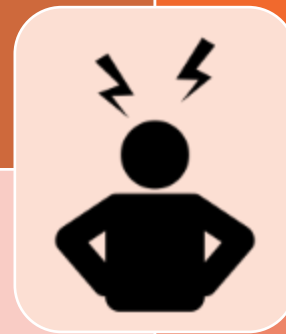


## Overview

Years-long process in immigration court



Access to ORR benefits varies by state



Months or longer wait for work authorization



Lack of access to legal representation

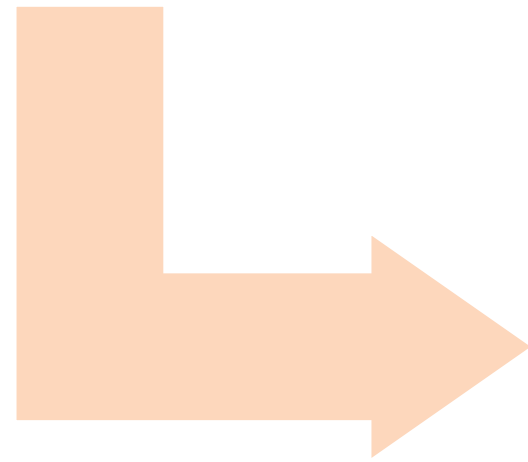






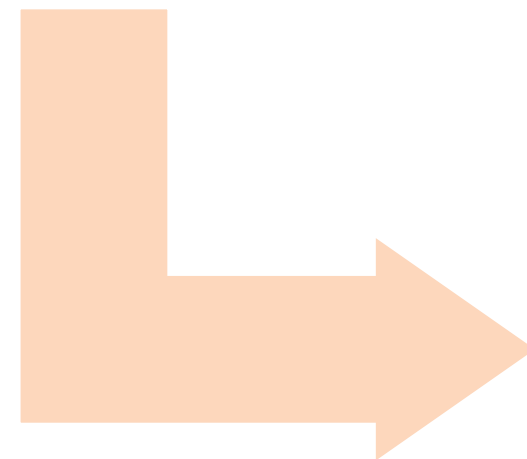
## **Lack of Stable Legal Status**

- Instability, ongoing trauma
- Delayed or no access to work authorization



## **Lack of Services**

- Lack of resources
- Difficulty navigating available services/benefits
- Limitations on eligibility for ORR services/benefits



## **Exposure to Harm**

- Basic needs not met
- Exploitation by notaries, employers, traffickers
- Failure to appear for hearings can lead to removal orders or bars to relief



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# Trauma-Informed Approaches

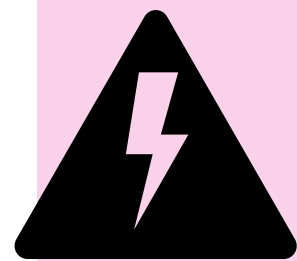
For Serving Cuban and Haitian Entrants

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**What are some of the trauma-informed practices you have used in your work, with Cuban/ Haitian Entrants clients?**

# What is Trauma?



**Trauma is not the event; it is the consequence of an event that overwhelms a person's ability to cope.**



**Commonly, trauma stems from events that are:**

- Deeply disturbing, frightening, or life-threatening
- Outside of what would be considered “ordinary” or “normal” for that person

**Trauma often results in feelings of being overwhelmed, helpless, or at someone else's control or mercy.**

**It can have negative physical, emotional, psychological, and/or spiritual impacts.**

# The Triple Trauma Paradigm



Why Trauma-Informed Approaches?

## Country of Origin

- War/conflict/oppression
- Forced labor
- Discrimination/racism
- Torture
- Gender-based violence
- Illness
- Religious persecution

## Migration

- Dangerous journeys
- Human trafficking risk
- Legal status process
- Questions of safety
- Unknown future
- Discrimination/racism

## Integration

- Family separation
- Discrimination/racism
- Underemployment
- Unmet needs
- Lack of choice and control
- News of home

# Principles of Trauma-Informed Care



*Consideration for gender, culture, history...*

# Integrating Trauma-Informed Care

Into Client Service Provision



# Incorporating a Trauma-Informed Approach



1

Take into account the impact of trauma on the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of an individual

2

Recognize that signs and symptoms of trauma can manifest in behavior, relationships, family dynamics, and community

3

Seek to not further, or retrigger, the trauma

4

Keep in mind that a trauma-informed approach is not a process; it's a practice





# Trauma-Informed Responses

NOT Trauma-informed	Trauma-Informed
“I got through it ok, so will you. Everyone has to do this.”	“Many clients we support have experienced what you are experiencing. We know it is hard, and we are here to help you through this difficult time.”
“I already told you about this benefit ending...”	<i>Respond without irritation. Re-explain gently. Remember that a client may ask the same question because they feel overwhelmed or forget.</i>
“All refugees do this for survival. They are just manipulating me and my team.”	<i>Clients may need resources to meet their immediate needs and may be unsure of who to trust. Resist thinking that clients’ behaviors are manipulative.</i>
“Why is the patient so reluctant to talk about what happened to them? I need to know to complete my assessment.”	<i>Prepare providers and clients beforehand: “When you go to the doctor, she will see your scar and may want to know what happened. She is concerned about your health.” Remember that intakes and assessments may feel re-traumatizing for the client, and clients need to go at their own pace.</i>



# Transparency and Trustworthiness



- Explain and maintain confidentiality
- Build a bridge of understanding across cultural concepts
- Explain your role; manage expectations and do not overpromise
- Be clear and consistent when setting expectations and boundaries with clients

# Case Scenario: Esther, continued

Esther and her children were finally able to enter the U.S. in early 2021. She was given a Notice to Appear and released in Brownsville. She and her children then traveled by bus to New Jersey to be reunited with a distant relative. Esther heard about a local organization that helps Haitians in the area. When she met her case worker, Esther asked her what to do with her case, as she did not understand what her documents meant.





**Questions?**

Type your question in the Q&A 



# Help us help you!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat to access our feedback survey!

- Five questions
- 60 seconds
- Help us improve future training and technical assistance



# Recommended Resources



- **Switchboard**
  - **Resource Collection:** [Getting Started in Navigating ORR Eligibility](#) (2023)
  - **Tool:** [Public Benefits Overview for Refugees and other Humanitarian Immigrants](#) (2022)
- **Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Guide,** [Benefits for Cuban/Haitian Entrants](#) (2021)
- **National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRC-RIM):** [Know Your Rights: Important Information for Cubans and Haitians Entering the United States Regarding Medical Care](#) (2023)

ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office of Refugee Resettlement

## ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Benefits for Cuban/Haitian Entrants

### Are you a Cuban or Haitian individual who has been granted entry into the United States?

You may be eligible for cash assistance, medical assistance, employment preparation, job placement, English language training, and other services offered through ORR. You may also be eligible for federal "mainstream" (non-ORR funded) benefits, such as cash assistance through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), health insurance through Medicaid, and food assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This document focuses on the benefits and services that ORR funds.

### Who may qualify as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant?

You may qualify as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant if you are a Cuban or Haitian national: 1) granted parole as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant;<sup>1</sup> 2) in removal proceedings;<sup>2</sup> or 3) with an application for asylum pending.<sup>3</sup>

### Where do I sign up for ORR benefits/services to qualify as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant?

ORR provides funding to state governments, resettlement agencies, and other nonprofit community-based organizations to provide benefits and services for eligible individuals. You can sign up at the state government benefits office or closest resettlement agency in your state beginning on or after the date that you qualify as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant. For a state-by-state listing of local resettlement agencies, view the ORR state program directory, which also includes a link to ORR state contacts: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/map/find-resources-and-contacts-your-state>.

### When should I sign up for ORR benefits/services?

Immediately. Your benefits and services are only available for a limited time. ORR-funded cash and medical assistance are limited to a maximum of 12 months from your date of ORR eligibility. For most employment services and other services that support integration and self-sufficiency, the eligibility period ends five years from the date you became eligible as a Cuban/Haitian Entrant.



# Stay Connected



**Switchboard@Rescue.org**



**@SwitchboardTA**



**www.SwitchboardTA.org**



**@SwitchboardTA**

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