

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXVII, Number 45, 5 April 1993 — Detainment of Haitians discussed at teach-in
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

Detainment of Haitians discussed at teach-in

By Joanna Cherensky

Contributing Writer

A teach-in was held in Ferris Booth Hall last night to discuss the American detainment of over 200 HIV-positive Haitian refugees at the American military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The refugees have been denied asylum in the U.S. because of a law forbidding immigration to anyone with HIV. The U.S. government will not send them back to Haiti, however, because of the threat that may await them from the military government that overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in October 1991.

Leonel Legros, of the Haitian Information Center, said the American government has acted hypocritically by claiming to support human rights, while at the same time allowing the refugees to suffer under terrible conditions in the Guantanamo detention camp.

“The relationship between the U.S. and Haiti has been one of open betrayal of an arrogant superpower versus a small, black nation,” said Legros.

Stefania Fumo, of the Emergency

Coalition for Haitian Refugees, said the American government is disregarding the value of the Haitians' lives by being concerned with the cost of caring for those refugees with AIDS.

Fumo said the reasons the government has given for the actions, such as the cost of caring for AIDS patients, and possible infection of American citizens, were not justifiable.

"Do we want to put price tags on people's lives?" Fumo asked the audience of about 20 students.

Mercedeh Momeni of Amnesty International, U.S.A., criticized the American government for breaking its own treaties by refusing political asylum to proven political refugees simply because they have the AIDS virus.

"The U.S. government is not facing up to its international obligations," she said.

The teach-in was sponsored by the Coalition to Free the Haitian Refugees, along with 15 other campus organizations.

Approximately 90 Columbia students are currently fasting to show solidarity with the detained Haitians.



SPECTATOR/MICHAEL FEIN

The Dragon Style Kung Fu Club performed "The Lion Dance," a ritual to chase spirits away, yesterday on the steps of Low Library.