

# haiti solidarity

The newsletter of Haiti Action Committee.



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haiti rises!

ayiti leve!

!haiti se eleva!

art by nia

# haiti solidarity

The newsletter of Haiti Action Committee.

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\* The woman in the photo of "Haiti Rises!" is Dr. Maryse Narcisse, the Lavalas presidential candidate.



# editorial: haiti rises!

**H**aiti Solidarity goes to press at the conjunction of two major commemorations—the twenty-fifth anniversary of the coup against the first administration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on September 30, 1991 and the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Black Panther Party in October 1966. This August 12 also marks the ninth anniversary when psychologist and founder of the *Fondasyon 30 Septanm* human rights organization, Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, was disappeared in Haiti in 2007. He remains forever present at the forefront of the struggle for justice and democracy.

In Haiti, despite two coups against former President Aristide—in 1991 and again in 2004—and the subsequent UN military occupation of the country, the *Lavalas* movement has risen once again. For the first time in 15 years, *Fanmi Lavalas*, the party of the poor majority, is on the ballot. Through continual mobilizations and resistance, Haiti's grassroots movement recently overturned a fraudulent election, an unprecedented victory. On October 9, there will be a new election in which Dr. Maryse Narcisse of *Fanmi Lavalas* could become the first elected woman president of Haiti—but only if the process is free and fair.

As the burgeoning Black Lives Matter movement shows, the issues that the Panthers highlighted, including police terror, are still with us today. Despite the FBI's COINTELPRO program and the systematic repression that resulted in over 40 Panthers being killed

and others imprisoned for outrageously long sentences, the legacy of the Panthers remains strong today. We are honored to have the contributions of two former members of the Black Panther Party in this issue—Kiilu Nyasha and Emory Douglas.

We join their call to free all political prisoners. These include former Panthers like Herman Bell, Seth Hayes, Jalil Muntaqim, and Mumia Abu-Jamal. They include Leonard Peltier of the American Indian Movement and Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera, the subject of articles in the current and a previous issue of Haiti Solidarity (see issue #4, August 2014). *Now* is the time to free them all, as the new artwork created for this issue of HS by former Black Panther Emory Douglas demands.

Please join active campaigns for President Obama to grant executive clemency to Leonard and Oscar. Contact the White House to free these brothers before he leaves office and before they die in prison.

We publish during the election cycle, which will make Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton the next president of the United States. Neither will be a friend of Haiti. Solidarity will be needed now more than ever. Contact us with your comments and thoughts and please help distribute this newsletter, also available at [www.haitisolidarity.net](http://www.haitisolidarity.net). Help counter the lies and silence of the mainstream media as Haiti's electoral campaign heats up once again. ✱

## IN HAITI & AROUND THE WORLD, PEOPLE DEMAND FREEDOM FOR OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA

THE LONG HISTORY OF SOLIDARITY BETWEEN HAITI AND PUERTO RICO

BY JUDITH MIRKINSON

*The cries rang out from Sweden to Greece and from Oakland, California to Argentina: FREE OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA!*

**I**n Cap Haïtien, grassroots activists gathered around the monument to the heroes of *Vertières*, the decisive battle in Haiti's War of Independence against France. They held signs saying, among other messages, "We Join The People of Puerto Rico Demanding Freedom For Oscar." The next day they went on a major radio station in northern Haiti to highlight the importance of the worldwide campaign to free Oscar.

On June 20, as UN diplomats listened and deliberated about the colonial status in Puerto Rico, there were demonstrations in 46 countries around the world calling for Oscar's release. (The Committee of 24, as the decolonization committee is known, once again declared Puerto Rico a colony.)

Five Nobel Peace Prize winners—Desmond Tutu (South Africa), José Ramos-Horta (East Timor), Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Argentina), Mairead Corrigan Maguire (Ireland), and Jody Williams—joined in and called for his freedom.

The activists in Haiti are part of a long history of solidarity and exchange between Puerto Rico and Haiti going back to colonial times. Far from being isolated, there was frequent

communication and "cross-nationalism" among all the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin and North America. In the late eighteenth century, Haitians escaping slavery fled to Puerto Rico and established maroon societies. In 1795, there was an aborted slave rebellion in Puerto Rico which, when crushed, resulted in the execution of 20 Haitians.

After the successful Haitian Revolution in 1804 people throughout the Americas looked to Haiti for inspiration and sanctuary. Puerto Rico was no exception. Haiti had done it: the people had abolished slavery and won independence!

Ramón E. Betances is known as the "father of Puerto Rican independence." He was the architect of the first major uprising against the Spanish. Although it was not successful, the *Grito de Lares* revolution, which began on September 23, 1868 is still celebrated to this day.

Betances considered Haiti "a central point of reference" and looked at the island of Hispaniola (the Dominican Republic and Haiti) as "the geographic staging ground for the war for Puerto

*(continued on page 18)*

# Popular demand for *accountability* leads to

## election annulment in Haiti

by Marilyn Langlois



Graffiti in Jacmel: "Electoral coup d'état = revolution"

**O**n a visit to Haiti in late April 2016 with Task Force on the Americas, a California-based organization in solidarity with the social justice movements of Latin America and the Caribbean, we witnessed another example of Haitians resisting US attempts to facilitate continued looting of the country's resources and to sabotage its democracy.

Democracy has been sorely missing in the island nation ever since the 2004 coup d'état backed by the US, France, and Canada, which ushered in a two-year reign of terror, followed by the unjust exclusion of Haiti's largest and most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, from participating in any elections until August and October 2015. The most recent president, Michel Martelly, had been pushed fraudulently to the forefront of sham elections in 2011 by then-US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. Haitians we met with did not appreciate this interference, as he stole public funds, privatized valuable natural resources, and instituted a paramilitary security force reminiscent of the notorious Duvalier era.

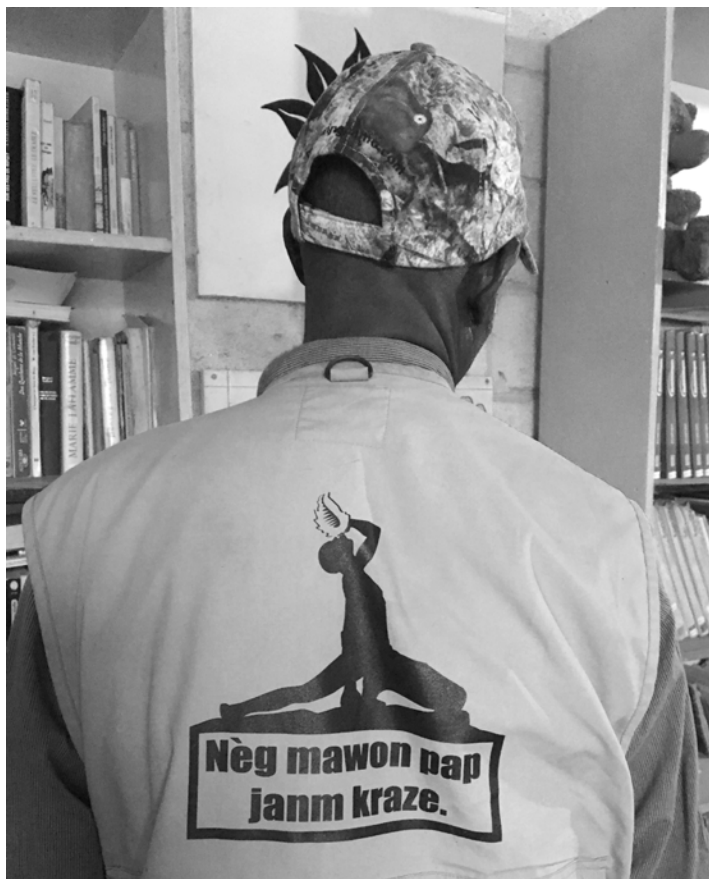
The October 25, 2015 first-round presidential election was riddled with massive irregularities, voter intimidation,

ballot box stuffing, and tampering with tally sheets, as has been widely reported and documented. People we met with from different sectors, including two of the presidential candidates, affirmed the nature and extent of the electoral fraud. Yet the US has pushed for a quick run-off between the ostensible top two vote-getters, which Haitians have successfully resisted with persistent, large scale street demonstrations.

Physical structures can symbolize power or lack thereof. The Haitian National Palace, seat of government and source of national pride for 200 years, was severely damaged in the 2010 earthquake and has since been leveled. All we could see was a tall fence surrounding the now-empty site. On the other hand, shortly after the 2004 coup, the US Embassy was relocated from a modest downtown Port-au-Prince building to a newly constructed gigantic, fortress-like compound outside of town, surrounded on all sides by United Nations MINUSTAH military bases.

Our group, consisting of seven US citizens and one Canadian, met with Michael Gayle, Deputy Political Counselor in the US Embassy, to discuss the electoral crisis. As we underwent rigorous security protocols upon





**Image of Haitian maroon revolutionary**  
**“The spirit of the Haitian people will never break.”**

entering the compound—passport check, metal detectors, handbag search, no cameras or cell phones allowed, no wandering around on your own, no going to the restroom unaccompanied—I kept wondering, what is it they’re afraid of?

Our conversation with Mr. Gayle, while cordial and friendly on the surface, revealed the condescending and colonialist nature of the US government’s attitude towards Haiti. His claim that Haitians have a poor history of participation in elections was refuted by one of our delegation members who had observed the 1995 and 2000 presidential elections in Haiti, both of which had gone smoothly with strong voter turnout and no major problems reported. He further suggested that “both sides” were to blame for cancellation of local and parliamentary elections between 2011 and 2015, and that there was cheating on “both sides” during the 2015 elections, when in fact outgoing president Martelly and his party were clearly responsible in both cases, with help from well-paid foreign political operatives.

Mr. Gayle stressed the urgency of having a stable elected government in order to reassure outside investors (no mention of reassuring the citizens that their votes were counted!). When asked why the US isn’t more concerned with the integrity of the elections than a delay in seating the government, he paused and then denied electoral fraud was widespread or affected the ultimate outcome. His

concluding remark, “When capabilities are so low and challenges are so great, where do you draw the line about how flawless the process has to be?” was indicative of the self-serving US policy of dismissing Haitian people’s intelligence, skills, and aspirations.

After the US Embassy visit, our next appointment with one of the 2015 presidential candidates offered a refreshing contrast. At the office of Dr. Maryse Narcisse of the *Fanmi Lavalas* party, we were warmly welcomed in an open and relaxed atmosphere, where supporters from various communities were engaged in lively discussions. Dr. Narcisse told us how all of the candidates and parties, except a few associated with Martelly, had come to consensus on heeding the people’s demands and proposing a framework for a verification commission to do an in depth and transparent evaluation of the 2015 elections. She said her party is not afraid of the results because people were fed up with the 2010-11 elections and insist on free and fair elections this time. She pointed out that while the current Provisional President has little power, he can appoint the verification commission and take steps quickly to assure a fairly and justly elected government is in place, which could then tackle the broader social and economic issues the country faces.

As a US-based delegation, our message to Mr. Gayle of the US Embassy in person and to the US State Department in a press conference we held in Port-au-Prince was to stop pressuring Haitians to accept a seriously flawed electoral process and to respect Haiti’s sovereignty in rectifying the situation.

The day after we left Haiti, on April 28, we were pleased to learn that Provisional President Privert did in fact convene the election verification commission as proposed by the group of parties and candidates, giving it 30 days to complete its investigation.

On May 30, the verification commission, which conducted its investigation with observers from various parties, reported that over 90% of the precincts sampled showed unacceptable evidence of fraud and tampering, and it recommended the October 25, 2015 presidential election be annulled. Despite objections from the US and European Union, the current Haitian Election Council followed this recommendation, and October 6, 2016 has been set for new presidential elections. It is a significant victory that people have succeeded so far in preventing a major election from being rigged.

Meanwhile people continue to protest the August 15 parliamentary elections, which had been widely reported to be even more problematic but haven’t yet been mandated for in depth investigation. Haitians are relentlessly demanding that their votes be counted. ✱

# a people that does not give up

By Leslie Mullin

*“It is always the poor who rise up to defend national sovereignty...they are people engaged in a political struggle, a revolutionary struggle.”*

– Lovinsky Pierre Antoine

**O**n August 12, 2007, renowned Haitian human rights activist Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine was kidnapped and disappeared in Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. His fate remains unknown. Neither the US Embassy with resources of the fifth largest American Embassy in the world, nor the United Nations with 9,000 troops deployed throughout the city, lifted a finger to investigate his whereabouts, while thousands of Haitian activists and international supporters mobilized to demand his safe return.

A psychologist and leading activist of *Lavalas*, Haiti’s popular movement, Lovinsky founded the organization *Fondasyon Trant Septanm*, named for the September 30 date of the 1991 coup that overthrew Haiti’s first democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The group held weekly vigils demanding justice for victims of human rights violations and the release of political prisoners. Lovinsky had the highest regard for his people and for the price Haitians have paid for their freedom. He was a powerful ally of Haiti’s political prisoners; he was a powerful ally of political prisoners everywhere. He felt a kinship with black people throughout the Americas. Just weeks before his disappearance, he sent his solidarity to the San Francisco 8, a group of former Black Panthers imprisoned in a 36-year old case based on “confessions” extracted by torture. Lovinsky spoke truth to power. His disappearance falls perfectly in line with US policy.

## 12 YEARS OF OCCUPATION

*“As long as the spirit of liberty is alive, there will always be a good fight to recapture liberty”*

– Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Haiti-Haitii? Philosophical Reflections for Mental Decolonization*

**H**aiti’s popular movement is engaged in a powerful struggle to reclaim the political space it has been denied ever since the 2004 overthrow of its democratic government. Tens of thousands of Haitians have been part of sustained demonstrations to demand free and fair elections and to expose the conspiracy to steal their votes by fraud, violence, and intimidation. Despite the 2004 coup, military occupation, and fierce repression, the *Lavalas* movement is not only back, but it has delivered an impressive setback to the Obama Administration, which insisted that the widely contested 2015 elections were “good enough for Haiti.” The Haitian people fought for a Verification Commission to review the ballots; they got one. They insisted

President Martelly depart office at the end of his term; he did. They struggled for the annulment of the sham elections; they won. This milestone in Haiti’s fight for democracy is all the more remarkable given the concerted strategy of the United States, its European allies, and Haiti’s wealthy elite to isolate and destroy Haiti’s popular democratic movement throughout the past twelve years of occupation.

*“Colonists and new colonists consider poor people like sweet mangos that they can suck, eat, and throw away. This is why the foreign soldiers who showed up in 2004 and in 2010 did not come to give the poor security. Colonization is wrapped inside rosy speeches, beautiful promises, while weapons are there to defend the interests of the new colonists.”*

– Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Haiti-Haitii? Philosophical Reflections for Mental Decolonization*

**T**he repression that followed Haiti’s 2004 coup showed how far the US, its allies, and Haiti’s elite were willing to go to reassert hegemony and foreign control. In



November 2004, a human rights investigation led by attorney Thomas Griffin from the University of Miami Law School reported that supporters of the elected Aristide government faced severe repression, showing up in “mass graves, cramped prisons, no-medicine hospitals, corpse-strewn streets, and maggot-infested morgues.”

Haiti’s ten years of democracy under Aristide were premised on inclusion of the poor in the political, economic, and social life of the country, summed up in the *Lavalas* slogan *Tout Moun Se Moun*, meaning everyone is a person equally deserving of dignity and rights. Silencing the voice of Haiti’s poor majority was essential to restoring the old hierarchy of Haiti’s elite allied with foreign powers. Not only did the coup remove Aristide, it removed thousands of other elected officials, set up a *de facto* interim government, and ushered in a 9,000-strong UN military occupation. Each step bore the unmistakable imprint of the United States.

The *de facto* coup government led by US-appointed Prime Minister Gerard Latortue assumed the job of “restoring order” with a vengeance. Latortue once said that it would be necessary to kill 25,000 people in the capital alone to stop calls for the return of exiled President Aristide. Thousands of *Lavalas* activists and supporters were hunted down and imprisoned, killed, or driven into hiding. Names of wanted activists were read over the radio, and “anyone or anything associated with grassroots activism immediately became suspect,” read one report. “They’re massacring *Lavalas* supporters on a daily basis now in most of the Port-au-Prince areas,” said Ira Kurzban, Aristide’s attorney. A respected medical journal reported that following the coup, 8,000 people were killed in Port-au-Prince and 35,000 women and girls sexually assaulted by UN troops, police, anti-*Lavalas* gangs and criminals.

With the arrival of 9,000 UN troops, Haiti came under *de facto* military occupation. Blue-helmeted UN soldiers

routinely joined Haitian police on heavy-handed search-and-destroy missions targeting centers of popular resistance. In July 2005, a Brazilian contingent of 440 UN troops, with 1,000 Jordanian troops on the perimeter, staged a predawn raid on Cite Soleil—a densely populated impoverished community on the edge of Port-au-Prince. Cite Soleil is a *Lavalas* base where people continued to mobilize against the coup, staging massive demonstrations demanding the return of Aristide. UN troops sealed the exits with shipping containers and opened fire on its 300,000 residents. They fired 22,000 rounds of ammunition during the seven-hour operation, yet claimed responsibility for only one death—that of leading activist Dred Wilme, their intended target, whom they disparaged as a “bandit.”

The following day, human rights activists interviewed residents flanked by their family members’ dead bodies, while the walls of homes, schools, and churches bore signs of indiscriminate machine gun fire. Thirty to 60 people had been killed; at least 26 were severely wounded, including 20 women and children. US Ambassador James Foley later praised Brazilian soldiers, saying “The security situation in the capital has clearly improved thanks to aggressive incursions in Bel Air and the July 6 raid against Dred Wilme in Cite Soleil.”

#### HAITI’S PRISONS ARE A NIGHTMARE

As *Lavalas* leaders, activists and supporters swelled the prison ranks, reports of conditions inside Haiti’s political prisons reached the outside world. Father Gerard Jean-Juste, *Lavalas* activist priest, was dragged from his church by armed men in October 2004 and jailed for being “a threat to public order.” He said, “This is a desperate move on the government’s part to frighten people into silence.” Haiti’s prison population soon doubled. The National

(continued on page 16)



# The Clintons in Haiti

*By Charlie Hinton*

In many ways the role of the Clintons in Haiti differs little from that of the foreign imperialists and profiteers who have plundered Haiti for centuries. But with the Clintons, it's not just a matter of business or diplomacy—they profess a genuine bond with Haiti. They honeymooned there and found a place “desperate and enchanting.” Eight days after the 2010 earthquake, Bill Clinton said, “This is a personal thing for us....She has the same memories I do. She has the same concerns I do. We love the place.”

But Bill and Hillary Clinton fell in love with a Haiti living under the Duvalier dictatorship, and they and the media use their “love” for Haiti to legitimize their policies as President and Secretary of State, which have perpetuated historical power dynamics and the Duvalier legacy of death squads and corruption.<sup>1</sup>

Running as a “New Democrat,” Bill Clinton became president in 1992, after 12 years of Reaganomics. He vigorously pursued Reagan/Bush economic policies (also known as “neoliberalism”), aligning with Republicans to push US participation in both NAFTA and the World Trade Organization through a resistant Democrat-controlled Congress.

He apologized at a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2010 for forcing Haiti to drop tariffs on imported US rice, subsidized by the US Government. Neoliberal policy prevented Haiti's government from subsidizing its own rice farmers, and they could not compete, wiping out Haitian rice farming and seriously damaging Haiti's ability to be self-sufficient.

What Clinton did not explain is that after Haitians stopped producing rice to feed themselves—under neoliberal gospel—they were supposed to instead produce mangos and other tropical foods to export to northern countries. Thus, Haiti became dependent on cutthroat global markets to earn the hard currency foreign exchange necessary to buy imported food, which is now sold at monopoly prices because there is no domestic competition.

As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton continued this political and economic policy, which emphasizes privatization of government services and promotes an economy geared to export to foreign consumers, instead of the everyday needs of Haitians—all held in place, in Haiti's case, by a twelve-year-old UN occupation force, which now includes almost 5,000 soldiers and police.

## THE US-CLINTONIAN RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKE

In the immediate aftermath to the 2010 earthquake—with Hillary Clinton the Secretary of State and Bill Clinton soon to become the “Haiti Czar”—both the Pentagon and the United Nations claimed that more troops were needed to provide “security and stability” to bring in aid, while according to nearly all independent observers in the field, violence was never an issue.

The rapid mobilization of thousands of US troops crowded out much of the arriving aid into the Port-au-Prince airport, forcing lengthy delays. A World Food Program official

said of the 200 flights going in and out of Haiti daily, “most...are for the US military.” Nineteen days into the crisis, only 32% of Haitians in need had received any food (even if just a single meal), three-quarters were without clean water, the government had received only 2% of the tents it had requested, and hospitals in the capital reported they were running “dangerously low” on basic medical supplies like antibiotics and painkillers.

Hillary Clinton announced that the United States would send back to Haiti any Haitians who illegally entered US territory while fleeing quake-hit Haiti. “Ordinary and regular immigration laws will apply going forward, which means we are not going to be accepting into the US Haitians who are attempting to make it to our shores,” Clinton told reporters. “They will be interdicted, they will be repatriated.”

A year and a half later, an exposé in *The Nation* magazine revealed that trailers donated by the Clinton Foundation to post-earthquake Haiti to use as temporary classrooms—and to double as hurricane shelters—were plagued by mold and shoddy construction. In at least one case, an air quality test revealed worrying levels of formaldehyde. The trailers were built by the same company that was sued for providing formaldehyde-laced trailers to displaced residents after Hurricane Katrina.

## SUPPRESSION OF DEMOCRACY

In January 2011, at the height of the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt, Secretary of State Clinton flew to Haiti to intervene in the Haitian



presidential run-off elections so that the US-preferred candidate Michel Martelly—originally announced as the third-place finisher—could secure a spot in the two-person run-off. Meanwhile, Haiti's most popular political party, *Fanmi Lavalas*, was barred from participation. Ultimately Martelly won the presidency, with only 16.7% of the electorate voting for him. By comparison, in the 1990 and 2000 presidential elections, Jean-Bertrand Aristide won by overwhelming majorities.

Hillary Clinton championed Martelly, calling him Haiti's "chief dreamer and believer," ignoring his ties to right-wing, militarist forces and with former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier and his associates. Martelly had supported the 1991 and 2004 *coup d'états* against the Aristide governments, and his administration was marked by corruption and bribery. His main virtue was his willingness to hand over Haitian resources to foreign investors.

Hillary has made an issue of Donald Trump's misogyny, but she ignored Martelly's crass misogyny. As a musician, Martelly's performances were filled with raunchy and sexist material. He often responded to criticisms of his presidency from women with crude sexual innuendo. During an August 2015 campaign rally for legislative elections, a local woman charged that his administration did not keep its promises. Martelly lashed out with degrading insults against her, calling for her to be silenced and sexually assaulted. Three Haitian officials resigned their government positions in protest.

#### **DISPLACING FAMILIES, NO FRIEND OF WORKERS**

**H**illary Clinton brokered the deal with South Korea clothing manufacturer Sae-A Trading (major supplier for Wal-Mart, Target, Gap, Banana Republic, Levis)

to develop the Caracol Northern Industrial Park sweatshop complex. Three hundred thirty-six families were forced off productive agricultural land to make way for it. Although the earthquake did not touch this part of Haiti, one third of earthquake reconstruction funding was allocated to build the park, a power plant to run it, and a port facility to service it. A New York Times article reported that "most high-profile projects the Clintons have backed—including a just-opened Marriott, another luxury hotel [called the Royal Oasis, so international travelers could have an "oasis" in the midst of the poverty of the majority of Haitians] and the industrial park—have helped foreign investors and Haiti's wealthy elites more than its poor."

Clinton boasted that the Caracol project represented a "new day for Haiti and a new model for how the international community practices development." She claimed Caracol would provide "not just any jobs—these are good jobs." But despite \$124 million from US taxpayers and \$105 million from the Inter-American Development Bank, Caracol now employs just 5,479 people, far from the 60,000 jobs promised within five years of the park's opening.

#### **NO MINIMUM WAGE**

**H**illary Clinton's State Department pressured Haiti not to raise the minimum wage. The move to block a wage hike for the lowest paid workers in the western hemisphere was revealed by secret US State Department cables showing that behind the scenes, USAID and the US Embassy vigorously backed factory owners contracted by Levi's, Hanes, and Fruit of the Loom to squash a minimum wage hike for Haitian assembly zone workers—one that had been unanimously passed by Haiti's Parliament in June 2009. The factory owners refused to pay \$5 per

eight-hour day. At the time, Haiti's minimum wage was \$1.75 a day.

#### **HOUSES THAT WERE NEVER BUILT**

**M**iami businessman Claudio Osorio, currently serving twelve years in federal prison on fraud charges, used his relationship with Bill and Hillary Clinton to help his company InnoVida obtain a \$10 million loan from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) for a Haiti housing project in 2010. OPIC is an independent government agency that submits its annual budget requests through the State Department and works closely with the agency. An internal OPIC memo said Hillary Clinton was prepared to marshal State Department resources to assist with the project. InnoVida was supposed to use the funding to build houses in Haiti after the earthquake, but it defaulted on the loan and the homes were never built. After InnoVida went bankrupt in 2011, a court-appointed investigator said it appeared that over \$30 million of its funds had been diverted to foreign bank accounts and were not retrievable.

#### **QUESTIONABLE ETHICS**

VCS Mining, a small North Carolina mining company, was one of only two companies that received a "gold exploitation permit" in 2012 from the Haitian government—a first in over 50 years. In 2013, author Peter Schweizer revealed that VCS Mining had named Hillary Clinton's brother, Tony Rodham, to its advisory board. The Washington Post reported that, "Rodham and the chief executive of VCS said they were introduced at a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative—an offshoot of the Clinton Foundation that critics have long alleged invites a blurring of its charitable mission with the business

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# HAITI RISES: A TIME

BY NIA IMARA & ROBERT ROTH

*Haiti Rises: A Time For Solidarity was first published in February. Since that time, Haiti's interim president, Jocelerme Privert, appointed an Election Verification Commission to investigate the fraudulent elections of August 9 and October 25, 2015. The Verification Commission's report, released on May 30, concluded that the previous elections were hopelessly flawed and set October 9 as the date for a new round of presidential elections.*

*Thousands of demonstrators have been in the streets for months, demanding a free, transparent and fair electoral process. The formal overturning of what Fanmi Lavalas, the people's party in Haiti, had called an "electoral coup", was a major victory for Haiti's popular movement. The Verification Commission findings were also a rebuke to the US State Department, OAS, MINUSTAH (UN occupying force in Haiti), and the European Union – all of which had insisted that the fraudulent election results stand.*

*Multiple candidates have now re-registered for the October 9 presidential election, including Dr. Maryse Narcisse, the candidate of Fanmi Lavalas. We can expect that the next period will see increased US efforts to destabilize Haiti and control the new election, with the primary aim of preventing a Lavalas victory. The upcoming months demand vigilance and increased solidarity from those of us committed to democracy and self-determination in Haiti.*

---

***“Reflecting on struggles everywhere, we came to the conclusion that a people  
can't be sovereign if they don't have the right to vote.***

***No people can retain their dignity if their vote does not count.”***

*From a Statement Issued by 68 Haitian Grassroots Organizations  
on January 22, 2016*

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The voice of Haiti's popular movement at this critical period in the country's history has never been clearer. For the past several months, since the discredited legislative and presidential elections of last August and October, mass, vibrant protests for the right to a free and fair vote and against foreign intervention have been a relentless force, in the face of heavily-armed and well-financed adversaries and mounting repression. The influx of articles and editorials in recent weeks by leading US media outlets depicts the situation in Haiti as a confused, incomprehensible, morass of violence and dysfunction, with all sides being equally unreasonable in their demands. This misleading portrayal of Haitian politics and culture—indeed, of Haitian people—by American mainstream media is not new. Rather, it is a continuation of a historical pattern of obfuscating the underlying reasons for the grievances of Haiti's mass movement, which has consistently denounced foreign intervention and the suppression of Haiti's sovereignty.

The popular revolt in Haiti has forced the postponement of the January 24 presidential run-off election, to the

dismay of the US State Department and the current Haitian government of Michel Martelly, whose handpicked candidate had been declared the frontrunner. And now, on February 7, it has forced the end of the rule of Martelly himself, who has had to step down rather than oversee the next stage of the electoral process.

These are major victories for the people's movement in Haiti. But already there are signs that the next round will be just as difficult as the fight has been already. The popular movement has made it clear that they have no interest in a top-down solution that excludes the participation and voices of the tens of thousands of Haitians who have risked their lives nearly every day in the fight for democracy. They have raised the fundamental question: How can elections proceed to a second round if the first round was hopelessly illegitimate? How can elections move forward without a thorough investigation and repair of the fraud that already took place? These are the critical issues being fought over today as Haitians celebrate the end of the Martelly dictatorship.



# WE FOR SOLIDARITY



Supporters of presidential candidate Dr. Maryse Narcisse

## BACKGROUND TO THE REVOLT: TWELVE YEARS SINCE THE COUP, TWELVE YEARS OF OCCUPATION

The revolt in Haiti has not emerged overnight. It is now almost twelve years since the United States-orchestrated coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and removed over 8,000 elected officials, and exiled, jailed, raped and murdered thousands of supporters of the *Fanmi Lavalas* Party. The coup was enforced by a United Nations military occupation that still exists today. It has been five years since Michel Martelly, a supporter of the brutal Duvalier dictatorships and their death squads, was selected as president; only 17% of eligible Haitian voters turned out in an election that excluded the most popular political party, *Fanmi Lavalas*. Hillary Clinton, then the US Secretary of State, flew to Haiti to dictate to Haitian officials<sup>1</sup> that Martelly be placed in the election runoff after initial results had left him only in third place. His US-backed reign has featured one corruption scandal after another, intimidation of the judicial system, the return of death squads, torture of political prisoners, selling off of oil and mineral rights to foreign corporations, and rule by decree.

Haitians have had enough of this. As they watched this latest election being stolen and a Martelly minion emerge as the leading vote getter, they took to the streets by the tens of thousands. As they saw ballot boxes burned and “observers” with 900,000 government-issued credentials vote over and over again, they declared the election an “electoral coup.”

As they were turned away from one polling place after another, and told that they were not eligible to vote, they declared fraud.

While they joined the demonstrators in the streets, *Fanmi Lavalas* and its presidential candidate, Dr. Maryse Narcisse also filed a petition with the National Office of Electoral Litigation to challenge the results. All major opposition condemned the fraudulent elections and announced a boycott of the scheduled presidential run-off on January 24. As the demonstrations grew in size and scope, the Haitian government responded with increasing violence. Police fired into peaceful protests, and beat and tear-gassed those in the streets. Much of this has been met with silence by the international media.

When it comes to Haiti, the United States’ homegrown illness—racism—is cast outward. Just as the voting rights of black people have been abused throughout American history, the US Government, through financial and diplomatic coercion, abuses the voting rights of Haitians.<sup>2</sup> Just as the basic human rights of black people—decent education, housing, healthcare, physical safety—are regularly undermined here, the US Government has directly and indirectly made efforts to extinguish fundamental civil and human rights in Haiti. Just as the State of Michigan forced the majority black population of Flint to drink contaminated water while the EPA did nothing, so did United Nations troops dump their excrement into Haiti’s water supply with impunity, bringing cholera to the country with no reparations. The US Government—from the Bush Administrations, to the Clinton and Obama Administrations—have routinely demonstrated, as a matter of policy, that black lives matter in Haiti as little as they do in America.

## THE STATE DEPARTMENT: TALKING DEMOCRACY, PROMOTING FRAUD

The US role throughout the electoral crisis is as predictable as it was after the 2010 earthquake, when the State Department sent then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to handpick a well-known misogynist and supporter of the Duvalier dictatorship, Michel Martelly, for

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**Haiti Rises**  
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president. With one hand, the US State Department

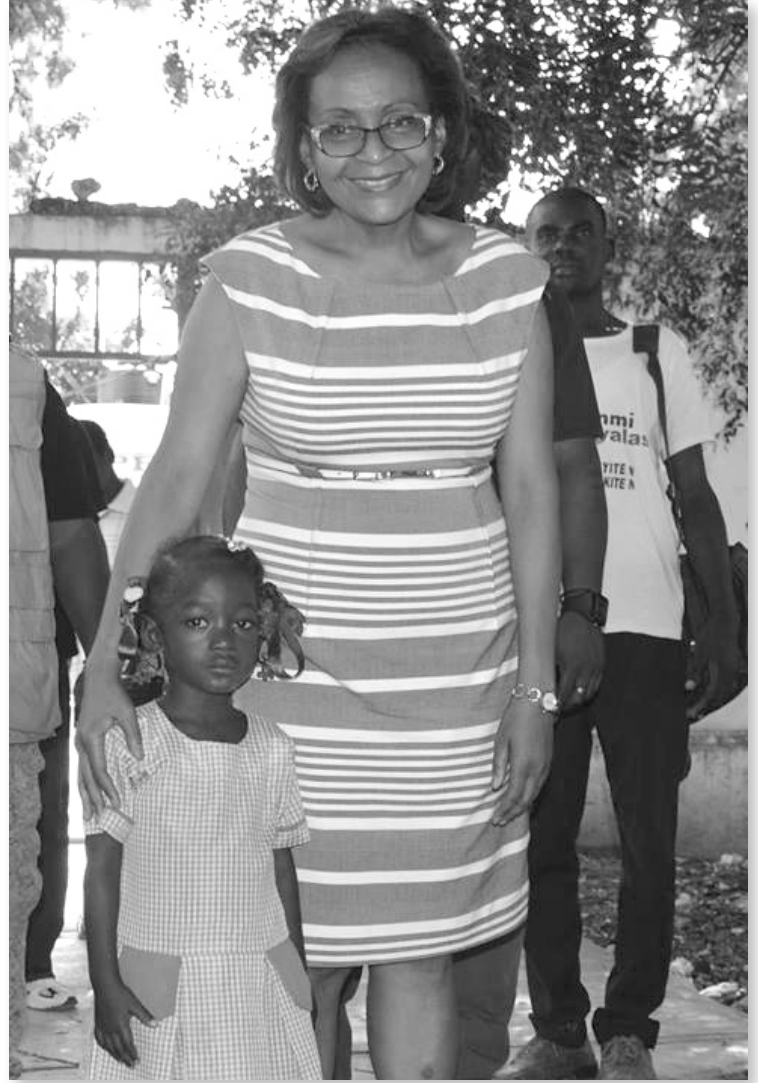
denounces<sup>3</sup> the “violence” surrounding the elections, while the other hand has never ceased stoking the fires of electoral fraud and corruption. With one face, the US State Department encourages fair, free elections and discourages voter intimidation; with the other, it upholds electoral fraud and threatens the leadership of Haiti’s most popular movement.

The US State Department has been the chief promoter of both the Martelly government and the fraudulent elections that Haitians have called an “electoral coup.” It has maintained its pro-Martelly stance despite the reports of independent human rights investigators that Martelly’s PHTK Party intimidated voters, stole ballots, burned ballot boxes and attempted to terrorize voters and suppress voter turnout in both the August 9 and October 25 legislative and presidential elections.

Now that the popular movement has finally brought these fraudulent elections to a temporary halt, the State Department has made its displeasure even more clear. On January 24, it issued a warning to demonstrators in Haiti against “electoral intimidation, destruction of property, and violence,” saying this runs “counter to Haiti’s democratic principles.” This is the same racist and paternalistic tone it has always used in Haiti—from the time of Haiti’s Revolution, to the US invasion and occupation of Haiti from 1915-1934, to the two coups that overthrew the democratically elected Aristide administrations in 1991 and 2004. This from the same State Department that was silent when peaceful protesters were killed, tear-gassed, beaten or arrested, or when Martelly’s agents terrorized voters and burned down polling places.

**HIDDEN FROM THE HEADLINES:  
FANMI LAVALAS AND DR. MARYSE NARCISSE**

In addition, there has been near-silence about the remarkable campaign run by *Fanmi Lavalas* and its presidential candidate, Dr. Maryse Narcisse. A medical doctor and long-time *Lavalas* militant, Dr. Narcisse helped establish health clinics in rural communities. At the time of the 1991 coup, like many Aristide supporters, she went into the streets to protest the military and was briefly forced into hiding. When President Aristide was reelected in 2000, she joined his administration. Exiled after the 2004 coup, she returned in 2006 to help rebuild *Lavalas* and continues to serve as Aristide’s spokesperson. Day after day throughout this campaign, she has been in the streets with the people. Her campaign has emphasized “dignity”—that the Haitian people cannot be bought or sold, that, as President Aristide



**Dr. Maryse Narcisse with a schoolgirl.**

has said, “If we don’t protect our dignity, our dignity will escape us.”

The progressive achievements and agenda of *Lavalas*—setting up health clinics in poor urban and rural communities, advancing the fight against HIV/AIDS, promoting equality for women, literacy education for all Haitians, living wage employment, taxing the rich, and abolishing the Haitian Army—have made it the party of the poor majority in Haiti. The organized collective of dozens of grassroots organizations that compose *Fanmi Lavalas* make it much different from the elite political parties we are familiar with in the US. *Fanmi Lavalas* grew out of a nationwide mass movement to force out the American-backed dictator, Jean Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, and to instill truly participatory democracy after years of rule by the elite and foreign intervention. In 1986, after decades of sacrifice and struggle against repressive regimes, Haitians succeeded in forcing out Duvalier and bringing about the nation’s first democratic elections. It was a hard-fought, hard-won victory when the great majority voted into presidential office Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990.

Since then, the US organized two coup d’états against





**Demonstrators protest Michel Martelly.**

the Aristide administration, which again received an overwhelming mandate in 2000. Following each coup—in 1991 and 2004—the US Government helped to install a military occupation to suppress resistance, namely, *Lavalas*. In 1991, the US lent its support to paramilitary groups, many of whom were part of the Duvalier military—since disbanded by *Lavalas*—and the Haitian police. In 2004, the US, with the support of France and Canada, threw its full weight behind the United Nations, which, in Haiti, is an occupying force, not a peacekeeping mission. Over the last 12 years, that occupation, known as MINUSTAH, has overseen the attempt to destroy Haiti's popular movement.

*Lavalas* still has a target on its back. In an article published by Reuters<sup>4</sup> on January 26, 2016 an unnamed Congressional source told the news agency that, "The Obama Administration would be worried if he [Aristide] were playing an important role. They're not thrilled with Aristide's forces coming back." This should be no surprise, given the leading role *Lavalas* has played in the democratic movement. After all, in 2011, it was President Obama who made a phone call<sup>5</sup> to South African President Jacob Zuma, warning him not to allow President Aristide and his family

to board a South African plane and come back to Haiti. When Aristide returned, he was greeted by thousands of people at the airport and then at his home. Once again, Haitians—and in this case the people of South Africa—did not obey.

### WHAT NEXT? A TIME FOR SOLIDARITY

**D**uring this campaign, Dr. Narcisse emerged as a formidable candidate. If there is a full investigation of the last bogus election, as *Lavalas* and grassroots organizations are demanding, the abundance of popular support for Dr. Narcisse is certain to manifest in the ballot box. If she ends up winning, she would be the first elected woman president in Haiti's history.

That will only be possible if a transparent and credible process takes place over these next months. The "electoral coup," after all, stole votes from candidates who represented popular organizations and parties. Any new election that repeats this process will be a new form of theft. With US officials already decrying the "violence" of demonstrators and warning against new protests, and reports circulating of "solutions" that leave out the representatives of the very grassroots organizations and parties that have been at the forefront of the fight for free and fair elections, this is a moment for vigilance in Haiti. In their recent statement, 68 grassroots organizations in Haiti state their position very clearly:

*"We say NO, WE WILL NOT OBEY ILLEGITIMATE OFFICIALS. Self-defense is a legitimate universal law. Civil disobedience is an accepted universal right when a people confronts an illegal regime. The right to elect a government is universally accepted as a way for people to protect its existence. Today, confronted by the danger presented by local and international colonialists, the Haitian people have started a RESISTANCE FOR EXISTENCE movement. They ask for people to people solidarity from everywhere on the planet."*

### We should heed their call. ✱

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-ap-us-haiti-story.html>
- 2 <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/1/for-us-in-haiti-black-votes-dont-matter.html>
- 3 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-election-usa-idUSKCN0V20XP>
- 4 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-election-aristide-idUSKCN0V42TV>
- 5 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/17/jean-bertrand-aristide-haiti-return>

# Haiti's Fanmi Lavalas & the Black Panther Party

By Kiilu Nyasha (a.k.a. Pat Gallyot)

*Kiilu Nyasha is a revolutionary journalist who hosts the BAVC cable TV show "Freedom is a Constant Struggle." For decades, through her work, she has provided support and advocated for freedom for political prisoners in the US and in Haiti.*

This October 2016 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in Oakland, California.

In 1968, prior to joining the Party, I was employed by Community Progress, Inc. (CPI), the nation's pilot program of President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," also euphemistically called "The Great Society."

I became one of the "Field Trainers" deployed in each of the seven impoverished neighborhoods of New Haven, Connecticut. Assigned to the predominately black area of Newhallville, I worked at the Teen Center, a government facility that eventually became the cite for the Black Panther Party's free breakfast program, launched by a town hall meeting and a popular vote.

My work for the Community Action Institute (CPI) was to *organize the community* around practically every issue relevant to the needs of the residents. However, on doing so, I quickly came under attack and was eventually fired. The intention of this so-called "war on poverty" was in fact *not* to serve the people, but to set up neighborhood corporations run by local governments to monitor and control community activists and quell any potential resistance.

As part of my job, I had been attending (without overtime pay) numerous community meetings regarding health care, lead-paint poisoning, education, housing, *et cetera*, working with various groups, such as "welfare moms," already addressing those issues.

Upon recognizing the divide-and-rule tactics of CPI, and joining with community leaders from each neighborhood, some of us formed a group called Seven Together. Of course, such *organizing* got me in hot water fast.

At nearly every community meeting, I would encounter Black Panthers who were organizing on a strictly volunteer basis. Once I was fired, I quickly discovered there was no safety net. I couldn't get unemployment insurance because both of the jobs I'd had—working for Yale and the Government—disqualified me. So I went to the City Welfare Department where I was offered \$25 a week to support my nine-year-old son and myself.

"What!!? I was giving you nearly double that in taxes per week," I told them (paraphrasing). "How was I supposed to pay my rent, my bills, support my child on such a pittance?"

At that time, 1969, Panthers across the nation had come under vicious attack by J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO (counterintelligence program), and by year's end a reported

twenty-eight Panthers had been murdered by police. The most blatant murders of Panthers happened on December 4, 1969 in the Chicago chapter when police raided the Panther pad in the pre-dawn and committed the premeditated murders of Fred Hampton, twenty-one, and Mark Clark, twenty-years-old.

I knew then it was time to stand up. I decided to join the Party and commit myself to a lifetime of revolutionary struggle. We single moms pooled our AFDC (Aid for Dependent Children) checks and lived communally, sharing all our resources.

Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Chicago chapter, was a dynamite organizer who brought together the first rainbow coalition and called on folks to "Repeat after me; I *am* a revolutionary!" He was also very conscious of the struggles of black people throughout the diaspora and particularly in Haiti. He denounced the infamous, brutal dictator known as Papa Doc Duvalier who was conducting a reign of terror on the Haitian people fighting for dignity and human rights.

Since I was one of the oldest members of the Party (thirty!), which was comprised mostly of youth in their teens and early twenties, and one of the few with an employment history, office skills, and church experience in quantity cooking, I started off working as the Breakfast Program Coordinator. (Later on, I was recruited to work as legal secretary to the Panther lawyers on the two capital trials of Panthers Lonnie McClucas and the joint trial of Chairman Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins.) I continued to do community organizing as a rank and file Panther in the New Haven chapter.

I loved working at the breakfast program, despite the difficulties of getting up at before 5:00 a.m. to rally the troops and begin the task of feeding scores of kids every weekday morning. Sending young students to school with a full stomach instead of going hungry was very gratifying.

There were no food stamps at that time and no school lunch programs in the City. What shocked me and raised my political consciousness was when we found ourselves under attack for feeding hungry kids. I'm reminded here of Father Jean Juste of Haiti who was brutalized and imprisoned for feeding hungry children in Haiti. May he rest in peace.

Later on, during the course of the Panther trials, in order to include all the forces in the community willing to work to save Panthers' lives from the possibility of life in prison or the death penalty, we formed "The People's Committee," comprised of nonmembers of the Party, including Yale students, welfare moms,





Puerto Ricans, white radicals, and more. We used attorney Charles Garry's temporary law offices, including the phone service, to support a Bobby and Ericka Free Food Program, among other activities in support of the Panthers and opposition to the war.

A coalition of movement forces organized an anti-Vietnam-war/free the Panthers rally scheduled for May Day, 1970 on the New Haven Green, a huge city-center area surrounded by the courthouse and post office. The rally drew tens of thousands of protesters from all over the country and beyond. The city called in the National Guard who lined side streets with rifles and bayonets in a display of military occupation I had never before seen.

We added "bring a can of food" to the flyers announcing the May 1 event for our Free Food Program. So much food was contributed, we filled a whole room of Garry's offices (near the Green) with cans of food later distributed to needy families.

As many of you know, Panthers in chapters across the country established various programs to serve the basic needs of our people whose civil and human rights were under constant attack. The Panthers' Ten-Point Platform contained the demand for "land, bread, housing, clothing, education, justice, and peace," and we set about to organize our communities to meet those basic needs.

Fast forward to the early 1990s: I got involved with the Haiti Action Committee and the struggle to return to the presidency exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted by the Haitian Army in the 1991 *coup d'état*, backed up by the US in cahoots with Haitian militias and death squads.

On learning about Aristide, a priest practicing liberation theology and serving the people, I became a supporter and advocate of *Fanmi Lavalas*, (*Lavalas* meaning a cleansing flood that would wash away political corruption, and *Fanmi* meaning family).

I saw the similarities in practice of our Panther and *Lavalas* activists whose dedication to the liberation of our peoples and whose provision of essential goods and services were paramount and well worth any risk to our lives.

Indeed, upon his return to the presidency in 1995, Aristide served out his abbreviated term, was reelected in 2000 with some 90% of the vote, and proceeded to fulfill the promises of his campaign. More schools were built in Haiti while the former priest was in office (until the second coup of 2004) than in the nation's entire history.



In rural areas, where no schools had ever existed, 195 new primary schools and 104 new public high schools were built. *Fanmi Lavalas* provided thousands of scholarships for children to attend private schools, subsidized schoolbooks and uniforms, and expanded school lunch programs to serve 700,000 hot meals a day to children who otherwise might have had no meal.

I was reminded of the school lunch programs instituted in New Haven public schools as well as schools across the country that resulted from the Panther breakfast programs highlighting the lack of free food programs in our schools.

Not unlike the Panthers' free health clinics and their battle against sickle cell anemia, the Aristide government built health clinics, hospitals, and dispensaries and added improved medical services. It greatly increased the number of health care workers, including doctors, and spent a larger percentage of its budget on health.

Just as Panthers came under attack in the Sixties and Seventies for feeding the people, Aristide came under attack for serving his congregants in his parish of the poor. His church was burned to the ground and parishioners massacred on September 11, 1988 (9/11!).

This was not the first or the last attempt on Aristide's life; he bravely faced down assassins, challenged the Catholic hierarchy, and was ultimately forced out of the Salesian order and the priesthood for his opposition to the corrupt regimes of the Duvalier dictatorship and their death squads, known as the *Tontons Macoutes*.

In 1990, the people drafted Aristide as their candidate to run for President, overcoming his initial reluctance. This signaled the origin of the *Lavalas* movement that swept Aristide into the Presidential Palace in 1991 with 67% of the vote. Seven months later, in the first *coup d'état* supported by the US, Aristide was exiled, and General Raoul Cédras was installed to conduct a reign of terror against the Haitian masses including anyone associated with *Fanmi Lavalas*.

The people demanded Aristide's return, so after an international campaign led in the Bay Area by Pierre Labossiere and the Haiti Action Committee, he was flown to Haiti in 1994 to finish his term in office.

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## A People That Does Not Give Up

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the 1918 US Marine occupation—held five times its capacity. Four thousand prisoners endured swelteringly hot cells so tightly packed that they’ve been compared to the holds of slave ships. At least one thousand were estimated to be political prisoners. They took turns sleeping on the floor. There was no plumbing or light, and only limited access to filthy water and meager, infrequent meals. Most prisoners were held in lengthy pre-trial detention without being charged or tried, without even appearing before a judge. Some were confined for six years without trial, freed only after the 2010 earthquake emptied the prison. For others, the toxic collusion of starvation rations, medical neglect, and long-term detention was a death sentence. In 2006, human rights investigators identified an outbreak of *beri-beri*, a disease caused by a vitamin deficiency, that had killed dozens of prisoners.

In December 2004, 107 prisoners in the National Penitentiary were massacred during a protest against prison conditions and illegal confinement. Colin Powell, then US Secretary of State, visiting nearby at the time, told Latortue, “We’re with you all the way.” In May 2006, Haitian police, guards and UN troops again fired on unarmed prisoners during a rooftop demonstration at the National Penitentiary, killing between 30 and 60. The prisoners were demanding that newly elected President Préval release them.

In the face of this terror campaign, Haiti’s popular movement continued to demand the return of Aristide, the release of political prisoners, and an end to the occupation. Not even the 2010 earthquake deterred them. Desperate Haitian survivors living in deplorable conditions assured listeners that “if Aristide were here, things would be better.” The remarkable victory of Aristide’s return in 2011 and Haiti’s refusal to accept demonstrably fraudulent elections continue to prove the power of this grassroots movement.

### SELLING HAITI: THE COUP CONTINUES

*“Right after the earthquake, the internationals took advantage of our momentary state of helplessness to occupy the political space. Today, the Haitian people are engaged in an all out struggle to reclaim that space and to exercise their right to vote.”*

– Call for Solidarity, from Haiti’s Popular Movement, January 2016

In Haiti, the coup continues under a cloak of fake progress. If the attempt to eliminate *Lavalas* marked its early years, the inauguration of another compliant president

Penitentiary—built to control a rebelling population during

signaled its consolidation. With a record low 16.7% of the vote, Michel Martelly assumed the presidency in May 2011, ready to deliver on his promise to US and foreign investors that Haiti is open for business—the mantra of then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who championed his candidacy. A familiar pattern of Duvalier-style centralized power, corruption, and ruthless repression in the service of foreign investment emerged. The reckless sacrifice of Haiti’s sovereignty, coupled with corruption and abuse of power ignited broad Haitian opposition to his regime. Repression, political imprisonment, and lengthy detention of pro-democracy activists and human rights advocates continued.

Martelly manipulated Haiti’s judicial system so it could be used to intimidate and jail political activists, while protecting his family and close associates from criminal prosecution. He appointed to the judiciary a former prosecutor, Lamarre Belizaire, whose persecution of political dissidents was so flagrant that he was suspended from the Port-au-Prince Bar Association. Belizaire jailed numerous Haitian lawyers who represented victims of police brutality. Two brothers and their attorney who filed a lawsuit for corruption against Martelly’s wife and son were jailed on murder charges; they were later exonerated. The judge who presided over that corruption case died under suspicious circumstances two days after he was threatened by Martelly and other top officials.

Martelly further amassed power by delaying elections until the terms of most Parliament members expired, enabling him to act without legislative oversight. He let the terms of elected mayors expire and replaced them with his appointees. His inner circle included descendants of the Duvalier dictatorship like his close advisor, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier’s son, Nicolas. Former army and neo-Duvalierists worked key security positions within his government.

### POLICE TACTICS RESURRECT THE DAYS OF DUVALIER

The Martelly regime was backed by a violent repressive apparatus composed of armed military, police, and paramilitary forces working in tandem with UN troops to crack down on dissent. Martelly got support from his foreign backers to reinstate the Haitian army, disbanded in 1995 by Aristide after massive human rights abuses and military coups. In 2013, Ecuador began training new Haitian army recruits; Brazil also pledged to help restore the Haitian army. Paramilitary death squads were maintained in well-armed militia camps.

The Haitian Police, with a newly formed Brigade of Operation and Departmental Intervention (BOID), a specialized UN-trained unit, terrorizes peaceful demonstrators and residents of impoverished neighborhoods with tear

gas, physical assaults and live ammunition. The day after *Lavalas* candidate Dr. Maryse Narcisse held a rally in Cite Soleil, BOID police killed 20 people, including two pregnant women. In Arcahaie, BOID officers killed five people in response to residents protesting a presidential decree that changed municipal boundaries to favor the rich.

### RESISTANCE FOR EXISTENCE

*“Today, confronted by the danger presented by local and international colonialists, the Haitian people have started a RESISTANCE FOR EXISTENCE movement. They ask for people to people solidarity from everywhere on the planet. The local and international colonialists plan is not an earthquake, yet it has caused far more damage to the country.”*

– Call for Solidarity, from Haiti’s Popular Movement, January 2016

Tens of thousands of Haitians have confronted this vast repressive power as they’ve protested land grabs, forced evictions, corruption, low wages, food insecurity, unemployment, illegal arrest, imprisonment, and stolen elections. In one instance, demonstrations at Île-à-Vache erupted after Martelly issued a decree appropriating as “state assets” the island’s land and resources for tourism. Instead of a school or hospital, a top-down plan called for a tourist resort with hotels, restaurants, shops, theaters, golf courses, and an airport. The plan would displace 20,000 people who fish and cultivate crops and whose homes have been in their families for generations. After a construction crew cut down the island’s only forest to build a road to the airport, residents mobilized against their exclusion from planning and the potential loss of farmlands, access to fishing, and environmental destruction. Their protests were met with heavy violence. Martelly removed the elected mayor and appointed a new local authority who conducted house to house searches with police. When protesters blocked the roads to stop the project, paramilitaries beat them, destroyed homes, and

fired live ammunition. The vice-president of the farmers’ organization was jailed in the National Penitentiary for ten months for speaking out against the decree. The president of the same organization died in suspicious circumstances in a motorbike accident. Today, over 100 armed guards are permanently based on Île-à-Vache to protect the planned resort.

Opposition to Haiti’s rigged 2015 elections has united a broad coalition of Haitians against the conspiracy to maintain the ruling party PHTK—the party of Martelly—in power. The popular movement is at the forefront of this resistance. In demonstration after demonstration, tens of thousands risked tear gas, rubber bullets, live ammunition, water cannon, physical assault, arrest, and torture to assert their dignity and right to free and fair elections. *Nou pap obeyi!*—we will not obey!—was their rallying cry, echoing the words of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide: “Do not obey people who have no respect for human rights.”

The US prolonged the electoral crisis by continuing to endorse the fraudulent August and October elections, thereby giving the regime a green light to attack the popular movement. In January 2016, a disturbing video showed the brutal beating and torture of two young Haitian activists by CIMO (similar to SWAT) police. The two youths had been arbitrarily arrested and transported to a local police station after a demonstration protesting stolen elections. They were tied up, stripped of their clothing, and viciously whipped. *Fanmi Lavalas* issued a statement condemning the actions of the police and calling for their prosecution: “*Fanmi Lavalas*, while supporting the demands of these young people and of the population as a whole against this electoral *coup d’état* being perpetrated by the ‘*Tet Kale*’ [reference to Martelly] authorities, empathize with the suffering of these young people and extend to them our deepest sympathies.”

It is a dangerous moment in Haiti, but it is also a hopeful moment. Haiti’s courageous people are calling for our solidarity as they continue waging a frontline battle for dignity, human rights, and real democracy. ❄

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### The Clintons in Haiti

*(continued from page 8)*

interests of Bill and Hillary Clinton and their corporate donors.” The deal with VCS created tension in the Haitian Senate after reports that the royalties to be paid to the Haitian government were at least half the standard rate at 2.5%. The backlash caused the government to put the permits on hold.

The Republicans and Democrats have given the United States public a truly terrible choice this November. Many people will vote for Hillary Clinton to prevent Donald Trump from becoming President. Regardless of who wins, neither will be a friend of Haiti. Let’s use this election to grow our solidarity work to support the Haitian grassroots majority, regardless of the outcome. ❄

### ENDNOTE

1 For more information about the Clintons in Haiti, see “*Plan Lanmó—the Death Plan: The Clintons, Foreign Aid, and NGOs in Haiti*” in *Haiti Solidarity*, Issue #6. All of the information in the article is available through web searches on key words.



**Oscar Lopez**  
(continued from page 3)

Rican liberation.” He was also interested in establishing a

trans-Caribbean organization and spoke of the “Antilles for the Antilleans.” He was instrumental in including not only the Spanish-speaking nations but those that had been colonized by Britain and France. After *Lares*, he was forced into exile and lived in Jacmel, Haiti for five years. Betances was also the first person to translate Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture into Spanish and had close relationships with Haitian leaders Antonio Fernin and Pecho F. Bono.

Pedro Albizu Campos, the great Puerto Rican nationalist leader, also looked to Haiti and travelled there in 1927. Haiti was then under US occupation and a reign of terror. Despite being warned of the danger of arrest, he left his ship and met with M. Pierre Paul, President of the Haitian Nationalist Party, and M. Jolibois Fils—both leaders of the Haitian resistance. The trip further cemented Albizu’s beliefs that the issue of race had to be addressed and dealt with throughout the Caribbean.

Albizu called for the Spanish-speaking peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean to be in unconditional solidarity with Haiti and to join in a united front against US invasion and occupation. And it was in Haiti that some of the strongest solidarity organizations for Puerto Rican independence were found.

Oscar Lopez Rivera comes out of this tradition. Oscar says: “Haiti has always been an example to all people fighting for freedom. The people of Haiti and Puerto Rico have an unshakeable bond as we both fight US occupation and colonialism.”

Like many other young Puerto Ricans, Oscar was drafted in 1971 and sent to the Vietnam War. It was in Vietnam where his views as an internationalist and as a Puerto Rican nationalist began to solidify. He realized that the very same forces that were oppressing the Vietnamese were those oppressing Puerto Ricans on the streets of New York and Chicago and in Puerto Rico itself.

When he returned to Chicago he was appalled by the conditions of the Puerto Rican community. Drug abuse, poor segregated schools, high unemployment, and substandard housing were widespread. Oscar became a community organizer and founded health clinics and an independent school, which is still going strong today. He fought for better housing and urged utility companies and others to desegregate their hiring practices.

The Sixties and Seventies were times of liberation and anti-colonial movements around the world. Puerto Rico was no exception, and ultimately Oscar decided it was necessary to join the clandestine movement in the US fighting for Puerto Rican independence.

In 1980, eleven members of the *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional* (FALN) were arrested and convicted of seditious conspiracy. This was clearly a political charge, historically used against the Puerto Rican independence movement. The eleven maintained that they were political prisoners and prisoners of war. They cited UN declarations which state that Puerto Rico is a colony and that under international law, colonial subjects have the inherent right to fight for independence.

Oscar Lopez Rivera was arrested in 1981 and was also

convicted of seditious conspiracy. Although he was neither charged nor convicted of any violent acts, nor of injuring anyone, he was given a sentence of 55 years.

Oscar was placed in the notorious maximum security unit at Marion Prison in Illinois. There he was subjected to continual sensory deprivation, harassment, and twelve years of solitary confinement. May 29, 2016 marked the thirty-fifth year of his imprisonment. He is the longest held political prisoner in Latin America and Puerto Rico and one of the longest held in the United States.

Oscar’s imprisonment and the campaign for his release comes at a particular moment in Puerto Rican history. Over the past couple of months the US Supreme Court has ruled on two cases concerning Puerto Rico. In both instances, the court decided against Puerto Rico’s sovereignty. (See *Puerto Rico v. Franklin California Tax-Free Trust* and *US Supreme Court PR v. Sanchez Valle*.)

On June 20, the United States Congress also passed a draconian program to deal with Puerto Rico’s debt (owed in large part to hedge funds and banks): The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act—PROMESA, Spanish for “promise.” PROMESA basically puts Puerto Rico under federal receivership, governing all aspects of Puerto Rican life, from minimum wage laws to street repair to health care and education. There will be a board of oversight (which up to now has had no Puerto Ricans), which has the authority to “prevent the execution of legislative acts, executive orders, regulations, rules and contracts.” Thus, Congress explicitly reaffirmed Puerto Rico’s colonial status by stating it has no sovereignty over its own territory and people.

Oscar has exhausted all the legal remedies open to him in the federal system. His only option (save for waiting 15 years for yet another parole hearing) is for President Obama to grant him clemency before he leaves office. There is ample precedence for this, as former presidents Truman, Clinton, and Carter commuted the sentences of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

On reflecting on colonialism and imprisonment Oscar says:

“For me, freedom is the most important thing to be achieved by human beings who are victims of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and slavery, because they have never had the opportunity to enjoy the freedom and exercise the inalienable and most fundamental right of the goal [of] self-determination. I have never experienced real freedom, but the desire and hope to have it. Such longing and hope have been part of the energizing force that has kept me [going] forward, continuing the struggle and resistance.”

Join the activists in Haiti, every Puerto Rican member of Congress, myriad Puerto Rican public officials, and millions of Puerto Ricans and others all over the world as we demand:  
FREE OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA! ✱

**For more information on Oscar’s case:**  
**[www.boricuahumanrights.org](http://www.boricuahumanrights.org)**



A solidarity demonstration for Oscar in Haiti. The top middle sign reads: “We join the people of Puerto Rico in demanding freedom for Oscar.” Bottom middle: “Jointly with the following leaders [names of prominent supporters of Oscar added] including the many thousands of activists and the people of Puerto Rico, we demand the immediate liberation of Oscar.” Right: “The struggle for a people’s self-determination is not a crime. That is why we the people in northern Haiti are in solidarity with Oscar.”

#### **Lavalas and the Black Panthers** (continued from page 15)

Reelected in 2000  
with 90% of the vote,  
Aristide’s presidency

was again interrupted with a US-backed coup, forcing him into exile once again, this time in Africa.

The Black Panther Party turned to electoral politics after Bobby Seale was released from prison, (following our people’s court victory), running Seale for Mayor of Oakland. At this point, there was a split in the party due to political differences and orchestration by COINTELPRO. Some members had gone underground, eschewed elections, and advocated urban guerrilla warfare. Neither strategy worked.

Look at the current electoral debacles in Haiti and America. The 2015 Haitian presidential election was replete with fraud, violent voter repression, and “zombie” votes. Yet the US, European Union, United Nations and other donors that make up the “Core Group” in Haiti all endorsed the results as credible.

Now that an election committee has determined new elections must be held in October, the US has threatened to withdraw millions of dollars in campaign funding if they proceed. They spent over \$33 million on the fraudulent 2015 election, although millions never went to electoral authorities. Hillary Clinton descended on Haiti to see that corrupt Michel Martelly was installed, and her husband is leading international investors in the establishment of an industrial park designed to grossly exploit Haitian labor.

In short, if the candidates chosen by the US imperialists and their cohorts (the Core Group) backed by the UN are not installed as planned, they’ll take their marbles and go home.

Here in the US, we’re faced with fraudulent elections as well, but they’re accomplished in a much more subtle and sophisticated (less violent) way. This government and its people are at the mercy of the ruling-class donors and their controlled corporate media. Candidates are chosen and nominees *selected* for their loyalty to Wall Street and the ruling class multibillionaires—not

for their loyalty to the masses of people. In fact, there’s no such thing as a *people’s candidate* in America, one who serves the best interests of the people and not Wall Street. Third party candidates can’t even get on the stage.

In Haiti, the people’s candidate, Dr. Maryse Narcisse, is from *Fanmi Lavalas* and was the fourth runner up in the 2015 fraudulent election. She probably would have been number one, given the massive support she received.

As BPP Field Marshall George L. Jackson noted, “With all the factors of control over the electoral process in the hands of the minority ruling class, the people’s party can always be made to seem isolated, unimportant, even extraneous.”

The people’s choice in Haiti, Jean Bertrand Aristide, leader of the people’s movement (*people’s party*), *Fanmi Lavalas*, was quashed because he served the people, not the ruling elites.

So the question remains for Haitians and Americans: How do we implement real change if we cannot do it through the ballot box?

The fiftieth anniversary of the BPP in this presidential campaign year, coinciding with the upcoming rerun election in Haiti, puts voting on the front burner in 2016. In contemplating the above question, also consider the following words by the freedom fighter and revolutionary author, Frantz Fanon:

“Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn’t fit in with the core belief.” (*Black Skin, White Masks*)

“Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity.” (*The Wretched of the Earth*)

*All power to the people! ❖*



# **FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS**



## **FREEDOM FIGHTERS USA:**

fighters for peace, justice, freedom, particularly the struggle against recognized cruel and oppressive conditions, governments inhuman policies and actions.

*EMORY / 2016*