

# haiti solidarity

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no more occupation of haiti



the

FLOOD

toward

LIBERTY

can **NOT** be  
extinguished

art by nia

# haiti solidarity

The newsletter of Haiti Action Committee.

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## Evolution of a Coup

by Nia Imara

The damages and suffering accrued by the Haitian people over more than two centuries of intermittent occupation, foreign interference, and dictatorship are immeasurable. The present occupation has multiplied and strengthened the old transgressions—and it has given rise to new structures of exploitation all its own.

Ten years ago, when the United States aided in the coup d'état and kidnapping of President Aristide, it launched an offensive that has steadily reversed the progress which was being made by the democratically elected Lavalas government. The following timeline is intended to document some of the milestones of the ten-year-old occupation, with special attention being paid to events that illuminate the United States' and the United Nations' tendency to push forth their coup agenda and undercut the rights of the Haitian people. My aim is for this timeline to be comprehensive—illustrative of how the occupation has evolved and emboldened over the years—while understanding that it cannot be exhaustive or inclusive of all the wrongs committed against Haiti.

### 2000 – 2004

NOVEMBER 2000 – President Aristide is elected into office by a tremendous majority (90 percent of the vote) for the second time. Lavalas took 75 percent of vote in both local and national elections.

2003 – USAID and the International Republican Institute (organizations both funded by the US government) spend

millions of dollars to create and enable opposition groups, called the “Convergence.” The US funds antigovernment radio stations and propaganda, and the Bush administration blocks \$146 million in loans to Haiti from the Inter-American Development Bank.

APRIL 7, 2003 – Bicentennial of Toussaint Louverture’s death. President Aristide publically announces that France owes Haiti \$21 billion in restitution. October 12 of same year, Aristide holds a four-day conference to further discuss Haiti’s restitution demands.

FEBRUARY 7, 2004 – At least one million Haitians march in Port-au-Prince in support of Aristide completing his full five-year term.

FEBRUARY 29, 2004 – US soldiers kidnap Jean-Bertrand and Mildred Aristide at their home. Luis Moreno of the American Embassy leads the kidnapping. The Aristides are first flown to Bangui, Central African Republic. Meanwhile, the US media continuously repeats the lie that Aristide left voluntarily. Two weeks later, a group that includes Representative Maxine Waters goes to CAR to get the Aristides and take them to Jamaica. The Jamaican government, however, is pressured by Washington, and so the Aristides ultimately go to South Africa, where they spend the next seven years in exile.

MARCH 2004 – While still living in the US, coup-supporter Gerard Latortue is installed as Prime Minister of Haiti. Over the next couple of years, his illegitimate government—sanctioned by the US, French, and Canadian governments—presides over the killing and imprisoning of thousands of Lavalas supporters.

APRIL 30, 2004 – United Nations Resolution 1542 establishes the UN Stabilization Mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH) bringing together over 9,000 military and police personnel from more than forty countries under the leadership of Brazil and Canada. The number has grown to over 11,000 MINUSTAH troops.

JUNE 2004 – Yvon Neptune, Prime Minister in Aristide's administration, is incarcerated under false charges. Neptune is held without trial for over two years with no proof he committed a crime. He is provisionally released in 2006, as are other defendants in the La Scierie case.

OCTOBER 13, 2004 – Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a longtime human rights advocate, is arrested while feeding children at his church, Sainte Claire Catholic Church in Port-au-Prince.

NOVEMBER 29, 2004 – After nearly seven weeks in prison, Father Gerry is released.

DECEMBER 2004 – Around sixty prisoners at the National Penitentiary are killed when inmates break out of their cells and assemble to protest terrible conditions and illegal confinement. As many as fifteen prisoners are executed by masked police; others are later shot in their cells.

## 2005

This year is marked by violent attacks against Lavalas activists and supporters of Aristide. Haitian grassroots groups regularly protest the occupation in large demonstrations, which are often attacked by MINUSTAH and Haitian paramilitary troops. Thousands are illegally incarcerated, and many go into hiding.

JULY 6, 2005 – UN soldiers attack Cite Soleil, a stronghold of Lavalas support. More than 350 MINUSTAH troops raid Cite Soleil and kill at least twenty-six people.

JULY 21, 2005 – Father Gerard Jean-Juste (“Father Gerry”) is arrested at the funeral of Jacques Roche—a Haitian journalist who was kidnapped and assassinated—and is falsely blamed for having taken part in the murder.

AUGUST 12, 2005 – Twenty-nine Members of Congress, including Representative Maxine Waters, send a letter to

President George Bush, urging him to aid in Father Gerry's release from prison.

DECEMBER 2005 – Dr. Paul Farmer examines Father Gerry in prison and diagnoses him with leukemia. Farmer advises that Father Gerry is in urgent need of proper medical care in the US, and Father Gerry is provisionally released in early 2006.

## 2006

FEBRUARY 2006 – Presidential election of René Préval. The MINUSTAH-Latortue regime does not allow polling places in Lavalas strongholds such as Cite Soleil; proponents of the coup government burn voting ballots and then refuse to announce the results of the elections. But after the people hold peaceful demonstrations in which they demand their voices be heard, it is announced that Préval won the election with 51 percent of the vote.

MAY 2006 – During inauguration ceremonies for President-elect Préval, MINUSTAH troops open fire on prisoners demonstrating inside the National Penitentiary. They kill at least ten people.

AUGUST AND OCTOBER 2006 – Beginning on March 1, 2004, the day after Aristide was kidnapped, occupation forces began illegally detaining what would be thousands of political prisoners. Among them was Ronald Dauphin, a grassroots activist and supporter of Aristide. In August 2006, Amnesty International urges the Haitian government to promptly bring to trial or else release all political prisoners, condemning the lengthy detention of Aristide supporters as politically motivated. In October 2006, the National Lawyers Guild urges Haiti's government to release the remaining political prisoners.

DECEMBER 22, 2006 – UN troops massacre thirty people in Cite Soleil.

## 2007

JANUARY 24, 2007 – MINUSTAH raids Cite Soleil in the middle of the night. Two little girls, Stephanie and Alexandra Lubin, are shot and killed in their sleep. The following morning, at least 5,000 people in Cite Soleil demonstrate against the murders.

FEBRUARY 7, 2007 – Massive demonstrations of more than one hundred thousand people across Haiti calling for end of occupation.

*(continued on page 4)*

## **Evolution of a Coup** *(continued from page 3)*

AUGUST 12, 2007 – Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, human rights advocate, leader in the Lavalas movement, and founder of the September Thirtieth Foundation, is kidnapped. His disappearing occurred only days after he led a protest against the US/UN occupation of Haiti in front of MINUSTAH headquarters in Port-au-Prince.

AUGUST 2007 – One of Haiti's transportation unions leads a general strike to protest the economic devastation—including high cost of living, layoffs, and privatization—produced by the occupation.

### **2008**

FEBRUARY 2008 – People (especially in extremely impoverished communities like Cite Soleil) have resorted to eating “mud cookies” to stave off starvation.

FEBRUARY 29, 2008 – Tens of thousands hold demonstrations in demand of Aristide's return.

APRIL 2008 – “Food riots” are held all over Haiti—and worldwide—over the high cost of food and living. In Haiti, the problem of poverty and expensive food can be traced to over thirty years ago, when the US flooded Haiti with cheap, subsidized rice. Haitian farmers could not compete, and local production decreased dramatically. By 2008, Haiti was the third largest importer in the world of so-called “Miami rice.”

AUGUST 2008 – SOPUDEP, a school that opened in 2002 to serve the poorest children of Pétion-Ville, is threatened. The mayor of Pétion-Ville threatens to forcibly evict the SOPUDEP school from their location, a property that formally belonged to an enforcer of the Duvalier dictatorship.

### **2009**

FEBRUARY 6, 2009 – Hillary Clinton meets with Préval in Haiti and uses the State Department's weight to influence upcoming Senatorial elections. By the following day, all fourteen Lavalas candidates are banned from running in the elections.

APRIL 16, 2009 – Hillary Clinton visits a sweatshop run by Andy Apaid, a supporter of the coup and the leader of Group of 184.

APRIL 19, 2009 – After unsuccessfully trying several times to change the ruling banning them from running can-

didates, Lavalas boycotts the elections, and less than five percent of the electorate turned out to vote.

MAY 27, 2009 – Father Gerry dies.

MAY 2009 – Bill Clinton is named by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as special UN envoy to Haiti.

JUNE 18, 2009 – UN troops are caught on film shooting into a crowd on the day of Father Gerry's funeral.

JUNE 21, 2009 – Lavalas boycotts runoff Senatorial elections.

NOVEMBER 2009 – The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) gives in to internal pressure and embarrassment from abroad to allow Lavalas to participate in parliamentary elections in 2010. Three days later, they retract their decision. Lavalas is still banned.

### **2010**

JANUARY 12, 2010 – Earthquake. More than 250,000 and perhaps more than 300,000 people are killed and millions more are left homeless, orphaned, or wounded. The death and devastation are greatly exacerbated due to Haiti's poor infrastructure, which was weakened by years of occupation and, before that, decades of dictatorship and exploitation.

JANUARY 2010 – President Obama appoints Bush and Clinton, both of whom had harmful foreign policies toward Haiti during their presidencies, as heads of United States' relief effort in Haiti.

FEBRUARY 2010 – Paul Vallas, who was previously hired to rebuild education in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, meets with officials of the Inter-American Development Bank. They ask him to lead the effort to redesign Haiti's public education system, and he ultimately accepts. The state in which Vallas left the New Orleans, as well as the Chicago and Philadelphia public school systems, left much to be desired for the teachers, families, and students of those cities, to say nothing of the arrogance of sidestepping the right of Haitian teachers, families, and students to shape their own educational system.

OCTOBER 2010 – MINUSTAH troops start a cholera epidemic in Haiti. Since October 2010, after UN troops dumped human waste into a tributary of the Artibonite River—Haiti's main water supply—more than 7,600 Haitians have died and more than half a million have become sick. Although Haitians have held many demonstrations to demand justice, the UN has yet to be held accountable.

NOVEMBER 28, 2010 – Unconstitutional, undemocratic presidential and parliamentary elections are held. Although the CEP has banned Lavalas and thirteen other political parties from participating, the Obama administration spends \$14.5 million on the elections, funneled through USAID. The candidates spend millions of US dollars promoting themselves, while hundreds of thousands of Haitians remained homeless and traumatized ten months after the earthquake.

## 2011

JANUARY 16, 2011 – Baby-Doc Duvalier, former dictator of Haiti who is responsible for the murder of thousands of Haitians, returns to Haiti with impunity.

MARCH 18, 2011 – After seven years of exile in South Africa, the Aristide family returns to Haiti. This victory is in the face of the White House's determination to prevent it: President Obama telephoned South African President Jacob Zuma to persuade him to prevent Aristide from leaving Africa and coming back to Haiti.

MARCH 20, 2011 – Runoff elections in which less than 25 percent of the electorate participate in fraudulent, undemocratic process.

APRIL 4, 2011 – The Government of Haiti announces that Michel Martelly—a Duvalierist who is currently facilitating the process of reverting Haiti to a dictatorship—is selected as the next President of Haiti.

JUNE 2011 – Martelly approves new illegal taxes on money transfers to Haiti and on international phone calls, purportedly to be directed toward a National Education Fund (FNE).

JULY 2011 – Workers at the State University Hospital of Haiti go on strike. Unsanitary and unsafe conditions make it impossible for doctors and nurses to provide care for their patients.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2011 – Forced to close after the coup, the University of the Aristide Foundation (UNIFA) reopens to a class of 126 Haitian medical students. As of today, the number has grown to more than 600 medical students and over 200 nursing students.

OCTOBER 2011 – As the nation continued to deal with its trauma in the year following the earthquake, teachers willingly worked without pay. But in October 2011, many months after Martelly came to power, and after he initiated the FNE, teachers went on strike to demand five months of back pay owed by the government.

## 2012 – 2014

APRIL 2012 – Dominican Republican journalist Nuria Piera breaks the story that during and after the 2010 elections, Michel Martelly allegedly accepted \$2.6 million in bribes to guarantee contracts for a Dominican construction company.

JUNE 2012 – Martelly announces new, illegal amendments to the democratic Constitution of 1987. The amendments would undercut democratic participation and bring back many of the oppressive laws of the Duvalier era, while concentrating the power of the president.

OCTOBER 22, 2012 – A land-grab is consolidated. Hillary and Bill Clinton attend the opening of the Caracol industrial park in northern Haiti. As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton negotiated a deal in which the Government of Haiti donated the land, free of charge, to the South Korean clothing manufacturer Sae-A. The US contributed at least \$124 million to the project.

NOVEMBER 2012 – Teachers strike for fair wages and improved conditions for their students. Four months later, in March 2013, they hold strikes again for the same demands as well as for back pay.

MARCH 8, 2013 – Aristide is summoned to court to be questioned in the thirteen-year-old murder investigation of Jean Dominique, journalist and critic of the US government's interference in Haitian politics. Knowing that this summons was part of the ongoing assault against Haiti's popular democratic movement and its principal leader, tens of thousands of people gathered at the Palace of Justice in Port-au-Prince, in support of Aristide.

JANUARY 17, 2014 – Myrlande Liberis-Pavert is threatened with an indictment in the case of assassinated journalist Jean Dominique. As with Aristide, this attack is a personal defamation of a Lavalas leader and an affront to the Lavalas movement.

JANUARY 22, 2014 – Haitian teachers go on indefinite strike for back pay from the government.

FEBRUARY 6, 2014 – Martelly meets in person with Obama, for the first time, at the White House. He also meets with Secretary of State John Kerry and members of the Congressional Black Caucus. The mainstream US media's reporting on these meetings is insubstantial, containing little analysis and less context. All in all, this is one of the latest examples of how entrenched the occupation has become and how its leading representatives appear to feel as entitled as ever. ❁



# Haiti/Honduras Same System, Different Players\*

article & photos by Charlie Hinton

**F**or those of us involved with Haiti, it sometimes seems like a lonesome struggle of Haiti isolated against the world, ever since the war for independence ended in 1804. Then the enslaved Africans in rebellion had to defeat not only the army of Napoleon, but also English and Spanish forces to free themselves. No world government would recognize the newly formed nation, and in 1826 France forced Haiti to start paying 90 million gold francs (more than \$21 billion in today's currency) in "reparations" to their former slave masters. Haiti did not finish paying until 1947, which has made Haiti "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere." Haiti also opened its doors to slaves fleeing from the United States, a real threat to the US economy, and the United States didn't recognize Haiti until 1862.

**N**ow countries from all over the world, from China, Nepal, and the Philippines, to countries in the Americas that might be considered "friends," like Chile, Bolivia, and Brazil participate in the United Nations MINUSTAH army that has occupied Haiti since the February 29, 2004 coup that overthrew president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, elected with over 90 percent of the vote in 2000.

Haiti has a unique history because it is an African country in the Americas, plus it is Kreyol/French speaking. In other regards, however, Haiti is not that unique, especially in relationship to the United States. Since the days of the Monroe Doctrine, the US has considered all of Latin America its exclusive "backyard." It has maintained a regionally consistent imperial policy to guarantee subservient governments and business arrangements that submit fully to the discipline of global financial markets at the expense of democracy and human rights.

The recent history of Honduras, in particular, parallels that of Haiti. In Haiti, after a grassroots movement overthrew the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, this Lavalas ("flood" in Kreyol) movement elected Aristide as president in 1990, only to see him overthrown in 1991. Elected again in 2000, President Aristide was overthrown in 2004, when US armed personnel kidnapped him and his family and flew them to the Central African Republic into forced exile. During Haiti's ten years of democracy, Lavalas administrations built more schools than had been built in the country's entire previous history, and provided uniforms, books and lunches to students who couldn't afford them. They also built parks, housing, health care centers, and the Aristide

University Medical School, among other accomplishments. In its place, an 8,600 strong (at its height 13,300) UN MINUSTAH army and police force has occupied Haiti ever since.

In Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, a wealthy landowner representing the traditional Liberal Party, became president in 2006. Zelaya evolved his thinking, however, to implement policies that supported poor, landless, and working class people and sought measures for environmental protection against mining companies and agribusiness. He pushed for Honduras to join ALBA, the regional cooperation alliance founded by Hugo Chavez. Most importantly, Zelaya proposed a process to rewrite Honduras' deeply undemocratic 1982 constitution, enacted immediately after the lifting of ten years of military rule. As a result, Honduran military forces kidnapped Zelaya and flew him into forced exile in Costa Rica on June 28, 2009.

In 1984, Edward Herman and Frank Brodhead wrote a book called *Demonstration Elections*, describing the template through which the US government uses elections as a tool of imperial control. Rather than serve the interests of the people voting in the election, their purpose is to create the illusion of democracy—to provide a civilian face to an occupation and "demonstrate" to the outside world, especially the US public, that the people under attack really support the "elected" puppet government, that the country is stable and worthy of diplomatic recognition and, in particular, foreign investment. Demonstration elections act as a camouflage for the ongoing efforts to defeat popular and revolutionary movements that threaten US hegemony.



**LIBRE presidential candidate Xiomara Castro de Zelaya on TV 5 days after the election explaining how the vote counting fraud took place and demanding a recount.**

In Haiti a series of “demonstration elections” have taken place since 2004 in which the Fanmi Lavalas Party founded by Aristide has been prohibited from participating, because it is clear they would win. The politically sophisticated Haitian majority has managed to have an influence however. In 2006, they took over the streets to make sure the candidate they had voted for, René Préval – a former member of the Lavalas movement and president from 1995 to 2000, would be declared the winner – only to be betrayed by him and the promises he had made to win their votes. In 2011, they massively boycotted the “elections” that made US favorite Michel Martelly president, denying him any credibility to the huge majority of Haitians.

Honduras held a demonstration election in 2009 that brought to power Pepe Lobo of the reactionary Nationalist Party. Infuriated by a history of repression, the coup and the illegitimate elections that followed, massive numbers of Hondurans protested, demonstrating throughout the country during the months following the removal of Zelaya. The National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP) emerged out of these street demonstrations and became a nationwide grassroots movement that included women, youth, workers and labor unions, LGBTs, teachers, students, campesino (rural farmworker) groups, and indigenous and Afro-descendant people.

In 2011, the FNRP voted to create a political party to participate in elections and formed the LIBRE Party. The word LIBRE means “free” in Spanish, but also comes from the full party name of LIBertad (Liberty) and REfundación (the refounding of the country based on a new constitution). LIBRE chose as its presidential candidate Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, former president Zelaya’s wife, who had stayed behind after the coup and helped lead the protest movement. Zelaya was allowed to return to the country in May, 2011 in exchange for the Organization of American States recogni-

tion of the Lobo presidency.

The Honduran elections of November 2013 took place in an environment of repression and intimidation of LIBRE candidates and their supporters, with at least eighteen candidates and campaign workers killed during the campaign. Nevertheless a record turnout of enthusiastic voters participated because of LIBRE and another new party, the Anti-Corruption Party. Unfortunately the elections concluded with old-fashioned results—they were stolen by fraud. Many international election observers praised the transparency of the elections, but behind the scenes the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) transmitted vote totals that did not match the tally sheets given to the party representatives at every polling center at the close of voting. LIBRE’s review of the tally sheets indicated Xiomara Castro won, but the official results announced the winner as Juan Orlando Hernandez, the leader of the National Party. The TSE refused to review the tally sheets, the physical evidence of the fraud. Also the National Party perpetrated the fraud by buying the table monitoring credentials of several smaller parties, as well as the votes of many poor people who would otherwise have voted for LIBRE.

LIBRE didn’t have representation on the Electoral Tribunal, which was controlled by the National Party. As president of the Honduran Congress, Hernandez had appointed the head of the Electoral Tribunal, the chief prosecutor whose job it is to prosecute fraud, and the head of the Supreme Court which refused LIBRE’s petition to annul the elections.

Honduras doesn’t have an occupation army per se, but it is the site of the enormous US-built Soto Cano (formerly Palmerola) air base used as a staging ground for the contra war against Nicaragua in the 1980s, and several smaller US bases built as part of the so-called War on Drugs. In addition, Hernandez has led the creation of a new 5,000-officer Military Police, with the first thousand funded and on the ground. So Hondurans face enormous military and police repression.

In a lame duck session of the outgoing Honduran Congress, controlled by the National Party, in January 2014, the Deputies elevated the Military Police to make it a constitutionally authorized permanent force, which can only be disbanded by changing the constitution with a super majority and ratifying the vote in the following congress. This is just one example of how this lame duck session institutionalized reactionary policies prior to LIBRE, with thirty-six deputies, entering the new Congress. Other examples include giving 87 new contracts to private companies; consolidating the entirety of the Honduran government into seven governmental agencies, which limits the balance of power; and

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## Haiti/Honduras

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severely limiting freedom of speech by making it illegal for journalists to whistle blow on corruption or abuse of power by Honduran officials.

Of course, what this all boils down to is money and the drive to privatize the world through export driven, cut government neoliberal economic policies. Jean-Claude Duvalier was allowed to succeed his father, Papa Doc, without elections in exchange for Haiti opening its doors to US corporate-owned sweatshops, with one result being the manufacture of baseballs moving to Port-au-Prince. The Clinton Foundation and the US State Department helped fund the Caracol industrial park/sweatshop development in Haiti's north in 2012 as a response to the 2010 earthquake, although that region was unaffected by the quake. The Clinton Bush earthquake fund invested \$2 million in the new luxury Oasis Hotel so foreign travelers will have an "oasis" from the misery faced by the majority of Haitians, as hundreds of thousands still live in post-quake tent cities. Hundreds of millions of dollars donated for earthquake relief still sit in banks, unspent.

Meanwhile, Royal Caribbean has, as they market it, a "private paradise in Haiti. This exclusive destination offers pristine beaches, breathtaking scenery and spectacular water activities... The inviting beach, coral reefs and exciting amenities provide a perfect place to relax and have fun."

Tiny Honduras is one of the largest clothing manufacturing countries in the world and has a special labor code for its export industrial zones, with fewer protections inside than for workers outside the zones. Its "Model Cities" proposals would create completely privatized cities with all services—as well as the police and the legal systems—privately owned. Ruling elites and international corporations are grabbing land for biofuel production, tourism, dams, and the mining of minerals. Massive resistance from those trying to protect their lands, livelihoods, and ways of life has resulted in widespread repression and violence.

Haitians and Hondurans now both find themselves caught in a globalized neoliberal economic trap enforced by the presence of a military occupation in Haiti and a number of US bases in Honduras. Both are governed by fraudulently selected presidents who are selling their patrimonies to the highest bidder. In Haiti the most popular political party is no longer allowed to even participate in elections.

Hondurans voted in record numbers last November only to be robbed of their victory, as the international mainstream media legitimizes the fraudulent electoral process in both countries. The US ambassador, only two hours after the polls closed and with barely a quarter of the votes counted, called for the results to be recognized. She indicated that



**A demonstrator in San Pedro Sula protests the election results. His t-shirt reads "I'm also indignant. Twitter hashtag: I didn't vote for JOH [Juan Orlando Hernandez]".**

legal mechanisms existed to challenge the count, a totally unrealistic statement considering that the National Party controlled all relevant governmental institutions. By comparison, the US has still not recognized the Maduro government in Venezuela that clearly won the popular vote in April 2013.

Given how recent history has unfolded in Haiti, one can only suppose that the more popular LIBRE and the Anti-Corruption Party become, the more they will be suppressed. Nevertheless, both countries have strong and dynamic grassroots movements that have a lot of fight in them. They have much to teach us and deserve our support.

\* This subtitle comes from a letter to the author from Clyde Jackson, a prisoner in the Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Unit/SHU/solitary confinement. He enjoys political dialogue and would appreciate correspondence: Clyde Jackson C-33559, D2/B-107 SHU, PO Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95532. ❁

# International Days in Solidarity with the Haitian People:

February 23 – March 8, 2014

*10 years since the 2004 Coup ... 210 years since Haiti's Revolution*

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*Haiti Action Committee sent the following letter earlier in February.*

**Dear Friend,** we are writing to you, knowing your longstanding support for the cause of the Haitian people. As you know, we are approaching the tenth anniversary of the February 29, 2004 coup d'état, engineered by the US, France, and Canada, which has left a brutal legacy of pain and destruction. This is an occasion that cries out to be seized upon by all who oppose the coup and support the popular movement.

In Oakland, the Haiti Action Committee is marking the coup, and the ten years of repressive coup regimes that have followed it, with a celebration of the 210th year of the heroic 1804 Haitian Revolution. The event is happening on March 1 at Humanist Hall. Other cities are organizing their own events.

**We are writing to see if you would consider holding a Haiti support activity in your area.**

The 2014 International Days in Solidarity with the Haitian People will take place February 23 through March 8 (International Women's Day).

**It could be a demonstration, vigil, march, public meeting, festival, film showing, rally, candle-light gathering, teach-in, musical or artistic event** to commemorate the Haitian Revolution and protest the continuation of the 2004 coup. We can supply films or materials if needed.

**The actions of US-imposed President Martelly and his ally Jean-Claude Duvalier clearly demonstrate what the 2004 coup was all about.** The Haitian people are outraged by the step-by-step return of Duvalierism and its embrace by the fraudulently elected Martelly government—which threatens to bring back the hated military—which organizes sweeps of market women and midnight raids on the camps of earthquake survivors—which continues its repressive vendetta against members of the majority Lavalas movement, including a threatened indictment of longtime Lavalas leader and former Senator, Myrlande Liberis-Pavert on trumped-up charges.

**We support the Haitian people's demand that Haiti's sovereignty be respected and that the 2004 coup must be reversed.** That would mean:

- Free and fair elections in which all parties can run candidates.
- Putting an end to the repression and the US/UN military occupation.
- Rebuilding Haiti the way the Haitian 99 percent want it built. Paying a living wage in the factories instead of sweatshop wages... Restoring farming self-sufficiency so Haiti can feed itself again ... Real Haitian control of mineral resources and aid funds... Schools, housing and health care for the people. ✱

Monument to Haitian hero Toussaint L'Ouverture in  
Parque de la Fraternidad, Havana



article & photos by  
Marilyn Langlois

# Thank you, Cuba!

It's time to show some appreciation and support for the people of two neighboring Caribbean islands. January 1, 2014 was the 210th and 55th anniversary of two major revolutions—one in Haiti and the other in Cuba—that can help us wake up and reclaim our humanity.

On this day in 1804, enslaved people of African descent accomplished the unthinkable after rising up to break the chains of slavery and colonialism, and gave birth to the Republic of Haiti, the first free republic in the Western Hemisphere. It was a bold beginning on the journey towards true liberation of the human spirit. Shocked by this unprecedented proclamation of universal human dignity, the pervasive greed of superpowers in North America and Europe kicked into high gear and managed to put the brakes on the next phase of the Haitian Revolution, the move towards economic equality. Wealthy Hai-

tian elites were swiftly co-opted by big capital and remain instruments of foreign oppression to this day, in spite of successive movements by the grassroots over the last two centuries to reclaim and share their country's resources.

Most recently, the emergence of the Lavalas movement in the late 1980s under the leadership of Jean-Bertrand Aristide brought the beginnings of social renewal welcomed enthusiastically by Haiti's poor majority. After just a few years of being elected to power, the Lavalas government made significant advances in education, housing, health care and economic justice, challenging the hegemony of the superrich in order to uplift the destitute. The movement was dealt a major blow, however, ten years ago with the February 29, 2004 coup d'état facilitated by the US, France, and Canada, from which it is still struggling to recover, amid growing US-backed repression that has thwarted

democratic processes and reintroduced sweatshop conditions.

During three visits to Haiti since the 2004 coup, I met with and listened to numerous groups representing poor neighborhoods, women, peasants, former political prisoners, low-wage workers and the unemployed, who engage in ongoing discussions on how to achieve their goals. I heard a strong and clear message about what Haitians want for everyone:

Decent living conditions, health care, education at all levels, meaningful work with fair wages, art and culture, participation in decisions that affect their lives, respect for their sovereignty, freedom for political prisoners (Lavalas leaders unjustly targeted since the 2004 coup), an end to foreign military occupation (by UN troops), and international solidarity.

Isn't that what people want everywhere? It's what I hear consistently



**Left: Discussion group and street scene on the Paseo de Martí, Havana. Right: Discussion group at the Aristide Foundation for Democracy in Port-au-Prince**

from my neighbors here at home and residents of countries all over the world. I heard it again in Cuba, Haiti's neighbor and partner in promoting healthcare.

On a recent sister-city visit from Richmond, California, to Cuba, people I met throughout the country echoed their commitment to these same goals for everyone:

Decent living conditions, health care, education at all levels, meaningful work with fair wages, art and culture, participation in decisions that affect their lives, respect for their sovereignty, freedom for political prisoners (the Cuban 5, three of whom remain unjustly incarcerated in the US), an end to foreign military occupation (by the US in Guantanamo), and international solidarity.

These are key values of the Cuban Revolution, now celebrating its 55th anniversary. On January 1, 1959, Cubans succeeded in moving beyond the end of slavery and colonialism, and liberated their country from the psychological chains of economic imperialism. The Cuban Revolution accomplished the unthinkable, successfully challenging the injustices of capitalist exploitation and claiming their land and resources for the benefit of all Cubans. Uplifting the poor and ensuring a dignified life for everyone emerged as guiding prin-

ciples, replacing the entrenched power of the superrich and transnational corporations.

People I met throughout Cuba embrace the changes brought by the revolution in terms of social uplift, economic redistribution, and opportunities for political participation. While some inequities persist, they don't want to lose these hard won gains. Building on the pro-people commitment of the post-revolution state, how to actually make the state work in everyone's best interest is open to vigorous debate. As the Mayor of Regla, Richmond's sister city, told us: "We continually evaluate and assess our social programs. We face many problems and we address them with participation from all the people."

Though material possessions in Cuba remain sparse due to the US blockade, there's a sense of everyone being in the struggle together with dignity and mutual respect. I enjoyed seeing people in well-kept public spaces on a Saturday, laughing, talking, making music, dancing, teaching children how to paint, doing sports, learning from each other, and genuinely appreciating each other's company.

By engaging in continual evaluation and policy adjustments with broad input, Cuba's revolutionary social, economic, and political model has perse-

vered since 1959 in spite of the 1990 fall of the Soviet Union, its major economic partner, and in spite of ongoing overt economic warfare and covert sabotage perpetrated against Cuba by the US.

The biggest problems facing Cuba and Haiti today are rooted in the power circles of Washington DC and Wall Street. Americans who care about and want to support the people of Haiti and Cuba need to start by cleaning up our own house. We need to overhaul US policies aimed at allowing certain individuals to do whatever it takes to amass huge amounts of personal wealth, which inevitably results in extreme income disparities in both the US and elsewhere, and all the social ills that such inequality breeds. In shifting US economic priorities, the goal is not to harm anyone, but simply to insist that the superrich do a better job of sharing the earth's resources equitably with their brothers and sisters in the human family. That way, everyone does well.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described his vision of the American dream as "A land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few." The US has a long way to go before it can achieve this dream. The people of Haiti and Cuba can lead us in getting there, if we would only listen to them. ❄

# We Stand With Our Sister

## *Stop the Attacks on Myrlande Liberis-Pavert and the Lavalas Movement*

A Statement from Haiti Action Committee

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On Friday, January 17, it was reported by news agencies that a Haitian judge investigating the assassination of Jean Dominique, a crusading Haitian journalist who was killed in 2000, recommended the indictment of former Senator Myrlande Liberis-Pavert, a founder and former director of the Aristide Foundation for Democracy, along with eight others.

No legal documents to sustain these charges have been made public. From press accounts it appears that the only “evidence” in the case is the testimony of a single informant, a former member of Haiti’s security forces who was convicted on drug trafficking charges in the United States in 2005.

By contrast, Myrlande Liberis-Pavert, who maintains her innocence, is one of the most beloved leaders of the Lavalas movement, someone who has fought for a democratic Haiti, and for the rights of Haitian women and children, since she was a teenager. We believe the attempt to link her in any way with the murder of Jean Dominique, a pro-democracy journalist who was a vocal critic of both the Haitian elite and the U.S. role in Haiti, is defamation, pure and simple. The attack on her is an attack on the grassroots movement in Haiti. We denounce it in the strongest possible terms.

Ms. Liberis-Pavert has dedicated her life to the poor of Haiti. Her father was murdered by the Tonton Macoutes, the dreaded paramilitary death squads of the dictator, Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier. As a teenager, she was an active member of the congregation at St. Jean Bosco, a center of Haiti’s struggle to end decades of rule by the Duvaliers and the Haitian military. She was a founding member of SAJ (Solidarite An Jen) the youth movement that helped lead the national student strike which finally overthrew Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier in 1986.

Myrlande worked closely with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from 1994 to 2004 at the palace, and then as the administrator of the Aristide Foundation for Democracy. An educator throughout her entire adult life, she founded dozens of schools, administered several literacy campaigns, and helped open community

stores that benefited hundreds of thousands of people throughout Haiti. She has been a leading advocate for the rights of women and for women’s education and economic empowerment. Ms. Liberis-Pavert was elected to the Senate in 2000, representing Port-au-Prince on the Fanmi Lavalas ticket. The target of numerous death threats, she was forced into exile during the violent 2004 coup that overthrew the democratically elected Aristide government.

The public defamation of Ms. Liberis-Pavert continues a pattern of slander and attack aimed at those associated with Fanmi Lavalas. The goal is to undermine Fanmi Lavalas, the most popular political party in Haiti, as the country approaches new legislative elections and to continue to tarnish the image of President Aristide himself.

Since Aristide’s return, he has led the reopening of the University of the Aristide Foundation (UNIFA). On September 26, 2011 the Medical School once again opened its doors—this time to a new class of 126 future Haitian doctors. Today, there are over 600 medical students, more than 200 nursing students and a new group of law students. And this is just the beginning of a determined initiative to improve health care for all Haitians, which has become even more urgent now with a cholera epidemic still sweeping the country.

The Haitian government of Michel Martelly came to power after a staged “election” in which Fanmi Lavalas was banned from participation. Martelly has embraced Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, the brutal former dictator, who lives freely in Haiti and recently occupied a place of honor at the January 1st 2014 Haitian Independence Day celebrations. Human rights organizations estimate that the Duvaliers—“Papa Doc” and “Baby Doc”—ordered the deaths of 20,000 to 30,000 Haitian citizens during their 29-year rule. While grassroots leaders and activists are targeted, “Baby Doc” is allowed free rein in the country he terrorized for so many years.

Myrlande Liberis-Pavert is our sister. We call on the Haitian government to end this inquisition against her and the Lavalas movement. ❄