

The newsletter of Haiti Action Committee.

haiti solidarity



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VIV CIT PÈP
AYISYEN AN!
VIV CIT PÈP LA!

ART BY NIK

haiti solidarity

The newsletter of Haiti Action Committee.

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* The Kreyol title translates as, "Long Live the Haitian People's Struggle! Long Live the People's Struggle!"

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editorial: elections in haiti

On July 15, on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, thousands of people filled the Aristide Foundation For Democracy to overflowing to commemorate former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's sixty-second birthday. The ceremony honored the victims of the US-orchestrated coups in 1991 and 2004 that had ruptured Haiti's first democratically elected government and then smashed the second Aristide presidency, removing thousands of elected officials from their posts, killing, imprisoning, and exiling so many more, and setting up an ongoing military occupation by the United Nations. Speakers at the Foundation remembered those who lost their lives or their loved ones in the earthquake of 2010, whose victims in the tens of thousands are still living under tents throughout the city, where so little has been done to support them in spite of the billions collected for aid and relief. They highlighted the plight of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, where a campaign of ethnic cleansing and racial terror has already forced more than 30,000 Haitians to flee. And they demanded restitution for the 60,000 residents of downtown Port-au-Prince whose homes were demolished last year as the current Haitian government pursues its own cruel form of US-financed development and gentrification.

The gatherings at the Foundation have always been exercises in popular democracy—a chance for Haitians to discuss the issues of the day and to engage in dialogue about what is happening in their society. Now they are also a chance for people to talk directly with candidates from *Fanmi Lavalas*, the party of President Aristide, which is participating in elections in Haiti for the first time in fifteen years.

Lavalas' presence on the electoral scene is, in and of itself, a remarkable feat. The intent of the two coups against President Aristide was to destroy *Lavalas*, the movement that has represented Haiti's poor since the late 1980s. While President Aristide was in exile in South Africa from 2004 to 2011, US-backed Haitian regimes carried out a classic counterinsurgency strategy designed to finish the job that the coup had started. UN forces and Haitian police violently attacked the *Lavalas* popular base in Cite Soleil and other communities, killing many. Thousands of political prisoners were arrested and held for years with no charges in horrendous conditions. Money was spread to divide and weaken the *Lavalas* infrastructure. Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, a human rights advocate, *Lavalas* leader, and candidate for Senate, was kidnapped and disappeared in 2007. Banned from political participation in the sham elections of 2011, bereft of the resources available to other political parties in Haiti,

Lavalas was targeted for marginalization. Yet today in Haiti, it is widely acknowledged that in a “free and fair election,” the *Lavalas* candidate, Dr. Maryse Narcisse, would win the presidency.

Dr. Narcisse, a medical doctor and longtime *Lavalas* militant, was setting up health clinics in rural communities. At the time of the 1991 coup, like many other Aristide supporters, she went into the streets to protest the military and then was 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 serve as Aristide's spokesperson. If she wins, she would be the first elected woman president in Haiti's history.

At the Foundation on July 15, *Lavalas* launched the “*Adoken-Diyite*” campaign. The *Adoken* is a five-gourdes coin, equivalent to about ten cents in US money. Dr. Narcisse underscored the fact that the other parties in Haiti are well funded, while *Lavalas* relies on the people for support. She asked each person present to contribute one

Adoken and to ask others to do the same. In an election awash in money, she emphasized: “We will not be bought or sold. And we will never give up our dignity.”

As Haiti moves through its electoral process, there will be many attempts by the Haitian elite and their US and UN allies to create another sham election rather than a free expression of popular will. For those who support the popular movement in Haiti, this calls for close monitoring and vigilance. Haiti is under military occupation. Roughly 7,000 UN troops and military police continue to patrol the country, backing up Haitian police who have broken up peaceful anti-government demonstrations this past year with clubs, water hoses, chemical agents, shootings, and arbitrary arrests. On at least one such occasion, UN troops killed an unarmed Haitian protestor. Government harassment and arrests of *Lavalas* activists have continued unabated. The Martelly government has periodically threatened President Aristide with arrest on spurious charges that have been shelved in the face of popular protest, only to pop up later. None of this is conducive to a “free and fair election.”

The last presidential contest in Haiti, which resulted in Martelly's election, should serve as a cautionary tale. The US State Department intervened with Haiti's Electoral Council (CEP) to insure that Michel Martelly was moved up in the rankings and would qualify for the run-off election. With *Fanmi Lavalas* excluded and two rightwing candidates running, the vast majority of Haitians stayed away, refusing to lend credibility to the

(continued on page 17)

*In Haiti right now, facing
the most daunting odds, the
Lavalas movement is once again
breathing life into democracy.*

The First US Occupation of Haiti

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by Leslie Mullin

“In 1915 the American Marines came to Haiti to collect American loans. Haiti was a land of people without shoes – black people, whose feet walked the dusty roads to market in the early morning, or trod softly on the bare floors of hotels, serving foreign guests. Barefooted ones tending the rice and cane fields under the hot sun, climbing mountain slopes, picking coffee beans, wading through surf to fishing boats in the blue sea. All of the work that kept Haiti alive, paid the interest on American loans, and enriched foreign traders, was done by people without shoes.”

– Langston Hughes –

Haiti’s Revolution established the first independent nation in Latin America and the world’s first Black republic. Former slaves defeated Napoleon’s army and liberated France’s most valuable colony. Birthed in the struggle to overthrow slavery, the Haitian people resolved never to surrender their sovereignty to a foreign power, never to return to slavery. The 1915 – 1934 US Occupation was to reignite this resolve.

The United States invaded Haiti on July 28, 1915 on orders from President Woodrow Wilson. US Marines ruled Haiti for the next 19 years. Military and economic motives for the occupation underlay racist stereotypes of Haitians as ignorant people incapable of governing themselves. In her book, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism, 1915 – 1940*, historian Mary Renda argues that the 1915 US occupation of Haiti was no sideshow, but one of several important arenas where the identity of the United States as an empire was forged.

On this hundredth anniversary, an era that looms large in the historical memory of Haitians is barely recognized in the United States. Yet the 1915 – 1934 American occupation illuminates a conflict that continues to polarize Haiti: the imposition of United States domination versus continued resistance to foreign intervention by the Haitian people.

For over a century after independence, Haiti faced hostility from foreign powers, especially France and the United States. For daring to overthrow slavery, Haiti was ostracized and forced into repeated compromise to secure foreign trade. In 1825, France demanded that Haiti pay an indemnity to compensate former slave owners for their “colonial losses,” an amount equivalent to \$21 billion today. The demand was

conveyed by six warships off the Haitian coast and accompanied by the threat of an economic blockade. Haiti’s peasant population carried the burden of this debt for 122 years. It was finally paid in 1947. The indemnity was a crippling blow to Haiti’s economy. The rural areas were robbed of money needed for development, infrastructure, and education. And Haiti went deeply into debt securing loans at exorbitant interest rates to keep up with the payments.

By 1862, after finally recognizing Haiti’s independence, the US Government was fully in pursuit of control over Haitian finances, labor, ports, and resources to benefit American banking and business interests. By 1905, the US replaced France as Haiti’s main trading partner. In 1909, National City Bank of New York secured controlling interest in Haiti’s Banque Nationale. US Marines later seized \$500,000 in gold from Banque Nationale and transferred it to National City Bank in New York.

In 1910 an American investor acquired Haiti’s National Railroad with rights to establish banana plantations on either side of the tracks between Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien. This land had sustained rural farmers and their families for generations. The Haitian Constitution did not even permit foreigners to own land—a safeguard against restoring slavery. The abrupt eviction of peasants from their land to make way for banana plantations prompted fierce resistance. Four years of insurrection followed, involving peasant armies—the *Cacos*—along with urban elites and members of Parliament who were opposed to foreign domination.

This period of government instability became the pretext for the US occupation. By August 1915, there were 3,000 US Marines in Haiti. They seized the customs houses,

imposed martial law, instituted press censorship, and outlawed dissent. The US installed a compliant president, imposed a “treaty” that was ratified only by the US Senate, disbanded the legislature, and rewrote the Constitution to eliminate the ban against foreign land ownership.

Haiti’s indigenous religion, Vodou—so central to the war for independence—was outlawed. US Marines—all white, many Southern—replaced local heads of every town and rural district throughout the country. By 1922, the US completely controlled Haitian finances, including the treasury, collected taxes, and forced Haiti to repay American loans.

Chief among the legacies of the occupation is the creation of the Haitian Gendarmes. Marines disarmed the former regionally structured Haitian Army and replaced it with a new army under US command. The sole purpose of the Haitian Gendarmes—later known as *Forces Armées d’Haïti* (FADH)—was to keep Haitians in line. Its centralized structure would be wielded by future dictators to control the Haitian state. Thus, the US Marine occupation paved the way for the ruthless Duvalier dictatorships that were to follow.

In the years following World War I, African Americans emerged as the first major critics of the occupation from within the United States. The occupation coincided with the Great Migration, an era marked by immense social and cultural change among African Americans. Historian Brenda Gayle Plummer explains:

“The timing of the occupation was especially significant. The Bloody Summers of 1918 and 1919, the agitation for a federal anti-lynching bill, and the rise of militant nationalism put racial matters at the forefront. Black Americans perceived the Haitians as related to themselves, and increasingly admired the Haitian tradition of resistance to servitude and fierce independence.”

In 1920, James Weldon Johnson, Field Secretary of the NAACP, returned from Haiti with alarming reports of US Marine conduct towards Haitians, published in a four-part series in *The Nation* entitled “Self-Determining Haiti”:

“Brutalities and atrocities on the part of American Marines have occurred with sufficient frequency to be the cause of deep resentment and terror. Marines talk freely of what they ‘did’ to some Haitians in the outlying districts. Familiar methods of torture to

make captives reveal what they often do not know are nonchalantly discussed. Just before I left Port-au-Prince an American Marine had caught a Haitian boy stealing sugar off the wharf and instead of arresting him he battered his brains out with the butt of his rifle. I learned from the lips of American Marines themselves of a number of cases of rape of Haitian women by Marines. I often sat at tables in the hotels and cafes in company with Marine officers and they talked before me without restraint. I remember the description of a ‘caco’ hunt by one of them; he told how they finally came upon a crowd of natives engaged in the popular pastime of cock-fighting and how they ‘let them have it’ with machine guns and rifle fire.”

The following passage from Johnson’s report describes the *corvée* system by which US Marines reintroduced slavery to Haiti, forcing rural peasants to build roads. The imposition of the *corvée* galvanized renewed peasant resistance leading to widespread rebellion against the occupation:

“The building of the road from Port-au-Prince to Cape Haitian is a monumental piece of work, but it is doubtful whether the Occupation had in mind the building of a great highway for the benefit of Haiti. . . . The manner of building this road was one of the most brutal blunders made by the American Occupation in Haiti. It was built by forced labor. Haitian men were seized on the country roads and taken off their farms and put to work. They were kept in compounds at night and not allowed to go home. They were maltreated, beaten, and terrorized. In fact, they were in the same category with the convicts in the Negro chain gangs that are used to build roads in many of our southern states. It was largely out of the methods of building this road that there arose the need for ‘pacification.’”

The great Haitian hero of this period was Charlemagne Peralte. Formerly a Haitian Army commander, Peralte mobilized and led an armed guerrilla force of thousands of peasants in Haiti’s Central Plateau. Peralte had been dismissed from the Haitian Army when he refused to surrender his weapons and flag to US Marines who took over his district, Leogane. In 1917, he was court martialed and sentenced to five years hard labor for aiding the rebels.

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Charlemagne Peralte,
leader of the *Cacos* rebellion.

reparations NOW

a brief history and the way forward

By Akinyele Omowale Umoja

Akinyele Omowale Umoja is a founding member of both the New Afrikan People's Organization and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. An educator and scholar-activist, he is a professor and chair of the department of African-American studies at Georgia State University, and he is the author of We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement (NYU Press, 2013).

In March of 2014 the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) introduced a ten-point program towards reparations from European states for slavery and colonialism. The recent proclamation of the Caribbean states is a part of an upsurge in the first decade of the twenty-first century that continued more than a century of reparations advocacy by African descendants in the western hemisphere. We will briefly examine the history of reparations activism and the most recent upsurge of the fight in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This article will deconstruct that activity so we can best prepare ourselves to forward our movement for liberation.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF REPARATIONS

Africans struggled to maintain their humanity and peoplehood during the struggle for emancipation against racial, chattel slavery in the Western Hemisphere. After emancipation, campaigns arose to get restitution for violations of their humanity and for the unjust enrichment accumulated by their captors and the colonial states that benefited from their labor. Some called for land of the former slaveholder to be turned over to the descendants of captive Africans, in order to develop independent communities. Some wanted the US to be responsible to assist with emigration to go back to Africa or another territory outside of its jurisdiction.

The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief and Bounty Society (NEMRB) was initiated by Callie House and Isaiah Dickerson in 1897 to organize for pensions for the emancipated African population. House and Dickerson organized hundreds of thousand of members into the NEMRB, before the organization declined from within, in the face of political repression and the incarceration of its leadership on trumped up charges.¹

Queen Mother Audley Moore spearheaded the demand for reparations in the US in the late 1950s. Queen Mother

organized the Committee for Reparations for Descendants of US Slaves in 1963. She should be acknowledged as the central advocate for reparations in the modern history of African people in the US. She lobbied several organizations in the Black freedom movement to adopt reparations in their political programs, including the Nation of Islam, the Yoruba Temple, the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PGRNA), and the Revolutionary Action Movement. In the spirit of Queen Mother Moore, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the PGRNA, and the New Afrikan Peoples Organization founded the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA) in 1987.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) began to deliberate on the question of reparations in 1992. That year the OAU empaneled a twelve-person Group of Eminent Persons to examine the question of reparations to Africa and its descendants for slavery and colonialism. Pan-Africanist and Jamaican legislator Dudley Thompson represented Jamaica on this body and discussed the question with colleagues in the Caribbean.²

Randall Robinson's *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks* was published in 2000. The publication of a pro-reparations treatise by a well renowned activist and author helped bring renewed national discussion around the issue.

2001: INTERNATIONAL REPARATIONS MOVEMENT

The motion towards the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa brought the discussion of reparations throughout the African world. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 52/111 authorized a World Conference Against Racism, "To focus on practical matters to eliminate racism, including measures of prevention, education and effective remedies." The Africa Group, the Latin American states, and the Caribbean states wanted the conference objectives to go beyond what was in the resolution and to include items

dealing with regional, national, and international measures for compensation for colonialism and slavery. Activists and intellectuals throughout the western hemisphere began plans to lobby for reparations at the Durban gathering. The participation of African, Caribbean, and Latin American states was a result of the work of the OAU-initiated Eminent Group and African-descendant activists in their respective countries. US reparations activist organizations, including NCOBRA, National Black United Front, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, Lost Found Nation of Islam (under the leadership of Silas Muhammad), and the December 12th Movement all participated in the fight to put reparations to Africa and her descendants on the agenda of the international community. The 2001 WCAR successfully passed a resolution to make the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade a crime against humanity. This was widely considered an important victory for the international reparations movement.

It is in this context that in 2003 President Jean Bertrand Aristide promoted a campaign for Haiti to receive restitution of \$21 billion from France. This demand was based on the 90 million in gold francs France coerced Haitian President Jean Pierre-Boyer to pay Haiti's former colonizer. The demand for restitution was one reason France and its allies, the US and Canada, collaborated with counterrevolutionary Haitians to destabilize and ultimately organize the 2004 coup of the popularly elected *Lavalas* government led by President Aristide. The demand for restitution continues to be a popular demand among grassroots Haitians.

WHICH WAY FORWARD

The 2014 CARICOM announcement of pursuit of reparations from their former colonizers increased discussion on the issue of reparations for African descendants. Later that year, the Ta-Nehisi Coates essay "The Case for Reparations" was published in *The Atlantic*, bringing further momentum and attention to reparations. The Coates essay made significant contributions to the understanding of the basis for reparations to African descendants in the United States. Coates moves the question of reparations beyond slavery and includes racial terror (e.g., lynching), apartheid (segregation), and institutional racism (e.g., red-lining).

Since the decline of the Black Power Movement, the Black freedom struggle lacks a comprehensive focus to bring unity. The issue of reparations has the potential to serve as a comprehensive focus to unite the Black freedom

movement as the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements did in the 1950s and 60s. Single issues that demonstrate the continuation of institutionalized racism can be linked in a pro-reparations social movement.

Reparations can be tied to the advocacy of rights for Black people related to housing, quality education, mass incarceration, and adequate wages for fast food workers, and any other fight for human rights and social justice. Black youth would have greater potential to be involved, if the basis of reparations were not only enslavement of their ancestors, but was tied to contemporary institutional racism. How does reparations relate to Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown? How does reparations relate to subprime mortgages and the housing crisis? How does reparations relate to the achievement gap in US educational institutions?

As we move forward, we have to assess this period in order to figure out how we keep going the momentum of a reparations movement. An organized, intentional national movement that is rooted in local communities can keep the momentum going. The intentional use of social media can maintain the momentum, even when the corporate media has shifted their attention to other issues.

The new reparations movement has to be a broad, grassroots movement that is intergenerational, multi-class, and has domestic and international allies.

It is necessary to make alliances with forces globally, particularly in the Caribbean and other African-descendant communities in the Americas. African descendants in the western hemisphere must collaborate in this international fight for reparations. It is important for the Black liberation movement in the US to be in dialog with the Haitian grassroots movement for democracy and with other African-descendant social movements throughout the Americas. The United Nations has declared 2015 – 2025 the International Decade of People of African Descent. Let us take this time to build genuine solidarity towards self-determination and to eliminating the vestiges of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. ✱

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- 1 For information on Callie House, Isaiah Dickerson, and the NEBRB, see Mary Frances Berry, *My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*. (New York: Vintage, 2006).
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Queen Mother Moore

Palestinian and Arab Solidarity with Haiti

From a speech delivered on March 1, 2015, by

Lara Kiswani

Executive Director, Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC)

WHY DO ARABS AND PALESTINIANS STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH HAITI?

We do so because it is a responsibility on all our parts to support the liberation of the Haitian people. As people that are engaged in an anti-colonial struggle, we know that Haiti is a pillar in the history of resistance against colonialism and, until today, is at the receiving end of it. We also stand in solidarity with Haiti because the same Zionist forces that are ethnically cleansing Palestinian people are the same forces that arm and protect the US-backed Haitian dictators.

The US and its Western allies are directly responsible for the economic, environmental, and social devastation in Haiti. While they raise slogans about humanitarian crisis and relief, they fail to mention that it was a concerted effort on their part to destabilize a strong and unified Haiti, in control of its own resources, and demanding their rights and dues. This process is familiar for the people of the Third World fighting colonialism. Among the most similar is Palestine, where the US and Israel prop themselves up as decision makers and peace negotiators while they are the producers of our colonial conditions and the ones who perpetuate it.

WHAT DO WE MOST OFTEN HEAR ABOUT PALESTINE AND HAITI?

Human rights abuses, humanitarian disaster, international aid and relief, conflict, crisis, peace talks, intervention, death, destruction. We hear about the need for the international agencies to take a position, to aid in relief, to solve our problems. We do not hear about how these same agencies and their Western bosses are the cause of our current problems. The UN has become a vehicle for Western powers to exert force over the Third World. It has become a vehicle for further devastation, and political control. The Haitian people know too well that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is about anything but stabilization. Or perhaps we should instead be asking: stabilization for whom and for what purpose?

WHAT IS IT THAT WE DO NOT HEAR ABOUT HAITI AND PALESTINE?

In fact, perhaps what makes struggle for the liberation of Palestine and Haiti most similar is what is most often less talked about. Haiti and Palestine are rooted in revolutionary anti-colonial struggles. Our struggles, while different, are deeply connected

and illustrate the very nature of neo-liberalism and imperialism.

Haiti broke the shackles of slavery and colonialism and defeated its French masters. They did so through a popular armed struggle aimed at bringing down the colonial system. And yet, although Haiti broke the shackles of slavery, its people have not yet achieved liberation or self-determination. Until today they are fighting off Western imperialism and occupation and paying the price for their victory against slavery. And today Haiti is occupied. But this time the occupation is facilitated by the UN, aimed at making Haiti dependent on foreign investors. Colonialism has taken on a new form.

Palestine is waging resistance against an ongoing anti-colonial struggle. We are not simply suffering a humanitarian crisis. We are not simply victims of occupation of parts of our land. We are colonized by an exclusionary settler colonial state created in 1948. When many others around the world celebrated their independence from colonialism, we began to see our own experience of colonialism manifest. And until today, every displaced refugee, every political prisoner, every artist, educator and family will tell you that we are committed to our liberation.

Another thing we share with Haiti is our shared experience with puppet governments. Just as France and the US place dictators in Haiti to facilitate their neoliberal policies and repression against dissent, the US and Israel have the Palestinian Authority as their puppet government, with little authority, but always willing to sacrifice more of our land, rights, and people for power and profit.

WE SHARE RESISTANCE.

But we also share resistance to the ongoing theft and destruction of our homelands. And the West, including the state of Israel, is committed to crushing both our movements. Just as the US and France oversaw the coup in Haiti, they also oversee the imprisonment and criminalization of Palestinians both in the US and globally. There was a day when the US crushed social movements through COINTELPRO. Today their weapons, tools and technologies are more massive. From intelligence and information sharing, to weapon sales and productions, to trainings and collaborations between law enforcement, state repression from Haiti to the US to Palestine continues to police and lock up our leaders, such as Rasmia Odeh and Aristide. They control our movements, they control our elections in Arab countries—as they do in Haiti—they decide who can or cannot run, they criminalize our freedom fighters, and together, they arm our oppressors.

It is the responsibility of everyone in the US to expose the role of the US in Haiti as well as the role of Israel in

global repression. Since 1968 Israel was among the few countries in the world that agreed to sell weapons to the most brutal Haitian dictators. We also know that in the first coup that deposed Aristide in 1991, 2000 Israeli Uzi and Galil machine guns were sent

Whenever we talk about liberation and internationalism we must talk about Haiti.

When we talk about Black struggle, we cannot forget Haiti.

When we talk about anti-colonial resistance, we must draw on inspiration from Haiti. . . .

Haiti and Palestine remind us of how all our struggles are inextricably linked to international struggles for liberation.

to Haiti to aid the military junta. And we know that just like the US whitewashes its crimes in Haiti by speaking of humanitarian aid and relief, Israel whitewashes its war crimes by establishing a hospital in Haiti and sending doctors and nurses to work on relief after the earthquake.

The resistance in Haiti and Palestine are part of the history of third world resistance against state repression and violence. Historically, the Palestinian struggle made connections to international struggles from the Black and Brown struggles in the US, to Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Our freedom fighters trained

with one another, wrote about and learned from each other's experiences, and acted in support of each other. Take SNCC's anti-Zionist position in 1967, for example. Like Haiti, we are rooted in international solidarity against imperialism, and we know that Israel is a part of that system. Palestinians continue to find inspiration from other liberation struggles, particularly that of Haiti and their revolutionary history.

TODAY, WE CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE TOGETHER.

In 2010 we saw families of Palestinian prisoners send donations to Haiti during the earthquake. What we saw was not charity. It was solidarity. Because it is our people's shared experiences and values that inform our commitment to one another's liberation.

Whenever we talk about liberation and internationalism we must talk about Haiti. When we talk about Black struggle, we cannot forget Haiti. When we talk about anti-

colonial resistance, we must draw on inspiration from Haiti. When we examine the limitations of human rights, relief, and NGO-ization we must look closely at the role of the UN in Haiti, the role of the UN in creating the state of Israel, and the ongoing Palestinian refugee problem. Haiti and Palestine remind us of how all our struggles are inextricably linked to international struggles for liberation. And they remind us of our resilience. Let us continue to remember and to be reminded so that we continue to reaffirm our commitment to one another and to fighting for our dignity and liberation. ❖

REPORT - BACK

LAVALAS • DOMINICAN REPUBLIC • E

Robert Roth, cofounder of the Haiti Action Committee, was interviewed on air by Dennis Bernstein on Flashpoints (KPFA) on July 2, 2015, after his recent trip to Haiti.

To listen to the interview, visit <https://kpfa.org/player/?audio=209395>

DENNIS: Begin by giving us an overview of the project: What was the reason you went and where did you go?

ROBERT: I hadn't been back to Haiti since President Aristide's return in 2011, and I went with Pierre Labossiere from the Haiti Action Committee, and we wanted to understand the changed conditions in Haiti—not just with the current crisis with the Dominican Republic, but also the fact that *Lavalas* is standing for elections for the first time in fifteen years. And what does that mean for the movement in Haiti, and what does it mean for the political conditions there? And we also wanted to go and see the incredible work being done at UNIFA, the University of the Aristide Foundation, which, through the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund, we've been in solidarity with and given support to. So those were some of the reasons that we went on this trip.

DENNIS: Let's start with the chaos that's happening at the border. We should explain that Haiti shares an island with the Dominican Republic. It's sort of divided in two. There's a lot of history there. Explain to people: What led to this mass purge and this push of folks out of the Dominican Republic? Set that up for us.

ROBERT: Well, the Dominican Republic in 2013 passed a law that revoked the citizenship rights of Haitian immigrants who had been in the country—who had been born in the country after 1929, and that involved nearly 250,000 Dominicans of Haitian origin. And they instituted a policy of mass deportation of Haitians—of not only Dominicans of Haitian origin, but also of Haitians who they called undocumented. Now, we're very familiar with that kind of draconian and racist policy in our own country with the Obama deportations of Mexican and Central American immigrants. In the Dominican Republic, this has a particularly racist character, as it's aimed at Haitians in the Dominican Republic. So it's a form of ethnic cleansing. And what's happened over the past couple of months is that any

Haitian in the Dominican Republic has been in danger.

Haitians . . . work in the sugarcane fields; they have little shops and sell things in the Dominican Republic. There are 30,000 Haitians who go to college in the Dominican Republic. And Haitians go back and forth to the Dominican Republic all the time. They do business in the Dominican Republic and come back and forth. And so people have had their shops burned. They've had their houses destroyed. There have been lynchings in the Dominican Republic of Haitians. It is reminiscent of so many—you could give so many examples. You could look at Palestine. You could look at what happened in the South in the early 1900s with the lynchings by the Klan and the terror that led to the Great Migration. These are the conditions that Haitians face now, that have led up to this really tragic and racist situation in the Dominican Republic that we're trying to call attention worldwide to.

DENNIS: And I understand, actually, that there are reports that some of these folks are getting chased out of their houses, dragged out of their houses. We've seen folks dressing up in Klan—Ku Klux Klan—outfits. Is that a fact? Is that true?

ROBERT: Yes. That is a fact. That is a fact. And one of the things that we did was. . . . A *Lavalas* organizer—*Lavalas*, which is the movement in Haiti—the popular movement in Haiti that, you know, brought Aristide to power many years ago and won elections whenever it stood for elections in Haiti and is the most popular political party in Haiti—they are taking a very proactive approach to this crisis, while the Haitian government has done literally nothing to support the people who are being forced out of the Dominican Republic.

And a *Lavalas* organizer took Pierre and I to the border to just investigate the situation. And we went with journalists from *Tele Timoun* and *Radio Timoun*, which are connected

K FROM HAITI

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Lavalas supporter in Bel Air.

to the Aristide Foundation. And Dennis, as a journalist yourself, you would've been so impressed with these young activists, powerful journalists. We were thinking about you when we were with them because it's a new generation of journalists who are absolutely fearless, courageous, wanting to get the news at all costs.

And so these journalists. . . . We were going to the border, and we were going to a place called Malpasse, which is one of the sites where Haitians, when they cross the border—when they leave the Dominican Republic—they have to stop and they have to register at the Haitian border with the Haitian authorities. They get a little green registration card, and that lets them come in to Haiti. And as we were going to the border, there was a bus filled with Haitians and overcrowded with all of their belongings—overflowing with bedding and their trunks and suitcases. There must have been seventy, eighty people on the bus. And the bus had been stopped by Haitian police who wanted them to go back to the border and re-register.

And these people had had it. They were not going back to that border, and they suspected that the reason that they were being asked to go back to the border was so that the Haitian authorities could get some money off of the deal. And they were staging a protest in the middle of this road. They were blocking traffic, and they were saying they would not, under any threat—they would not go back to the Dominican border.

And these were people—there was a pregnant woman, five months pregnant, she said, “My child is sick; we’ve been under attack in the Dominican Republic. My other kid was attacked by someone, by Dominicans. My house was burned.” Another man was saying that he’d been in the Dominican Republic for the last ten years, and that his belongings had been burnt. They were not going anywhere near that border.

And so the *Lavalas* organizer took us back to the police station and he organized. He made it very clear—these people are not returning to reregister, and he said, “The only way that you’re going to defuse the situation is if

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Report-Back from Haiti
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you go talk to the people. You want to register them again over there, fifteen miles away, you can do it.” And of course they asked us as Americans—like me with my American passport—to say a few things. And the police then went back, talked to the Haitians, and the situation calmed down. And then the organizer was inundated with requests for cards for Maryse Narcisse, the *Lavalas* candidate for president, because all these people now wanted to support Maryse, because they’d been given concrete help in support from *Lavalas* as they were dealing with their situations.

This is day by day, Dennis. People are coming from that border day by day. They’re facing crisis at every step of the way—in the Dominican Republic, once they get to Haiti, then what are they going to do when they get to Haiti. And so it’s on every level. It’s a horrific situation.

DENNIS: Again, to be clear, this is *Lavalas* reaching out and filling in a huge gap, one more huge gap that is being left there by the current US, shall we say, imposed government. And I guess, just before we move to the elections, what is the worst case scenario here? I mean, we have a situation in Haiti that’s already horrific. The poverty is overwhelming. We’ve got 250,000 or more people being purged from the country. It could really turn into a massive tragedy.

ROBERT: I think that the worst case situation is that this becomes one of the critical human rights disasters in the world—in the entire world. And we’re living in a world in which you could name fifteen of those. You can name them in the Middle East. You could name them in Central America. And you could name them in Haiti. So I think that yes, this is a country that is barely recovering from the earthquake. The tent cities have been removed from the center of town but if you go through Haiti and you go to Port-au-Prince, they’re still there. There are hundreds of thousands of people living still in displaced refugee camps. They’re not as visible but they’re there. And then there are the shantytowns; and then there are the people being displaced from the Dominican Republic. Plus . . . there are people who are being displaced through the tearing-down of homes that they have lived in for generations, because of redevelopment plans that have come to pass through all of the money that has come in for redevelopment.

We were in a part of the city where 60,000 people had had their homes destroyed in a two-day period last May, through a \$40 million redevelopment plan headed by the former Prime Minister, Lamothe, who was very close to the Clinton Foundation. And these people returned from their work in the markets and in other parts of the informal economy,



Haitian refugees flee the Dominican Republic. June 2015.

and they found themselves with no homes. And one of the presidential candidates, Jean-Henry Céant—who is a notary public in Haiti, was part of that deal—did all of the legal work for that deal and got \$4 million.

DENNIS: Who will live in these new houses?

ROBERT: Who knows? Nothing has been built. Nothing has been built. The homes are now totally torn down, and people are living in buses, and people are living in the remnants of where they used to live. There’s open sewage, which of course is the basis for cholera which is spreading—not under control at all. These are the conditions in which *Lavalas* is attempting to really run an electoral campaign, speak to the needs of the people, and attempt to create a situation in which people have a voice and have a chance at some gains, some improvement in their lives.

Now, the danger is that if it appears that *Lavalas* can win the election, many people believe that there will be some maneuver to prevent the election from happening. There’s already talk that there’ll be one round of elections that will be parliamentary but that when it comes to the presidential election that there will be a push by the international community—meaning the US, the UN, *et cetera*—to do a transitional government for three years, to so-called



Bulldozed homes in downtown Port-au-Prince.

“stabilize” Haiti once again.

So the situation is very delicate and, you know, for us in the Haiti Action Committee, we’re going to try to educate people because, as always, the situation in Haiti—unless there’s the earthquake or the Dominican crisis—Haiti is often on the back burner of people’s consciousness.

Haiti is in crisis, but there’s such a powerful movement, and it operates on so many different levels. For example, in the middle of all this, Dennis, we go to UNIFA, and there are hundreds of students quietly studying for their final exams.

DENNIS: That’s the Aristide-founded university.

ROBERT: The University of the Aristide Foundation. Medical students. Law students. Nursing students. Students in physical therapy. And next year, they’re going to try to open a school of continuing education where you don’t have to have a degree; you don’t have to have any certificate or pass any standardized test to go take college classes. They want the grassroots to be able to go study at the University and take courses and feel part of the university experience. And you walk onto that campus and you see a new generation being trained and being educated and not having to go to the Dominican Republic, where they could

be forced out and racially profiled at any moment.

So there’s a broad-based movement that gives you not just hope, but gives you a model of ways that we could operate in movements around the world, including here. But it’s a real struggle.

DENNIS: And it is amazing. Anybody who’s been to Haiti and has, one, seen the extraordinary poverty—unimaginable in the United States, I mean, profound—also felt the spirit of the people, so poor but so in love with self-determination and democracy that they have suffered every kind of injustice. Now, there is some concern, before we say goodbye, Robert Roth, that this decision, the timing of this decision in the Dominican Republic was in part a way, a scheme if you will, to disrupt, as an excuse to undermine the presidential election using this as the point—too much destabilization, this is happening at the border, we can’t have these elections.

ROBERT: Well I think that there are very deep roots. There’s deep racism in what’s happening in relation to the Dominican Republic and Haiti. These roots, they go very far back into the history and they have reappeared many times in the history between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. So I wouldn’t say that it’s only about the election. But does the timing and the potential escalation of the crisis—could it influence and become a part of the electoral crisis? Absolutely. Could they use it in that way? Absolutely. Does the movement feel it could be used that way? Yes. No question.

And there also have been—in the last week there were killings in Cite Soleil, where paramilitary squads gunned down people in the street.

DENNIS: That’s a very strong support base for *Lavalas* and former President Aristide and perhaps one of the poorest communities in the world.

ROBERT: Yes. And so that’s the other way that people think the election could be sabotaged—is to create insecurity in one neighborhood after another. We were in Bel Air at a festival, at a church festival. And Bel Air is a very important area, and a *Lavalas* rally broke out. A powerful *Lavalas* rally broke out in the middle of the festival, which showed the strength at the base that *Lavalas* has. And so the government knows this. The United States knows this, and they do not want *Lavalas* in power. So we can expect many different maneuverings over the next period of time, and it’s worth watching very closely. And for those of us that love Haiti and love the popular movement and respect it, it’s a time to be very vigilant and very supportive. ✨

Plan Lanmó – the Death Plan: The Clintons, Foreign Aid, and NGOs in Haiti

By Charlie Hinton

When Bill and Hillary Clinton married in 1975, a friend gave them a trip to Haiti for their honeymoon. The Washington Post reported, “Since that honeymoon vacation, the Caribbean island nation has held a life-long allure for the couple, a place they found at once desperate and enchanting, pulling at their emotions throughout his presidency and in her maiden year as secretary of state.”¹ Haiti’s president at the time was Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier, and Hillary and Bill fell in love with a country living under a dictator and his *Tonton Macoute* death squad.

Bill Clinton helped found the Democratic Leadership Council in 1985, formed as a conservative counter to Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition campaign of 1984, which more pro-business Democrats saw as a threat. Running as a “New Democrat,” Clinton became president in 1992 after twelve years of “Reaganomics”—philosophically part of the global economic movement called “neo-liberalism,” a policy of privatization and free trade that was transforming the global economy.

Instead of trying to brake or reverse Reaganomics, Clinton vigorously pursued Reagan/Bush policies, aligning with Republicans to push US participation in both NAFTA and the World Trade Organization through a resistant Democrat-controlled Congress. He also signed the Republican-sponsored bill to overturn the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, which had separated commercial banking from investment banking. The destruction of that firewall fueled the Wall Street gambling-created economic bubble that burst in the housing mortgage crisis of 2008 – 2009.

Clinton finally had to confront some of the consequences of his actions. “We made a devil’s bargain,” Clinton apologized at a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2010.² He apologized for forcing Haiti to drop tariffs on imported US rice, subsidized by our government, during his time in office. Neo-liberal 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.

Clinton testified, “Since 1981, the United States has followed a policy, until the last year or so when we started

rethinking it, that we rich countries that produce a lot of food should sell it to poor countries and relieve them of the burden of producing their own food, so, thank goodness, they can leap directly into the industrial era. It has not worked. It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake. . . . I have to live every day with the consequences of the lost capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people, because of what I did. Nobody else.”

What he did not explain is that after Haitians stop producing rice to feed themselves, under neo-liberal gospel, they’re supposed to instead produce mangos and other tropical foods to export to northern countries. Thus they become dependent on cutthroat global markets to earn the hard currency foreign exchange necessary to buy imported food, which can now be sold at monopoly prices because there is no domestic competition.

By the time Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to office in 1994 after the first coup against him in 1990, “Miami rice” had already flooded Haiti’s markets. However the Aristide government resisted enormous pressure to privatize other Haitian government-owned businesses, and Clinton made sure Aristide would not serve the full five-year term to which he was elected, despite demands from the majority of Haitians, who wanted Aristide to complete his full term, making up for the almost four years spent in exile after the coup.

As a result of the destruction of the rice crop, Haitian farmers and their families who could no longer afford to farm flooded into Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, to look for work. Many of them were among the hundreds of thousands of killed and injured in the catastrophic earthquake of January 12, 2010.

Eight days after the quake, Bill Clinton continued in the Post interview: “This is a personal thing for us.” He and his wife had “always felt a special responsibility” for Haiti and its people. “She has the same memories I do. She has the same concerns I do. We love the place.” The earthquake destruction “personally emotionally affected” him. His wife, he said, became “physically sick.”

The global community responded with incredible generosity³ after the quake, donating or pledging almost \$10

billion.⁴ The Red Cross raised \$488 million,⁵ World Vision \$265.3 million (by 2015),⁶ Catholic Relief \$159 million,⁷ Partners in Health more than \$81 million,⁸ the Clinton Bush fund \$52.6 million,⁹ the Clinton Foundation \$36 million, and on and on. One hundred eighty charities raised money in the name of Haiti earthquake relief, yet Haiti remains as poor as ever, with the poverty rate in 2012 at 58.5 percent, and in rural areas at 74.9 percent.

In “Haiti after the quake,” Bill Quigley and Amber Ramanauskas discuss where the relief money went, noting that “The largest single recipient of US earthquake money was the US government. The same holds true for donations by other countries. Right after the earthquake, the US allocated \$379 million in aid and sent in 5,000 troops. The Associated Press discovered that of the \$379 million in initial US money promised for Haiti, most was not really money going directly, or in some cases even indirectly, to Haiti.”¹⁰ Quigley and Ramanauskas documented in January 2010 that 33 cents of each of these US dollars for Haiti was actually given directly back to the US to reimburse ourselves for sending in our military. Forty-two cents of each dollar went to private and public non-governmental organizations like Save the Children, the UN World Food Program and the Pan American Health Organization. Hardly any went directly to Haitians.

The overall \$1.6 billion allocated for relief by the US was spent much the same way, according to an August 2010 report by the US Congressional Research Office. The money was used to reimburse the Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services; it went to USAID disaster assistance, to the US Department of Agriculture, the Department of Homeland Security, and so on. International assistance followed the same pattern. After the earthquake, the US ambassador to Haiti wrote an email saying, “The gold rush is on.”¹¹ And indeed it was. For everyone but Haitians.

Instead of building infrastructure and providing aid to those most in need, Haiti’s international rulers continue their same old neoliberal formula of promoting tourism, sweatshops, natural resource extraction, and cash crop exports.¹² As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton promoted this very policy, demonstrated particularly in the imposition of Michel Martelly as president. In January 2011, at the height of the Egyptian Arab Spring revolution, Clinton flew to Port-au-Prince to demand that Martelly be named one of the two runoff candidates, although the Electoral Council had not originally announced him as one of the two top vote getters.¹³

Despite a voter boycott, with fewer than 20 percent of the electorate voting, Martelly was announced the winner of the “runoff,” and the results were accepted by the international community. The results have been catastrophic

for the Haitian majority, as Martelly appointed Duvalierists throughout his administration and has sanctioned privatization, repression, death squads, corruption, illegally appointed judges, and illegal changes to the constitution, while bringing a particularly greedy and arrogant entourage into his government. His administration has granted mineral concessions with no accountability, and it cut down the only forest on the island of Île-à-Vache, displacing hundreds of peasant families, to build a tourist resort.

The Clinton Foundation invested earthquake money in the Caracol Northern Industrial Park,¹⁴ with Korean sweatshop apparel manufacturer Sae-A Trading Co. Ltd. the anchor tenant. Sae-A Trading makes clothes for Walmart, Gap, and other retailers. The earthquake did not touch this part of Haiti. Projected to provide 65,000 jobs as of September 2014, currently, only 4,165 people worked there.¹⁵ At the opening ceremony, Secretary of State Clinton said, “I want to begin by thanking President Martelly for his leadership and his vision and his passion about the people of his country and for your administration’s commitment to show the world Haiti is open for business.”¹⁶

In June 2015, ProPublica and NPR published an analysis of the Red Cross called “How the Red Cross raised half a billion dollars for Haiti and built 6 homes.”¹⁷ The report reads: “The Red Cross says it has provided homes to more than 130,000 people. But the actual number of permanent homes the group has built in all of Haiti: six. . . After the earthquake, Red Cross CEO Gail McGovern unveiled ambitious plans to ‘develop brand-new communities.’ None has ever been built.” The donations, however, “helped the group erase its more than \$100 million deficit.”

NGOs

Haitians call neoliberalism *plan lanmò*, the “death plan,” because of the social and economic devastation caused by neoliberal policies—because of the forced opening of markets to US goods, sweatshop wages, and the plundering of natural resources, austerity budget programs, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises.

This pattern is not new, so much as it is a continuation of the same policies used to rule over Haiti, ever since the people’s successful 1804 revolution to overthrow slavery and drive out the French. The former slave-owning countries, in particular France and the United States, have operated ever since to prevent any true democratic form of government that would benefit the majority of Haitians or limit in any way US and French business interests.

The most recent development is rule through nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs. In “Is Haiti

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Ramachandran writes, “One study found that even before the January 2010 earthquake, NGOs provided 70 percent of health care, and private schools (mostly NGO-run) accounted for 85 percent of national education. . . . Humanitarian agencies, NGOs, private contractors, and other non-state service providers have received 99 percent of [earthquake] relief aid—*less than one percent of aid in the immediate aftermath of the quake went to public institutions or to the government.*”¹⁸

NGOs first entered Haiti shortly after World War II but became a flood in the 1980s, propelled by global neoliberal economic ideology, changes in tax laws that allowed the mushrooming of foundations as tax dodge havens, and the desire to divert aid money away from the famously kleptocratic regime of Baby Doc Duvalier.

One goal of neoliberalism is to starve governments of the money necessary to provide social services, so those services, like education, healthcare, water, and even prisons, become privatized. Public assets, theoretically available to all who need them, get sold to corporations; and then only those with money get served. Once governments can no longer fund services, NGOs leap in to try to do the job—but with a hitch.

A democratically elected government will work to serve the needs of the people that elected it, whereas NGOs fulfill the agendas of those who fund them and are not necessarily accountable to the people they serve. While NGOs may seem benign, they actually help to destabilize social services, undermine governments, and ultimately increase poverty.

Since foundations and governments in the Global North are primary funders of the NGOs that operate in the Global South, the goals of NGOs may not be the same as the goals of governments—particularly in Haiti, where 67 percent of Haitian voters elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide president in 1990, with a mandate to develop institutions to support the majority of Haitians, not international investors.

Big NGOs operate as big businesses, with the same goals, methods, and views, but their “profits” come from the “alleviation” of people’s suffering. In other words, NGOs exist as a result of suffering and they need that suffering to thrive and persist. Each NGO has its own staff, its own office, its own agenda, and its own Haitian “partners.” They raise money in the name of Haiti, but they control that money, and they decide how to spend it, not Haitians. After the earthquake, not only did little money go to the Haitian government or institutions, many meetings about aid distribution excluded Haitians or were conducted in languages other than Haitian *Kreyol*.

According to an internal Red Cross budgeting document for a housing project, “the project manager—a

position reserved for an expatriate—was entitled to allowances for housing, food and other expenses, home leave trips, R&R four times a year, and relocation expenses. In all, it added up to \$140,000. Compensation for a senior Haitian engineer—the top local position—was less than one-third of that, \$42,000 a year.”¹⁹

PLAN LANMÓ AND CHOLERA

The cholera epidemic provides possibly the most explicit example of how *plan lanmó* is the “death plan.” Cholera was introduced into Haiti by the waste dumped into the Artibonite River by Nepalese soldiers serving in the UN MINUSTAH army, which has occupied Haiti since the US, Canada, and French-sponsored coup against democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide on February 29, 2004.²⁰ Conservative estimates show that as of August 30, 2014, 8,592 people had died from the disease, and 706,089 people—six percent of the population—had been made sick, because of water contaminated by sewage.²¹ At first the UN denied its role in introducing cholera. Then when a French scientist proved it, the UN refused to spend the necessary money to create or coordinate the creation of a sanitation system that would eliminate it.

The ProPublica report says, “When a cholera epidemic raged through Haiti nine months after the quake, the biggest part of the Red Cross’ response—a plan to distribute soap and oral rehydration salts—was crippled by ‘internal issues that go unaddressed,’ wrote the director of the Haiti program in her May 2011 memo. . . . Throughout that year, cholera was a steady killer. By September 2011, when the death toll had surpassed 6,000, the project was still listed as ‘very behind schedule’ according to another internal document.”

The Guardian reported on a ten-year plan to eradicate cholera: “According to Nigel Fisher, head of the UN mission in Haiti, funding is tight—the UN has committed only \$23.5 million on top of money it has already spent on cholera. This compares with the \$650 million the UN spends annually on the troops that brought the epidemic to Haiti.”²² It took four years after the introduction of cholera for the international community to hold a donor conference to raise funds for the cholera response. Of the \$2.2 billion needed for an eradication program, only \$50 million has been pledged.²³

So there you have it. When Haiti needs coordinated planning to create a massive infrastructure project, there is no entity capable of leading it. A competent government is the most obvious answer, but the Haitian government

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Plan Lanmó
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has been so neo-liberalized, privatized, defunded, imposed, and corrupted that it has neither the will nor the capacity to carry out such a task.

The UN occupation army helped create the catastrophe, but a US judge ruled that the UN has legal immunity from any lawsuits by Haitians. There has been no hearing of the case in Haitian courts.

The Red Cross distributes soap. Many governments, NGOs, and church organizations initiate programs, most well intentioned and staffed by well-intentioned people, but their efforts are not coordinated, and none of them get to the root need—a modern sanitation system.

Almost all aid decisions are made—and the aid administered—by non-Haitians. When Haitians twice elected a government that actually worked to benefit the majority of its people, the US government and Haitian elites twice orchestrated coups to overthrow it. And the US is the primary funder of a UN occupation army, which suppresses those calling for its restoration.

This system of outside control of Haiti—replacing government with foreign aid, NGOs, and consultants—has totally failed most Haitians. Finally, Martelly and the Electoral Council have called elections—August 9 for parliament and October 25 for President. Former President Aristide’s party, *Fanmi Lavalas*, will be running candidates for the first time since 2000. Repression and exclusion chicanery by forces allied with Martelly have already begun. It is time for Haitians to be able to choose their own government and for the international community to respect and support their choice. ✱

Haiti Elections
(continued from page 3)

charade. In the end, Martelly was selected by only 17 percent of eligible Haitian voters. According to a just-released report in Al Jazeera, USAID funneled \$100,000 to Martelly’s *Movement Tet Kale* (MTK) or *Skinheads Movement*, which was responsible for violent street demonstrations during the election campaign.

Undoubtedly, more of the same manipulation and covert funding is occurring today. One of the major presidential candidates, Jean-Henry Céant, a notary public working with Martelly, reportedly received \$4 million as payment for his role in last year’s massive land grab and destruction of a working-class neighborhood in downtown Port-au-Prince. He has had no problem financing his campaign. And while the first round of Parliamentary and local elections—scheduled for August 9—appears to be on schedule, many grassroots activists in Haiti have expressed concern that the government will find a pretext to cancel the presidential elections, if Dr. Narcisse appears to be on the verge of victory. *Lavalas* organizers are fully aware of these

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contingencies. But they have faith in the historical memory and consciousness of their people and in their capacity to see through any schemes.

Haitians have experience with *Lavalas*. They know that President Aristide built more public schools than had been built in Haiti’s entire history. They remember the doubling of the minimum wage, the literacy programs, the subsidies for schoolbooks and uniforms, the good low-cost affordable housing, and the health clinics that treated their children. They know that, under Aristide, the elite had to pay their taxes like everyone else and that land reform was begun. Most of all, they remember that the poor were treated with dignity. Now they are turning out in large numbers at rallies for Dr. Narcisse, chanting, “*Lavalas ap tounen*” (“*Lavalas is Back*”).

In his book, *Eyes of the Heart*, Aristide wrote, “Only the day-to-day participation of the people at all levels of governance can breathe life into democracy and create the possibility for people to play a significant role in shaping the state and society they want.” In Haiti right now, facing the most daunting odds, the *Lavalas* movement is once again “breathing life” into democracy. ✱

First US Occupation
(continued from page 5)

and executed by order of US Marines.

In September 1918, Péralte escaped, returned to Hinche and began recruiting a guerilla movement. He issued a formal declaration of war against the United States in a letter to the French Minister that bore one hundred signatures:

“For four years, cruel and unjust Yankees brought ruin and hopelessness to our territory. Now, during the peace conference and before the whole world, the civilized nations took an oath to respect the rights and sovereignty of small nations.

We demand the liberation of our territory and all the advantages given to free and independent states by international law. Therefore, please take into consideration that ten months of fighting has been in pursuit of this aim and that our victories give us the right to ask for your recognition. We are prepared to sacrifice everything to liberate Haiti, and establish here the principles affirmed by President Wilson himself: the rights and sovereignty of small nations. Please note, honored Consul, that American troops, following their own laws, don't have any right to fight against us.”

Resistance spread over much of the country, which gave rise to brutal repression. The American campaign against *Caco* resistance became a war of extermination. Not since slavery had a foreign power exercised such ruthless violence in Haiti. Marines couched their campaign in racist terms, dehumanizing Haitians as mere targets, as they “hunted *Cacos*.” They referred to *Caco* guerrillas as “bandits.” Prisoners were routinely executed. Villages suspected of harboring *Caco* were burned; suspected sympathizers shot. *Caco* villages with children, families, and their livestock were bombed in aerial assaults that, of their very nature, were indiscriminate. Ground troops followed the bombings, killing survivors.

Like Sandino, Zapata, and Pancho Villa, Charlemagne Péralte led a nationalist peasant army resisting foreign domination. He was a formidable opponent who was able to establish a provisional government in northern Haiti. The Marines decided that the best way to crush the *Cacos* was to eliminate him. James Weldon Johnson would later denounce the savage murder of Charlemagne Péralte:

“If anyone doubts that ‘*caco*’ hunting is the sport of

For the same charge, his brother Saul was sentenced to death

American Marines in Haiti, let him learn the facts about the death of Charlemagne. Charlemagne Péralte was a Haitian of education and culture and of great influence in his district. . . . The America of the Revolution, indeed the America of the Civil War, would have regarded Charlemagne not as a criminal but a patriot. He met his death not in open fight, not in an attempt at his capture, but through a dastard deed. While standing over his campfire, he was shot in cold blood by an American Marine officer who stood concealed by the darkness, and who had reached the camp through bribery and trickery. This deed, which was nothing short of assassination, has been heralded as an example of American heroism.”

“The US occupation of 1915 and the US occupation of 2004 are two sides of the same coin.”
– Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine –

Charlemagne's body was taken by train to Cap-Haïtien where he was put on public display like a trophy, unclothed, strapped to a board, the flag of Haiti circling his head. Photographs of this im-

age were dropped from airplanes over areas where *Cacos* were active. Though the intent was to demoralize the guerillas, the image became a symbol of martyrdom, immortalized in Haitian artist Philome Obin's painting, “The Crucifixion of Charlemagne Péralte For Freedom.”

The *Caco* rebellion continued for another year with renewed leadership, but when Benoit Batrville was killed, resistance subsided.

The US presidential election campaign of 1920 provided an opening for critics of the occupation, as reports of indiscriminate killings of Haitians reached the United States. James Weldon Johnson argued, “The United States has failed in Haiti. It should get out as well and as quickly as it can and restore to the Haitian people their independence and sovereignty.” In 1925, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) assembled an interracial delegation to investigate the occupation that included Addie Hunton, president of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, and Emily Green Balch, former WILPF president. The delegation's report found “the problem in Haiti to consist not in individual instances of misused power, but in the fundamental fact of the armed occupation of a country.”

In Haiti, the final chapter of the occupation opened with the strikes and riots of 1929. Student strikes against increased tuition fees became a rallying point for popular discontent. On December 4, a general uprising started with

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First US Occupation (continued from page 18)

customs employees in Port-au-Prince. Thousands of peasants converged on American outposts to denounce the occupation authorities.

Marine troop reinforcements were sent to key cities. Martial law and the curfew were rigidly enforced; opposition news was suppressed. Disaster struck on December 6 when 1,500 unarmed peasants confronted 20 Marines in the southern town of Les Cayes to protest the imposition of new taxes and demand the release of prisoners. In response, the Marines opened fire, killing at least 24 Haitians and wounding 51 more.

News of the 1929 uprising and the Les Cayes massacre attracted worldwide attention and made the occupation untenable. In 1934, the United States withdrew from Haiti formally transferring authority to the Haitian Gendarmes. Fifteen thousand Haitians had been killed; 50,000 peasants lost their land. US business was thoroughly entrenched in Haiti.

THE CURRENT US OCCUPATION OF HAITI

“The US occupation of 1915 and the US occupation of 2004 are two sides of the same coin.”

– Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine –

Haitian human rights activist, July 28, 2007

In 2004, the United States imposed another military occupation on Haiti with support from United Nations troops, MINUSTAH. The 2004 occupation followed a brutal US-backed coup d'état against the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The coup forced Aristide into exile and killed or imprisoned thousands of activists and supporters of Haiti's contemporary grassroots movement, *Lavalas*.

Lavalas—meaning “the flood”—is the popular movement that emerged from the struggle to oust the Duvalier dictatorship and succeeded in establishing Haiti's first democratic government under President Aristide. Haiti's popular movement has a very different agenda for Haiti than does the United States, one that prioritizes Haiti's people over foreign profit. Just as the US attacked the *Caco* movement, the United States has used every means to destroy *Lavalas*: economic blockade, the 2004 coup, armed assaults against communities of resistance like Cite Soleil, imprisonment and exile of *Lavalas* leaders, exclusion from elections.

Controlling the narrative is an essential feature of the current US occupation. The American public has been so thoroughly won to regard Haiti as subordinate to the United States that even the name Haiti has become just a prefix, “Haiti—the-poorest-country-in-the-western-hemisphere.”

This dismissive label hides the main reason for Haiti's poverty—the economic model forced upon Haiti by foreign powers to generate foreign profits. Haiti's poor majority call it “the death plan.”

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the former democratically elected president and powerful spokesman for Haiti's poor, subverts this western narrative by linking Haiti's name to her people's rich history of struggle for freedom. He proposes its African roots in two Swahili words: *Hai*, meaning Not, and *Tii*, meaning Obey. Joined together, the word “*Haitii*” speaks to the resistance of Haiti's people—“*Haitii*, Do Not Obey.” Aristide asserts that, “For centuries the people's strength has been to resist. . . .resistance comes by nature to Haitians.” This is the Haiti whose struggle for justice and freedom threatens US empire. This Haiti represents one of the great popular movements for democracy in the world today, *Lavalas*. ✱

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**NO! TO APARTHEID IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
STOP RACIST PERSECUTION AND DEPORTATIONS TO HAITI**



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