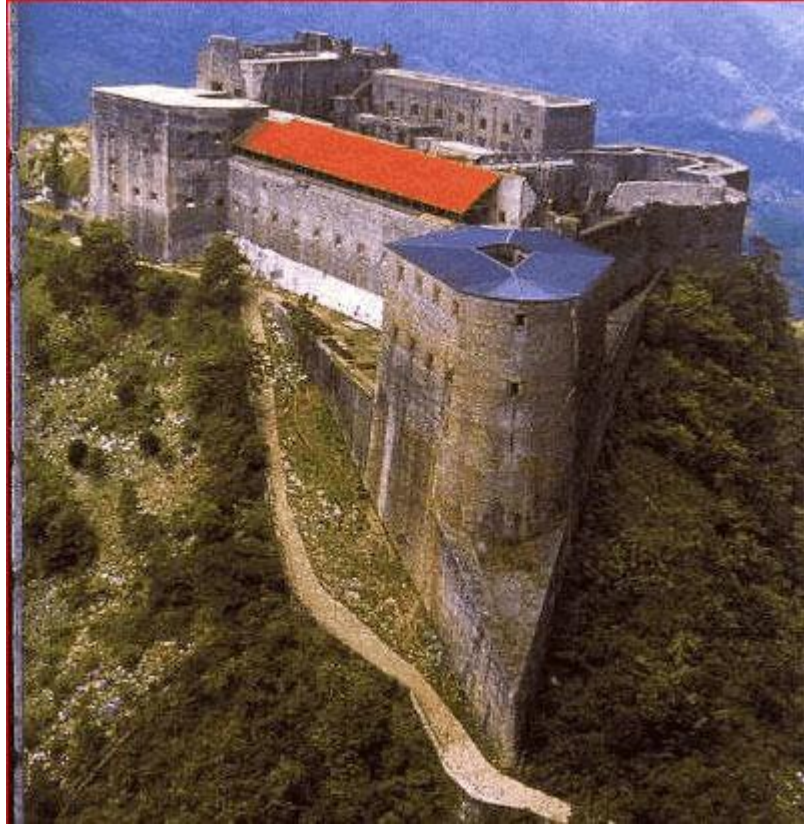


Haiti: Reparations and Reconstruction

Horace Campbell

For two hundred years, the peoples of Haiti have been struggling to reconstruct their society. Before the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) could be consolidated, the French and other imperial powers worked to isolate the revolution for fear that the ideas of freedom would be contagious and spread. However, they could not turn the tide of freedom. Failing to stem the idea that the African enslaved wanted freedom, the government and political leaders of France demanded reparations from Haiti, thus distorting the essence and meaning of reparative justice for 100 years. Despite this, the fears of the imperial west that the Haitian Revolution would inspire other slaves in Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States came to fruition. Haiti played its role of supporting freedom and independence throughout the region. Simon Bolivar and other revolutionaries from Latin America flocked to seek assistance from Haiti. Every act of freedom by Haiti scared the imperial powers. These powers slowly consolidated the ideas of capitalist exploitation and white supremacy so that these racist ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries began to take root in Europe and North America.

United States revolutionaries, such as Thomas Jefferson, who internalized chauvinistic ideas about European and male superiority opposed the reconstruction of Haiti and refused to recognize the independence of Haiti. It was only after the bloody US Civil War (1861-1865), when the enslaved in the United States won their freedom, that the US government recognized Haiti. This diplomatic recognition was followed by the destruction of the capacity for the Haitians to reconstruct their society. Western bankers, financiers, merchants, and Jim Crow architects worked with a small clique inside of Haiti to frustrate efforts for reconstruction. To guarantee that reconstruction did not take place the bankers, financiers and the militarists organized a military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934). This occupation by the US, supported by France and Canada, laid the foundations for brutal militarism to contain the spirit of the people of Haiti. In the book, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, author Patrick Bellegarde Smith brings to life the epic struggles of the Haitians to be independent and how the forms of peasant agriculture gave them social solidarity outside of the urban centers where the *évolué* aped France.



The Citadelle of Henri Christophe, built 1805-1820 to defend the freedom of the Haitian people, is reputedly the largest fortress in the Americas. 'Every Caribbean child should be taken to see it'.

Genocide and genocidal violence from the government of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo sent a message to Haitians that their lives were meaningless and that the place of Haitians in the Americas was to provide cheap labor for others. Yet, the Haitians struggled for dignity. It is the novelist Edwidge Danticat who has brought us this history in her book, **The Farming the Bones**, which is set in the Dominican Republic of the 1930s.

Militarism and genocidal violence was then reinforced by a crude form of chauvinism that manipulated the religious and spiritual values of the people. Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, who ruled Haiti from 1957 until his death in 1971, perfected a form of brutal repression with thugs and death squads called the Militia of National Security Advisers. This militia was renamed the Tonton Macoutes by the Haitian people after a mythical Haitian bogeyman who kidnapped children and ate them. Armed with machetes and guns, the Tonton Macoutes reigned terror on the Haitian people. When Francois Duvalier expired, external forces propped up his son,

Baby Doc, until the people revolted in 1986. From 1915-1986, there was no possibility for reconstruction in Haiti, but towards the end of the Duvalier dictatorship the people of Haiti revolted and brought a new movement to lay the basis for reconstruction. The Government of the United States organized not one, but two violent interventions to curtail possibilities of reconstruction by removing the first democratically elected president in Haiti, Bertrand Aristide. Aristide was placed at the front of a grassroots movement that gave itself the name "Fanmi Lavalas". The Fanmi Lavalas movement was seeking to work through the inherited contradictions to lay a new foundation. This movement believed that the reconstruction of Haiti could only take place in the context of the reconstruction of the lives of the Haitian people based on the revolutionary history of Haiti. Together with other African descendants from across the world, the people of Haiti supported the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in September 2001, seeking to implant on the world a new spirit or reparations so that humanity could heal from the crimes against itself committed during the period of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and thereafter.

But this national and international effort was nipped in the bud.

A global "war on terror" imposed a different agenda on the world while real terrorism against the peoples of Haiti was supported by the west. Thugs, death squads, drug runners and anti-social elements permeating Haiti were supported by France and the United States. Bertrand Aristide was removed in 2004 just at the moment when the world was being reminded of the 200th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution. The United Nations was brought in to give legitimacy to the erosion of the popular sovereignty of Haiti in the form of an allegedly peacekeeping force called the United Nations Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Money launderers, drug runners and gangsters flourished in this scheme of recolonization. In this moment of external domination, the imperial forces had suborned the Organization of American States to support imperial occupation of Haiti. What was baffling was how governments in Brazil and Venezuela that presented themselves as progressives could be part of the OAS front for oppressing the Haitian peoples. Indeed the Wikileaks cables reveal the desire of the United States to keep Aristide out of Haiti and suppressing the Haitian people by pressuring Brazil, which led the MINUSTAH at the time.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jan/21/haiti-wikileaks>

In 2005, Brazil led MINUSTAH in a deadly assault to suppress the coup and occupation of Cite Soleil, one of Haiti's poorest communities.

On January 12, 2010 there was a massive earthquake in Haiti. Millions of people were displaced in the capital Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas killing hundreds of thousands. Billions of dollars were pledged for reconstruction. For a brief moment, the popular and democratic forces in Haiti looked to the progressive world to intervene solidly so that all of the international attention on Haiti after the earthquake would support the democratic forces inside Haiti. Again, reconstruction was opposed by the imperial forces in France and the United States. Cynically, the military and humanitarian occupation of MINUSTAH, by appointing former President William Jefferson Clinton as UN Special Envoy to Haiti to utilize Clinton's networks that had been in support of the anti-social forces of the nineties. To add to the rubble and distress in the society, an outbreak of cholera served to intensify the pressures on the people of Haiti to keep them down. Progressive Haitians now looked to the Caribbean, Latin America and the new rising forces to become an antidote to humanitarian imperialism. To block the energetic measures of the people of Haiti, the imperial forces of the US imposed a new president who was clearly enamored by the militarist traditions of the Duvalierists. The inauguration of Michel "Sweet Micky" Martelly as President of Haiti on May 14, 2011, was an affront to the peoples of Haiti and the world. The sham elections of November 28, 2010, that excluded the largest party in Haiti, Fanmi Lavalas, dictated that the people of Haiti would have to find new ways to organize for reconstruction. This reconstruction in Haiti will demand political changes in all parts of the Americas. The struggles for reparative justice is transnational and the lessons of imperial destruction in Haiti dictate that the progressive forces in all parts of the Americas will have to see how the struggles for peace, democracy and reparations are inseparable from the struggles in other parts of the Americas.

The earthquake of January 12, 2010

When the massive earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, it was estimated that over 222,000 Haitians perished. Close to 2 million persons were displaced. Hundreds of thousands were homeless. In the midst of the rubble, the United States sent troops, ostensibly to prevent looting. Such was the mindset of international capitalists that in a moment when quarter of a million persons lost their lives, protection of property and material goods came before the lives of the peoples of Haiti. International non-governmental organizations of all stripes descended

on Haiti. Many of these international NGO's demanded military protection from the people whom they were in Haiti to purportedly serve. Haiti presented a textbook case of disaster capitalism. Together with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, these NGO's created a new layer of oppressive governance to isolate the democratic aspirations of the people. International goodwill for the people of Haiti brought promises of support of all forms from all over the world. Bill Clinton and the neo-liberal faction of US capitalism established themselves at the head of this wave of popular support for reconstruction. Where clear planning was needed, these forces continued to push the failed reform plans of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to create a layer of servile imperial allies inside Haiti. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians in the diaspora rallied to form international teams to rebuild the country. Instead of international brigades going into Haiti to assist the rebuilding and working with the people, Bill Clinton was named Special Envoy to Haiti. Later, Paul Farmer, the renowned physician and anthropologist and founder of Partners in Health, was named Deputy Special Envoy. This ruse was to exploit to good image of Partners in Health, which provided medical services to the poor, in the service of imperial machinations.

Reconstruction after the earthquake required an honest government, a solid partnership with those who wanted to see homes, schools, hospitals, public facilities, roads and other infrastructure rebuilt for the people. These were not forthcoming. In the absence of clear support for reconstruction in spite of billions of dollars pledged, there were some sections of the people of Haiti and their allies who began to believe that the earthquake was not a natural disaster. Web surfers began to read blogs claiming that a 'tectonic weapon' had been unleashed to induce the catastrophic earthquake that hit the country. The US military Project called HAARP was named as the tectonic weapon. HAARP, the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program, is a Pentagon operation in Alaska directed at the occasional reconfiguration of the properties of the Earth's ionosphere to improve satellite communications. Many writers on this program associate this military capability with the ability to generate "violent and unexpected changes in climate."

Such capabilities exist could only be clarified in a context of full disclosure of the role of the drilling of the oil companies in the Caribbean and the byproducts of deep drilling below the ocean floor in the Caribbean. The full role of the US military and intelligence services in Haiti over the previous one hundred years ensured that the US military forces did not inspire confidence in the people of Haiti when the Obama administration deployed 13,000 marines in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Whether the earthquake was a natural disaster or not, the conservative and racist forces invoked God against the people of Haiti. The racist media had a field day reproducing images of sloth, poverty and hopelessness in Haiti. The media repeated the formulation that Haiti was “the poorest country in the western hemisphere.” Racists and imperialists sought to outdo each other in mobilizing stereotypes of Haiti. Kidnappers and child traffickers used the disaster as cover for their trade. Pat Robertson claimed that the earthquake was God’s revenge because Haiti had made a pact with the devil. Robertson said on National TV in the United States that,

“Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French, you know, Napoleon the Third and whatever, and they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you if you'll get us free from the French.' True story. And so the devil said, 'O.K., it's a deal.' ”
http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-13/us/haiti.pat.robertson_1_pat-robertson-disasters-and-terrorist-attacks-devil?_s=PM:US

Inside the United States and in the Caribbean, fundamentalist and born again forces reproduced this tale so that even among some sections of the poor in Haiti, there was a view that the suffering was payback from divine forces. According to this rendition of the revolution in Haiti, the struggles against France and slavery were struggles against Christianity and civilization, because the enslaved were being Christianized by the French. The evil voodoo priests of Haiti had made a pact with the devil in order to secure Satan's aid in expelling the French occupation.

The ranting of Pat Robertson was a new variation of the kind of racism that had developed in the West to oppose black dignity and self-assertiveness. In the book, *From Toussaint to Tupac*, Michael West captured the birth and support of the racist ideas of Count Gobineau in France and how these ideas became part of the international arsenal to hold back Haiti and black people.

“If the Haitian Revolution could not be rolled back, it would certainly be contained. Having won the war, the Haitians would be denied the fruits of victory: they would be made to lose the peace. The cost of throwing off the shackles of colonialism, slavery and white supremacy would be very high, even crippling. European powers and white-run states variously isolated Haiti, embargoed its goods, demanded reparations, and barred from their shores its dangerous achievements and citizens. scientific racism as a mode of securing post abolition global racial hierarchies flourished, initially, and not accidentally, in post-Napoleonic France, most notably in the writings of Count Gobineau, “the father of racist ideology.”

The crippling of the revolution and the attempt to systematically destroy the Haitian revolution by military occupation and by thugs and drug dealers ensured that the task of reconstructing Haiti would require new political forces nationally, regionally and internationally. Such forces had begun to coalesce during the presidency of Bertrand Aristide and the international efforts to support the World Conference Against Racism.

Reparations and Reconstruction

In the first years after the revolution in Haiti, the people were desperate to end diplomatic isolation. The history books tell us that the “French government sent a team of accountants and actuaries into Haiti in order to place a value on all lands, all physical assets, the 500,000 citizens who were formerly enslaved, animals, and all other commercial properties and services. The sums amounted to 150 million gold francs. Haiti was told to pay this reparation to France in return for national recognition. The Haitian government agreed; payments began immediately. Members of the Cabinet were also valued because they had been enslaved persons before Independence.”

Numerous writers have been chronicling how France had worked to systematically destroy the Republic of Haiti. Professor Hilary Beckles, principal of the University of the West Indies, was among the many who added his voice to the exposure of France and the US in the destruction of Haiti. He argued that France had carried out a merciless exploitation, “that was designed and guaranteed to collapse the Haitian economy and society.” Haiti was forced to pay the sum of 150 million francs until 1922 when the last installment was made.

France had used the international balance of power in the 19th century to turn the idea of reparations on its head.

At the end of the 20th century, the international balance of forces were shifting and in this shift the anti-globalization forces, the forces of peace, the environmental justice movement and the anti-racist movements had coalesced and came together under the framework of the World Conference Against Racism. Coming together in differing regions of the world over a ten year period, this WCAR met in Durban, South Africa in September 2001. It was in the general international mobilization to name the slavery and slave trade as crimes against humanity where the peoples of Haiti called on the peoples of France to repay the forced reparative claims of French imperialists of the 19th century.

During the 2001 UN Conference on Race in Durban, South Africa, there were strong representations that reparations were due to the black peoples of the world emanating from the years of enslavement. Additionally, it was agreed in the Durban conference that the government of France had to repay the 150 million francs. “The value of this amount was estimated by financial actuaries as US \$21 billion.”

Here was a firm basis for reparations and reconstruction.

Neither France nor the United States took these deliberations lightly. It was a historical coincidence that the attack on the US, September 11, 2001, took place two days after the end of the WCAR in Durban. Since that time the resolutions of the meeting were squashed as the world was diverted to the global “war on terror”. Inside Haiti, the forces of destruction unleashed terror against the peoples of Haiti. When the US invaded Iraq in March 2003, France and the US were at loggerheads. However, when it came to the destabilization of Haiti they were in agreement. President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was removed from power and another form of occupation took place. Only this time, the French and the USA sought the cover of the United Nations with the installation of MINUSTAH. This device of hiding behind the United Nations necessitated clarity on the part of the forces opposed to imperial domination. The Caribbean societies and the South Africans rejected the propaganda war against Haiti.

Brazil and Venezuela gestured towards the progressive camp but allowed their troops to be caught to in the UN and NGO occupation.

Whatever the conditions of Haiti before the major event of January 2010, there was need for clarity. Forces such as Patrick Gaspard, the Executive Director of the Democratic National Committee, and served as Director of the Office of Political Affairs for the Obama administration from January 2009 to 2011 and Paul Farmer, world renowned doctor, had to emerge from the shadows to join in the required fight back against the recolonization and remilitarization of Haiti. Page | 9

Sham Elections 2010 and the Challenges to the International Left

International divisions over the future paths of Haiti simmered as disaster and rubble were reinforced by a massive cholera outbreak. The strain of this cholera was foreign to the Caribbean and instead of seriously investigating the UN mobilized the international media in what seemed like an attempt to demonize the people of Haiti. It was in the midst of these multiple catastrophes that the US' form of democracy without elections was imposed on the people of Haiti. The elections were held in November 2010 after the US disenfranchised the majority of Haitians by denying the participation of the Lavalas in the elections. Two candidates, who between them received 11 per cent of the vote, were nominated for the second round of the elections in March 2011.

The Clintons worked overtime to ensure that there was media support for this illegitimate process. Hilary Clinton, the Secretary of State, left to deal with the smoldering revolution in Egypt to fly to Haiti to bully the government to accept a fraudulent process. President René Préval of Haiti was promised the same treatment of ouster like that which deposed Aristide if he did not accept the pressure to sanction the illegitimate procedure. In the midst of this farce of preparing for the runoff, the exiled Baby Doc Duvalier returned to Haiti. In a democratic society, Duvalier would have been arrested for the criminal actions, and it was significant that there were no drumbeats for his arrest from the western media. Baby Doc is a criminal and pressures must be intensified so that he is brought to trial in Haiti.

Pressures on the people of Haiti did not deter them, and they continued to organize. It was this grassroots organization and pressure that enabled Bertrand Aristide to return. Reports coming out from the grassroots organization in the country showed that the people were not cowed. Norman Girvan, professor Emeritus of the University of the West Indies, who attended and participated in one such meeting in Haiti, reported on the vibrancy of the grassroots social movements inside Haiti and their call for international solidarity. Girvan reported that approximately one hundred representatives of social organizations from throughout the country -- including farmers, women, labor, students, human rights, and professionals -- concluded three days of intense debate about the kind of Haiti they want to see, the obstacles they face, and the nature of the financing they need. According to Norman Girvan,

“Among other conclusions, they agreed on an agenda for collective action that includes creating a permanent Assembly of Social Movements, campaigning for the non-renewal of the Interim Commission for the Reconstruction of Haiti - a veritable parallel government set up a year ago under the tutelage of the U.S., World Bank, IDB and other so-called ‘international donors’, and reinforcing a regional campaign for the withdrawal of the MINUSTAH military occupation.”

<http://www.normangirvan.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/report-papda-forum.pdf>

I am in support of the calls from within Haiti for a new path to reconstruction that begins with the people of Haiti.

The installation of Michel Martelly as President of Haiti on May 14 demanded that the left and progressive forces internationally organize to expose and oppose the forces of violence and destruction inside Haiti. The process that brought Martelly to the Presidency was a sham and this farce will force popular forces to distinguish between processes of democratization and pseudo-elections without democratic participation

The constellation of class and military forces fighting to oppose reparations and reconstruction in Haiti are the same constellation of forces that hid behind the view that Haiti is cursed. The majesty of the Haitian revolution continues to inspire new forces as we enter a new revolutionary moment. The events of the current revolutionary moment in world politics demand that Haitians and all those in solidarity with Haiti cannot give up on Haiti. I am in

agreement with C.L.R James that the people of Haiti and the people of the Caribbean will move again and when they move they will shock the world.

20 May 2011.