

Can Capitalism Save Haiti ?

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Absolute horror continues in Haiti . The inhuman — response by the international community the U.S. especially — has been directly responsible for thousands of deaths, whether it be those who were buried alive under rubble, or who died by infection or other untreated injuries.

The U.S. military's domination of the Port-au-Prince airport prevented international medical teams from landing for days, while Partners of Health estimated that up to 20,000 people a day likely died from infections. Starvation and fighting over very scarce food are the persisting deadly threats faced by most Haitians.

What is the solution?

President Obama would have you believe that thousands of U.S. troops and 100 million dollars of aid have done the trick. But Haitians are right not to have one iota of faith in the U.S. government, which for decades supported dictatorships in the country while forcibly removing a popular president, twice.

Now, the U.S. military encircles the island to prevent starving people from fleeing a living nightmare, a policy that is the logical extension of Obama's general anti-immigrant stance.

As the situation continues to deteriorate, a slew of U.S. professional pundits are weighing in to give advice to the struggling Haitians. Nearly all of them ignore the U.S. 's past and present actions towards Haiti . Instead, they paint the U.S. as a saintly intervener into the affairs of the backward Haitians.

Even worse, these lecturers ignore the still unfolding humanitarian disaster in Haiti and are brainstorming instead for down-the-road solutions. This saves them from having to denounce the U.S. "effort" to save Haitian lives so as to fantasize about a more perfect, futuristic Haiti .

A popular long-term solution that many are advocating is — free market "reforms" that will supposedly lift the country out of poverty. These ideas are shared by both wings of the corporate U.S. political establishment. One such example was outlined in The New York Times editorial titled, Thinking About a New Haiti. In the view of New York Times, the "new Haiti " should be one that puts markets ahead of people: a strategy that will "promote self sufficiency" (never mind that no small island nation can become self sufficient, due to size and lack of resources).

The New York Times answers the prayers of dying Haitians by preaching classic free-market

dogma. This tired scripture teaches that Haitians can pull themselves up by their bootstraps by making use of their natural market advantages: "... Haiti has considerable economic advantages, like low labor costs..." (January 31, 2010).

In reality, "low labor costs" means that Haitians make literally slave wages — the lowest in the western hemisphere that is full of very poor countries. The implication here is that Haitians should welcome U.S. corporations to come set up shop and hire Haitians for a dollar a day to make super profits for foreign companies.

The New York Times specifically mentions "garment-making" as a type of industry that Haitians might excel at and not by accident. In nearby Honduras , U.S. garment-making corporations — Nike, GAP, Adidas, etc. — would love to off-shore work to Haiti , since the Honduran class has become unruly in demanding higher wages.

Another way that The New York Times suggests that Haitians strive for "self sufficiency" is by "rebuilding and modernizing agriculture to grow staples and export products like coffee and mangoes..." So, in a country where rice and beans is a luxury, Haitians should focus on growing cash crops for foreign consumption. Again, it is the slave-wages of Haitians that will make these crops better able to compete on the world market. It is a lie, however, to say that such a strategy will improve the lives of Haitians. The history of the hemisphere proves the opposite.

An historic pillar of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America is to keep countries underdeveloped by forcing them to limit their economies to producing cheap food products for the U.S. market. Perpetual poverty is produced instead of wealth, with profits going to the U.S. corporations who own these giant cash crop plantations. The few Haitians who would benefit from such a policy would then be able to afford the luxury goods produced in the U.S. , while the vast majority of Haitians would continue to suffer in poverty.

So-called Banana Republics do not create self-sufficiency, quite the opposite. Haiti would be utterly dependent on the constantly fluctuating prices of these few cash crops on the world market or they would be reliant on the whims of the U.S. corporations who decided to exploit the slave-wages of Haitian workers. In essence Haiti would be a colony of the U.S.

And this is the real goal of the strategy. It is the historic goal of U.S. foreign policy that underdeveloped nations become dependent on the U.S. consumer market or supply cheap labor for U.S. corporations. These countries become economic satellites that transfer their native wealth to U.S. shareholder pockets, a never-ending game of poor nations chasing a fake carrot of economic development.

Real development would mean that Haiti would use its resources for the people of its country or trade these resources with another country to benefit ALL Haitians. This was part of the political program of Jean Baptiste Aristide, the popular Haitian President that the U.S. twice overthrew. Aristide wanted to use Haiti 's natural resources to be nationalized so they could benefit all Haitians. This violated a sacred principle of capitalism, prompting the U.S. to intervene.

If Aristide were allowed to return to Haiti , he would likely join the fair-trade bloc ALBA, which uses state-owned industries in various Latin America countries to promote development between nations. This would again make Aristide a natural enemy of the U.S.

government, which is dominated by corporations motivated only by the profit principle.

For Haiti to become self sufficient it must be allowed to determine its own destiny. U.S. troops must leave Haiti , and Aristide must be allowed to return. Without these two conditions being met, any solution to Haiti 's problems becomes a distraction and reinforces U.S. interventionism. HANDS OFF HAITI!

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