

Haiti Devastation: A Survivor Reports

By [Jesse Hagopian](#)

In-depth Report: [HAITI](#)

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I have been in Haiti since Sunday with my one-year-old son and my wife whose job centers on curbing HIV in the country. For some reason – some incredible stroke of luck, as she almost always works late – my wife came home early on Tuesday. Not 10 minutes after her arrival in our hotel room in the Villia Creole, the “tremblement du terre” struck – a 7.0 quake that threw our bed across the room, collapsed the other half of the hotel, and as we found out later, laid waste to Haiti.

We had one Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) at our hotel, a man who went by the initials JH, who went out front of the hotel helping people who were coming in injured. When word got out that there was a nurse at our hotel, people just started bringing their injured family members to the hotel. My wife and I were deputized by JH to help in whatever way we could. So he would tell me where a broken bone was, and I had to learn on the sly how to make a splint.

The injuries that we have seen over the last few days have been horrific. I was working on a boy whose house collapsed and he had been trapped under the rubble. His father spent all night digging him out and they brought him to our hotel. Most of the hospitals are totally over capacity, and so the fact that there was one medical professional was a huge draw to people. He brought his son here who was barely breathing and we went to work. He had a head injury. His bone was sticking out of his leg. We worked with the bed sheets that we’d stripped from the hotel and ripped into four-inch-long strips to wrap around his head and his leg to wrap a splint on. Despite our efforts that boy died right there in front of us and had to be just carried off.

Thousands – or tens of thousands – more are still trapped under the rubble and need rescue. Today is an absolutely critical day. If these people don’t get water today they will die. If you listen to the politicians in the US they are doing everything they can to help.

President Barack Obama, flanked by his predecessors George W. Bush and Bill Clinton said, “By coming together in this way, these two leaders send an unmistakable message to the people of Haiti and to the people of the world.”

Finally we hear the truth on a major foreign policy issue from Obama. A message has been sent: we have come to pillage your country in its greatest hour of need.

President Bush, during his first term, cut off desperately needed aid to Haiti and supported the overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Bush’s father, former President George H.W. Bush, supported the first coup against Aristide in 1991. Clinton, meanwhile, helped restore Aristide, but only on condition that he accept harsh neoliberal policies.

Yesterday, Secretary Hilary Clinton was sent to Haiti and gave a speech saying that the US is doing “every thing we can” to help the Haitian people. But that fact that her trip to the Haitian airport stopped all aid from arriving for three hours - three critical hours on a day when the difference between life and death for tens of thousands is a drink of water - should tell you everything you need to know about the US relief effort.

Obama has pledged \$100 million, which will only just begin to help; and only if it is used for direct aid at all and not squandered on private contractors looking to make a dime (or many millions of dimes) off the suffering of Haitians.

U.S. Bankers got bonuses totaling over \$100 billion last year. The US is spending trillions to destroy countries in the Middle East. We can raise the money needed to help our brothers and sisters of Haiti, but it is going to take ordinary people doing extraordinary things to push even the liberals in power to help.

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