

The Disaster Within The Disaster: Its Time To Investigate the Aid Fiasco

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Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

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Haiti remains a death trap, with an aid program that has sat by and watched thousands die without relief. The International Red Cross describes the situation there as a catastrophe while the American Red Cross reports raising more than \$100 million dollars thanks to texting technologies and backing from the White House.

Raising money is their specialty; delivering aid is not.

The New York Times noted: "The contributions come despite well-publicized controversies over the Red Cross's performance and financial accountability after other major disasters.

After [Hurricane Katrina](#) in 2005, for example, representatives from the British, German, Colombian, Dutch and other international Red Cross organizations criticized their American counterpart for inadequate planning, poor management of supplies and faulty record-keeping and logistics. And after the Sept. 11 attacks the organization struggled to deploy some \$1 billion in donations."

These are the people we are trusting with our money!

Meanwhile, Haitians are trying to get out of the apocalypse in Port au Prince while the US Navy warns that anyone trying to flee this hellhole will be caught and returned. Thanks a lot!

This is reminiscent of the early 90's when anti-communist Cuban boat people were welcomed in Florida while Haitians fleeing a brutal dictatorship we backed were captured and sent to detention camps in Guantanamo, I believe.

I recall covering a rally at the statue of Liberty led by filmmaker Jonathan Demme demanding that the beleaguered Haitians be given refugee status. They weren't.

Another memory comes to mind as we hear heart-warming tales of Americans welcoming Haitian orphans. The Governor of Pennsylvania flew to Haiti for the day to "rescue" 54 orphans at a destroyed orphanage run by some sisters from Pittsburgh. A CNN anchor spoke glowingly of the teddy bears and crunch cereal that awaited them on the plane. Clearly these children had been orphaned well before the earthquake.

Many Americans may not know that economically stressed Haitian mothers give up their children because they have no way of supporting them thanks to the dreadful poverty that has been allowed to fester for decades. Even worse, some of these children are forced to become slaves or restevics for the Haitian elite. Sexual abuse and exploitation is common.

To my knowledge there were few earlier “rescues” of these exploited children by well-funded US relief groups.

But the flashback that has me sleepless is an earlier memory that dates to the end of the Vietnam War when a US government backed “OPERATION BAYBLIFT” sought to make Americans feel like saviors after our military and politicians had devastated that country with B-52s, napalm and Agent Orange.

Then as now, cuddly sympathetic orphans were used to touch our hearts as orphanages were emptied even though in that case many families left their children with orphanages run by Catholic Sisters for protection, on the clear understanding they would retrieve them when the war ended. Many were, in fact, not orphans.

It didn't matter. Plans were rushed to send a huge C5A to Saigon, just as US military cargo planes are landing every ten minutes at the airport in Port Au Prince which is described as a “bottleneck.” That plane with a history of unsafe technologies took off with hundred of children packed like sardines amidst great publicity. There was no oxygen supplies for the kids riding in the belly of the plane and little on the upper deck. The plane took off to meet a photo-op rendezvous with President Ford at the Presidio in San Francisco.

Tragically, its huge cargo door blew off in flight, and the plane crashed. Half of the children died and the other half, we later learned, were brain damaged by the explosive decompression. So much for our desire to show the world how compassionate we could be. Later it would turn out that some of these kids were given to families that were not vetted, including a sexual predator. Some Vietnamese parents later fled to the US as boat people desperate to find their children who were refugees, not orphans.

I know about this in detail because I produced a story on it for ABC's 20/20. It won a big award but only one newspaper was interested in the more detailed report I did on a preventable tragedy involving corporate greed by the manufacture and government negligence/propaganda that many would prefer to forget.

Many Americans are not compassionate at all, and not just Rush Limbaugh. Bill O'Reilly polled his viewers on whether they would donate to Haiti. A majority—58%—defiantly said they would not! This type of callous insensitivity is cultivated and reinforced by media outlets and smarmy, know it all, self-righteous TV personalities. Others assuage their guilt by texting ten bucks and feel as if they are helping.

How much money supported the suffering children of Haiti BEFORE this recent disaster. How many Americans even know the history of our years of “beneficent” military interventions into Haiti or sweat shop “development” projects since.

How many knew that many kids were surviving by eating “mud pies?”

Even as TV correspondent after correspondent reports on crippling aid shortages, the overall frame of the coverage remains upbeat. There will be a celebrity telethon on Friday night but no one seems to be investigating how this all went so badly and who is responsible. Who will get the reconstruction contracts? My guess: big American companies. How much are the executives for relief agencies paying themselves?

There has been criminal negligence here, not just mistakes. It is worse than “bottlenecks.”

Who will blow the whistle? Who will condemn it? Already this debacle is being compared to the “great job” President Bush did after Katrina devastated New Orleans.

It is time to speak up and speak out about a charade that promised so much and delivered so little, at all the preventable deaths and suffering caused by a massive screw-up. Could it have been deliberate? Our good intentions are now being buried in a mass grave in Haiti.

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