

The Sacrifice of Haiti

America's Foreign Policy "Pact with the Devil"

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Haiti's history has been cursed by white nationalism and associated political and economic domination and not by rebelling slaves' "pact to the devil," as televangelist Pat Robertson "prophesized" after the fact of the 7.0 earthquake's devastation of the country. Unfortunately, whatever coverage America's mainstream media gave to Robertson's comment focused on its outlandishness and not on the real history of Haiti's liberation struggles against past and present white oppression. A comparison of evangelical Christian Robertson's "divining" words with Haiti's actual history provides an informed moral basis for judging and undoing the real "pacts with the devil" still cursing Haiti.

The day after the horrible earthquake buried Haiti in inconceivable destruction and injury and death, Pat Robertson said on his televised and widely viewed 700 Club on the Christian Broadcasting Network,

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, uh, 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 get us free from the Prince. True story [italics added]. And so the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.'

And they kicked the French out, the Haitians revolted and got themselves free, and ever since they have been cursed by one thing after the other, desperately poor. . . . And we need to pray for them, a great turning to God. And out of this tragedy, I'm optimistic something good may come, but right now we are helping the suffering people, and the suffering is unimaginable. ("Pat Robertson Blames Haiti's 'Pact to the Devil,'" from Jan. 13 edition of the 700 Club program, CBN, www.youtube.com, Jan. 13, 2010)

"True story. . . . And people might not want to talk about it. . . . And we need to pray for them, a great turning to God." Pat Robertson is a white evangelical Christian taking "liberty" with black people's oppression. A son and benefactor of America's white-controlled hierarchy of access to political and economic and religious power. Whose obvious revisionist distortion of Haiti's true history reveals that he did "not want to talk about it." Nor did mainstream media, with their momentary on-the-scene coverage of the earthquake's horrific destruction, want to dig into the related racist ruins of Haiti's early and recent past. But Haitian activist and political analyst Jean Saint-Vil did "want to talk about it"—and did so before the earthquake led Haiti to cross Robertson's mind with his passing and dishonoring judgment.

Instead of a "pact to the devil," Jean Saint-Vil called Haiti's "uprising against slavery . . . 'A

Giant Step for Mankind—Made in Haiti.” (godisnotwhite.org, Aug.11, 2009). That “giant step,” Saint-Vil writes, was taken against brutal oppression, which Pat Robertson and mainstream media choose “not . . . to talk about”:

Popes, kings and queens enriched themselves and built vast empires on the profits made with the sweat and blood of kidnapped men, women and children loaded on ships, stacked like sardines and reduced to slavery on plantations of coffee, sugar, cotton, cocoa, all over the Americas[1]. . . . millions of human beings . . . kidnapped, terrorized, thrown to sharks in the middle of the Atlantic ocean. . . . It has been estimated that the population of Africa in the mid 19th century would have been 50 million instead of 25 million had this catastrophe known as the MAAFA [also known as the African Holocaust] not taken place[3].

Following his graphic documentation of the actual “devils,” Jean Saint-Vil then discloses the “giant step for mankind—made in Haiti,” which Pat Robertson and America’s white-controlled dominant press did not talk or write or report about. Saint-Vil states,

It is within such an atmosphere of unparalleled terrorism and human decadence that a remarkable gathering of men and women took place on the small Caribbean island of Haiti, the evening of August 14-15, 1791. Known as the Bwa Kay Iman Ceremony[4], it is said that this revolutionary meeting brought together representatives of twenty-one displaced African nations who vowed to revolt against the powers that had unleashed against their people such a relentless campaign of terror; a genocide that was expertly conceived and implemented, state-sponsored and financed, justified with numerous literary works and blessed by the most powerful and influential religious institutions of the day[5].

The “giant step for mankind—made in Haiti” included a “giant step” for the religious equality of womankind. Jean Saint-Vil states that the main leaders, of this “first [successful] major revolt against racial slavery in the Americas,” were a female Vodou Priest named Cecile Fatiman[6] and a male Vodou Priest called [Dutty] Boukman[7]. Vodou religion (publicized as Voodoo), with its emphasis on individual respect, generosity and solidarity within community, and gender and sexual orientation inclusiveness, recognized the full and equal power of women in religion centuries before most Christian denominations began cutting their “umbiblical” cord of patriarchy. (See “About Haitian Vodou—Haitian Voodoo History & Beliefs,” by Mike Rock, www.erzulies.com; and “Voodoo a Legitimate Religion, Anthropologist Says,” by Brian Handwerk, for National Geographic News, Oct. 21, 2002).

With Vodou Priests Cecile Fatiman and Dutty Boukman leading the revolt’s “giant step for mankind,” Jean Saint-Vil states that Boukman gave the call to action, which was not a “pact to the devil” but a deeply human and spiritual pact with the “heart.” This pact of liberation was made at a religious ceremony, with the following prayer by Boukman signaling the beginning of the revolt:

The god who created the earth; who created the sun that gives us light. The god who holds up the ocean; who makes the thunder roar. Our God who has ears to hear. You who are hidden in the clouds; who watch us from where you are. You see all that the white has made us suffer. The white man’s god asks him to commit crimes. But the god within us [italics added] wants to do good. Our god, who is so good, so just, He orders us to revenge our wrongs. It’s He who will direct our arms and bring us the victory. It’s He who will assist us.

We all should throw away the image of the white man's god who is so pitiless. Listen to the voice for liberty that speaks in all our hearts[8].

It was "a great turning to God," but not to the white god paternalistic Pat Robertson had in mind and prays to. It was a god who empowered people, not a white-controlled institutionalized god who seeks power over people—and then curses them when they overthrow him and his creators and gain their human birthright of freedom.

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people may not want to talk about it." Five years ago, Ed Kinane, who worked in Haiti with Peace Brigade International, wrote that the United States did "not want to talk about it." He stated, "This was the world's first successful slave revolt. Ignored in our history books, it was an accomplishment as significant and as liberating as the French or U.S. revolutions." ("Why the U.S. and France Hate Haiti," MinutemanMedia.org, July 20, 2005, reprinted in CommonDreams.org.)

If Pat Robertson and mainstream media did "not want to talk about" Vodou Priests Cecile Fatiman and Dutty Boukman, they surely would not "want to talk about" Toussaint L'Ouverture, who became a great leader of the Haitian slaves' struggle for independence. The Toussaint Louverture Project on "Toussaint Louverture" states that he "was the preeminent figure of the Haitian Revolution." The statement continues:

A former slave, he became a brilliant general and capable administrator, defeating British, Spanish, and French troops, emancipating the slave population, and overseeing the country's initial attempts at reforming its political and social structure. His extraordinary efforts at reaching across lines of race and class set him apart from his contemporaries, and his vision of a race-blind, independent country of equals was ahead of his time.

Toussaint L'Ouverture's words, upon capture by the French, are most inspiring for Haiti's earthquake victims, for those who want to talk about it. Toussaint told his captors: "In overthrowing me, you have cut down in Saint-Dominique only the trunk of the tree of liberty. It will spring up again by the roots, for they are numerous." (Ibid)

In his book, *The Negro*, civil rights activist, historian and writer W.E.B. Du Bois called Toussaint L'Ouverture "the greatest of American Negroes and one of the great men of all time." Du Bois then quoted Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society president Wendell Phillips' 1861 lecture on "Toussaint L'Ouverture":

Some doubt the courage of the Negro. Go to Hayti and stand on those fifty thousand graves of the best soldiers France ever had and ask them what they think of the Negro's sword. I would call him Napoleon, but Napoleon made his way to empire over broken oaths and through a sea of blood. This man never broke his word. I would call him Cromwell, but Cromwell was only a soldier, and the state he founded went down with him into his grave. I would call him Washington, but the great Virginian held slaves. This man risked his empire rather than permit the slave trade in the humblest village of his dominions. You think me a fanatic, for you read history, not with your eyes, but with your prejudices. But fifty years hence, when Truth gets a hearing, the Muse of history will put Phocion for the Greek, Brutus for the Roman, Hampden for the English, LaFayette for France, choose Washington as the bright, consummate flower of our earlier civilization, then, dipping her pen in the sunlight, will write in the clear blue, above them all, the name of the soldier, the statesman, the

martyr Toussaint L'Ouverture. [See, " 'Toussaint L'Ouverture' A lecture by Wendell Phillips (1861)"]

Published in 1915, W.E.B. Du Bois ends his "Text on Haiti" with prophetic words:

In political life Hayti is still in the sixteenth century; but in economic life she has succeeded in placing on their own little farms the happiest and most contented peasantry in the world, after raising them from a veritable hell of slavery. If modern capitalistic greed can be restrained from interference until the best elements of Hayti secure permanent political leadership the triumph of the revolution will be complete.

The most accurate account of the Haitian Revolution is believed to be C. L. R. James's book *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. James analyzes the economic and class differences driving the revolution more than the influence of racial divisions. He writes, "The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But," James also stresses, "to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental is an error only less grave than to make it fundamental. (283)" (See "The Black Jacobins: a Class Analysis of Revolution," by Benjamin Graves '98, Brown //University, www.postcolonialweb.org/poldisco)

Tragically, "capitalistic greed" engulfed Haiti. And "Truth" has not received a hearing. Beneath the earthquake's massive rubble in Haiti today is seen the real "pact with the devil." The historical reality that Pat Robertson and America's mainstream media do "not want to talk about." Like, France's demand for "reparations" following the slave revolt as compensation for lost plantations and slaves, a demand the United States supported, which crippled Haiti's economy for over 100 years. The refusal of the United States to even recognize Haiti's independence from slavery until its own slavery foundation began to crack during the Civil War (See "Great television/bad journalism: Media failures in Haiti coverage," By Robert Jensen, OpEdNews.com, Jan 25, 2010)

Robert Flamini talks about "The Risk of Sending U.S. Troops to Haiti" now. In the January 19, 2010 *World Politics Review*, he writes, "In 1915, Woodrow Wilson sent in the marines to Haiti, ostensibly to steady the country, then beset by coup and counter-coup, but actually to protect American business interests." Flamini continued, "Wilson took control of the Haitian National Bank and transferred \$500,000 to the United States for 'safekeeping.' A virtual occupation," he added, "with the U.S. marine commander acting as provincial governor, remained in force until 1934."

There is more on America's "capitalistic greed" under the earthquake's ruins that America's political and religious status quo and their guardian media do "not want to talk about." The United States government's support of the repressive dictatorships of Francois "Papa Doc Duvalier and then his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier from 1957 to 1986. The BBC News reported, "During their 31-year rule tens of thousands of people were killed, some tortured to death," with Haitian exiles in France calling for "Baby Doc" Duvalier to be tried for "crimes against humanity." ("World: Americas 'Bring Baby Doc to justice,'" Dec. 8, 1998) But the United States government did "not want to talk about it." As Gary Younge writes in *The Guardian*, "Both the US and France backed the Duvaliers' brutal dictatorships and when democratic government did arrive it was hogtied by terms imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. Among other things," Younge continues, "rigged trade agreements

transformed Haiti from a self-sufficient rice producer to importing the bulk of its rice from subsidized growers in the US." ("The West Owes Haiti a Bailout. And It Would Be a Hand-Back, Not a Handout," Feb. 1, 2010) Ashley Smith talks about it this way: "Floods of U.S. agricultural imports destroyed peasant agriculture. As a result," Smith writes, "hundreds of thousands of people flocked to the teeming slums of Port-au-Prince to labor for pitifully low wages in sweatshops located in U.S. export processing zones." ("The Incapacitation of Haiti," Counterpunch, Jan. 14, 2010; see also, "Haiti Earthquake: Made in the USA: Why the Blood is on Our Hands," by Ted Rell, CommonDreams.org, Jan. 14, 2010)

"Something happened" not too long ago "in Haiti," and America's "modern capitalistic greed"- controlled government and guardian media and accommodating religious status quo "might not want to talk about it" today. The US-sponsored coups that drove democratically elected, reform-committed, Catholic priest and liberation theologian Jean-Bertrand Aristide from the presidency in 1991, and again in 2004. The New York Times reporting that the C.I.A. had financed Haiti's "most feared right-wing paramilitary group . . . accused of murdering, raping and beating hundreds of supporters of Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide." ("Haitian Ex-Paramilitary Leader Confirms C.I.A. Relationship," By Tim Weiner, Dec. 3, 1995). The US-instigated banishing of Aristide from Haiti and banning of his Fanmi Lavalas party, the most popular political party in the country, from participating in elections. Why? Aristide's Lavalas party threatened US business and political interests with its emphasis on restoring Haiti's independence and self-sufficiency. (See "Plan of Death in Haiti," By Vijay Prashad, Counterpunch, Jan. 27, 2010).

There is much US oppression of Haiti that our government does not want talked about. Seen in President Obama appointing former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush to lead the humanitarian response to Haiti's earthquake victims—the very two presidents whose administrations overthrew President Aristide's democratically-elected governments in 1991 and 2004. (See, "Haiti, Aristide and Ideology," By William Blum, Counterpunch, Feb. 10, 2010) Sadly, their appointment indicates that the Obama administration "would rather not talk about it."

The January 12 earthquake exposed America's historic "pact with the devil" in Haiti. The pervasive poverty. The stifling slums and fragile housing in Port-au-Prince. The lack of adequate life-sustaining infrastructure of clean water, sanitation and electrical power. The limited and limiting educational system. The minimal social and health care services. And a US-weakened and dependent government. These political and economic fault lines were made in America, and contributed greatly to the severity of the earthquake's damage.

The response to Haiti's overwhelming catastrophe should not just be about charity. Though the generous giving and services of countless individuals and groups and helping professions is most urgently needed and laudable. But Haiti's overwhelming need and criminal victimization call for full reparations from the US government. Citizens' contributions to Haiti should include demanding that the US government recognize the injustices America has committed against Haiti and pay full reparations for those past and present crimes against its people. America's response to Haiti should not be about looking good in the eyes of the world but about doing good.

It is also about reparations. As Peter Hallwood writes in The Guardian/UK,

Along with sending emergency relief, we should ask what we can do to facilitate the self-empowerment of Haiti's people and public institutions. If we

are serious about helping we need to stop trying to control Haiti's government, to pacify its citizens, and to exploit its economy. And then we need to start paying for at least some of the damage we've already done. ("Our Role in Haiti's Plight," Jan. 14, 2010, reprinted in CommonDreams.org.)

America should not be about sacrificing and destroying lives and resources in profit-and political power-driven imperialistic wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our country should be using its human and material resources to respond justly and fully to the rights and overwhelming needs of our Haitian neighbors and to the impoverishment of our own vulnerable citizens. America's security lies in alleviating the suffering that terrorizes people not in being the cause of their terror.

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