

Letters on the Haiti earthquake

21 January 2010

On “Haiti: US troops deployed as popular anger mounts”

Thanks to Bill Van Auken and other WSWs writers who have contributed to discussing and analyzing the present crisis in Haiti. I also appreciate the criticisms aimed at the inadequate or disgustingly callous reporting done by the mainstream press. If the US continues the occupation and suppression of Haiti, then it looks like we will have to begin demanding withdrawal of troops from Haiti as well as Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the US, whatever the left hand gives the right hand takes back one-hundredfold. Unfortunately, some far right-wing discussion (on blogs at least) has revolved around the myth that the United States is an unfaltering force of good and comments remain attached to the paradigm of colonial fantasy. Such discussion is heavily strained with racism, cynicism, indifference, and capitalistic rationalizations of inequality such as “why should we help people who don’t want to help themselves?” I mention this because these comments are symbolic of the rationality and attitude of the nation at large.

Articles on WSWs combat the imperialistic notions that permeate mainstream conceptualizations of events. Socialist perspectives and clairvoyant exposure of the rotten infrastructure propping up the financial elite are immensely helpful. There is no reason why such poverty and injustice should exist when there are enough resources to cure it a stone’s throw away. This situation seems strikingly similar to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when looting by distraught and hungry people was seen as criminal, while the violence enacted by vigilantes and soldiers was seen as a justified response. Both New Orleans and Haiti could have been spared such devastation if the necessary measures had been taken. With each passing year, capitalism reaffirms that it is incapable of providing the most fundamental and basic needs of society. That is why socialism, and the building of a socialist movement of the working class, is so important.

Nick M
Tennessee, USA
16 January 2010

On “Bush, Clinton and the crimes of US imperialism in Haiti”

At long last, Obama has spoken the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth: “in a moment of need, the US stands united”.

Isn’t this a strange, even extraordinary remark? It suggests that it is the US, and not Haiti, that finds itself “in a moment of need”. And yet this is true, from the standpoint of Obama, Bush, Clinton and cohorts. For the political elite, there *is* a moment of need: standing behind Wall Street and its economic interests, including maintaining US imperialist interests abroad, such as in Haiti.

So Obama really said: “when US imperialism is in need, Democrats and Republicans stand united”. But there is more to this than meets the eye and plays on words. For by sending US troops to Haiti, Obama is not behaving in the same way as when he sends troops to Afghanistan. It is not a matter of fighting “terrorists” but of something closer to home: *crowd control*.

US troops are going to get some excellent training in Haiti, protecting the government and imposing curfew and martial law, while all the time pretending to protect the population from looters. All this may—who knows?—prove useful back home if the increasing number of Americans unemployed, pensionless, without welfare and threatened with foreclosure were to take to the streets...

Reynold H
Paris, France
18 January 2010

On “The history that ‘binds’ the US and Haiti”

Bill Van Auken puts into precise and succinct words how the media blames the Haitians who have been subject to decades of ravages of colonial plunder and the profit system. I was disgusted by the massive outpouring of hypocrisy and sensational media coverage that covered up the filthy underlying causes that played such a deadly force in this large loss of life. No insights into what conditions of life

produced such deplorable conditions and why the shanty structures flourished? In reality, there were no building codes enforced, and there may be no building codes altogether on housing. A major disaster happens, thousands perish and no lessons drawn nor anyone the wiser. The media refuse to help or explain how the island has been plundered over a long historical period, and any desires and aspirations of the country's population crushed.

Whilst the earthquake was nature's force at work, the terrible shaky structures the population lived under or died under arose specifically out of a system based on one of the world's highest rates of exploitation. It is so striking; there is such a large element of unpaid labor time. Included also, Haiti has a large child slave labour force that is brutally forced to work for nothing. The widespread hovels and hunger are a direct consequence flowing out of the horrific levels of the exploitation imposed brutally on the industrial and rural working class.

It is not some accident there are 9,000 UN military stationed in Haiti, as well as the local military, police and a fairly large secret security organization with a sordid history of dragnets, roundups, torture, murder and repression. You might walk all day to find a hospital but you cannot walk far without noticing guns on show everywhere. The military are there primarily as a semi-dictatorship over all aspects of life and to keep the population down, suppressing any uprisings at the point of a gun. This is an island that offers people no steady work, no future, no decent medical care or education/university facilities. The forecast for industrial or rural production growth (for the next decade) is zero and has been kept that way. As well, to their credit, a history of slave rebellions and a revolution.

Not too long ago the IMF mission chief for Haiti told Reuters: Haiti is a "land of opportunity if you're an entrepreneur and an investor," adding, "It is a golden moment for Haiti to start investing in export capacity, particularly in textiles."

"Big money" is only too aware that an uprising is long overdue and would immediately inflame the Caribbean and America—especially so, with a socialist perspective fighting for great aims and workers power. Hunger and poverty are on the increase, becoming ever more global, driving working people into struggle against the existing social order.

Hillary Clinton's first comment about the earthquake was to promise to send more troops. Kevin Rudd, speaking for the Australian Labor Party and the billionaires he represents, indicated the indifference of the Labor Party: Haiti is too far away for aid to get there in time! (Less than twenty-four

hours by plane)

Life is extremely poor, fragile and degrading for the peoples of Haiti. There are clear lessons in this process for all workers, students and professional people who have to unite their struggles and fight for the only alternative—a socialist solution.

John C
Australia
15 January 2010

Finally, an honest and credible review of the real disaster taking place here. Thank you.

Julie H.
15 January 2010

Obama and European politicians are conveniently doing an excellent job for the media on both sides of the Atlantic, posturing as the "good Samaritans" without indulging in the history of imperial subjection of the Haitian people. The topic, as to why they (under force) came to the island, could be a simple matter for any German media to investigate the facts.

Philip T
Germany
15 January 2010

No massive mobilization of international assistance? Canada landed in Haiti on Wednesday and has several frigates en route. Iceland also landed a Hercules class aircraft. Canada has allowed both Russian and Chinese planes to refuel en route to Haiti. I could go on. Are you finished with your research? I find your articles interesting, but lacking.

John
15 January 2010

On "Obama's 'gentle bank tax'"

Instead of talking about "obscene bonuses," Obama should have put them on the spot by thanking the Wall Street banks for graciously donating their bonuses to Haitian Earthquake Relief.

MZ
15 January 2010



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