



OVERCOMING CATASTROPHE IN HAITI: ELECTION ILLUSIONS AND CONTINUED STRUGGLE

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There are rumors and scattered reports that there were democratic elections in Haiti last Sunday, but it is difficult to take seriously a process promoted by visible and invisible forces who concede it is deeply flawed, but still claim it is a steady move toward democracy and self-determination. Yes, the posters were up and some candidates came forth, made their pleas and placed their names and images at various venues. Also, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the 15-nation Caribbean Community were brought or sent in to help with planning, logistics and the problem of legitimizing the process. The rough-riding and much disliked UN security and suppression forces were assigned, along with the Haitian National Police, to maintain security at the polling places and numerous international monitors were also put in place. And there was the persistent and perennial calls for calm, cooperation and collaboration of the people in this process essentially designed to legitimize domination, not foster democracy, and to sanction “international” tutelage not self-determination.

But the list of problems that prevent the claim of a credible democratic self-determined election is long and overwhelming. To begin with, the largest party, Lavalas, a party of the masses of the Haitian people, has been outlawed and denied the capacity to participate. No election can claim to be democratic, real or relevant if it denies the masses of the people the right to vote, have a voice and participate in their own government and society. Not only have the established order – internal and external – outlawed the largest party, they have been waging a murderous campaign of suppression and elimination against its members since the overthrow and kidnapping of its leader, President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

This too is a problem for those claiming they have brought the possibility of political democracy, social stability and financial heaven to Haiti when it is they who destroyed it. Thus, they seek to paper over, erase the memory and empty the mind of the fact that they overthrew, kidnapped and forced into exile President Aristide, the democratically-elected president of Haiti, who was elected by an overwhelming majority, an achievement presidential candidates in the occupying countries can only hopefully pray for. Moreover, “the people in power” have banned President Aristide from his own country, preventing his return as president or private citizen.

So, they have decided to hold elections, dangling in front of eager aspirants to power, billions of aid monies promised, but not delivered, and clearly not intended to empower the people, satisfy their needs in dignity-respecting ways or help lay the basis for a rising and reconstruction in their own image and interests. This was a process forced and foisted on Haiti by external forces called “the international community”, which in reality was the unholy trinity of the U.S., France and Canada, representing in their basic forms brute force and imperial claims; aggressive historical hatred hawked as current concern; and junior ally in tow, taking things in stride, seeing which way the corporate winds blow. Who can honestly accept such an arrogant brute-force and imperial position and call it democracy, self-determination or the most effective way forward?

It is amazing how many White folks imagine themselves and others and even expect others to accept their illusions as facts, their racial fears as a rational foundation for foreign policy, and their government and corporate interests as essential and the only way forward. And it is equally amazing to see how

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utterly astonished they are when the people they oppress push back and resist the terrorism, occupation, exploitation and oppression imposed on them.

And consider the way they talk about Haiti in dignity-denying ways, as they occupy its land, kill its people, kidnap and force out of office its democratically- elected president, steal its children, freeze-frame its future and cut corporate deals in air-conditioned caves about how to hold it hostage for another century as a center of cheap and desperate labor and possible resource extraction. But it's up to those of us who understand resistance and struggle as the rightful way forward to reject the illusions and oppression represented by this election; for it is not in the interests of the Haitian people. On the contrary, it is illegitimate; for it excluded Lavalas and President Aristide; was riddled and rife with fraud, vote suppression and manipulation and was ultimately determined and directed by external forces.

Moreover, it was and is deceptive in its pretension of pursuing democracy, empowering the people and allowing for self-determination; and its sowing of endless illusions surrounding these fake and forked-tongued claims. The election is also, and in great part diversionary, creating illusions of involvement, myths of relevant action while suffering continues unabated; needs remain unanswered; and problems persist without solutions. And the people continue to die, suffer hunger and homelessness, illness, displacement and are made artificially unable to live a decent life.

Haiti and the Haitian people can and will rise from the rubble and ravages of earth-

quake, heavy rain and resultant floods; recent epidemic, hurricanes and structured hardships, bad governance and imperial imposition. But it will take struggle, long, hard and difficult struggle, requiring the sacrifice and suffering liberation requires and Haiti is known for. And it will require our organizing and building a constituency of support for the Haitian people in their ongoing struggle to achieve several basic goals: (1) end of the military occupation under the cover of the U.N. Forces, (2) secure permanent status and work permits for Haitian nationals in the U.S. while encouraging and supporting their increased contribution to Haiti's development; (3) release of international aid; (4) establish fair and reciprocal trade policies; (5) foster internal development directed toward food security, rebuilding infrastructure, poverty reduction, restoration of agriculture, reforestation and water projects; (6) cancellation of the unjust and debilitating international debt; and (7) the return of democracy, the rule of law and of Haiti's democratically-elected leadership, Lavalas and President Aristide.

For Haiti's rising and reconstruction will require a leadership which approaches its office as a moral vocation; loves the people and is loved by the people, and cannot be bought or bribed by the promised billions on their way to corporate coffers in varied forms. And it will require a leadership which has the capacity to call the people together to reach inside themselves and bring forth the strength, insight and sustained struggle to solve their own problems, forge their own future, free themselves and end the 200-year interruption and reversal of a heroic, hard-won liberation, known in history as the Haitian Revolution.

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