

8th Day Center for Justice



CENTERINGS

A PUBLICATION OF 8TH DAY CENTER FOR JUSTICE

HAITI



A choir director stands before her choir in the outdoor replacement church at St. Claire's parish in the Ti Plas Kazo neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, 10 February 2010.



Riders sit on a tap-tap, a converted pickup truck, in Cité Soleil, 9 February 2010.



A woman waits to be seen by doctors volunteering at a one-day medical clinic under a tarp in Cité Soleil, 11 February 2010.



Two kids carry a bucket of water into a camp near the earthquake's epicenter in the Léogâne area, 6 February 2010.

An Open Letter to Our Haitian Sisters and Brothers

BY: KATHLEEN DESAUTELS, SP

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Haiti,

Your resiliency these months in the aftermath of the January 12, 2010 devastating earthquake is a beacon of light to the world. Tragedy throughout your history is no stranger. The enormity of the recent disaster, however, is unimaginable - over 1 million deaths and more than a quarter of a million left homeless. One can only stand in awe at your steadfast resolve to rebuild life in the face of the obstacles ahead.

As people of faith and good will we are troubled and angered by the machinations of “disaster capitalists,” as Naomi Klein writes, swooping into Haiti to make money off your suffering. How well you know that their plan for “recovery” is a euphemism for what it really means – sweatshops, land grabs and privatization. Such a “recovery” is yet one more attempt at the neo-liberal system of economic slavery you’ve been resisting since your slave revolt in 1803.

Who knows better than Haitian people how sweatshop labor works? Your most recent struggle to have the Haitian Parliament approve an increase in hourly wage from \$1.75 to a



The staff uses a window to get the food outside the St. Claire’s rectory kitchen, 10 February 2010. St. Claire’s feeds at least 1,500 people every day, Monday through Friday, and has been doing so for ten years. The lines have been longer since the earthquake, and the food more difficult to get. This program is a model of efficiency and nutrition compared to the UN World Food Programme’s rice-only distributions. Photo by René Merino, © 2010.

8th DAY CENTER FOR JUSTICE

205 W. Monroe Street
Chicago IL 60606-5062

Phone: 312-641-5151, Fax: 312-641-1250

Email: info@8thdaycenter.org

Web: www.8thdaycenter.org

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CENTERINGS COMMITTEE

Erin Cox; Stephanie Dernek;
Kathleen Desautels, SP; Elizabeth Deligio;
Mary Kay Flanigan, OSF; Kaitlin Ramsey;
Krystyna Soljan; Katie Varatta; Ashley Velchek

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mere \$5 per hour is a prime example. The business elite quickly opposed this, followed by President Rene Preval’s subsequent refusal to sign the bill. Added to this defeat is the proposed \$50 million “industrial park” that would house roughly 40 manufacturing facilities and warehouses. Such “develop-

ment” promises are good news for investors making Haiti competitive with China’s slave wages. Once again, those most vulnerable – the economically poor - will bear the burden of such a plan.

As people of faith and good will we are alarmed by this kind of abusive economic policy and know that it is often, as in your case, carried out by “barrel of the gun” diplomacy. Where under the guise of “security” in the immediate aftermath of the quake the US assumed the control of Haiti’s air space and landed 6,500 soldiers with 15, 000 more troops off shore. While corporate media in the US fixated on the need for these troops because of the “problem of looters,” virtually every independent observer in Haiti after the earthquake noted the lack of violence. Militarism and neo-liberal policies, as we say, make one big happy family.

This “new occupation of Haiti” – the third in the last 16 years – fits within the US doctrine of rollback in Latin America in-

cluding support for the coup in Honduras, seven new military bases in Colombia, and hostilities toward Bolivia, and Venezuela. Arun Gupta writes, "The US wants to ensure that Haiti will not pose the 'threat of a good example' by pursuing an independent path, as it tried to do under President Jean Bertrand Aristide — which is why he was toppled twice, in 1991 and 2004, in US - backed coups." Security is not the need, rather control of the Haitian people and the region is.

One has to wonder how it is that the country made the most poor in the Western Hemisphere, having endured years of domination, is able to continue to show such resiliency in the face of adversity? It is this spirit, this beacon of light that calls people of faith and good will to step up and out and say "no" to the imperialist policies being imported in the name of relief.

We offer this edition of Centerings as our small effort to educate people in the US about your efforts to control your own

destiny. It is our belief that help from the international community should be a partnership that honors the reality that the Haitian people are the only real experts who can truly rebuild Haiti.

In solidarity we pledge to support you, the Haitian people, in this effort.

Kathleen Desautels, SP, is staff at 8th Day for the Sisters of Providence since 1986. She visited Haiti as a human rights monitor at the time of the 1994 coup.

NOTES

¹ Gupta, Arun. "The US in Haiti: Neoliberalism at the Barrel of a Gun," *The Independent*. 19 Feb. 2010, <http://www.independent.org/2010/02/18/us-in-haiti>.

Haiti, Challenges and Opportunities:

An appreciation of Haitian History

BY: HARRY FOUCHE

Haiti, the second oldest republic in the northern hemisphere, gained independence on January 1, 1804 following the only successful slave rebellion in the history of the world. This slave revolt led to the establishment of Haiti, a country run by former slaves in a world still very much slave oriented. November 18, 1803 marked the final and decisive battle and total defeat of the French Army. This victory made possible the Louisiana Purchase on December 19, 1803, a transaction that made the US a continental power overnight.

In the late 1700's three great revolutions changed the world: the 1776 American Revolution, the 1789 French Revolution, and the 1791 Haitian Revolution. Of all three revolutions however, only the Haitian Revolution was faithful to these guiding premises: *All men are created equal and are endowed by their creators with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

With the American Revolution came the initial crowning of the US Constitution. In this document it was stated that black inhabitants were only 3/5 human, thus not entitled to protections inscribed in the Constitution. Women were also not included in the document. Similarly, the French Universal Declaration of Human Rights made clear that all men meant "all white men"; blacks and women were also excluded.

By contrast, Haiti's 1801 Constitution crafted by Toussaint Louverture stated that all people, regardless of sex or race are equal. The 1803 and 1805 Constitution added both whites and women as full citizens in Haiti.

During the war of Haiti's independence from 1801 to 1803, Poland was under French domination, thus France sent an expedition of Polish soldiers to fight Haitian freedom fighters. However, Polish soldiers sided with the Haitian Resistance. After Haiti's independence on January 1, 1804 Polish soldiers and their families were granted full Haitian citizenship and were given land. These soldiers settled in Cazales, located outside of Port au Prince and in Fond des Blancs in southern Haiti where their descendants remain today.

After gaining independence, Haiti suffered an immediate embargo by the United States and Europe. Yet despite this unjust policy, Haiti became a beacon of hope and freedom for the region. Leaders such as Simon Bolivar, Francisco de Miranda, Jose de San Martin, and later Jose Marti all came to Haiti to obtain financial, military, logistical, and manpower in their efforts to oust the Spanish colonizers. With Haiti's support, 20 out of 21 Latin American Republics gained independence. In return for the support of their freedom, Haiti asked that immediate steps be taken to abolish slavery.

OUTSIDE INTERFERENCES AND DESTRUCTION OF HAITI'S ECONOMY

In 1825, the French returned to Haiti with an armada and demanded 150 million gold francs (approximately \$25.6 billion dollars today), in exchange for recognition of the country's independence. Haiti had to borrow money to pay this ransom over a period of time. Haiti paid the last installment of \$5 million dollars in 1947. This ransom was the first of many lethal blows administered to Haiti and its economy.

During World War I and World War II, the United States used Haiti to experiment with the culture of rubber, a tree native to Malaysia. Sisal was also introduced to Haiti to satisfy the US need for twine and rope. Thousands of acres of arable land were deforested to enable vast plantation of these two products. Unfortunately, rubber never grew at the rate needed to satisfy industrial exploitation. In addition, the use of Sisal was trumped when the Japanese invented nylon. Thus, Haiti was left with barren land and deep scars of deforestation.

In the 1980s, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced to the world that their field officers in Haiti discovered swine flu among some of the pigs they observed. To prevent a swine flu epidemic and possible damage to the US Swine Industry, the USDA recommended killing all the pigs in Haiti. The USDA stated that Haiti would receive a variety of new pigs as replacement.

The wholesale, systematic killing of all the pigs in Haiti resulted in a severe contraction in the Haitian economy. The Haitian people were rendered paupers overnight. Pigs in Haiti served as a savings account or a highly liquid commodity. Pigs could be sold to raise the funds a family needed to pay for weddings, births, illnesses, funerals, or schooling. When replacement pigs from the US finally arrived to Haiti, only the upper class could afford the maintenance and upkeep imposed by the USDA including enclosed areas with a cement floor and wheat and milk as food. Most people in the countryside did not have such luxury to meet these standards.



An older child feeds a younger child at St. Claire's rectory in the Ti Plas Kazo neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, 9 February 2010. Photo by René Merino, © 2010.

On the political side, a string of dictators and puppets imposed by the US on the Haitian people further deteriorated the social fabric of the country. The examples cited above provide only a few illustrations of the harm done to Haiti, its people, and its economy. Yet, despite these setbacks, the Haitian people continue to show resiliency in the face of adversity.

AFTER THE HURRICANES, THE QUAKE HIT

In 2004 and 2008, hurricanes struck Haiti and damaged beyond repair the few working bridges and roads in the country. Despite money raised and turn over to the authorities, little to nothing was done after these natural disasters. Corrupt officials siphoned much of the relief.

On January 12, 2010 a powerful earthquake destroyed much of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and surrounding areas. At last count approximately 250,000 people have died and more than 1 million people are homeless. Three months after the quake, the situation remains dire. The exact number of dead will remain unknown because days following the quake thousands of people were buried in mass graves in Titanyen, a barren zone used during the Duvalier dictatorship to dispose victims of the dictatorship.

Days after the quake, the Haitian government was notoriously absent and victims were left to fend for themselves. Food,

water and medical attention began to appear at disaster areas only with the arrival of the first wave of international relief and support. Flights transporting medications, medical personnel, and food could not land in Port au Prince because US military crafts were given priority (the US had taken control of the airport). Civilian flights were diverted to the neighboring Dominican Republic.

When the Haitian government finally asserted themselves, they announced that all goods coming into the country were subject to customs and duties, regardless of whether they were for relief purposes. This decision made the Haitian government even more unpopular.

Meanwhile, provinces that had been long subjugated by the central authorities in Port-au-Prince began to express dissatisfaction with the Preval administration. Although Port au Prince and the surrounding areas were devastated, the rest of the country had not been affected by the quake and were treated as if they did not exist. Airports and ports available in those areas were not considered for use in relief efforts. One month into the aftermath of the quake, regional authorities in Cap-Haitien decided to set up an Emergency Management Authority in Northern Haiti to utilize the facilities being ignored by the Central government and promote relief efforts.

In Southern Haiti a group of mayors formed a federation to address the problems confronted by their municipalities. Haiti's central authorities initially ignored these initiatives. However the Ministry of the Interior, on behalf of the government, made strong exceptions to these measures, especially in the case of Southern Haiti.

We must insist that a new Haiti become decentralized so that all provinces can have autonomy and provide for their own inhabitants. Local Haitians know more about problems affecting their own provinces than some bureaucrats in Port au Prince, Washington, New York, Paris, or Montreal.

The absence of the Haitian government caused Haiti to become a country run by international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). For many observers, it seems no less like a thriving poverty industry.

THE UN, BILL CLINTON AND HAITI

On March 31, 2010 a conference was held at the United Nations in New York under the leadership of Bill and Hillary Clinton in order to obtain and solicit financial support for Haiti. Bill Clinton wears many hats in his involvement with Haiti, most recently becoming Haiti's reconstruction Czar for an 18-month period. The Haitian Prime Minister is co-chair of this 18-month venture, despite the fact that the government term ends in 9 months. The \$5.9 billion promised to Haiti, to be installed over 3 years, has yet to be seen.

While Haiti and its people are suffering, US contractors and others with connections have begun the process of positioning themselves for contracts that will be awarded by Bill Clinton's special Reconstruction Commission. Membership is limited to donors who contribute at least \$100 million dollars.

By far, the biggest contributor to Haiti's well being is the Haitian Diaspora, sending home approximately \$2 billion dollars every year. Although the Haitian Diaspora was granted a seat at the table, it had no voting power in the rebuilding of Haiti. Meanwhile big NGOs, multilateral organizations, and rich countries will decide how and where the rebuilding process will evolve.

MOVING FORWARD: REBUILDING HAITIAN SOCIETY

Haiti's society and social fabrics need to be re-woven. The social inequalities that have marked Haitians are exposed for the world to see. Haiti came to light as a result of an excavation. The earthquake made it possible for outsiders to witness and realize the sub-human conditions in which most Haitians live. Basic living necessities such as running water, electricity, and roads are not available to the majority of the population. The unemployment rate that before the quake was approximately 80%, now estimates closer to 90%. Haiti is in a very difficult situation, but simultaneously stands at a crossroads. For any reconstruction to take place in Haiti the following conditions are imperative:

- a) Basic living necessities such as potable running water, electricity, roads and access to health care must be high priority
- b) Haitian people need a helping hand, not a hand out. The international community must listen to the Haitian people.
- c) The international community should not impose unpopular leadership on the people; the 18 month mandate of the Clinton Commission should be revisited.

Finally, Haitians should be put to work rebuilding their country. Foreign companies, eager to participate in the reconstruction of Haiti, should participate only with the understanding that they act as a vector for the transfer of technologies and lasting jobs. Doing so will help create a Haitian work force capable of maintaining the new infrastructures to be laid down. The new workforce and the velocity of dollars earned will create enough economic activity to move the country forward, provided public corruption is stomped out and international corruption and interference are reduced completely.

Harry Fouché is Chairman of the Consortium For Haitian Empowerment www.haitianconsortium.org and is the former Consul General of Haiti in New York.

Mercenaries Circling Haiti

BY: BILL QUIGLEY

On March 9 and 10 there was a Haiti conference in Miami for private military and security companies to showcase their services to governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the earthquake devastated country.

On their website for the Haiti conference, the trade group IPOA (ironically called the International Peace Operations Association until recently) lists eleven companies advertising security services explicitly for Haiti. Even though guns are illegal to buy or sell in Haiti, many companies brag of their heavy duty military experience.

Triple Canopy, a private military company with extensive security operations in Iraq and Israel, is advertising for business in Haiti. According to human rights activist and investigative reporter Jeremy Scahill, Triple Canopy took over the Xe/Blackwater security contract in Iraq in 2009. Scahill reports on a number of bloody incidents involving Triple Canopy including an incident where a team leader told his group, "I want to kill somebody today...because I am going on vacation tomorrow."

Another company seeking work is EODT Technology which promises in its ad that its personnel are licensed to carry weapons in Haiti. EODT has worked in Afghanistan since 2004 and provides security for the Canadian Embassy in South Africa. On their website they promise a wide range of security services including force protection, guard services, port security, surveillance, and counter IED response services.

A retired CIA special operations officer founded another company, Overseas Security & Strategic Information, also advertising with IPOA for security business in Haiti. The company website says they have a "cadre of US personnel" who served in Special Forces, Delta Force and SEALs and state that many of their security personnel are former South African military and police.

Patrick Elie, the former Minister of Defense in Haiti, told Anthony Fenton of the Inter Press Service that "these guys are like vultures coming to grab the loot over this disaster, and probably money that might have been injected into the Haitian economy is just going to be grabbed by these companies and I'm sure they are not the only mercenary companies but also other companies like Halliburton or these other ones that always come on the heels of the troops."

Naomi Klein, world renowned author of *The Shock Doctrine*, has criticized the militarization of response to the earthquake and the presence of "disaster capitalists" swooping into Haiti. "The high priority placed on security by the US and NGOs is wrong", she told Newsweek. "Aid should be prioritized



Armed military outside of food distribution center after the earthquake. Photo by René Merino, © 2010.

over security. Any aid agency that's afraid of Haitians should get out of Haiti."

Security is a necessity for the development of human rights. But outsourcing security

to private military contractors has not proven beneficial in the US or any other country. Recently, US Representative Jan Schakowsky (IL) and US Senator Bernie Sanders (VT) introduced bills entitled "Stop Outsourcing Security" to phase out private military contractors in response to the many reports of waste, fraud and human rights abuse.

Human rights organizations have long challenged the growth in private security contractors in part because governments have failed to establish effective systems for requiring them to be transparent and for holding them accountable.

It is challenging enough to hold government accountable. The privatization of a public service like security gives government protection to private corporations which are also difficult to hold accountable. The combination is doubly difficult to regulate.

The US has prosecuted hardly any of the human rights abuses reported against private military contractors. Amnesty International has reviewed the code of conduct adopted by the IPOA and found it inadequate, in which compliance with international human rights standards are not adequately addressed.

This is yet another example of what the world saw after Katrina. Private security forces, including Blackwater, also descended on the US gulf coast after Katrina, grabbing millions of dollars in contracts.

Contractors like these soak up much needed money that could instead be used to fund job creation or humanitarian and rebuilding assistance. Haiti certainly does not need this kind of US business. In a final bit of irony, the IPOA, according to the Institute for Southern Studies, promises that all profits from the event will be donated to the Clinton-Bush Haiti relief fund.

Bill Quigley is legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights and a long-time human rights advocate in Haiti. To contact Bill email: Quigley77@gmail.com.

Haiti 100 Days Later

BY: FRITZ GUTWEIN

In an interview after the earthquake in Haiti, Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, the leader of the Peasant Movement of Papay (MPP) said, “We have to take advantage of this catastrophe and say the clock is set at zero. We have to build another Haiti that doesn’t have anything to do with the Haiti we had before.”

This quote from Jean-Baptiste is a powerful description of where the Haitian people find themselves today.

270,000 have died. 1.2 million are homeless. Thousands are still living without shelter. Many in camps are faced with involuntarily removal (the new euphemism for the forcible eviction of IDPs—internally displaced persons).

The natural disaster of January 12 would have been damaging to any country, any major city. But the quake and its aftermath were much more disastrous in Haiti. Why? The natural disaster was only the beginning. It was also the end result of a man-made disaster that was decades, if not centuries in the making.

Port-au-Prince (PAP) is a city built for 300,000 people that had a population of three million. People had been living in both heavily congested situations as well as in buildings that were not built to code.

Since the quake, many people have left PAP and returned to their homes in the countryside. As a result, another disaster has emerged. The rural population does not have enough food to feed the returnees. The MPP reports that malnutrition exists amongst both the host families in Papay and the returnees. Now for food, families have to use seeds they had originally been saving for the planting season. This will create drastic food shortages in the months to come.

The overcrowding of PAP and the poverty in the rural sector is very much a result of structural adjustment policies that have discouraged food security and encouraged people to move to urban areas for sweatshop jobs in export industries.

The rainy season has started and it’s hard to imagine that the camps will survive. Only one camp run by the Venezuelan government meets international standards of IDP. What will happen if a tropical storm or hurricane hits the island? What will be the fate of those who don’t have basic shelter?

The statement by Jean-Baptiste that “the clock is set to zero,” highlights both challenges and opportunities for Haiti and the international community. Now is the time to imagine a new Haiti and our relationship with its people.

MODELING NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH HAITI

The Haiti Response Coalition (HRC), is a loose coalition of NGOs in the US partnering with grassroots organizations in Haiti. Formed within hours of the earthquake, organizations



A girl sells produce on the roadside in Port-au-Prince, 11 February 2010. Photo by René Merino, © 2010.

such as KONPAY, the Quixote Center and Beyond Borders work with animators (Haitian organizers) trained by the MPP in 33 different camps around Port-au-Prince, serving more than 40,000 people. Distributions have included numerous items from the US, tarps and tents from Australia and food from Venezuela.

These distributions are not only an end in themselves, but a means to reinforce and empower the leadership and commitments within the camps. Evaluations are conducted of the camps and their needs. Then an effective strategy is put in place that provides alternative means of distribution that listens to and works with the Haitian people, reaching the most vulnerable among them.

The Haiti Response Coalition also has a prophetic voice in DC and beyond to ensure that the voices of our Haitian partners are heard on issues such as forced evictions and the need for food security (local food purchase), in the midst of the food aid that is pouring into the country.

As the clock has been set to zero in Haiti, NGOs and the international community needs to re-address how they operate in-country and take a hard look at the policies that have so negatively impacted Haiti. The building of a new Haiti calls us all to engage in partnerships that are professional in our work and prophetic in our own voices.

Fritz Gutwein is co-director of the Quixote Center and coordinator of the Haiti Reborn program. The Quixote Center has worked in Haiti since the early 1990s and recently celebrated ten years supporting a reforestation program in Gros Morne. You can donate to their earthquake relief efforts at <http://quixote.org/haitiquake>.

One Bank's Recovery Plan

BY: LEIGH CARTER

"My credit agent came to see me a couple of days after the quake, I knew he had lost his home as well, but he was there reassuring me that we will make it."
– Roselene Pierre-Louis, Fonkoze client

In 35-seconds, the earthquake brought devastation to Haiti and Fonkoze, Haiti's Alternative Bank for the Organized Poor founded by Father Joseph Philippe, CSSp. Some officials have characterized this as the largest natural disaster in history.



Five Fonkoze staff members perished, and we are devastated by their loss. 112 clients are dead or their families cannot locate them; 470 staff members are homeless, and like almost everyone in Haiti, most lost someone very close

to them. Ten offices, including the Central Office need to be replaced, and six offices need major repairs.

Fonkoze once again solidified its reputation as "the bank on which the poor of Haiti can rely." The first priority was to locate staff and help them get their life in order so they could then serve Fonkoze's clients. In total, 470 were homeless, and these employees received financial support as a result of generous donations. Psychological support by Haitian psychologists has been offered and continues, and tents were secured for many of the staff – although not all. With employees located and initial care provided, attention quickly turned to clients...

At 56, anyone would understand why this woman could just give up. Roselene worked all her life to accumulate a few, very critical, assets, only to see them destroyed in less than one minute.

"I was proud of my small home, and it was well covered." Referring to the hurricanes of 2008, Roselene said, "When 2009 came and went with no big storms, that was a big relief."

Roselene was one of the Fonkoze clients who had her business, garden, and livestock destroyed in the 2008 hurricanes, and greatly benefitted from Fonkoze's Kredi Siklon (Hurricane Credit) program. "After in the hurricanes, I worked harder than ever, and it felt good, Fonkoze helped me so much at the time to regain my confidence and start over again."



This is what is left of the home of Roselene Pierre-Louis, Fonkoze client, after the earthquake of January 12th.

Significant infrastructure challenges remain at Fonkoze offices. Of the branches that could not be used, skeleton branch operations were set up on the grounds outside of the buildings, and an innovative mobile van office is operational in Leogane. Temporary headquarters were located and brought "on-line."

The third phase of recovery addresses the needs of Fonkoze clients. Credit agents and branch directors worked to contact clients and determine their status. The final numbers look like this:

- 112 of 44,674 have died
- 3,456 lost their business only,
- 1,675 lost their home only,
- 1,055 lost both homes and businesses

Fonkoze is currently creating a client recovery plan, similar to the one Fonkoze instituted after the hurricanes, to enable clients to receive an outright grant, take out a new loan, and receive forgiveness for their old loan.

Looking to the future, Fonkoze is needed more than ever as thousands migrate to the countryside. The institution will be expanding Ti Kredi (or small credit loans), scaling up the program for the ultra poor (Chemen Lavi Miyò Program or CLM), and restarting much-needed education programs in rural areas.

Leigh Carter is the Executive Director of Fonkoze USA. For further information about Fonkoze USA email fonkozeusa@fonkoze.org or visit www.fonkoze.org.

Accompaniment in Haiti

BY: FR. HARRY CELESTIN, CSV

During my afternoon walk on January 12, 2010, I felt the ground beneath me tremble with such intensity that I was unable to stand upright. I began to experience what would soon become the most chaotic and devastating event of my life. It became apparent very quickly that I was utterly powerless. The novices, who moments before had returned to the novitiate after playing basketball, came running outside to protect themselves. It seemed that everywhere walls were collapsing.

Our neighborhood was filled with commotion. Adults were shouting. Children were crying. At the nearby diocesan seminary, seven young seminarians were trapped under the rubble of their collapsed building and were calling out to us for help. The novices and I began digging to free them. After nearly three hours, we placed one seminarian with a severe head wound in a pick-up truck with five other injured people and drove off in search for treatment. However, there were so many wounded and traumatized people that medical personnel were too overwhelmed and unable to help. The injured seminarian died soon afterwards. The others were placed in a long line to await triage.

Today we continue to live with sadness for the loss of the people we knew and loved, concern for the many children who became orphans, and pain for the thousands who have lost limbs, making it even more difficult for them to find employment in a country where over 50% of the private and public enterprises have been destroyed. I often ask myself, how do I accompany those who have not yet been able to dry their tears because they feel such an overpowering helplessness?

In spite of all this suffering, we cannot ignore the wonderful solidarity that has been expressed at the international level. We are also grateful for the solidarity amongst Haitians, expressed through precious times of prayer during rescue efforts or providing whatever assistance they can manage to the most vulnerable survivors of the earthquake. It is heartwarming to see neighbors reach out to the elderly and youth, who find themselves with nowhere to go.

As a Viatorian, I am grateful that we were able to assist more than 17,000 refugees find shelter, food, medical care and pastoral services on the grounds of our former ministry and residence in Port-au-Prince during the immediate weeks following the earthquake. Sadly, the makeshift camps had to be relocated in order to move in bulldozers to extricate the decaying corpses of seven of our co-workers from the rubble of our retreat house. The bulldozers had to demolish our build-



Picture courtesy of Fr. Harry Celestin, CSV.

ings in order to prevent future injuries to those who had taken refuge nearby.

Today, the Viatorians in Haiti continue to work hard to help people get their lives back on track and establish a semblance of normalcy. Refugees from three of the former six camps have returned home. We have distributed tents to those who have room on their own property. Those who have nothing have been given money to construct shelter with wood and corrugated steel. We continue to distribute food and bedding to families in need.

With our Viatorian commitment to youth, we are in the process of developing a program of psycho-social intervention for youth, ages three to eighteen, on the site of our former retreat house. We are erecting six large tents in which two psychologists, dance teachers, physical education instructors, civic and ethics teachers, and speakers on various topics will organize psycho-therapeutic activities. We plan to open a communal dining area where youth in the various programs are provided hot meals for three months. Additional short, medium, and long-term activities are planned for all age groups. In order to accomplish this, we are in continuous dialogue with leaders of five impoverished neighborhoods located near our property.

I realize that the plight of the people of Haiti is no longer in the news as it once was. However, this most recent catastrophe has given us, once again, the opportunity to renew our values and that which we hold sacred. For many, as we continue to rely on ourselves, our neighbors and our trust in a providential God to see us through this, we pray for change in governmental policies to favor those in the greatest of need.

Fr. Harry Celestin, CSV, a native of Haiti, is the director of the Viatorian novitiate located on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.

CREATE CONNECT COMMUNITY

Partnering with 8th Day Center for Justice

I first learned about 8th Day Center for Justice in 2007 during **Urban Plunge**. The Urban Plunge participants came to do a tour with The Resurrection Project (TRP). I have worked with TRP's, whose mission is to "build relationships and challenge people to act on their faith and values to create healthy communities through organizing, education and community development." This year I co-led the Urban Plunge tour with my colleague Alex Morales. The tour involves helping facilitate a conversation around affordable housing, gentrification, marginalization of immigrant communities, and neighborhood revitalization. There are always great responses and pertinent questions from 8th Day's Urban Plunge participants.



In 2008, I joined 8th Day Center's Communication and Development Committee. Joining this committee has been a great way for me to work first-hand with staff and other committee

members. Our role as a committee is to help guide strategic vision around sustainability of the organization and implementing new ways of encouraging others to invest in the important work that 8th Day Center pursues so diligently.



This year for the first time I was able to attend the 8th Day Center's 30th Annual **Good Friday Walk for Justice**. It was great to finally experience the Good Friday Walk because it was a powerful and poignant intersection of action and prayer and a hallmark of my Holy Week this year. Being able to participate in these different 8th Day efforts gives me an appreciation for consciousness-raising

and dialogue facilitation that the Center encourages across a variety of venues and audiences.

Catherine Ruffing, pictured (left center) on the Urban Plunge, is a member of the Communications and Development Committee for 8th Day Center for Justice. She is the Grants Manager at The Resurrection Project. Pictured above are mimes at this year's 30th Annual Good Friday Walk for Justice.

Become an Associate of 8th Day Center for Justice

By making a donation to 8th Day you'll receive *Centerings*, our quarterly magazine, urgent action bulletins, our e-zine (environment focused email alerts) and access to our extensive book and video libraries. And know that you are a critical piece to the work of the 8th Day Center for Justice.

Checks can be made out to 8th Day Center for Justice, or donate online at our website, <http://www.8thdaycenter.org>.

- Much Peace, 8th Day Center Staff

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

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An Expression of Solidarity with Haiti

8th Day Center for Justice, a Catholic social justice organization dedicated to systemic change, promotes the values of nonviolence, the dignity of each person, the common good, and the integrity of creation. While we are pleased to see the large and generous international response to the catastrophic earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, we are disturbed by the transgressions of each of the above values during the relief and reconstruction efforts. To date, no action on the part of other governments or international lending agencies has broken the cycle of oppression that Haiti has been forced to endure.

Specifically, 8th Day Center denounces the militaristic spirit of the US government response; the delay in the distribution of emergency supplies; the neoliberal paradigm for distribution of donations and of reconstruction contracts; the lack of protection for Haiti's most vulnerable populations; and the demeaning and racist representation of Haitians in international coverage.

We call for recognition of the accurate history of Haiti, a history of cyclical oppression and the denial of human rights. Internationally recognized human rights include food, water, shelter, safety, and self-determination. The majority of Haiti's people have been deprived of all of these throughout the country's existence...

We call for the creation of an appropriate international body to respond to natural disasters. The use of armed military personnel as a response to natural disasters is unacceptable. As an organization that promotes the values of nonviolence, 8th Day Center denounces the militarization of Haiti by the entry of American forces, ultimately numbering 22,000. The US military took over Port-au-Prince airport, turned it into a military base, and withheld food and water donations from the general populace for days...

We call for all aid to Haiti to be given in the form of grants, not loans, and for the cancellation of all past debts. Haiti is not a debtor country seeking forgiveness of its loans but a creditor, a country with the right to reparations for its past abuses... The March 2010 confirmation of debt cancellation from the World Bank was a hollow victory for Haiti, since that agreement was incumbent upon the implementation of neoliberal development models and the supervision of foreign donors. While we understand the need for immediate financial support and the help of international donors, we are, first and foremost, concerned for the citizens of Haiti...

We call for Haiti to be reconstructed in a comprehensive, responsible and ecological way. Going forward, sustainable agriculture and rural investment must accompany sustainable industry in the urban centers, as opposed to textile production and garment sweatshops as planned for new free trade zones...

We call for the protection of vulnerable populations in Haiti. We stand in awe of the resilience of the Haitian people and the hospitality that rural communities have shown to those fleeing Port-au-Prince... We recognize an urgent need for improved social services, medical care and psychological assistance for all vulnerable populations.

We call for a profound paradigm shift in all partnerships with Haiti. Notions of Haiti as an isolated "failed state" obscure the historical roots of its modern-day problems. Historically and to this day, Haiti is a victim of imperialism... In respecting Haitian autonomy, self-determination, and the values of subsidiarity, we support reconstruction initiatives led by Haitian civil society. If and when outside assistance is absolutely necessary, it must privilege Haitian workers and respect local leadership.

8th Day Center for Justice offers its continued support and prayer throughout the long process of reconstruction. We hold in our minds and hearts the heavy knowledge of the injustices that have been perpetrated on Haiti. Our fear is that these injustices are continuing into the future. We will continue to advocate with our brothers and sisters in Haiti, and create a space for their voices to be heard. From a place of hope and solidarity with Haiti, we will advocate for systemic change beyond disaster response, extending to lasting justice in international relationships. We uphold the vision of Dr. Joia Mukherjee of Partners in Health: "The solutions of Haiti's problems will come from the Haitian people and the government they choose. The greatest resource of Haiti is the indomitable spirit of the Haitian people."

8th Day Center staff stand in solidarity with Haiti due to the history of cyclical oppression and injustices that have affected Haitians both before and after the earthquake. This is an abridged version of the statement; a full version can be found on 8th Day Center's website at www.8thdaycenter.org/aboutus/statements.html.

8th Day Center for Justice
205 West Monroe St Ste 500
Chicago, Illinois 60606-5062

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2. Magdalena Colombia Delegation, **AUGUST 7 - 17, 2010**
3. SOAW, Converge at Ft. Benning, GA, **NOVEMBER 18 - 21, 2010**
4. SOAW, Washington DC, Week of Action, **APRIL 4 - 11, 2011**

**For more information on these events please contact
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