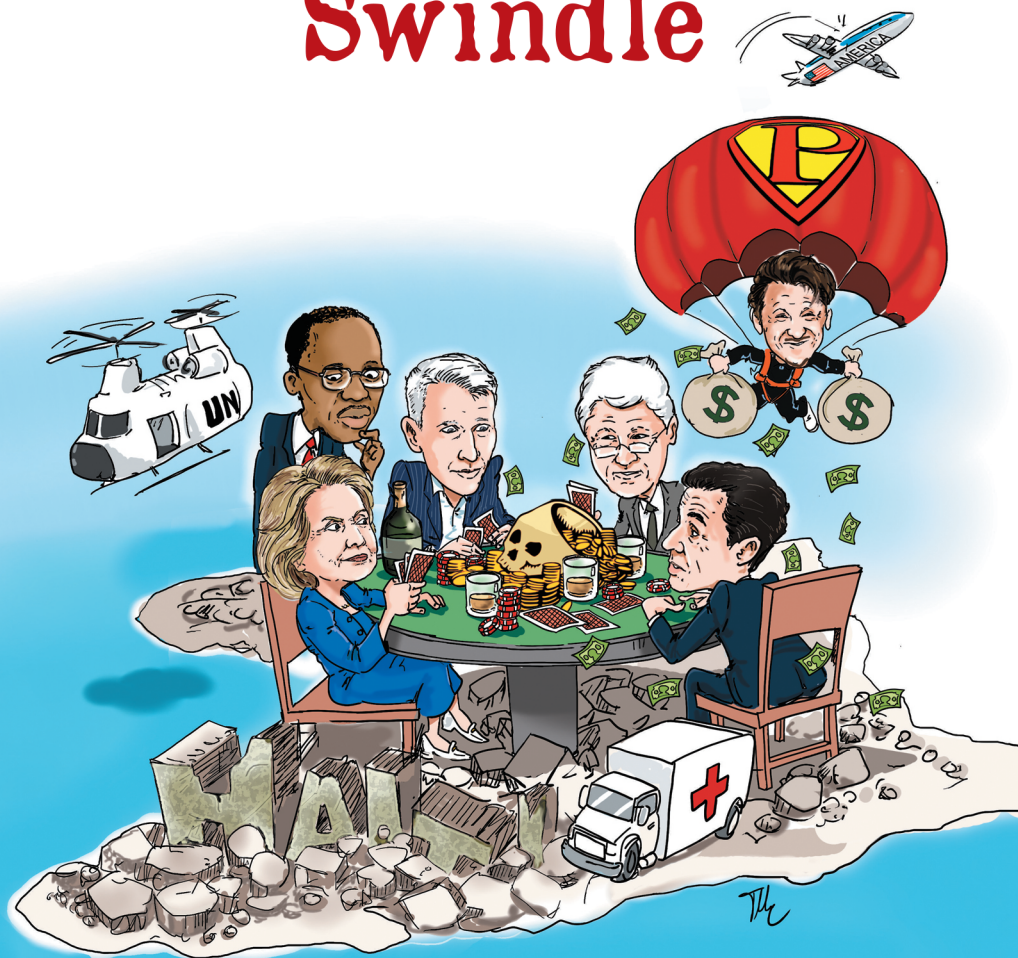


# The Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle



Timothy T Schwartz

# 1

## ***Introduction: The Charity Business***

### **MOBSTERS ON THE CHARITY BUSINESS**

I am sitting at a table in a dark saloon in the Dominican Republic. Smoke hangs thick in the air. Skimpily clad sex workers line the bar. Across from me sit three of the physically most intimidating men I've ever met. They're New England mobsters. Real ones. They're not my usual friends. Or at least two of them aren't. Suffice it to say that one of them, Billy, I knew years ago, before I became a PhD in Anthropology, before I began to study and work in the humanitarian sector in Haiti, when I was living a very different life. And mobster or not, Billy is also a war hero, has always been a solid friend, and we've kept in touch over the years. So when Billy called me and said he was coming with some friends to the Dominican Republic—where I was living at the time—I somewhat naively volunteered to tag along as a kind of guide for them. That's how I wound up at this table with three very serious New England gangsters.

Most of their conversations have gone somewhere along the lines of, "Do you remember when they whacked Davy?" followed by details of why poor Davy got executed. Or how so-and-so had extorted some fool out of money. Accounts of heists and deals gone bad. And lots and lots of stories about bar room fights.

On this evening, after almost an entire week, one of them has just asked me about what I do. All three men are looking at me, waiting to hear my response. They already know I've written a book about humanitarian aid, and so I'm guessing they want to hear about the book. But I'm a little apprehensive. Humanitarian aid seems pretty bland compared to their world of bar room brawls and mob hits. But I tell them anyway. I tell them about orphanages that are businesses. I tell them about schools that are supposed to be for impoverished children but that are full of rich kids getting a free ride. And I tell them about school feeding programs meant for near starving children but in which teachers and aid workers embezzle the food. At some point while I'm recounting all this it occurs to me that I might be talking to the wrong people about the ills of foreign aid. It might strike these guys as good business. But when I get done all three of the mobsters are shaking their heads in disgust. One takes his cigar out of his mouth and with all the sincerity of a stone-cold killer says, "that's some of the sickest shit I've ever heard."

## **THE PERVERSION OF CHARITY**

Charity is a good thing. To rescue people, to give to those in dire need, to sacrifice your own hard earned money so that you can help a person you've never met, these are not just admirable things to do, they're heroic, they're divine. We all know this. Every person on earth knows what it means to give to the widows, the orphans, the crippled and the homeless. But to steal that charity, to insinuate yourself into a position where you take money meant for a homeless blind woman or a starving child, that's the same as stealing from those people. It's the same as pushing the blind woman into the street. It's the same as snatching food from the mouth of the hungry child. It is despicable, cowardly, and depraved. It's a low that shocks and repulses even gangsters. It is

indeed, some 'very sick shit.' But, what I'm describing not only happens, it has become a multibillion-dollar industry.

## THE CHARITY BUSINESS

Millions of people are engaged in ripping off the neediest people on the planet. They participate in duplicity, exaggeration, and outright lying. As will be seen in the following pages, they publish images of what they claim are enslaved children and raped women. They invent or exaggerate statistics. They seek out the most horrid stories of abuse. They insinuate themselves into the stories or the statistics as saviors who are rescuing those in dire need. And then, of course, they ask us for money.

And all that is fine if they really do help those people. But many, if not most, do not help. Or they help very little. Instead they spend the bulk of the money, not on the needs of the desperately poor or wretched and distressed, but on themselves. They use the money to pay for their own homes, to pay school tuitions for their own privileged children, to pay their pension plans and vacations.

It's bad. It's twisted. It's sick. But, the majority of the people doing this are not devious crooks sitting around plotting and scheming in smoke filled rooms. On the contrary, most are professionals working for United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, NGOs such as CARE International, and religious charities such as World Vision and Catholic Relief Services. Some are rock stars like Wyclef Jean and movie stars like George Clooney, people who are already rich. Their major ally in getting us to believe the stories, the radically inflated numbers, and the twisted statistics are those bastions of supposedly credible news, such as *The New York Times*, London's *The Guardian*, wire services such as the Associated Press, United Press International, Agence France-Presse and prime time news shows such as 60 Minutes and Anderson Cooper 360°. It's these mainstream media outlets that get the word out. They give credibility to the lies and



exaggerations that keep the good people of the world giving to causes many of which are fake, exaggerated and sometimes the accounts of which have been so twisted that they've taken some useful local tradition like apprenticeship, something that helps keep children off the street and teaches them a trade, and they've turned it into a form of depraved slavery—at least on paper.

I'm not saying that these people and organizations intentionally set out to do what I am accusing them of. I'm not saying they intentionally participate in duping us into believing things that are not true, or that they intentionally participate in snatching money meant for the neediest people on the planet. Most of them believe the exaggerations and lies they are telling us. At least some of them participate in championing the exaggerations and lies for free. Some of them even pay to participate. They believe what they are saying because they get the information from "experts" and "activists." And so they think that they are helping to resolve horrendous social afflictions. But what I'm telling you is that in my experience—and I've been working as a researcher and as an analyst for the world's biggest humanitarian aid organizations for over 20 years—many of the most shocking afflictions don't even exist. Or the accounts of them are so twisted that they bear little to no resemblance to reality. And that's what this book is about. It's about the charity business in Haiti. To some extent it's about the waste and embezzlement, a story that although it needs more telling, has at least in part been told by others. But more than anything, this book is about another facet of the story, a story that has yet to be told: the exaggerations, truth-twisting and lies that keep donors giving. It's about the press that, instead of vetting the lies and getting us the truth, has been complicit in duping us and making Haiti out to be one of the most despicable places on earth. Indeed, it may be that nowhere is the problem that I'm describing worse than it has become in Haiti. And at no point in time did the

problem become more evident than in the wake of the January 12, 2010 Haiti earthquake.<sup>i</sup>

## **THE GREATEST FINANCIAL OUTPOURING OF SYMPATHY IN HISTORY**

The 2010 Haiti earthquake was followed by one of the greatest financial outpourings of sympathy in human history. The money given was nothing short of spectacular. All totaled, corporations and individuals would donate \$3.1 billion<sup>1</sup> to help Haiti earthquake victims. Foreign governments pledged another \$10 billion in aid. To put it into global perspective, all global disaster aid from private sources and from developed world governments amounted to 19 billion dollars in 2010. That's all the aid given for international disasters by every country on earth, from China to the U.S. to Sweden; and \$13.1 billion of it went to Haiti. And it was donated in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression. <sup>ii iii iv v vi</sup>

Had it been handed over to the Haitian government it would have paid for thirteen years of the country's national budget (\$965 million in 2009). But it was not handed over to the Haitian government. Or rather, in that first year after the earthquake, the Haitian government got one percent of it. The other 99 percent of the money went to NGOs, among them Save the Children, the Red Cross, CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, Concern Worldwide, Mercy Corps, Food for the Poor, and Feed the Hungry; it went to UN agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Program; and it went to private humanitarian aid contractors, such as United States' Chemonics and Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI).

The expectation was that these organizations were the entities best equipped to deal with the crisis in Haiti. They had vast experience in dealing with poverty

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<sup>1</sup> Monetary values are given in U.S. dollars, unless otherwise noted.

throughout the world. Most were founded in the 1950s or earlier. And many of them had been in Haiti for half a century or more. They had unrivaled worldwide administrations, professionals, volunteers and consultants. The expectation was that not only were they the most able to put Haiti back together, but with the avalanche of donations they could create a new Haiti. They could set the country on the path to prosperity that had so miserably eluded her for the two centuries since Haiti gloriously became the second country in the Western hemisphere to win its independence.<sup>vii</sup> As Bill Clinton said, “This is the best chance, even in spite of this horrible earthquake, the best chance Haiti ever had to escape the darker chapters of the past and build a brighter future.” He then sent up the rallying cry, “Build Back Better.”<sup>viii</sup>

## **THE WASTE**

The squandering and waste began almost immediately. The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) rented two luxury cruise ships, complete with maids and waiters. It was, at a cost \$16.6 million for 90 days, a fee that Fox News investigators later discovered to be three times greater than its market value.<sup>ix</sup>

The two biggest disaster clean up companies from the U.S. partnered with Gilbert Bigio, a Jewish Haitian of Syrian descent who was also at that time consul for Israeli, and the then Haitian president’s wife to win hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts to clean up rubble. They charged \$68 per cubic meter, three times the scandalous \$23 per cubic meter of debris they charged the U.S. government for clean-up after Hurricane Katrina and five times the \$14 per cubic meter that Sean Penn’s team was, at that very moment, charging for cleaning up rubble in Haiti.

The U.S. government would get billed an average cost of \$5,265 per temporary shelter built for earthquake victims, a figure more expensive than any other

humanitarian shelter in the world. Much more expensive. It was almost twice the cost of its nearest competitor, the developed country of Georgia where the UN paid \$3,000 in 2009 for winterized cottages; it was five times the \$910 cost that humanitarian organizations charged to provide a winterized temporary shelter to Afghanistan war refugees; and it was 18 times the \$300 local cost in Haiti for materials to build a 12×10 foot shack with a concrete floor, plywood walls and corrugated metal roof.

Meanwhile, the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund, which had raised \$47 million for victims of the Haiti earthquake, would take \$2 million of that money and give it in the form of a low interest loan to one of Haiti's richest families—the Madsens—so they could complete the construction of a luxury hotel. And the Clinton Foundation, which had collected \$34 million, would provide over 1,000 children with classroom- trailers that had levels of formaldehyde wood preservative so high they caused the children and teachers who occupied them to fall ill. The manufacturer of the trailer-classrooms turned out to be Clayton Homes, a U.S. company that had also sold formaldehyde-drenched mobile homes to FEMA in 2004 and that, at the very moment the Clinton Foundation had purchased the classrooms for Haiti, was being sued by Hurricane Katrina survivors.<sup>x xi xii xiii xiv</sup>

The stories go on and on. The NGO Food for the Poor was building permanent houses in Haiti before the earthquake for \$2,000 per home. After the earthquake, the U.S. government partnered with Food for the Poor to build 750 of what were essentially the same houses, but at a cost of \$38,000 per house, 19 times the pre-earthquake costs.<sup>xv</sup> Red Cross CEO Gail McGovern said that \$100 million of the \$500 million given to the Red Cross would go to "provide tens of thousands of people with permanent homes."<sup>xvi</sup> Five years later NPR would report that the charity had built six permanent homes.

Don't misunderstand me. Not all the aid was squandered. Cost-effective short-term relief efforts did exist. Surgical teams from Doctors Without Borders, Partners in

Health and hundreds of other medical relief organizations from all over the world came to Haiti and without them post-earthquake Haiti would have been a much greater hell. Sean Penn turned out to be an exception as well. Penn showed up nine days after the earthquake. He brought with him his charisma and a seemingly indefatigable disposition to say anything he pleased and curse out anyone who crossed him. Yet, he also turned out to have a talent for crisis management that embarrassed most NGO directors. In the first year, Penn spent 14 million dollars of mostly celebrity-donated money. It was a tiny fraction of the \$1.4 billion that was spent that year. Yet, his group cleaned up 20 percent of all the rubble in Port-au-Prince while attending to 5 percent of the camp refugees.<sup>xvii xviii xix xx xxi xxii xxiii xxiv xxv xxvi xxvii xxviii</sup>

## THE COVER-UPS

Unfortunately, Sean Penn, Doctors Without Borders, and Partners in Health were exceptions that proved the rule. It is much easier to find examples of waste and absurd claims. And just as disturbing were the cover-ups and refusal to account for the money.

Disaster Accountability Project (DAP) examined 196 of the biggest organizations that got donations for earthquake relief and found that:

1. Only six had publicly available, regularly updated, factual situation reports detailing their activities.
2. Only one provided what DAP considered “complete and factual information.”
3. The majority — 128 — did not have factual situation reports available on their websites, relying instead upon anecdotal descriptions of activities or emotional appeals.
4. Many claimed to provide details of their activities on their blogs, but the blogs were almost entirely “appeals to emotion, pictures of children, and purely anecdotal accounts about touching moments during a particular delivery of relief.”

When DAP wrote to the NGOs and asked them to complete a short survey, 90 percent did not respond. DAP followed up with four more e-mail requests explaining

the value and moral obligation NGOs had to be transparent and account for donations. That changed nothing. DAP director Ben Smilowitz concluded that, “most of them don’t care about coordination. They do their own thing on their own. They don’t share what they do. We don’t know what they do. And probably they don’t want us to know what they do.”<sup>xxix xxx xxxi</sup>

## THE GREED

So, humanitarian agencies collected a mountain of donations in the name of Haiti earthquake victims, they largely squandered it, and they then refused to account for it. But, once again, that’s not really what this book is about. What this book is really about is how they got us to give the money. It’s about the exaggerations, truth-twisting and outright lies that humanitarian agencies used to get donors to give. And it’s about the international press’s role in spreading those lies and giving them credibility. For despite all the widely-known waste and inefficiency that we saw after the Haiti earthquake, despite the humanitarian agencies appalling lack of capacity and competence to get the money to the people for whom it was intended, and despite the astonishing surfeit of money that had already poured in, the aid agencies kept asking for more. And the overseas public kept giving it.

The International Federation of the Red Cross made an initial “emergency flash appeal” for \$10 million to provide emergency assistance to 100,000 people. By January 30, three weeks after the quake, they were asking for \$103 million to “assist up to 600,000 beneficiaries for a total of 3 years.” They would receive a total of \$1.2 billion. That’s ten times what they had originally asked for. Save the Children originally called for \$9.8 million in donations. When they reached that figure in a matter of weeks they raised their need to \$20 million. By the end of the year they had collected \$87 million, almost ten times their original request. World Vision asked for \$3.8 million. But they



then kept asking for more, and more, and more, until they had collected a total of \$191 million. UNICEF originally called for \$120 million. When they brought in \$229 million in six months—almost double what they requested—they decided they needed another \$127 million. Those are just a couple of examples. The NGOs and UN agencies were as a rule insatiable. In all post-earthquake Haiti, only Doctors Without Borders told donors they had enough money, and that was after bringing in a whopping \$138 million.<sup>xxxii</sup> And it wasn't just the big NGOs. Six months after the earthquake, musicians and performers were still coming out of retirement to do benefit concerts and school children were still setting up lemonade stands to help Haiti earthquake survivors.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

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## THE GIVING

It was this giving, this seemingly endless inclination of the overseas public to be charitable, that is the greatest marvel of the Haiti earthquake. “The real question,” stammered Blake Elis of CNN Money nine days after the quake “is whether this surge of giving will continue.” Philanthropic fundraising consultant Lucy Bernholz worried too, “The outpouring of support is great, but people lose interest [in disasters] really quickly.” The editor of the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Stacy Palmer, also worried: “Something has to happen to keep it on top of people’s minds, or they turn back to their own world.”

Something did indeed happen. What happened was a plethora of lies, exaggerations and truth-twisting, all targeted to elicit shock and sympathy from overseas donors and artfully disseminated by international media outlets that thrive on sensationalism and are, at least in the case of Haiti, incapable—if not totally disinterested—in sorting fact from fiction. And the reason I’ve written the book is not only to reveal the extremes the humanitarian aid agencies go to lie, pat themselves on

the back, and ask for more money after squandering what we've already given them, and how the press unabashedly repeats those lies, but also because something has to be done to bring them to account. Forcing the humanitarian aid organizations to accurately and honestly identify the problems that afflict the poor and that they claim to be resolving is the first and necessary step to stopping the waste and outright embezzlement of money meant for the neediest people on earth. And the only way that's going to happen is if people first learn just how bad it is.

In many ways, this book is the sequel to an earlier book that I wrote, *Travesty in Haiti*, a book about the misguided efforts to develop Haiti and the culture of deception and embezzlement that has grown up around the aid. Like *Travesty in Haiti*, this book is meant not to disparage aid efforts, nor to embarrass individuals or to smear the reputations of specific humanitarian aid agencies. It is meant to encourage honesty and change. The difference between *Travesty in Haiti* and this book is that, armed with the data from the earthquake and an additional decade of doing archival research and some 40 investigations and surveys in Haiti conducted on behalf of humanitarian agencies and governments that are the subject of the following chapters, I take the argument and analysis further. I present a more complete and well documented description and analysis of the effusive lies and exploitation of Haitian poverty in what can only be summed up as the Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle.<sup>xxxvi xxxvii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> I've been researching and working in Haiti and the aid sector for 26 years. I wrote my Master's thesis about Haiti. I wrote my PhD dissertation about Haiti. I lived in rural Haiti for 5 years, first in the thatch roof hut with a Haitian family and later in my own homes. I wrote a book about the humanitarian sector in Haiti. Before the earthquake I had done about 20 major surveys and research consultancies in Haiti. Since the earthquake, in the past 6 years alone, I've done at least 47 consultancies for more than 60 different organizations, including every one that I mention in this book. For those 6 years I've lived and breathed humanitarian aid. I've also worked in the Dominican Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Grenada. But it's Haiti that I know best. I know and have known hundreds of humanitarian aid workers in Haiti. From Sean Penn to directors of USAID to State Department officials and Ambassadors to the implementers of aid projects, the drivers of aid vehicles to the impoverished beneficiaries who are supposed to receive the aid, I've discussed the topics in this book with people from all sectors of the humanitarian aid industry and I've learned from their experiences. I've been interviewed for documentaries and by newspaper

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journalists on at least 50 occasions now. And I'm telling you, aid is rife with waste, indifference and outright corruption

<sup>ii</sup> CNN report the Hope for Haiti telethon aired in 60 countries, becoming the most widely distributed telethon in history. With George Clooney in Hollywood, Wyclef Jean in from New York, Rihanna in London, Anderson Cooper in Haiti and some 100 of the World's biggest entertainers manning the telephones. Big names on the telephone or participating in other ways included Mel Gibson, Tom Hanks, Snoop Dogg, Robert DeNiro, Jay-Z, U2, Matt Damon, Leona Lewis, Mariah Carey, Miley Cyrus, Jon Bon Jovi, Rod Stewart, Kylie Minogue, Mika, Michael Buble, James Blunt, Gary Barlow, Cheryl Cole, Westlife. See: Alan Duke. 2010. " 'Hope for Haiti' raises \$58 million and counting," CNN. January 24. <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/SHOWBIZ/TV/01/23/haiti.telethon/>

<sup>iii</sup> For a list of NGOs and money received, see: Preston, Caroline and Nicole Wallace. 2010. "\$1.1-Billion Donated for Haiti Relief: Updated Tally (May 11)," The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 11. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/11-Billion-Donated-for-Haiti/160723>

<sup>iv</sup> In the first hours after the Haiti earthquake, donations came into the American Red Cross at the rate of \$300,000 per hour, amounting to \$7 million in 24 hours. In the first five days, U.S. corporations donated more than \$83 million. On day six, in just two hours, viewers of Larry King Live donated \$9 million. On day ten, in a single night, CBS's star-studded *Hope for Haiti Now* telethon set a fundraising record of \$57 million. That's three times the \$18 million raised in the 2004 U.S. telethon *Tsunami Aid*, more even than the estimated \$40 million raised in the 2005 Hurricane Katrina telethon *Shelter from the Storm*. When it was all over, total U.S. contributions would exceed \$1.2 billion, 85 percent of which came from everyday citizens.

And it was not just United States citizens that gave. Germany, a country with one-fourth the population of the United States, held a benefit telethon featuring singers, soccer players, actors, and politicians that collected \$25 million. The Netherlands outdid even Germany. With a population of 17 million—one-fourth that of Germany's and one-eighteenth that of the U.S.—the Netherlands held a telethon for Haiti that brought in \$52 million, twice as much as the German fundraiser and only \$5 million less than the American telethon. In Canada—with a population of 35 million, one-tenth that of the U.S.—a telethon raised \$16 million. Canadians would subsequently donate another \$200 million. And it was not just developed countries that gave. From Africa to Asia, countries around the world, among them the poorest on earth, reacted with an outpouring of generosity.

All totaled, corporations and individuals would donate \$3.1 billion. Foreign governments pledged another \$10 billion in aid. To put it into global perspective, all global humanitarian aid from private sources and from developed world governments amounted to 19 billion U.S. dollars in 2011, only one-third more than what was pledged to Haiti. And, to put it into perspective in terms of what the money meant to Haiti, it was equal to \$21,833 for every one of the 600,000 families in the strike zone.

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<sup>v</sup> As Stacy Palmer, senior editor of the Chronicle of Philanthropy, noted, “It makes sense that lots of people gave to the Katrina disaster in the U.S., but to give outside of the U.S. like this is remarkable, especially at a time with 10% unemployment.” See: Ellis, Blake. 2010. “Haiti donations exceed \$305 million,” CNN Money, January 21.

[http://money.cnn.com/2010/01/21/news/international/haiti\\_donations/](http://money.cnn.com/2010/01/21/news/international/haiti_donations/)

<sup>vi</sup> In the first 24 hours the American Red Cross received US\$10 million dollars in donations; by the time 48 hours had passed it had received \$35 million; in the first week \$137 million; in two weeks \$231 million; and before the year was out they would receive \$486 million, a figure equal to half the annual Haitian budget.

For summaries of the private sector money donated to the earthquake relief effort, see:

Gross, Doug. 2010. “Red Cross text donations pass \$21 million,” CNN. January 18.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/01/18/redcross.texts/>

Holden. 2011. “How Much Money Has Been Given For Haiti Earthquake Relief? Putting The Numbers In Perspective,” Givewell (blog). January 10.

<http://blog.givewell.org/2011/01/10/how-much-money-has-been-given-for-haiti-earthquake-relief-putting-the-numbers-in-perspective/>

Preston, Caroline and Nicole Wallace. 2010. “\$1.1-Billion Donated for Haiti Relief: Updated Tally (May 11)” The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 11.

<https://www.philanthropy.com/article/11-Billion-Donated-for-Haiti/160723>

<sup>vii</sup> Kellett, Jan. 2010. “Humanitarian aid: it’s not just about the money.” Global Humanitarian Assistance. Development Initiatives.

<http://www.iecah.org/images/stories/publicaciones/documentos/descargas/documento2.pdf>

United Nations (OCHA). 2012. “World Humanitarian Data And Trends 2012.”

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/World%20Humanitarian%20Data%20and%20Trends%202012%20Web.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> Clinton had used the same “build back better” rallying cry he’d been using since the 2008 floods in Gonaives. See: Clinton Foundation, 2016. “Commitment To Action Hurricane Relief and Reconstruction Commitment by International Organization for Migration.”

<https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-global-initiative/commitments/hurricane-relief-and-reconstruction>

<sup>ix</sup> For description of the Love Boat scandal, see: Russell, George. 2010. “With Haiti in Ruins, Some UN Relief Workers Live Large on ‘Love Boat’,” Fox News, April 08.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/04/08/haiti-ruins-relief-workers-live-large-love-boat.html>

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Russell, George. 2010. "Floating Your Boat? UN's 'Flotel' in Haiti Is Vastly Overpriced, Says Expert," Fox News, June 10.  
<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/10/floating-boat-uns-flotel-haiti-vastly-overpriced-says-expert.html>

<sup>x</sup> Macdonald, Isabel and Isabeau Doucet. 2011. "The Shelters That Clinton Built," July 11.  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/161908/shelters-clinton-built>

<sup>xi</sup> Joseph, Mario and Nicole Phillips. 2011. "100 days into Michel Martelly's presidency: Survey reveals government's closure of camps conflicts with durable housing solutions proposed in housing plan (IJDH-BAI)." Press Release. August 18.  
<http://www.ijdh.org/2011/08/topics/housing/100-days-into-michel-martelly%E2%80%99s-presidency-survey-reveals-government%E2%80%99s-closure-of-camps-conflicts-with-durable-housing-solutions-proposed-in-housing-plan-ijdh-bai/>

<sup>xii</sup> Below is a more complete list for costs of UN-provided shelters around the world at about the time of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Bearing in mind that the cost in Haiti for a transitional shelter was \$5,265, it highlights the absurdity of the costs in Haiti.

- In Kenya, Dadaab, 2009, a permanent shelter was \$480.
- In Goma, DRC, 2009, costs for a permanent shelter was \$930, 1/5th the cost of the 2010 Haitian temporary shelter.
- In Afghanistan, 2009, all costs for a shelter (additional winterization works, project staff, transport, office accommodation, administration, etc.) was \$910, again 1/5th the cost of the 2010 Haitian temporary shelter.
- In Somalia, 2009, the cost of a shelter was \$620.
- In Bangladesh, 2007, cost per shelter was 1,600.
- In Georgia, 2008, the cost for a winterized cottage was \$3,000. (This means that even in Georgia, where per capita income was 12 times greater than Haiti, the cost of a permanent winterized shelter was half what it was costing in sub-tropical Haiti for temporary shelter).
- In China, Sichuan, 2008, cost per new home for earthquake survivors was \$9,000 to \$18,000.

Source: SHELTER PROJECTS 2009 Published 2010 Available online from [www.disasterassessment.org](http://www.disasterassessment.org)  
UN-HABITAT and IFRC.

<sup>xiii</sup> For the pre-earthquake Food for the Poor houses and costs, see Williams, Grace A. Daley. 2006. An Evaluation of the Low-Income Housing Sector in Jamaica. A Thesis Presented to The Academic Faculty In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Science in the Building

<sup>xiv</sup> For Caracol, see: Sontag, Deborah. 2012. "Earthquake Relief Where Haiti Wasn't Broken," *New York Times*, July 5. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/world/americas/earthquake-relief-where-haiti-wasnt-broken.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/world/americas/earthquake-relief-where-haiti-wasnt-broken.html?_r=0)

Sontag, Deborah. 2012. "Rebuilding in Haiti Lags After Billions in Post-Quake Aid," *New York Times*, December 23. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/24/world/americas/in-aiding-quake-battered-haiti-lofty-hopes-and-hard-truths.html>

<sup>xv</sup> The other major post-earthquake USAID housing project was outside of Port-au-Prince, in a town called Cabaret. USAID spent \$53,205 per home for 156 homes. It's hard to convey the absurdity of these prices. The homes were, once again, little more than garden sheds and in Haiti building materials and labor are cheap. To give an idea of how cheap, \$53,205 is only \$12,000 short of the two story 4 bedroom, two kitchen and 4 bath upscale Haitian home I sit in right now as I write.

For the \$53,205 USAID homes see, USAID 2013. "Housing Development Fuels New Hope for Haitian Families." Blog Posted by Anna-Maija Mattila-Litvak, Senior Development Outreach and Communications Officer, USAID/Haiti on Wednesday, October 30th 2013

<sup>xvi</sup> For the Red Cross's extreme waste and '6 house' see: Sullivan, Laura, 2015. "In Search Of The Red Cross' \$500 Million In Haiti Relief." *All Things Considered* (PBS). June 3. <http://www.npr.org/2015/06/03/411524156/in-search-of-the-red-cross-500-million-in-haiti-relief>

<sup>xvii</sup> Penn was so able to make an example of effective aid that USAID showcased Penn's work as if it were their own—in fact, they hadn't given him a dime at the time. (I know this because Penn invited me to tour the relief efforts with him and a visiting U.S. congressional delegation in 2011).

What some saw as his 'loud-mouthed' displays were often threats towards sloppy or negligent NGO directors of negative publicity, a tactic that worked splendidly. The last thing any NGO board of directors wanted was a Hollywood superstar on television talking about how they were wasting their donors' money.

<sup>xviii</sup> If you were to try to make estimates of expenses based on audits from aid watchdogs such as BBB's Wise Giving Alliance or Charity Navigator —NGOs themselves—you would not get far. Or rather, you would conclude that they aid agencies were streamlined paragons of efficiency that spent most of their money on the poor. For example, a 2011 BBB audit of Catholic Relief Services reports that the organization only spends 2% on administration costs, 3% on fund raising and the remaining 95% on program costs. But what they're talking about is the home office. What's happening on the ground and what happened in Haiti is far from those figures. But we don't need them to tell us to detect the extraordinary waste and redirection of the money away from the people for whom it was intended.



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<sup>xix</sup> The Haitian merchant elite caught on quick. "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste," said Georges Sassine, president of Haiti's manufacturers association. An equally enthusiastic Reginald Boulos—President of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Haiti, a third generation Lebanese-Haitian, medical doctor, banker, owner of a chain of supermarkets, pharmaceutical company and several car franchises—declared, "This is what the earthquake is today—an opportunity, a huge opportunity. I think we need to give the message that we are open for business. This is really a land of opportunities." (see NPR 2010. "After Quake, Haiti Seeks Better Business Climate." Morning Edition. March 10.

Other Haitian entrepreneurs agreed. The price of meals in restaurants catering to foreigners doubled overnight. And not because there was not enough food readily available. Twenty-five miles down the highway, just across the border in the Dominican Republic, you could buy an entire cooked chicken on the street for five dollars. Not in Haiti, where an order of chicken wings for two skyrocketed to \$40. In the Dominican Republic a 24-ounce beer was going for \$1.50. In Haiti a 12-ounce beer went from two dollars to five dollars. Even on the street, wherever there were NGOs, prices soared. While a banana went from 12 to 25 cents in Haiti's elite districts, it still cost seven cents on the street in the Dominican Republic. A dozen eggs that sold for \$1.25 in the Dominican Republic sold for \$3 in Haitian supermarkets. The wholesale price for a 110-pound sack of wheat flour—pouring across the border but under the tight control of a few elite Haitian businessmen—was \$27 in the Dominican Republic. Right across the border in earthquake devastated Haiti it shot from a wholesale pre-earthquake price of \$30-\$35 to \$45-\$50.

The gauging occurred at every level. Homes that before the quake rented to NGOs and foreigners for \$2,000 per month rocketed to prices on par with Geneva, Switzerland: \$6,000, \$8,000 and even \$10,000 per month. The justification at the time was that 70 to 80 percent of all buildings had fallen down. But the true figure was seven percent of buildings collapsed and another thirteen percent of buildings damaged to the point they should have been torn down. As will be seen, most of those were not torn down but repaired. And with some 37,000 of Haiti's wealthy elite getting on jets and flying off to their second, third and fourth homes in Miami, New York, Montreal, Paris and the Dominican Republic, there was a surfeit of upper-income housing the likes of which the NGOs want. Yet, prices soared. A single room rented to a foreign aid went for an average \$1,000 per month. And everywhere in Haiti there actually is not monthly rent; it's 1 year paid up front. If it's rich person's house, the advance is 3 years rent. The first consultant house I stayed in—and which the owner had vacated for USAID—went for \$10,000 per month, with 3 years rent paid in advance. The owner, a renowned narcotrafficker picked up a cool \$360,000, far more than the house was worth. The Red Cross house I stayed in two years after the earthquake was the same: they paid \$10,000 per month, 3 years up front for a house in Jeremie, a provincial city 150 miles from Port-au-Prince, and the Red Cross rented it for 6 years, \$720,000 total. And to another renown narcotrafficker. For that money the owner could have built six houses just like it. So while middle class Haitians—and people like myself who had lived in the country—continued to find and pay an average of \$300 to \$500 per month for apartments with modern plumbing, water, electric service, parking, and security, NGO workers were relieved to find one for \$3,000 per month.

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Transport was the same. Round trip airplane tickets from the Dominican Capital of Santo Domingo to Port-au-Prince—a 20-minute flight—shot from \$150 to \$500. A vehicle and driver for the day cost \$150 and up. But you couldn't get them by the day. You had to pay by month, which meant that vehicle and driver began at \$4,500 per month. That's \$54,000 per year, a figure comfortable enough that some Haitian doctors were leaving their private clinics and becoming taxi drivers.

The money squandered on consultants and international aid workers consumed a lion's share of the aid money. The minimum typical fee for international consultants is \$250 per day for NGOs with a State Department defined per diem of \$155 each day, plus housing. I was earning \$315 per day. Some of my colleagues were earning \$700 per day. UN consultants were getting a minimum of \$440 per day and a per diem of \$284 per day. That means that a single UN consultant who worked 5 days per week cost at least \$19,520 per month – at least 28 years of the current Haitian per capita GDP.

But pay is only one piece of the puzzle. NGO employees have to have transport. That's another \$4,500 per month. There were so many vehicles being rented from the Dominican Republic that the roads in Port-au-Prince—few, poorly maintained, and already packed with too many vehicles—became even more snarled in traffic. Aid workers spent much of their days sitting in traffic jams. It often took for the USAID consultants I lived with 4 to 6 hours to drive to the embassy and back. You could have walked it in 1 hour.

Then there was housing, with those inflated, post-earthquake rents (approximately \$3,000 for an apartment; \$6,000 to \$10,000 for a house or office per month), hotel rooms (\$100 per night and up), and airline flights, like those from Santo Domingo that had tripled in price.

Two of dozens of absurd examples of transport waste: At the end of January, I went to fetch USA Today journalist Ken Dilanian in Santo Domingo, some 6 hours away on the other side of Hispaniola. We caught a ride back in a 40-passenger bus rented by the American Red Cross. Onboard with us was a single Red Cross employee, the bus driver and Ken and I. The other 37 seats were empty. A Haitian friend had a three-month job picking up and dropping off two United Nations consultants at their office for \$150 per day.

Meanwhile, the aid had brought the lower levels economy to a screeching halt. Importers, knowing that hundreds of thousands of dollars in food aid was being shipped to Haiti and given away free, quit importing. Farmers and market women couldn't sell their produce. Even water vendors were put out of business by massive importation of bottled water. With the economy frozen, listening to the radio and the promises and knowing the sheer volume of the money that had been donated, many of the poor gathered in the camps described in Chapter 9. They were desperately hoping to get a piece of the aid. Although only seven percent of buildings had collapsed and another 13 percent were declared unsafe to live in, by seven months after the earthquake, 40 percent of the entire population claimed to be living in camps. In some counties (*communes* in French) there were more people living in camps after the earthquake than had lived in the entire county before the earthquake. The vast majority were not from destroyed homes. One only had to do the math to see that there 10 to 20 times the people in camps as was expected.

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The avalanche of money at the top only reached those at the bottom in trickles. Nevertheless, the camps, as will be described in Chapter 9, became an excuse for wanton expenditures and an ongoing sea of human misery that kept bringing in donations.

<sup>xx</sup> Disaster Recovery Corporation (DRC) and AshBritt were so confident they would get contracts in Haiti that before either were even awarded a contract they spent \$30 million of their own money. And they had plenty of reason to be confident. AshBritt hired Lewis Lucke, a former U.S. ambassador to Haiti who only days before taking the AshBritt job had been the U.S. post-earthquake Special Coordinator for Relief and Reconstruction in Haiti. At US\$30,000 per month plus commission, Lucke was AshBritt's guarantee they would get contracts. DRC, the other major U.S. disaster cleanup contractor, did even better. They hired the then Haitian president's wife, Elizabeth Preval, who helped them land a \$100 million contract. Both corporations were soon collecting three times the scandalous \$23 per cubic meter of debris they charged the U.S. government for clean-up after Hurricane Katarina and five times what the \$14 per cubic meter that Sean Penn's team was charging for cleaning up rubble.

<sup>xxi</sup> For the DRC Hurricane Mitch lawsuit, see: UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Case 1:10-cv-00003-PLF Document 68 Filed 03/28/11

<sup>xxii</sup> When a cry of foul went up from Haitian business community that they were getting unfairly left out of the reconstruction of Haiti, contracts promptly went to two Haitian national companies, those of Vorbes and Gilbert Bigio. The Vorbes Group was already Haiti's biggest recipient of road construction contracts (they have little road equipment and so takes their cut and promptly pass the contracts off to Estrella, a firm from the neighboring Dominican Republic). The other major recipient was Gilbert Bigio and his corporations. Bigio is Israel's honorary Consul General to Haiti. It is widely rumored that Mr. Bigio was launched into the ranks of Haiti's ultra-rich back in the 1980s when he negotiated the sale of Israeli Uzi machine guns to then President-for-Life Jean-Claude Duvalier. Today Bigio is reputedly Haiti's only billionaire with a stake in 16 of Haiti's largest corporations—including banking and telecommunications—a near monopoly on edible oil imports in Haiti and ownership of Chevron Caribbean, a semi-monopoly on regional petroleum distribution, and a monopoly on steel in Haiti. He also, since the earthquake, built a brand-new mega-port and industrial park, largely with a low interest World Bank loan. Both Haitian entities had actually paired with the two U.S. disaster cleanup giants: DRC and AshBritt.

For information on Bigio, the family and corporation, see: GB Group website at <http://gbgroup.com/corporate/overview/history/>

Woodward, Paul. 2010. "Does Gilbert Bigio make Israel look good?" War in Context, January 25. <http://warincontext.org/2010/01/25/does-gilbert-bigio-make-israel-look-good/>

<sup>xxiii</sup> DRC claimed to have made a \$5 million investment before getting any contracts. They hired Elisabeth Delatour Préval, the President's wife, as a consultant. She helped broker a deal with a family business, Vorbe et Fils V&F Construction, and DRC Group an Alabama Corporation for 100

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million dollars (according to Haiti Truth citing the online publication Omega World News, see, <http://www.haitian-truth.org/flash-news-haitian-conflict-of-interest-elizabeth-delatour-preval/>).

AshBritt claimed to have invested \$25 million in preparing for the cleanup—before they were awarded a contract. AshBritt hired Lewis Lucke, the U.S. appointed Special Coordinator for Relief and Reconstruction in Haiti with the title of ambassador, Lucke had resigned two weeks before AshBritt hired him, signed on as a consultant for a cool 30 grand per month and after 3 months on the job Lucke would sue his employers for \$500,000 in promised commissions.

See Hallward, Peter 2010. "Haiti 2010: Exploiting disaster." In Pambazuka News. November 18. <http://www.pambazuka.org/governance/haiti-2010-exploiting-disaster-0>

<sup>xxiv</sup> Of 1,490 U.S. contracts awarded in the 10 months following the earthquake 23 went to Haitian firms. See Quigley, Bill and Amber Ramanauskas. 2012. "Where the Relief Money Did and Did Not Go? Haiti After the Quake," Counterpunch, January 3. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/01/03/haiti-after-the-quake/>

<sup>xxv</sup> For a summary of AshBritt owner Randy Perkin's rise from food stamp recipient to mega-millionaire and politician, see: Nevins, Buddy. 2006. "Entrepreneur's Image Pays Price For Firm's Profitability," Sun Sentinel, August 20.

[http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2006-0820/business/0608180915\\_1\\_perkins-first-disaster-recovery-debris](http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2006-0820/business/0608180915_1_perkins-first-disaster-recovery-debris)

Also see, <http://www.randyperkinsforcongress.com/meet-randy/>

<sup>xxvi</sup> See, Panchang, Deepa, Beverly Bell and Tory Field. 2012. "The Super Bowl of Disasters: Profiting from Crisis in Post-Earthquake Haiti," The Women's International Perspective. February 16. <http://thewip.net/2012/02/16/the-super-bowl-of-disasters-profiting-from-crisis-in-post-earthquake-haiti/>

<sup>xxvii</sup> For description of the Love Boat scandal, see: Russell, George. 2010. "With Haiti in Ruins, Some UN Relief Workers Live Large on 'Love Boat'," Fox News, April 8. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/04/08/haiti-ruins-relief-workers-live-large-love-boat.html>

Russell, George. 2010. "Floating Your Boat? UN's 'Flotel' in Haiti Is Vastly Overpriced, Says Expert," Fox News, June 10.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/10/floating-boat-uns-flotel-haiti-vastly-overpriced-says-expert.html>

<sup>xxviii</sup> For Ambassador's Merten's cable, see: "Haiti: WikiLeaks reveals 'gold rush' postquake for contractors" <http://permalink.gmane.org/gmane.politics.marxism.marxmail/150034>

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<sup>xxix</sup> The Disaster Accountability Project, an independent aid watchdog, tried to find out exactly how much NGOs were spending and on what. It focused on 196 of the largest organizations soliciting donations for the Haiti earthquake. They sent them two surveys. The first survey was sent six months after the earthquake; the second survey sent on the one-year anniversary. The survey explained what the project was and how it was part of a report on NGO transparency.

The questions were simple. How much money did you gather? How much have you spent? How big is your staff? Do you provide reports on expenses? Are you still collecting donations for Haiti? Respondents could leave answers blank. Organizations that did not respond were sent four follow-up requests.

A few NGOs are more transparent. Oxfam, reported spending 33% on “management and logistics.” Doctors Without Borders – an organization with an untarnished reputation for transparency, efficiency, and sincere spending – reported its costs for “staff and transportation” were 58 percent of total spending.

On the second survey, one year after the earthquake and after a lot of negative press about the earlier refusals, 80 percent still would *not* respond.

For Disaster Accountability Project, <http://www.disasteraccountability.org/news-media/press-releases/pr071210.html>.

<sup>xxx</sup> Despite fifty years of experience in Haiti and impoverished countries throughout the world, the NGOs and UN agencies that were expected to lead and guide the aid distribution did not know how to get aid to people who most needed it. They didn’t know what aid, who to give it to and what organization could legitimately help them distribute it. Employees went house to house giving perplexed farmers hygiene kits with toilet paper, toothpaste, soap and a hair brush. That’s nice. But why? What good was a one week supply of tooth paste and toilet paper expected to do for peasants living in the mountains? Was one week of toothpaste going to save their teeth? Moreover, it was in the mountains above Jacmel, an area barely affected by the earthquake.

At the one end you had the NGOs divvying up the money to an army of consultants who were supposed to know what they were doing—but the vast majority of whom had never been to Haiti before, knew nothing about the culture, and did not even speak the native Kreyol. On the other extreme you had aid agencies passing money off like a hot potato. ACDI/VOCA got \$50,000 from their own employees. They distributed \$5,000 checks, to their Haitian employees. These were people who had high paying jobs. Even ACDI/VOCA drivers were earning US\$850 per month, more than the annual per capita income of the rest of their compatriots. Only one of them lived in a house that was destroyed. Three days after the earthquake the U.S. State Department had a strong box with 2 million dollars in it delivered to the Haitian airport to FONKOZE, Haiti’s premiere microfinance institution (a U.S. Government supported NGO). It was emergency aid for their members. And FONKOZE duly gave it to their members. They “forgave” 10,000 loans and then gave clients another \$125 each – five times the amount of their \$25 introductory loan. A noble gesture, except that most

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FONKOZE beneficiaries live in rural areas, meaning the earthquake was unlikely to have directly impacted them.

xxxix I too tried to get information from the NGOs. When I wrote press representatives of 20 NGOs and asked them how many people in their organization had died, only 5 of them responded. And two of these, such as Compassion International, subsequently bounced me from one specialist to another without ever giving me that one number response that, one would think, everyone in the organization should have known. At least one organization, World Vision, responded with what could be interpreted as a type of defensive hostility:

From: World Vision <Info@WorldVision.org>

Subject: World Vision Response

(KMM1020342V38475L0KM)

To: schwartz833@yahoo.com

Date: Monday, August 30, 2010, 3:39 PM

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

Thank you for contacting World Vision for information about our work in Haiti. It is a blessing to be able to serve you.....

While we are happy to provide you with information that we have readily available, due to limited resources and in an effort to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to us, we are unable to further research this inquiry. We apologize and hope you understand our inability to assist with your request.

Below you will find some of the projects and progress that have taken place, which have been funded and made possible thanks to the support of our donors:

- Emergency and transitional shelter, including distributions of tarps and tents, as well as procurement and staging for construction of transitional shelters once land is available
- Water, sanitation, and hygiene efforts in 35 camps, providing 7.6 million liters of clean drinking water since January 12; construction and maintenance of latrines and shower facilities; and drainage solutions to prevent flooding in camps
- Food Security programming, including food distributions to more than 1.86 million people within Port-au-Prince in the early stages of the response
- Primary health care services, including opening five mobile and five stationary health clinics, serving 15 camps and more than 11,000 people
- Nutrition, health, and hygiene education
- Ongoing support to some 120,000 people, distributing tarpaulins, tents, kitchen sets, blankets, mats, footlockers, and other household items



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- Child protection programming including assisting 7,730 children each week in 22 Child-Friendly Spaces in camps in the greater Port-au-Prince area, Central Plateau, and in the border area with the Dominican Republic

- Registered 795 children separated from their families during the earthquake; through the family tracing and reunification unit, 84 children have been reunited with their families

With hurricane season approaching World Vision is concerned for the fate of displaced families and is implementing programs to help ease the effects of heavy rains. We are currently working with the government of Haiti and other international organizations on a contingency plan to prepare Haiti for the hurricane season.

There is still much to be done to help the survivors experience fullness of life, and World Vision is committed to helping children and families in the months and years it takes to recover

To learn more about World Vision's ongoing efforts to come alongside the people of Haiti and help families thrive in the aftermath of the earthquake, please visit our website using the following link: <http://www.worldvision.org/haiti-relief>.

If we may be of further assistance, please reply with history to this e-mail or call a Donor Service Representative toll free at 1.888.511.6422. Our hours of operation are Monday through Friday 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Pacific Time. We will be glad to help you

Thank you again for your interest in building a better world for children!

Blessings,

Victoria Anderson  
Donor Contact Services  
World Vision U.S.

World Vision | Building a better world for children |  
[www.worldvision.org/home](http://www.worldvision.org/home)

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

Original Message Follows:

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Victoria,

Thanks so much for the information.

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Hate to be a nuisance but just two more questions, please, and I will leave you in peace.

1) How many of those 800 staff members were in Port-au-Prince and surrounding area

2) How many sponsored children in that area.

Thanks again.

Tim

<sup>xxxii</sup> Under serious fire from critics by 2013, Red Cross representatives would claim that, “Virtually all of the \$486 million donated to the American Red Cross following the earthquake has been spent, committed or allocated for planned housing and neighborhood recovery, health, clean water and sanitation or disaster preparedness projects.” And assuaging any concern, “On average, 91 cents of every dollar spent by the American Red Cross goes directly to humanitarian services and programs.” We’ve seen were that went. See: “American Red Cross Releases Progress Report on Haiti Earthquake,” <http://www.redcross.org/news/article/American-Red-Cross-Releases-Progress-Report-on-Haiti-Earthquake>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> The UN summed it up very well when they concluded in a report that, “The speed of disbursement and volume of funds were critical factors in the response. The Central Emergency Fund (CERF) and the Flash Appeal based primarily on estimates and assumptions provided by field staff was rapidly prepared and launched by headquarters three days after the earthquake. The appeal was quickly funded by donors.”

See: Bhattacharjee, Abhijit and Roberta Lossio. 2011. “Evaluation of OCHA Response to the Haiti Earthquake Final Report.” January, p. 9.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> For a summary of which organization got how much, how fast and who much they were asking for, see: The GiveWell Blog. January 10, 2011. <http://blog.givewell.org/2011/01/10/how-much-money-has-been-given-for-haiti-earthquake-relief-putting-the-numbers-in-perspective/>

<sup>xxxv</sup> All of which might have been great except that the money the vast majority of that money was either absorbed directly into the coffers and salaries of NGO staff or it was embezzled or squandered.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Haitians have a name for the earthquake; they call it Goudou-goudou. The name comes from the frightening noise that rose from deep beneath the ground on that day, announcing the arrival of the most violent quake to hit the Caribbean nation in 158 years.

When Goudou-goudou struck greater Port-au-Prince, the capital city, where lives one third of Haiti’s 10 million people, the first thought of many was that the end of world had arrived. As religious-

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minded as any people on Earth, many Haitians raised their hands to the sky and shouted, *jezi kri* (Jesus Christ).

After the initial shock, people traded theories on what else might explain the calamity. Some figured it must have been an underwater missile or bomb accidentally launched by Haiti's powerful neighbor, the United States. Others associated the event with construction of the "Caribbean Sea Tunnel," an urban legend rumored to be in the works to link Haiti with Miami. Activists and conspiratorially inclined skeptics suspected that the earthquake was somehow part of a scheme cooked up by the developed world to take control of Haiti, and idea entangled with the rumor—or "revelation," to the believers—that Haiti has vast oil reserves. Internet sites were soon to crop up making fantastic claims: "Haiti Could Have Larger Oil Reserves than Venezuela," "Haiti has More Oil than Saudi Arabia." One website gave technical details on how offshore oil exploration in a deep sea coastal trench had triggered the disaster.

In the years following Goudou-goudou most Haitians have come to accept the event not as part of a plot to hijack their homeland, or the result of an errant bomb, but as a *fenomen natirel*—"a natural phenomenon." Still, as is so often true in Haiti, there is an element of truth, a perverse logic, behind the suspicion Goudou-goudou was, if not the result of a sinister plot, at least embedded in less than altruistic ensemble of interests and financial windfalls for more privileged overseas entities.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Among the NGOs, the American Red Cross got \$479 million in donations, World Vision got \$194 million, Catholic Relief Services \$192 million, Doctors Without Borders \$138 million, Oxfam \$98 million, Partners in Health \$89 million, Save the Children \$87 million, Direct Relief \$64 million, Concern Worldwide \$43 million, and CARE International \$45 million. There were 16 UN agencies, the biggest winners of which were the World Food Program at \$461 million and UNICEF at \$291 million. And there were hundreds if not thousands of smaller non-profits that brought in millions in donations in the name of the earthquake. It also went to U.S. contractors. These were professional "development" companies, almost all with offices off the Washington DC's beltway. In the first 12 months after the earthquake the biggest of them, Chemonics and DAI, would get \$125 million in U.S. government contracts. And in the following year both would pull in contracts worth over 100 million for each agency.

See: The GiveWell Blog. <http://blog.givewell.org/2011/01/10/how-much-money-has-been-given-for-haiti-earthquake-relief-putting-the-numbers-in-perspective/>

Preston, Caroline and Nicole Wallace. 2010. "\$1.1-Billion Donated for Haiti Relief: Updated Tally (May 11)" The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 11.

# 2

## *The 2010 Earthquake Rescue Effort*

### **THE BEST-TRAINED URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (US&R) TEAM IN THE WORLD**

It's Thursday, just over two days after the earthquake, it's dark, and I'm driving into the devastated center of Port-au-Prince. A fire glows in the street ahead. Truck tires sizzle and crackle. Smoke billows up into the night sky. The acrid scent of burning rubber fills the air.

In the back of my truck are three rescuers, two search dogs, and my friend Ben, a recently retired Army major. Inside the cab with me are four more members of a rescue crew, part of a team from Fairfax, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> They're no-nonsense rescuers. Even inside the truck they are wearing their hard hats and climbing gear.

"Golden 48 hours," the Fairfax Rescue Chief says. "The first two days are critical." We have been talking about how long a person can survive trapped under a pile of rubble.

"There's a thing called *rhabdo*," another rescuer explains. Rhabdomyolysis. "After 72 hours the skeletal muscle starts breaking down, just goes liquid." He goes on to talk

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Task Force 1, The Fairfax County International Urban Search and Rescue.

about how the injured, dissolving muscle sends proteins into the blood stream that leads to kidney failure and, unless treated quickly, death.

“Three days,” says the Rescue Chief. “That’s it.”

We drive slowly past the burning tires. I can feel the heat. The rescue workers in the back of the truck say they think they see dead bodies in the flames.

“If *rhabdo* doesn’t kill them,” the Chief clarifies, “thirst will.”

I make a wide turn, circling past the fire, and head into the heart of Port-au-Prince. “Three days without water,” says the Chief, “and you’re finished.”

We start calculating aloud. “So, it’s 50 hours since the earthquake,” somebody says, “and by the time we are back working tomorrow morning it will be 64 hours. By tomorrow afternoon it will be 72 hours. No more hope.”



We had been at this all day. Searching one collapsed building after another. Some of the houses looked hopeless, one floor having collapsed flat on to that below it in a manner the Fairfax chief called “pancaking.” In most cases life in the neighborhood where we searched went on around us as though normal: people walking by as they return from making purchases at the market, others cooking meals behind their homes, children playing. But at collapsed stores and markets, crowds were gathering. People slipped through holes in the buildings and hauled off whatever they could carry.

In one case, Ben and I entered a destroyed market through a massive hole shredded in the side of the concrete and rebar building. Thinking we had come to help clear out a couple of looters, I shouted into the building, “Hey! We have to clear the building out so rescuers can come in with dogs and look for people who might be alive.”

I waited a moment. When no one came out, I shouted into the hole, "We're sending dogs in." We waited again. No one. "They *BITE*," I shouted as loud as I could. A moment later people poured out of the building, their arms full of as much as they could carry.

The 'looters' were not aggressive. Many struggled up the wall on top of which I was standing, saying, "Mesi Blan," (which in Kreyol does not mean, as many might think, "thanks white guy", but rather, "thanks foreigner"). One woman with a huge sack struggled to get up a ledge in front of me. She didn't have the strength to get the sack to the top of the mound of rubble. I kept suggesting to different men that they help her and they kept ignoring me. One said, "no way, each to his own," and hefted a case of laundry soap onto his shoulder. I finally went down and helped her up the wall myself.

Others called me over and asked for help.

A young man stopped and set a box down. He pulled out a gallon of Ernest and Julio Gallo wine and asked me, "What's this."

"It's wine," I told him.

*L ap fe m gwo?* "Will it make me big?" he asked.

While it was calm inside the mangled store, outside a scene of apparent madness was evolving. The Haitian National Police had blocked off the end of the streets with a rope. The police weren't bothering the looters coming out of the market. But to keep new looters from coming in they were using lengths of hose like clubs to beat back anyone who crossed under the rope. This meant that the mob was waiting on the other side of the rope like hungry sharks. The looters had to go into this crowd with their goods. They went staggering down the hill, under the rope, and into the wall of the waiting crowd, which tore into the sacks and boxes they carried, jerking and pulling,



tearing the goods open and spilling the contents, then running away with whatever they could get their hands on.



Back in my truck with the rescuers and Ben in the back, we pass the entrance to a cemetery. The sign across the entrance offers a timely reminder from Genesis 3:19.

*Souviens-toi que tu es poussière, 'Remember that you are dust.'*

"They've found people after up to four days," the Chief says, extending the deadline for trapped survivors.

"I think the record is five," one of the other rescuers adds.<sup>2</sup>

The Chief is fidgeting. "We don't have any light," he says. "We don't have tools with us." The Chief wants to go back to the Embassy where other newly arriving crews are putting up tents and organizing search parties for the next day and where maybe the tools that the Fairfax crew has been waiting for will arrive at any moment. But tools or no tools, time is running out. And people in the street told us there are survivors trapped in Saint Trinity, the Episcopal cathedral. It's close. There's some debate. We compromise and decide to at least locate the church before we return to the embassy.

A few minutes later we drive through a narrow passage of crumbled buildings and small fires. The street is covered with black sludge. People huddle in the shadows. I don't tell the rescuers that I am lost.

We ride up one blackened and abandoned street and down another. Then, in the distance, there is light.

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<sup>2</sup> As I discuss later in this chapter, the record was 14 days. Eight days is more common. But the point stands, very few people survive more than 72 hours.

We get closer. The light gets brighter. We hear the sound of pounding. We feel it. Then we can see it.

A massive front-end loader comes into view. Mounted on it are floodlights that illuminate a partially collapsed building. We get closer and suddenly it's like daylight. The giant machine is smashing the structure. Its huge steel bucket rises, then slams down against an exposed section of the second floor. The whole building shudders. Across the street, a sullen crowd stands watching.

I pull the truck over to the curb, just short of the spectators. Several police officers are there, sitting in a black and white pickup truck. The driver's side door is open and a policeman's legs stick out. Another policeman is draped over the seat next to him. The onlookers solemnly watch as the bucket on the front-end loader rises high, stops, then comes slamming down again. Wham! The building shudders.

This crowd isn't like the one outside the market earlier that day. It's orderly. The people stay off to one side of the street, as if an imaginary line keeps them back. The building across from them is also different. It's not hopeless, not a pile of rubble, or a pancaked stack of one floor on top of another. Each level has three to four feet of space remaining between ceiling and floor. It's broken, but not destroyed.

We climb out of the truck. Our eyes fixed on the building, we walk closer. People crowd around me. They tell me that this was the government's College of Nursing (L'ecole Nationale d'Infirmieres). When the earthquake hit, 110 students were inside. "There are women in there," someone says. Hope grows. *After a day of futile searches*, I am thinking, *finally, we can rescue somebody*. "They are alive. We were talking to them."

*We are going to save someone.*

I look at the front-end loader. Its powerful flood-beams bathe the building in white light. *With that light*, I am thinking, *the rescuers can work*. I look at the building. The force

of the earthquake has blown out the walls, and I can see inside the second floor. There is a bathroom. I can see the porcelain sink. Behind it, space. *No reason to go back to the Embassy now. We have all we need. We have light. We have dogs. We can get into this building.* But the front-end loader, it is moving again. Its bucket comes crashing down again. I feel the ground shudder under my feet.

I'm standing next to it now. I shout to the operator in Kreyol, *Tann!* "Wait! We have dogs." The monstrous yellow machine stops.



When the earthquake struck 51 hours earlier, I was in the Dominican Republic, the country that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. I was vacationing with my friend Joseph, a foreign service officer stationed in Port-au-Prince, and Ben, the retired Army major who was with me at the College of Nursing. We had just checked into a hotel when Joseph switched on the television and learned there had been an earthquake. He got on the phone and called a Haitian friend. No response. He called Washington. They had no contact either. All we knew was that it was bad. Thousands had been killed. Joseph's wife and daughter were there. We started driving towards Haiti.

Joseph was going to find his wife and daughter who had been in Port-au-Prince when the earthquake struck and who he had not been able to reach on the telephone. Ben and I had come to help —not only Joseph, but anyone we could. We wanted to be heroes. And why not. Being a hero is a good thing to be. And like so many foreigners who have lived and worked in Haiti, I am haunted by a sense of frustration and failure. An anthropologist and sometimes aid worker, I had spent much of the preceding 20 years watching the country sink ever deeper into misery and despair while I had done nothing tangible to help slow down the process. I had occasionally earned a respectable

salary (by the standards of 90 percent of the Haitian population, a veritable fortune). But it seemed a hollow accomplishment. So I made some money. But I never got to be a hero.

On the surface, Ben is my polar opposite. I'm a bit of a loner, I am not overly fond of authority, not at my best working with a team. Ben on the other hand spent four years in the U.S. Marines, twenty years in the Army, for three of which he was a field instructor at the Sapper Leader Course (SLC), operated by the U.S. Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He's a nationally ranked handgun competitor and explosives expert. And he's not just an officially certified bad-ass, he's also an educated and polished officer. West Point graduate, electrical engineer, part of a seven-man team that was tasked with getting the Iraqi electrical grid up and running after the U.S. army destroyed it during the 2003 invasion. Ben also spent two years as one of two Army press representatives at the Pentagon. Ben is a great candidate for a hero.

Despite our differences, Ben and I share a common frustration. We have both witnessed, from the inside, massive bureaucratic screw-ups that have ruined the lives of countless people we were supposed to be helping. I've written about how food aid drove Haiti's small farmers out of business, making the threat of famine worse. Ben retired the year before the earthquake, disgusted with the American military bureaucracy in Iraq that he said was completely out of touch with what needed to be done. But now, with the earthquake, we were both seized with a clear-eyed sense of mission. Here was an opportunity to actually do some good, quickly. A chance to do things right.

The tasks at hand were obvious. Thousands of injured and homeless people needed immediate help. No reason to hold meetings and come up with some elaborate proposal; just a matter of helping. A matter of getting out there, pulling people out of the rubble, getting them to hospitals, moving supplies. That's why we had come. And

with our Foreign Service friend Joseph as our contact, we figured the U.S. Embassy was the place to start. We were wrong.

The first day we wound up helping carry luggage for Embassy personnel who were evacuating. They caravanned out—children, family dogs and all—headed to the airport in a guarded convoy. Some were in tears. Joseph, a seasoned veteran of strife in the Congo, Kenya, Russia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, “ducked out,” as he described it. Refusing to leave, he disappeared into an Embassy door, went to his office, and started working the phone and Internet. Ben and I remained in the parking lot, watching people scurry around and then standing there as a long line of black SUVs pulled out. As the last one rolled out, us standing there alone in the empty parking lot, Ben said to me in his Montana drawl, “As an American,” he admits, looking after the caravan as it disappeared down the long dusty road, “I find this a little embarrassing.”

The next morning, some 36 hours after the earthquake struck, was different. When Ben, Joseph, and I arrived at the Embassy compound it was beginning to fill with rescue workers. Pallets loaded with supplies had been dropped in the parking lot. Men were stacking boxes beneath a large tent. People were wandering in and out of the Embassy. Some of the new arrivals erected tents on the lawn. A few sat on boxes eating MREs (military issue Meals, Ready to Eat). The real heroes were arriving.

It was among those professional rescuers that we met the Fairfax team. They were, they told us, the best-trained Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) workers in the world. By 10:00 a.m. we were riding through Port-au-Prince with one of their units. The team had specially trained dogs, two of which were in my truck at the College of Nursing. “These dogs are the very best in the United States,” one of the rescuers told us. “If someone is alive in one of those buildings, they’ll find ‘em.” So if we are going to be heroes, it seemed a good bet that these were the guys who were going to help us get there. And that’s how we eventually wound up at the College of Nursing.



The crowd is buzzing with chatter. I hear someone near me say, *Y ap sove yo* ("now they'll get saved"). Another person is saying something about his sister. I hear someone say, *si Jezi vle* ("if Jesus makes it so"). I turn back to the Rescue Chief and see that he is standing on the curb, shaking his head. He points to a piece of broken concrete dangling precariously from the eaves of the third floor. "Widowmaker," he says.

*Widowmaker? I am thinking, But it's on the other side of the building. No one has to go near it.*

A rescuer is looking at him expectantly, waiting for a decision.

"Have to be careful," The Chief says to no one in particular.

Another member of the crew, one of the dog handlers, arrives at his side. "What are we going to do?" she asks.

The Chief is hesitant. We are all looking at him now. He stares at the dangling piece of concrete, then says, "Bring a dog."

The handler jogs back to the truck and returns with a German Shepherd held tightly on a short leash. The crowd has closed in around us. The anticipation intensifies.

The woman and rescue dog go into motion. The dog pulls on the leash as they walk toward the building. An empty space of some fifty feet lies between them and the entrance. They get 10 feet closer. The dog is in front, eager, tugging. I'm thinking, *The dog is one of the best rescue dogs in the USA. He is going perform. It'll find someone. It'll prove that there are people trapped in the building. That they are alive. And then we'll get them out.*

"GO!" the handler shouts as she lets the dog loose. It shoots toward the building. Half-way there it banks left, runs a twenty-foot course parallel to the building, and then it stops. It sniffs the ground, then turns and runs back to the woman.

She leans down and pats the dog, "That's a good boy," she says. Then she whispers in his ear, gives him a big shove, and again shouts, "GO!"

The dog shoots toward the building. Again, it stops and sniffs something.

"GO!" The handler shouts.

The dog runs parallel to the building again.

"GO!"

The dog runs back and forth. Two steps toward the building. Two steps back. Now it's back on its parallel track. The handler tries to coax the dog, leaning over and whispering approbations again, but it's no use. He's not going in.

I am thinking, *The handler needs to go into the building—or at least get closer to it. Take the dog with you.*

"Forget it," the Chief tells the handler and she snaps the leash onto the dog's collar and walks it back toward my truck.

"There's nothing we can do here," the Chief is saying, looking at the building in a faraway manner. "We better get back to the Embassy."

*Fuck that. You got your crampons and your hard hats, and you have this other dog. You're Goddamned rescuers. You're HEROES! Let's go. GO!*

The Chief is still looking at the building. "No, nothing to do here, we got no equipment."

*How the hell do you know there is nothing to do here? None of you have even gone into the building.*

People in the crowd sense the Chief is giving up. They are starting to talk. Someone is groaning. I turn and talk to them in Creole, "Just wait," I'm saying, "I'm going back to get another crew."

The crowd is gathering around me, excited again. I'm excited, too. *There's no way I'm leaving this building to be destroyed, not when there's any chance that someone alive is inside.* "Just be patient," I tell the crowd. "I'll be back."

A policeman cuts in, "Are you sure you know what you are saying?"

I don't know how to respond.

"Are you sure you're coming back?" The policeman is serious, authoritative.

*Well, no, I am not sure.* And I start thinking, *What if I can't get a crew? What if they won't listen to me?*

"Because we must get the dead bodies out of there," the policeman says.

*I'm the translator and driver, the guide. I'm not a rescue worker.*

"The dead bodies," he says, "they are starting to rot."

The operator of the front-end loader is there, too. He is echoing what the policemen is saying, "They're going to be stinking soon."

*I don't even know what that means, 'the bodies are starting to rot,' 'they're going to be stinking soon.'* That must be bad, I'm thinking. *Disease.*

"Are you an expert?" The policeman asks.

*No, I am not a fucking expert, not on earthquakes or disasters. These guys who want to leave, they're the experts. They're highly trained. The best in the world. They keep their gear packed in portable crates, ready to fly off to any country on Earth. They have been telling us this all day. The U.S. government sent them here, for Christ's sake. Me, I am a cultural anthropologist. I specialize in peasants. My last book was about the Haitian family. I'm not a fucking earthquake expert! And what's more, I have been sent here through a friend at the embassy and I can hear him scolding me now, "You took it on yourself to contradict the chief of the most elite emergency team in the U.S. 'Are you an expert?' "*



I look at the Chief. He hasn't understood a word of the back-and-forth, in Creole, between me and the cop and the heavy equipment operator. "What should I tell them?" I ask the Chief.

He doesn't even look at me. He is still looking at the building, "Tell them to keep doing what they're doing."

"You want me to tell them to destroy the building?"

He's still looking the building over like it's a lost cause. "I don't have equipment," he says, "It's dangerous."

"You want me to tell them to destroy it?"

Still looking at the building, "Yeah, tell them to destroy it."

I turn to the policemen and the other men standing there, "Destroy the building," I tell them. Then I head back to the truck.

People are following me, saying, "What?"

"No, wait. There are people alive in there!"

I am climbing into the truck.

"We were talking to them just a little while ago."

"You can't go!"

I am in the truck now, behind the wheel. I roll up the window so I won't hear the people pleading with us. I wait for everyone to load up. I'm welling up. I feel tears coming. *I don't know what I should have done.* I imagine the sight of me sitting there, 230 pounds, 46 years old, tears rolling down my face. The Fairfax guys climb into the cab with me. Ben is in the back with the dogs and the other rescue workers.

The truck rocks as the Chief clambers in. He slams the door. He's breathing heavily and fidgeting. "Broken Arrow," he wheezes into his radio as we pull away. And I am thinking, *What in the fuck is a broken arrow?*<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Very interestingly, Matthew Price of the BBC would report a very similar experience at the nursing school on the 15th of January, 24 hours after we were there:

I have been standing outside a nursing college in the capital for several hours. One desperate woman, who is part of the management team, has told me that inside the remains of the college, which used to be five stories high, there are 260 dead bodies and 25 people still alive, even after three days. She says the principal has received a text message from inside to that effect. A Brazilian rescue team has been trying to get access to them, but progress has been very slow. The several hundred locals gathered nearby are getting increasingly alarmed...

BBC News, 2010. "As it happened: Haiti earthquake." January 15.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/mobile/americas/8460771.stm>

According to one of the members of management here, inside there were believed to have been more than 200 people who were crushed when that building came down. It is also believed that there are possibly 25 people alive in there.

The reason for believing that is that last night a text message was received from someone who said they were inside, that they were very hungry, that they were very hot indeed and that they needed someone to come and rescue them.

Price, Matthew. 2010. "At the Scene, Matthew Price, Port-au-Prince." *BBC News*, January 16, 2010  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8462796.stm>

So a full two days after Ben and I were there with the Fairfax rescue workers the same scene was replaying itself. This time with Brazilian rescue workers, albeit the Brazilians apparently went into the building.

Making this déjà vu scene that much more of an oddity, for me at least, Al Jazeera's Sebastian Walker recounted to me a mob looting-scene at the collapse Caribbean Market. Walker's account very neatly paralleled an experience Ben and I had on the 14<sup>th</sup>, one day before Walker was there. Our account is in Rabble.ca, "Is this Anarchy?" <http://rabble.ca/taxonomy/term/9259/0>

# 3

## *Broken Arrow: The International Press, Fear, and Aggravating Disaster*

### FEAR

It is January 15, 2010, day three after the earthquake. Ben and I are at the airport, on the tarmac, helping soldiers in the 82nd Airborne load thick, heavy metal plates into the back of my pickup truck. I lift an armful and heave them into the bed of the truck. Then, I stop. "What the hell are these things?"

"Body armor," Ben says.



It's dawning on me that the rescuers, and others swooping in to help, are afraid of a complete breakdown in society. Until the Chief said 'Broken Arrow,' no one had actually come right out and admitted it, not to me. But from the first moment the fear had been there.

At Joseph's house, on the morning we arrived, we had sat under the veranda, next to the swimming pool, the sun rising as we ate poached eggs, bacon, and sliced mangoes. Joseph had turned on the portable communications radio from the Embassy

and set it on the table. We ate, listening as the radio squawked out the sounds of panic and flight. The Embassy security personnel were organizing an evacuation.

“What are they so afraid of?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” Joseph replied, spearing a hunk of mango with his fork.

An hour after breakfast Joseph and his wife and daughter—who were all unhurt—were told they had to evacuate. Two armed security agents arrived and escorted the family to the Embassy. Ben and I followed in my truck. It felt odd, after driving into Port-au-Prince to help injured and trapped Haitians, to find ourselves riding along behind uninjured Americans who were being evacuated even though they wanted to stay. But we didn’t know what else to do. We needed to attach ourselves to some group that was here to help. As recounted in the previous chapter, the Embassy seemed like it would be the best place to find one. So we helped with their luggage and then stood in the Embassy parking lot, watching our fellow Americans pull out.

Now, loading body armor into the back of my truck for one of the U.S. military’s most elite fighting forces, I am beginning to understand that fear is the reason the embassy personnel were evacuated. And fear is the reason we had abandoned the College of Nursing school the day before. “Broken Arrow,” the Rescue Chief had called in on the radio. That’s military jargon, Ben explained to me later, for calling in airstrikes on your own position when you’re being overrun. While I thought the Chief had been making an objective and thoughtful—if wrong—assessment of the building we were looking at, the Chief had actually been panicking over what he saw was an increasingly hostile crowd.

And fear must be the reason for all this military hardware, and for the 10-foot-high fence the soldiers around us are setting up at their airport base camp. Fear must be why they are walking around in the near sweltering heat with 80 pounds of military

hardware strapped to their bodies and machine guns slung over their shoulders. And fear is one of the reasons why during these first 72 hours after the earthquake, the most important moments when people can be pulled from the rubble, none of the aid workers, or even the UN troops, are going into the poorest barrios, to the areas where the damage is most severe and the people most need help.

Why was everyone so afraid? The answer is that the rescuers, aid workers, and soldiers streaming into Haiti expect to find Port-au-Prince erupting into riots. And the reason they expect that is because that's exactly what the mainstream press has been telling them is happening.

## **SEEING WHAT YOU BELIEVE**

The first reaction from the press was an appropriate one. On January 13, the day after the earthquake, most newspapers drew on the first somber dispatches from the Reuters and AP wires. Headlines around the English-speaking world read, simply, "Haiti Earthquake, Thousands Feared Dead" (ABC, BBC, AOL).

But by day two, January 14, when Ben and I were with the rescuers—oblivious of the news and what people must have been telling the rescuers—the tone had changed. A headline on the CBS News website read, "Gangs Rule Streets of Haiti." *The Washington Post* said, "Gangs Take Over Port-au-Prince." CBS New York reported, "Central Business District Resembles Hell On Earth As Bodies Pile Up And Armed Men Battle Over Food, Supplies." Haiti, according to the press, was erupting in Vesuvian fury.

This was not just unseasoned reporters making these statements. Otherwise responsible journalists such as Jennifer Kay and Michelle Faul of the Associated Press wrote of "machete-wielding young men who roam the streets, their faces hidden by

bandanas.” Newspapers around the world repeated the cry: *The Boston Globe*, *Northwest Herald*, *The Australian*, *Huffington Post*, the *Toledo Blade*, *Hindu News*, *The Star*, *Free Republic*, as well as CBS News and ABC News, all reprinted the description of machete-wielding men behind masked faces.

London’s *Telegraph* took it even farther and in an article written by Aislinn Laing and Tom Leonard—who were not even in Haiti at the time but rather on the other side of the island, 160 miles away in Santo Domingo—declared that law and order were breaking down with rampant looting and “‘constant’ gunshots heard across the capital.”

And in one of the most jaw-dropping tidbits to be repeated in newspapers and broadcasts worldwide, Shaul Schwarz, a *TIME* magazine photographer, told Reuters: “It’s getting ugly out there. Survivors are making barricades out of bodies.”<sup>i</sup>

The reports were having a devastating impact. Rescue workers were abandoning survivors, hunkering down in safe compounds. The UN was forbidding aid workers to go to the street. NGOs were forbidding their staff to help people. Many of the ones who knew Haiti and who had been present when the earthquake hit were simply gone. Independent journalist Ansel Herz had told an interviewer he hadn’t seen a single aid convoy on the streets downtown on the day after the quake. Not even a lone relief worker. He hadn’t spotted anyone from the Haitian government or the UN, either. And neither had Ben and I. Ben kept remarking, “Where the hell did they go?”<sup>ii</sup>

It turned out some had gone to the airport, evacuated just like the Embassy personnel. There were even teams of doctors on the ground that packed up and left—not despite the disaster, but because of it. Bryan Hartog was one of them. When the earthquake struck, Dr. Hartog, an orthopedic surgeon, was with a 50-member medical team, including another doctor and seven nurses. They were working in Leogane, the true epicenter of the quake, where they were building a clinic for the evangelical

organization “Mission to Haiti.” How fortunate could people in Leogane have been to have, at that very moment, an entire 50-member medical team complete with orthopedic surgeon. But they left.

Hartog would recall later, “I knew there were going to be thousands of casualties.” Indeed, almost immediately, people arrived with leg and skull fractures, paralyzing spinal cord trauma, and open, contaminated crush injuries. “We pulled two little girls, two and four years of age, out of the rubble, and then three other kids died later on—one from a collapsed lung.” Hartog was deeply disturbed, “To see the fear on their faces before they passed away, and to see the grief of their families—these are real people with real needs, and they need our help.” And yet, despite the desperate need Hartog himself described for people like him and his team, by day two he and his entire crew were sitting at the airport, homeward bound.<sup>iii</sup>



The flight of people like Hartog and his team was almost certainly related to the fear. Press reports of widespread violence stoked that fear. But the problem was that it was almost completely untrue. For those of us who lived in Haiti or those who did not expect mayhem, what the press described simply bore no resemblance to the situation on the ground. Yes, people were indeed stacking bodies by the road. But they were not, as *TIME*'s Shaul Schwarz seemed to be implying, stacking them like sandbags in preparation for war. They were stacking them up with the hope that rescue forces were going to come and haul them away before they rotted.

And yes, a large segment of the impoverished population of Port-au-Prince was doing what many people in New York City, Montreal, or Paris would have been doing after such a catastrophic event: they were looting. It made for great pictures. Black people scrambling for goods among crumbled ruins, streets choked with a haze of dust,

many of the looters young men, scarves wrapped around their faces like bandits. And yes, in their hands many carried machetes and knives. But the scarves were not to hide faces of criminals, as Jennifer Kay and Michelle Faul implied. They were to block the stench of decaying bodies and filter the dust from pulverized cement that was hanging in the air like a thick fog, making it hard to breathe. And the machetes and knives were not for killing. Machetes are the impoverished Haitians' all-purpose tool—for many, their only tool—and survivors were using them to dig through the rubble. Yes, some of them were using knives to cut and pry open doors and safe boxes so they could loot them. But they were also using them to free people trapped in the rubble—thousands of them. In the years since the earthquake, dozens of people have told me how looters dug them out. I have never met anyone saved by an official rescuer.

And the shooting? It was not coming from gang members. There weren't gun battles breaking out across Port-au-Prince, as the London *Telegraph's* Aislinn Laing and Tom Leonard implied with their descriptions of "'constant' gunshots heard across the capital." Frightened locals and foreigners alike were stepping out their back doors at night and shooting into the air to scare off looters and bandits, real and imaginary—mostly, as I will explain, imaginary. It was not Armageddon, not some violent free-for-all. In fact—as many Haitians already knew and as Lieutenant General Ken Keen, commander of the U.S. Joint Task Force Haiti for Operation Unified Response, would eventually admit, it had been a very long time since Port-au-Prince had been so safe.<sup>iv</sup>



We've finished moving the body armor. Now Ben and I are standing on the airport tarmac looking at two helicopters. They are about 100 yards away from us, and they are monsters. Their blades are turning and their motors thumping. They are so powerful that we can feel them pounding the air. Ben is close to my ear. "They're Chinook CH



47's," he is shouting, "Soldiers call them 'shit-hooks.' They can pick up a semi-truck and fly away with it." He also tells me that they burn about 350 gallons of fuel per hour. They've been sitting there, engines running, for at least a half hour. Ben and I start calculating. A sergeant cuts in. "There's a meeting."

A moment later we're huddled up on the tarmac with the entire unit of some 40 paratroopers. We have to strain to hear over the thumping of the helicopters. The Lieutenant is hollering. He is telling us, "The plan is to fly out to pre-identified spots. When the helicopter puts down, the translator from the State Department" — that's me — "is going to be on the bullhorn telling the population to stay back." He explains, "Then, three of you guys are going to jump out. You are going to go into a three-man triad formation with your guns pointed at the people."

*With their guns pointed at the people?*



There were voices of reason. When the earthquake struck, freelance journalist Ansel Herz was in his second-floor apartment, in a middle-class neighborhood of two and three-story concrete buildings. As the building shook and swayed with increasing intensity, Ansel staggered to the balcony and positioned himself to jump to the roof next door. The earth quit shaking.

Twenty-two years old, fresh out of college and, for those of us who know him, an impressively cool character, Ansel pulled himself together and shouldered his camera. In the dark, in the midst of a catastrophe the proportions of which he could not yet fathom, Ansel walked down the hill and into the city below: alone, at night. He went to the cracked and broken National Palace. He went into the abandoned penitentiary. He walked over to Cite Soleil a neighborhood that in 2006 UN security forces labeled

“among the most dangerous on the planet.” Two days later, Ansel tried to tell the world:

... following the quake there was no widespread violence. Guns, knives and theft weren’t seen on the streets, lined only with family after family carrying their belongings. They voiced their anger and frustration, not with their fists, but with sad songs that echoed throughout the night.*Herz, January 15, 2010<sup>v</sup>*

Six days into the rescue effort, Paul Hunter of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), also on the street for the entire week, reported:

The immediate expectation after the earthquake was that Haiti would quickly descend into rioting and violent mayhem.

That has not happened.

Yes there have been reports of looting...

And, yes, there have been reports of occasional gunshots. But the fact is, Port-au-Prince has been full-on peaceful.

CBC’s constant experience here has been to be welcomed warmly by everyone we’ve encountered —be it in tent cities or amid the rubble of downtown streets, and both day and night.

It’s a singularly spiritually uplifting aspect to the nightmare of everything else here.<sup>vi</sup>

*Hunter, January 17, 2010*

Few other journalists were listening.



A crew from CBS’s *60 Minutes* has just discovered us. Ben and I have been on the other side of the airport tarmac sitting next to the soldiers, waiting to go out on an airlift. *60 Minutes* had embedded themselves with the 82nd Airborne and, like us, have spent the last three hours following the soldiers around thinking that at any moment they are going to board a helicopter and fly out to deliver supplies to some of the

desperate and devastated people of Port-au-Prince. Ben tells one of the editors that I am an anthropologist who has worked in Haiti for 20 years, and she leads us over to meet the rest of the crew. I am assuming that it is so that I can share my insights on the situation. I definitely have something to say.

"This is a big problem," I'm saying as we walk, eager to set the record straight and, I suppose, still trying to be a hero. "Someone has to tell people there is nothing to fear. The rescuers and aid workers have to get out there and help."

I meet the crew. I have no idea who they are. I haven't seen an episode of *60 Minutes* in at least 20 years. But I know this is big: *60 Minutes* is the most successful news program in the history of U.S. television: 42 years on the air, 78 Emmys. One of these folks is going to be talking to the American public in a few hours. They are going to be giving the world a message. That message can be a wakeup call. "People aren't understanding what's going on," I'm telling them. And all the while I am thinking, *this is my chance to have an impact, to help end this panic*. "There is no security issue," I am trying to sound as professional as I can. "Port-au-Prince has never been safer."

There is a heavy-set, light-skinned man sitting there. He seems to be the boss. And he seems impatient. He doesn't like what I am saying. He cuts in, "Someone," he says with the deliberate weight and authority of a seasoned newsman, "shot at a CBS crew last night."

"That's bullshit," I blurt out. Then catching myself, I try to back-peddle in a more professional tone. "Maybe they simply misunderstood. Maybe someone was firing in the air. The police?" But there is nothing I can say. *I should have asked him for details*. A moment later I find myself talking to the side of his head.



Not all mainstream journalists got caught up in the panic.

That same night, on January 15, CNN anchor Dr. Sanjay Gupta and a film crew were recording at a field hospital when the Belgian medical team that was caring for the patients suddenly began packing up their belongings. The Belgians loaded everything in vehicles and then, with a UN military escort, they departed. No UN soldiers stayed. They even took their medical equipment with them. All they left behind, according to Sanjay Gupta was, “earthquake victims writhing in pain and grasping at life.”<sup>vii</sup>

Why?

“I find this astonishing these doctors left. People are scared of the poor,” said retired Army Lieutenant General Russel Honoré, head of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina relief effort. “I’ve never seen anything like this before in my life. They need to man up and get back in there.”

Gupta was the only doctor who remained. He, Lt. Gen. Honoré, and the CNN crew cared for the wounded throughout the night. At 3:45 a.m. Gupta tweeted: “pulling all-nighter at Haiti field hosp. lots of work, but all patients stable. turned my crew into a crack med team tonight.”

Hats off to Gupta and the CNN guys. They are heroes. And whoever ordered the doctors to leave should be court-martialed. But the disgrace in all this was not so much that aid workers were afraid. Anyone who read the headlines would have been afraid. The disgrace was the press; those professionals we count on to tell us what’s happening. *They* were fomenting the fear. And more ominously, the U.S. military, those trained and capable experts at modern combat, the ones who are going to be in control back home if there is ever a major disaster or invasion and who at any moment could have been granted the authority to conduct wholesale killing, *they* were listening to them. The message that Armageddon had descended on Port-au-Prince had been rocketing

around the world and coming back to Haiti to scare the hell out of everyone. And it would get worse. The next day, January 16, four days after the earthquake, this is what anyone who read a newspaper headline would have learned:

“Port-au-Prince looting worsens, turns violent”

*Vancouver Sun*, January 16, 2010

“Machete-wielding thieves have begun roaming the streets of Haiti at night.”

*The Telegraph*, January 16, 2010

And, conjuring up images of Rwanda, as if there was some kind of secret slaughter going on, CNN’s Anderson Cooper and Ivan Watson reported:

“Mass grave found outside Port-au-Prince”

*CNN*, January 16, 2010

*Of course* there were mass graves! Tens of thousands of people had just been crushed to death. It would have been impossible to give every victim a decent burial. But the media coverage was ridiculous. And it was having a real impact. If, on January 14, U.S. troops had gone out and started shooting Haitian looters dead, no one would have questioned the logic. Indeed, there seemed a real danger that might happen. On January 17, Lt. General Ken Keen, Deputy Commander of the U.S. Southern Command (US SOUTHCOM) announced, “We are going to have to address the situation of security. We’ve had incidents of violence that impede our ability to support the government of Haiti and answer the challenges that this country faces.” And, “Providing humanitarian aid requires a safe and secure environment,” he continued. He said that violence was increasing. Which, predictably, led him to conclude, “We’re going to have to address that along with the United Nations, and we are going to have to do it quickly.” On January 17, it looked like the U.S. military really was going to crack down on looters and gangs.<sup>viii</sup>

And by that point General Keen certainly had the wherewithal to “do it quickly.” Immediately after the earthquake the U.S. Army had taken control of the airport. In the ensuing five days they refused landing to planes carrying humanitarian supplies from France, Brazil, Italy, Venezuela, Cuba and even to international aid agencies UNICEF and the World Food Program (WFP). Four planes belonging to Doctors Without Borders were diverted to the Dominican Republic. Each one of them had blood and medical supplies. One of them had 40 tons of it. Meanwhile the U.S. military had been flying in its own aid, which included 20,458 combat troops and countless boxes of body armor, among them those that Ben and I had been loading into my truck.<sup>ix</sup>

It wasn’t necessarily a bad idea to send in the U.S. military. Haiti sure could have used one or two of its 31 Sustainment Brigades, specialists in supplies and transportation. Or some of its 16,600 Seabees, experts in construction, rubble removal, and battlefield first aid. The U.S. could have sent a few thousand of them with vehicles to support rescuers and set up food distributions. They sent them to Katrina in 2005, to Pakistan the same year, and to Japan in 2011. Why not Haiti in 2010?

They didn’t send Sustainment Brigades or Seabees.

Instead they sent the 4,000-member 22nd and 24th Marine Expeditionary Units. They sent the 3,400 member brigade combat 82nd Airborne Division, the guys Ben and I were with. The soldiers didn’t bring rubble removal equipment or masses of emergency medical supplies. They brought machine guns, ammunition and body armor. They were reinforcing the 6,700 UN combat troops already on the ground in Haiti.

The extent of the military buildup is nothing short of astonishing. Compared to the in-country population, there were 20 percent more U.S. and UN combat troops in Haiti than were sent to invade Iraq in 2003 (27,000 troops confronting 3 million civilians in Port-au-Prince, versus 200,000 troops that confronted 30 million civilians *plus* 1.2 million hostile Iraqi soldiers and reservists).<sup>x</sup>

Journalists did the math, adding the general's statements about insecurity together with the general sense of panic, and concluded that the slow pace of the aid effort was due to post-earthquake violence.

*"Violence in Haiti Hindering Aid Work"*

(AP article repeated on BBC, CBS, Fox, *The Lancet*, *The Star*, *Boston Globe*; *Huffington Post*; *Yahoo* and *ABC*, January 17, 2010)

*"Violence stalls aid to Haiti"*

*The Star-Toronto*, January 18, 2010

*"Loot mob anarchy holds up Haiti earthquake aid"*

*The Mirror*, January 18, 2010

The aid had indeed stalled. But not because of mayhem. The real culprit was the *fear* the Press had unleashed.



Meanwhile, on January 19, the medical crisis was deepening. Dr. Mark Hyman of Partners in Health was making a plea from the Port-au-Prince's General Hospital, saying they needed more IVs, syringes, IV fluids and surgical supplies. He said they had to wash with vodka and operate with hacksaws because they didn't have enough operating instruments. On the other side of town, MSF coordinator Loris de Filippi was reporting that they had 12 people who needed amputation. They too had to use a hacksaw.<sup>xi</sup>

The same day the U.S. military turned away a fifth Doctors Without Borders (MSF) plane. The U.S. air traffic controllers gave them a landing appointment on the 26th of January, a week later. That plane was carrying 12 tons of medical equipment, including drugs, surgical supplies and two dialysis machines.<sup>xii</sup>



The press kept fanning the flames with live footage of scuffles and looting in the streets of Port-au-Prince. CNN's Anderson Cooper—ironically seen by many viewers as an example of balanced journalistic reason in what was becoming a media frenzy—provided a good example of irresponsible journalism when he illustrated to the world his own fearlessness and heroism in a January 18 piece entitled, “In the Midst of Looting Chaos.”

In Cooper's CNN clip there was a violent melee in which it is not clear what was going on. But with Cooper explaining, viewers learned that looters were battling over boxes of candles. A piece of concrete struck a 10-year-old boy in the head. Cooper jumped into action, waded into the melee, scooped the bleeding boy into his arms and swept him to safety. All caught on video. A few moments later the boy was gone. Cooper didn't know what happened to him. He didn't know if he survived. He didn't even know who struck the boy, why or whether it was an accident or intentional. But it was dramatic and Cooper implied it was no mystery that this was some kind of battle.

But what the Cooper story illustrates, besides that Cooper is fearless, is a discrepancy that should have struck viewers as bizarre. While foreign journalists enthralled viewers and readers with footage and tales of looting and fighting, of machete wielding bandits with faces hidden behind scarves, the reporters themselves seemed bullet proof. They walked about with cameras rolling, taking pictures of the people holding knives and machetes, waded into the midst of looting melees, interviewed people, and generally did whatever and went wherever they pleased.

In the biggest international deployment of TV news talent since the 2004 tsunami, not a single reporter got attacked, injured, or threatened. Yet, through selective and sensational reporting focused on a few areas of looting (almost entirely non-violent looting), the press went right on sending out an image of Armageddon. They began to



blame the slow aid deliveries on the widespread “violence”; and now the U.S. military was poised to declare martial law and move troops into the city.<sup>xiii</sup>

Why had the press done this? The answer, historically, is that’s what they’ve always done in Haiti. Journalists and fabulist authors have been spouting misinformation about Haiti for more than a century. The press’s role in misunderstanding what is going on in Haiti is a major theme throughout this book, one that helps to explain a second theme to come: how the NGOs are able to get away with egregious truth-twisting and misrepresentation of Haiti, Haitians and Haitian culture. Indeed, it helps explain why most NGO workers believe their own organization’s bullshit. Here’s a short summary.

## **HISTORY OF HAITI’S BAD PRESS: CANNIBALS, ZOMBIES, AIDS, SLAVE CHILDREN, RAPISTS, AND DIRT EATERS**

The modern Western media image of Haiti, at least that of the English speaking North America and Great Britain, can be traced to the 1886 bestseller, *Hayti or the Black Republic*. In the book, Sir Spencer St. John, then British consul to Haiti, introduced the West to Congo Stew, supposedly a Haitian dish of Congo beans and human flesh. Thirty-one years later, the beginning of the U.S. occupation brought Haiti fully into the mainstream imagination of the West. In 1920, National Geographic, that mascot of U.S. popular intellectualism, summed up that:

Here, in the elemental wildernesses, the natives [*sic*] rapidly forgot their thin veneer of Christian civilization and reverted to utter, unthinking animalism, swayed only by fear of local bandit chiefs and the black magic of voodoo witch doctors.<sup>xiv</sup>

In 1929, William Seabrook, an American journalist and travel writer for *The New York Times*, would complete the image and set the tone for the rest of the century when he wrote *The Magic Island*, another best-seller passed off as non-fiction in which Haiti

was presented as the land of the macabre. Seabrook re-affirmed the voodoo-cannibalism link and introduced the West to the “living dead,” the shell of a human who has been killed, risen from the dead and turned into an imbecile slave through some type of sorcery. We are talking, of course, about the infamous zombie, a ghoul that has haunted the international image of Haiti ever since. To the present, Seabrook’s living dead has been followed by a grand total of 660 films with zombies in them.<sup>xv</sup>

Modern science did not help. In the 1980s, after five decades of increasingly ridiculous zombie horror films, Harvard PhD candidate Wade Davis announced that zombies were in fact real. And Davis claimed he had the proof: the pharmacological recipe Haitian sorcerers use to zombify their neighbors. Both Hollywood and the press would come to adore him for it. His first non-fiction book, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985), became an international best-seller. Movie director Wes Craven, of *Nightmare on Elm Street* and Freddy Krueger fame, subsequently made it into a major motion picture. Davis’s second book, *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie* (1988), was an attempt at convincing the academic world that he was not joking. The preface was written by Davis’s mentor, Harvard professor and acclaimed father of ethnobotany, Richard Evans Schultes, who had first turned Davis on to the subject of zombies.<sup>xvi xvii</sup>

Davis’s and Schultes’s arguments were fascinating. Haitian witch doctors—properly called *bokor*—concocted a powder, that included a neurotoxin extracted from the puffer fish. The powder was sprinkled in someone’s shoes or clothes. Another ingredient—a type of caustic thistle with irritant properties similar to poison ivy—would cause the victim to itch. He or she would scratch, tearing the skin and working the toxins into the blood stream. It was marvelous reasoning. All the research and logic was there. Academic references were in the right place. There were documented cases from elsewhere in the world where people who had eaten poorly prepared puffer fish had indeed fallen into a death-like coma. It’s clear that both student and professor had

convinced themselves that they had, indeed, discovered the secret to the undead. They did a skillful job of convincing readers as well.

But under scrutiny, Davis's conclusions had about as much substance as claims of Big Foot in Alaska or Vampires in Transylvania. Critical scientists looked at his zombie formula and calculated that victims would recover if the dose was too small; otherwise, they'd probably die. The odds that it might leave them looking dead long enough to be buried alive, then recover enough to be a useful field hand—without ever regaining their wits—were slim to none. Still, the Zombie was embedded in the imagination of the overseas audience, in this case the growing cadres of Americans interested in *vodou* and Haitian mysticism. Readers gobbled it up.

And it was certainly no coincidence that behind Davis' academic delusions was an encouraging Max Beauvoir, the Haitian MIT biochemist and self-proclaimed high-priest of *vodou* who first enticed father of ethnobotany Schultes with the notion that there was a pharmacological logic behind the zombie phenomenon. Beauvoir, who had moved back to Haiti in 1973, serenaded Schultes with stories of zombie powders and the lavish rewards that pharmaceutical companies could reap in Haiti. Schultes eventually secured funding and sent to the 'Magic Island' Wade Davis, a brash PhD student who didn't know the first thing about Haiti. Beauvoir took care of everything. He directed Davis's research to the extent that he sent his 16-year-old bilingual daughter to accompany Davis as translator and guide on field expeditions. Beauvoir's daughter made sure that Davis met authentic *vodou* practitioners, associates of Beauvoir who, in exchange for wads of cash that Davis had gotten from pharmaceutical company executives, would fill Davis full of tales of pharmacologically plausible zombie concoctions, which Davis then transformed into bestselling non-fiction books. Meanwhile Beauvoir, snake oil salesman *par excellence*, parlayed the attention into a lucrative career selling miracle cures and love potions, and putting on costly voodoo

shows in Haiti for tourists, among the most famous of which were none other than a honey-mooning Bill and Hillary Clinton who spent a late night being enchanted by Beauvoir.

The mainstream press was only too happy to ignore the lack of academic credibility of Davis's zombie research, and instead to trumpet his claims (e.g., *Time* magazine, 1983). Years after the scientific community had roundly rejected Davis's puffer fish tetrodotoxin as the secret ingredient for inducing zombification, CBS's Bill O'Reilly (1991) declared on *Inside Edition* that, "Incredibly, scientists have now proven that zombies do indeed exist." To this day (in 2016), ABC's website airs a blog declaring that, "in real life, the zombies come from the Caribbean island of Haiti," repeating Davis's findings without a hint of skepticism.<sup>xviii xix xx</sup>

## **A NEW HAITIAN MYSTICAL HORROR: AIDS**

Also in the 1980s, about the same time that Wade Davis began cranking out bestselling pseudo-science about Haitian zombies, the explosion of the AIDS epidemic created another occasion for the press to trash Haiti's name. Trying to figure out where AIDS came from, the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention noted an early outbreak in Haiti and identified Haitians as a high-risk group. It was a historical first. As Haitian physician Guy Durand pointed out, "Never before in modern medicine has a pathological condition been linked to a nationality." But then, we were talking Haiti, land of "voodoo" and zombies. With proof that zombies exist and oncoming waves of "boat people" from the Magic Island, we now had a mysterious syndrome on the mainland, one that was rendering modern medicine helpless. Perfectly normal Americans, their bodies suddenly unable to fend off pathogens, were dropping dead. All the ingredients for a mystical, zombie, body-snatcher scenario were in place.<sup>xxi</sup>

Instead of carefully scrutinizing the implied accusation, the mainstream media dusted off the old sensationalist stories about sacrifices (true, but animals, not people), drinking animal blood (some people, some times), cannibalism (false), unbridled sex (false). Some new ones were added as well: consumption of menstrual blood (false), hypodermic injections of water with used needles (true). Dr. Paul Farmer in his book *AIDS and Accusation* (1992), exposed two centuries of cumulative journalistic slander when quoting a *Rolling Stone* article that described the Haiti-AIDS link as, “a clue from the grave, as though a zombie, leaving a trail of unwinding gauze bandages and rotting flesh, had come to announce a curse.”

The economic impact was immediate and devastating. From 1981 through 1983, Haiti’s already debilitated tourist sector plummeted from 70,000 paying hotel visitors per year to 10,000. Haitians in the U.S. paid a different price. Considered a high-risk group, they were no longer allowed to donate blood, they were quarantined, and Haitian children in school were singled out as potentially deadly playmates.<sup>xxii</sup>

In the end, it was determined that AIDS did not come from Haiti. It originated on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in Africa. And it did not move from Haiti to the U.S. It was the other way around. AIDS had been introduced into Haiti by foreign gay men who had gone there on holidays during the dawn of the epidemic, and had sex, often for money, with impoverished Haitian men, leaving them infected.<sup>xxiii</sup>

One would think that after the enormous damage done and the nonsense and false aspersions about zombies and AIDS, that apologies were in order. At the very least one would think that in the ensuing decades the mainstream press would tread more carefully with respect to the “Magic Island.” Nothing doing. By the beginning of the millennium the scoop-hunting, international journalists found themselves a new ‘zombie’: child slaves.

## CHILD SLAVES

By the early 1990s Haiti had, according to major media outlets in the United States and Britain, 300,000 to 400,000 child slaves; 80 percent of whom were girls between 4 and 15 years of age. The “slave children” were trafficked, sold, and purchased as if in some kind of market whereupon they began to lead “brutal lives.” The only physical expression of love or affection the slaves received, according to press accounts, was sexual abuse for which journalists consistently offered the most extreme and horrible examples, such as a case in Pembroke Pines, Florida. *Time* magazine readers were regaled with the shocking revelations that the practice of child slavery is “an entrenched Haitian tradition” that had reached the shores of the United States. The article went on to illustrate with the story of how, “Florida officials... removed a 12-year-old Haitian girl—filthy, unkempt and in acute abdominal pain from repeated rape.” Indeed, a new zombie was rising. Breathless headlines told the whole story:

“Of Haitian Bondage”

*TIME*, 2001

“Haiti’s Dark Secret”

*NPR*, 2004

“The Plight of Haiti’s Child Slaves”

*The Telegraph*, 2007

“The Brutal Life of Haiti’s Child Slaves”

*BBC*, 2009

Child slavery in Haiti was one more whirlwind of sensationalism that journalists whipped up to capture the public’s attention. And those agencies that stood to gain—UNICEF, the International Labor Organization (ILO), Save the Children and hundreds of orphanages—were more than happy to help. Indeed, it was arguably the beginning of the press-humanitarian aid alliance that, deliberately or not, would soon turn into a type of massive donation generating machine. The numbers were so exaggerated and

truths so twisted that much of what we were hearing bordered on fraud. The most telling moment in the entire campaign to save Haitian slave children came in 2004, when UNICEF, Save the Children, and ILO hired FAFO, arguably the world's foremost research institution on child labor practices. FAFO was tasked with conducting a massive survey of 7,812 households randomly selected from both rural and urban areas of Haiti.

What FAFO found was that Haitian domestic workers between the ages of five and seventeen years were not 14 percent of the population in this age category (as the agencies had been telling journalists), but 6.3 percent (173,000 children). They also found that while yes, *restavek* (child domestic servants) worked more than the biological children of the households in which they lived, they had a good reason to want to. Many were from the ranks of the then 70 percent of the Haitian population that lived in rural areas and towns. They performed domestic chores in exchange for board and access to education beyond the rural primary schools. Moreover, many of the child domestics were not, by Haitian standards, any more abused than biological children of the household. On average parents tended to beat their own children more often than they beat the *restavek*; the *restavek* had equal or greater sleeping time; and the *restavek* more often than the biological children of the household had his or her own bed, mattress, or sleeping mat. Moreover, contrary to portrayal of them as missing out on education, at least 60 percent of *restavek* were enrolled in school, that's exactly the same figure as the then national average (60 percent) and 6 percent more than the average 54 percent for rural children in school at the time. In summary, the average *restavek* was, in terms of physical wellbeing, statistically better off than the average Haitian child living with his or her parents.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The child protection agencies would never mention the FAFO study again. Not a single media outlet cited above would mention it. Even official agencies ignored the

FAFO study. In its 2007 report, the U.S. Department of Labor repeated the unsubstantiated UNICEF study (1996/1997) claim of 250,000 to 300,000 *restavek* in Haiti, saying that 80 percent were girls under fourteen years of age—an absurd figure that places 25 percent of all Haitian girls in the status of “child slave” in that age category. They also disregarded other FAFO findings, saying that “most” *restavek* worked from ten to fourteen hours per day and that “most” were not enrolled in school. And as if to erase the findings of the FAFO study, in 2009 the U.S. embassy, along with FAFO funding agencies UNICEF, Save the Children, and the ILO, got together with other agencies to celebrate the results of a new study funded by USAID, one carried out under the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF). Dramatically entitling the study, “Lost Childhoods in Haiti,” the humanitarian aid agencies that sponsored the report claimed that it was “the largest field survey on Human Rights violations with an emphasis on child trafficking, abuse, and violence.” It was in fact a 1,480-household survey, less than one-fourth the size of the FAFO precursor they never mentioned.

The press were quick to hail the findings as an appalling revelation. Fox, BBC, ABC, CBS, all had the same ‘we are shocked’ things to say. A CNN news report cited the new—what should have been more sobering—figure of 225,000 children in “slavery” saying that it was “far more than previously thought,” despite the fact that for more than a decade virtually every article and report had been citing UNICEF’s 1996 figure of 300,000. They also returned to the heavy emphasis on girls, saying that over two thirds of *restavek* are female and, once again emphasizing abuse as if it were the norm, they told readers that, “mostly young girls...they suffer sexual, psychological and physical abuse while toiling in extreme hardship.” By the time of the 2010 earthquake Child Slavery in Haiti was a hotter issue than ever. But child slaves were only one of the many new ghouls rising from the Magic Island.<sup>xxv xxvi xxvii</sup>



In the years since the images of the Haitian child slave first entered the popular international imagination—and as if the sensationalist journalistic representations of Haiti had not gone far enough—journalists flocking to Haiti once again turned the country into a land of violent, twisted, sexually depraved, voodoo fanatical, hungry and starving people: Specifically, they discovered gangs, rapes, sky-high homicide rates and mud cookies.

## **GANGS, RAPES AND KILLINGS**

Cuba aside, in the 1990s, the Haitian population became the very last country in the Caribbean Basin to get sucked into drug transshipment and the concomitant emergence of the youth gang phenomenon and crack cocaine use. Indeed, by urban Latin American standards the vast majority of Haitian youth remain, even today, sexually and socially conservative. Far more so than their U.S. counterparts or those of neighboring islands or the Dominican Republic (the country that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti). Just to offer a quick example to skeptical readers, Haiti's teen pregnancy rate is among the lowest in the developing world, half or less that of many Latin American countries, including the neighboring Dominican Republic and one third the 2006 rate of 126 per 1000 teenage girls for both Hispanic and Black youth in the United States.<sup>xxviii</sup> Things like tattoos are all relatively recent and still stigmatized by most of Haitian society.

But by the early 2000s the country was being portrayed in the media as rife with gangs. Neighborhoods such as Cite Soleil—which is largely composed of recent immigrants from rural areas—were declared “the most dangerous on earth.” Once again, the headlines said it all:

“Haiti Gangs”  
ABC, March 14 2006

“UN Troops Fight Haiti Gangs One Street at a Time”

*The New York Times*, February 10, 2007

“‘Misery Breeds Violence’ In Haiti’s Seaside Slum”

CNN, May 15, 2009

Mind you, I’m not saying that there were no problems in Haiti or no gangs. What I am saying is that the problems that existed were radically distorted. Perhaps most spectacular of all, journalists were sending back unconfirmed reports of male and lesbian street gangs dedicated to raping young women:

“In Haiti’s chaos, unpunished rape was norm”

*Miami Herald*, May 16, 2004

“Rule of the rapists in Haiti”

*The Sunday Times*, May 6 2008

Harking back to the AIDS scare, when a disease was associated with being Haitian, journalists did something perverse: they turned the act of raping into a contagious disease:

“The Rape Epidemic”

*The New York Times*, December 2, 2007

“Haiti Kidnap Wave Accompanied By Epidemic Of Rape”

*Reuters*, 8 Mar 2007

Never mind that most journalists had never actually seen or talked to a Haitian gang member.

Never mind that for much of this period Haiti was in the throes of a violent political struggle. One side was made up of *chimere*, the armed representatives of 90 percent-plus of the population that supported Jean Bertrand Aristide, former priest and the democratically elected president. On the other side was the remaining 10 percent—the elite class—that had backed a lavishly financed and heavily-armed 200-member rebel force that had overthrown Aristide.

Never mind that impoverished neighbors of many of the *chimere* saw them as rebels in a class war and that their source of arms and money was in fact political action groups.

Never mind that extremists in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan were executing dozens of people at a time and strapping bombs to their bodies and killing in a single incident more people than Haitian “radicals” on both sides of the conflict killed in any given three-month period.

Never mind that journalists referred to Haitian paramilitary groups such as the “cannibal army” without ever explaining that they were not cannibals, or that they described Port-au-Prince as “the most dangerous city on earth” without ever acknowledging that statistics suggested that it might be considerably safer than most U.S. cities

Never mind that while, yes, rapes occur in Haiti, the figures published by victim advocate groups (official figures don’t exist) put the level of rape at a fraction of the U.S. rate in a typical year.

Never mind that without any medical documentation journalists for major U.S. newspapers wrote of gangs of rapists, including men with the foreskin of their penises stuffed full of ball bearings so they could damage women, even though, in the middle of a class war, people could walk unguarded in 99.9 percent of the country.

Never mind that despite 1,356 registered kidnappings in 2006—one of the worst years of violence and in the midst of a class struggle—Haiti had the lowest homicide rate in the Caribbean, one fifth the overall average, one sixth that of the neighboring Dominican Republic, one ninth that of Jamaica, one third that of Puerto Rico.

Never mind that homicide rates from 2004 to 2009 did not separate out political violence, meaning that Haitians have arguably conducted the most benign civil war in

the history of the world, or that throughout the entire period, the official estimate of homicides is 1,600, one tenth the homicide rate for the U.S. capital, Washington D.C., one tenth that of Haiti's neighbor, the democratic and politically stable Dominican Republic, a country of approximately equivalent population size but twice the land mass and about 20 times the per capita GDP (\$405 vs. \$8,500).

Never mind all of that.

Rape, kidnapping, and murder: that's good news, or at least the kind of news that sells papers and increases readership.

Then came the mud cookies.

## **MUD COOKIES**

In 2008, Associated Press journalist Jonathan Katz reported people eating dirt as "regular meals" sometimes "three times per day," according to an informant. But this is not possible. No one can survive on dirt. Moreover, Haiti has an old and fascinating industry of geophagy, certain areas of the country specializing in processing clays and limes that contain essential minerals and that people consume out of habit, like snuff, or to tighten stools when sick, like Imodium. And never mind that Katz himself, by all accounts—including my own—is one of the best journalists working in Haiti, fully aware of the customs, and never intended to say that people were surviving on dirt (Katz told me this himself). Never mind all that; people so hungry that they eat dirt, that's news. With the stamp of the world's premier news service (the AP)—implying proper editing and fact checking—the story was good to go. It went on the wire and rocketed from one major newspaper to another.

*"Haiti's Poor Resort to Eating Dirt Cookies"*

*The New York Sun, January 30, 2008*

“Haiti: Mud cakes become staple diet as cost of food  
soars beyond a family’s reach”

*The Guardian*, July 29, 2008

“Dirt Poor Haitians Eat Mud Cookies to Survive”

*Huffington Post*, February 22, 2009

National Geographic, that bastion of U.S. popular intellectualism that 91 years earlier had described the Haitian masses as having “reverted to utter, unthinking animalism,” was not to be left out:

“Poor Haitians Resort to Eating Dirt”

*National Geographic News*, January 30, 2008

And then came the earthquake.

## CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

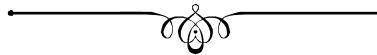
When it was all said and done, in the anarchic hell that was ‘reportedly’ post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, with 2.3 million people homeless (so we were told), 316,000 dead (another exaggeration I’ll get to shortly), 4,000 of the country’s “most dangerous prisoners” escaped (most had never been tried and many were not criminals but political prisoners), 80 percent of buildings destroyed (wrong again), and unbridled hunger, hopelessness, and looting, the violence for the week following the earthquake was spectacularly low. The official tally:

- Two Dominicans wounded—clearly intentional (what we don’t know is if they were trying to sell aid, as some Dominican truck drivers were doing).<sup>xxx</sup>
- One girl killed—apparently by a police man’s bullet but ruled unintentional.<sup>xxx</sup>
- Two men that the police allegedly bound and executed (foreign journalists reported them as ‘looters’ but since in most cases the police were not only permitting looting but partaking in it, we can assume there is more to the story, such as the government order to shoot to kill escaped prisoners).<sup>xxxi</sup>
- A looter shot by a security guard—intentional (but we don’t know what happened prior to the shooting, if the man had threatened the guard, if he had returned several

times, if there had been some kind of fight, if he was one of the higher profile escaped prisoners).<sup>xxxii</sup>

- One cop shot by his partner — another accident, or so we think (the press reported that his partner mistook him for a looter).
- At least two people beaten to death by vigilantes (in Haiti, vigilante justice is common, arguably one reason that crime isn't as high as other countries, meaning — as a Haitian might say — that there are no police to *protect the criminals* from the population).<sup>xxxiii</sup>

We are talking about a metropolitan area of 3 million people and in the wake of one of the worst disasters in the history of the Western hemisphere. It was considerably less violent than the Dominican Republic next door, where an average 55 people were being killed every week. No newspaper or television journalists reported that.



It's not at all clear who went first, the press or the military, but on the 19th of January both abruptly changed the tone of their reports. Indeed, it was an about-face. General Keen, who only two days before had been getting ready to send the troops into the streets of Port-au-Prince, was suddenly acting like he had never been worried. "The level of violence that we see right now," Keen declared, "is below the pre-earthquake levels." U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates repeated the point. "There has been a lot less violence in Port-au-Prince," he told reporters, "than there was before the earthquake."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, the U.S. military commander was planning to send several battalions of the most elite armed forces on the planet into the streets of Port-au-Prince and put an end to the violence and mayhem that had engulfed the city. On the 18<sup>th</sup> the situation had worsened, all hell was breaking loose, martial law was imminent. But the very next day, the 19<sup>th</sup>, the marauding Haitian masses melted from the pages of newspapers and televisions screens and from the cross-hairs of the U.S. Southern

Command's automatic rifles and it was as if insecurity in post-earthquake Port-au-Prince had never been an issue at all.

UN peacekeepers, who spent much of the week sealed off inside fortified compounds, only venturing into the streets in tanks or armed details and insisting that no one else go out without an armed security escort, suddenly changed their tune as well. Acting as if they too had never been worried about anything, UN spokesman John Holmes told the press, "It's very easy to convey the impression by focusing on a particular incident that there's a major security law and order problem arising. But in our view, that is not the case." xxxv



The press and military would change their rhetoric but the fear and restrictions would linger. The 20,000 troops and the thousands of aid workers who had come to provide emergency relief were now effectively scared shitless and under security restrictions. The UN had carved the city into color-coded zones. In red zones aid workers could not enter at all. In orange zones they had to have their windows rolled up and they could not get out of the vehicle. In yellow zones they could enter but only at certain times of the day. The least secure zones were, of course, the poorest. The aid that would subsequently go out to the impoverished areas that most needed it would be delivered in tightly controlled sites, drawing crowds that sometimes reached into the tens of thousands. There was massive frustration and resentment and in these areas a real security threat emerged, one surrounding the aid distribution itself. Then there were the green zones.

The green zones were safe. They were the wealthy areas where little to no aid was needed at all. Yet, they would soon be the sites of massive aid distribution. And not least of all, with their upscale bars and restaurants they would become economically

thriving reprieves with skyrocketing inflation, where the cost of beer and nutritionally varied meals and comfortable hotel rooms soon rivaled or exceeded prices in Miami, Paris and Geneva. The green zones were aptly named: they were places where the people the poor call the *boujwa* (bourgeoisie) made new fortunes, or added to old ones.



In trying to understand what happened, I'm not sure if we can blame the military. Officers and soldiers are trained for war. That's why we pay them. More at fault are the politicians and bureaucrats who sent them. The U.S. sent combat troops. After the fact, the U.S. government tried to rewrite history and tell us it was all for humanitarian work, something so transparently bogus it would be laughable if it were not for the tragic consequences. The fact is that U.S. government really did fear a break down in society. Almost everyone did. The real culprits, in my way of thinking, were the ones responsible for creating the fear. It was the members of the press who we rely on for the truth.

The mainstream media did what it always does to Haiti: in the name of selling newspapers and increasing television viewership it re-affirmed the image of Haiti that it created, an image of the macabre, the mad, and the malevolent; indeed, the 'island of the damned' where in the best of times 'murder, rape and voodoo' prevailed. In what has to be considered one of their most dishonorable moments, what should have been their opportunity to help, to quell the fear and smooth the way for rescuers and medical workers and the deliverers of aid, a moment when newspaper editors could have stepped in and made sure that responsible reporting ruled, much of the press corps failed. Indeed, they did worse. Television networks and newspapers unleashed a massive deployment of news professionals. But rather than telling us what was happening and responsibly reporting on the needs of the survivors, the press tried, in



the name of readers and viewership, to entertain and scare the hell out of us. In the process, they set the ground work for a second disaster: the medical disaster and failed delivery of emergency aid described in the next chapter.

But to finish here, on January 19, the U.S. State Department, U.S. military and the mainstream press suddenly backed off. And they didn't really have a choice. The overwhelming evidence from the streets was that the mainstream press, the U.S. military and the State Department had it all wrong: Haiti was not an Armageddon of murder and mayhem. Independent journalists, such as Ansel Herz and overseas news outlets such as Canada's CBC, were starting a media frenzy of their own criticizing the exaggerations and sensationalism. A chorus of criticism was also coming from medical NGOs such as the French Doctors Without Borders that had five planes carrying medical supplies which were diverted by the U.S. military. In the meantime, Hillary Clinton had flown into Port-au-Prince on January 16. The U.S. military shut the airport for three hours.

The entire U.S. led relief effort was on the verge of becoming a massive embarrassment. It was becoming Obama's Hurricane Katrina. Worse because Haiti was not on U.S. soil and yet the U.S. had taken upon itself the role of controlling the relief effort. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would put an interesting twist on the entire affair when she accompanied the U.S. about-face with a cable sent to U.S. Embassies around the world saying,<sup>xxxvi</sup>

"I am deeply concerned by instances of inaccurate and unfavorable international media coverage of America's role and intentions in Haiti. It is imperative to get the narrative right over the long term."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Yes, get the narrative right. Clinton was talking, not to the mainstream U.S. press, which had been bolstering the case for military intervention and even blaming the U.S.

for not taking firmer control of the streets of Port-au-Prince, but to the foreign press who were now blaming the U.S. for the loss of thousands of lives.

But whoever's fault it was, the game was over. Suddenly Port-au-Prince was "safer than it had been before the earthquake." And despite forthcoming sensationalism about rapes and sexually deviant child slave hunters, it would stay that way. The fear of violence suddenly gone, the news industry had lost a hot-selling story, and had to find a new one. They didn't have to look far. By the middle of the first week after the quake rescue crews began to make a series of dramatic rescues. The rescues served on prime-time news shows as happy endings in the midst of so much trauma and despair. They sent television viewership skyrocketing. They made the U.S. government who funded most of it seem like heroes. And just like almost everything else to do with the press, the international aid industry, and politicians, there was a thick vein of bullshit running through the middle of it all, the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>i</sup> For Shaul Schwarz comments to Reuters, see: "Angry Haitians block roads with corpses: witness." World News (Reuters), January 14, 2010, by Andrew Cawthorne.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-quake-haiti-roadblocks-idUSTRE60D6F92010011>

<sup>ii</sup> For Ansel Herz and no aid workers on the streets of port-earthquake Port-au-Prince, see: Democracy Now, 2010. "Report from Haiti: Desperate Call for Aid with Rescue Equipment, Medicine, Food & Water in Short Supply." January 14, by Amy Goodman.  
[http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/14/haiti\\_desperate\\_for\\_aid\\_with\\_rescue](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/14/haiti_desperate_for_aid_with_rescue)

<sup>iii</sup> For a description of Dr. Bryan Hartog and his University of Iowa medical mission see The University of Iowa Spectator blog, "Standing on Shaky Ground. UI Alumni Faculty and Staff Respond to the

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Earthquake in Haiti (September 6, 2011).

<http://spectator.uiowa.edu/2010/march/standingshakyground.html>

<sup>iv</sup> For “‘constant’ gunshots heard across the capital.” see: *The Telegraph*. 2010. “Haiti earthquake: gunshots and panic as locals fight back against looters.” January 14, Aislinn Laing and Tom Leonard. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/6990801/Haiti-earthquake-gunshots-and-panic-as-locals-fight-back-against-looters.html>

<sup>v</sup> Herz, Ansel 2010. “As Aid Efforts Flounder, Haitians Rely on Each Other.” Inter Press Service, January 15, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2010/01/haiti-as-aid-efforts-flounder-haitians-rely-on-each-other/>

<sup>vi</sup> Hunter, Paul. 2010. “CBC reporters on what they are seeing.” CBC News, Jan 17, 2010. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/cbc-reporters-on-what-they-are-seeing-1.879912>

<sup>vii</sup> For Gupta left by the Belgian UN soldiers as well as the quote from Retired Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honore, see: Carlson, Kathryn Blaze. 2010. “CNN reporter Sanjay Gupta becomes part of the story in Haiti.” *National Post*, January 19. <http://www.nationalpost.com/reporter+Sanjay+Gupta+becomes+part+story+Haiti/2461040/story.html>

<sup>viii</sup> For the General Keen quote on January 17, see: *Associated Press*. 2010. “Violence in Haiti Hindering Aid Work. U.S. Official Says Violence Increasing As People Become Desperate.” *CBS News*, January 17.

<sup>ix</sup> For a summary of diverted MSF flights, see: Crossed Crocodiles 2010. “US Military Turning Away Aid Flights To Haiti.” Posted by xcroc at <https://crossedcrocodiles.wordpress.com/tag/doctors-without-bordersmedecins-sans-frontieres-msf/>

MSF (Press release), 2010. “Doctors Without Borders Plane with Lifesaving Medical Supplies Diverted Again from Landing in Haiti.” January 18. <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/press-release/doctors-without-borders-plane-lifesaving-medical-supplies-diverted-again>

<sup>x</sup> For a good summary of U.S. military buildup in Haiti after the earthquake, see: Herz, Ansel. 2011. “U.S. Worried about International Criticism of Post-Quake Troop Deployment.” *Haiti Liberte*. June 21. [http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1953379\\_1953494\\_1954326,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1953379_1953494_1954326,00.html)

Thompson, Mark. 2010. “The U.S. Military in Haiti: A Compassionate Invasion.” *TIME*, January 16. [http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1953379\\_1953494\\_1954326,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1953379_1953494_1954326,00.html)

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<sup>xi</sup> For the quotes from Mark Hyman of PIH see, *CNN*. 2010. "Haitian authorities record 72,000 deaths from earthquake." January 20, Karl Penhaul, Alec Miran, Gary Tuchman and Justine Redman contributed to the report. <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/19/haiti.earthquake/>

<sup>xii</sup> For de Filippi quote and for the fifth diverted MSF plane, see: *MSF*. 2010. "Doctors Without Borders Plane with Lifesaving Medical Supplies Diverted Again from Landing in Haiti." Doctors Without Borders. Press Release, January 19.  
<http://uruknet.com/index.php?p=m62340&hd=&size=1&l=e>

<sup>xiii</sup> With the exception of at least one vigilante act—which is typical in Haiti as the people have learned to take justice into their own hands—the journalists documented one person getting hacked up or stabbed (they took pictures of that). See, Maile Online 2010. "Haiti's Ground Zero: 30,000 dead and almost every building flattened in town at epicentre of earthquake." January 18.  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1244034/Haiti-earthquake-disaster-Mob-justice-Haitis-streets-blood-looter-lynched-police-shoot-rioters.html>

For the increase in viewership: *TVbythenumbers*. 2010. "Haiti Earthquake Coverage Boosts Fox News To #2 Behind USA In Cable Primetime Viewership." January 20.  
<http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/sdsdskdh279882992z1/haiti-earthquake-coverage-boosts-fox-news-to-2-behind-usa-in-cable-primetime-viewership/>

<sup>xiv</sup> For the National Geographic quote, see: "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States." *The National Geographic Magazine*, December 1920, 497-511.

For more on Haiti's historic bad press, see:

Baroco, Molly Marisa. 2011. "Imagining Haiti: Representations of Haiti in the American Press During the U.S. Occupation, 1915-1934." Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences Georgia State University.

Lawless, Robert. 1992. *Haiti's Bad Press: Origins, Development, and Consequences*. Schenkman Books: Vermont.

<sup>xv</sup> For a summary of Zombie movies, see:

Dendle, Peter (2012). *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, Volume 2: 2000–2010. McFarland. ISBN 978-0-7864-6163-9.

Kay, Glenn (2008). *Zombie Movies: The Ultimate Guide*. Chicago Review Press. ISBN 978-1-55652-770-8.

Russell, Jamie (2005). *Book of the Dead: The Complete History of Zombie Cinema*. FAB Press. ISBN 978-1-903254-33-2. OCLC 57526971.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Davis Wade. 1988. *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian zombie*, University of North Carolina Press, pp. 199-202.

<sup>xvii</sup> For articles debunking the Zombie phenomenon, see:

Anderson, W.H. 1988. "Tetrodotoxin and the Zombie Phenomenon." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 23:121-126.

Kao, C.Y. and T. Yasumoto. 1986. "Tetrodotoxin and the Haitian Zombie." *Toxicon* 24:747-749.

Benedek, C. and L. Rivier. 1989. "Evidence for the presence of tetrodotoxin in a powder used in Haiti for zombification." *Toxicon* 27:473-480

Kao, C.Y. and T. Yasumoto. 1990. "Tetrodotoxin in 'Zombie Powder'." *Toxicon* 28:129-132.

Hines, Terrence. 2008. "Zombies and Tetrodotoxin." *Skeptical Inquirer*, Volume 32, Issue 3 (May/June), pp. 60-62.

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Benedek, C., and L. Rivier. 1989. "Evidence for the presence of tetrodotoxin in a powder used in Haiti for zombification." *Toxicon* 27:473– 480.

Efthimiou, C.J., and S. Gandhi. 2007a. Cinema fiction vs. physics reality. Ghosts, vampires and zombies. *Skeptical Inquirer* 31(4), 27–34.

———. 2007b. *Skeptical Inquirer* 31(6), 66–67.

Inglis, David. 2010. "The Zombie From Myth To Reality : Wade Davis Academic Scandal And The Limits Of The Real." *SCRIPTed*. Volume 7, Issue 2, August.

Isbister, G.K. 2002. "Marine envenomation and poisoning." *Medical Toxicology*. 3rd edition, 1621–1644. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Isbister, G.K., J. Son, F. Wang, et al. 2002. "Puffer fish poisoning: A potentially life-threatening condition." *Medical Journal of Australia* 177:650–653.

<sup>xviii</sup> Davis, Wade (1988). *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie*. Robert F. Thompson, Richard E. Schultes. University of North Carolina Press. ISBN 0807817767.

Davis, Wade (1985). *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0-671-50247-6. (1997 edition retitled: *The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist's Astonishing Journey into the Secret Societies of Haitian Voodoo, Zombis, and Magic*.)

The O'Reilly quote comes from February 20, 1991. Bill O'Reilly's "Inside Edition" ran a show talking about Voodoo. He painted the picture of this island nation as held hostage by Voodoo priests, capable of turning people into zombies. O'Reilly even claimed Voodoo is used to keep people in economic slavery

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<sup>xxix</sup> For the Time 1983 article, see: Diederich, Bernard, and Claudia Walli. 1983. "Medicine: Zombies: Do They Exist?" *Time*, October 17, 1983.

<sup>xx</sup> For ABC's educational resource on 'real' zombies, see: ABC. 2014. "Zombie," by Karl S. Kruszelnicki. <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2004/12/09/1260445.htm>

<sup>xxi</sup> For the Guy Durand quote, see: Lassiter, Sybil M. *Cultures of Color in America: A Guide to Family, Religion, and Health*. Greenwood Publishing Group. Santa Barbara, Ca. p 126.

<sup>xxii</sup> For AIDS stigma and plunging tourism in Haiti, see: Simons, Marlise. 1983. "For Haiti's Tourism, The Stigma Of Aids Is Fatal." *New York Times*. November 29. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/29/world/for-haiti-s-tourism-the-stigma-of-aids-is-fatal.html>

<sup>xxiii</sup> For the origin of AIDS and Haiti, see: Farmer, Paul. 1992. *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992. p. 352.

More recently, an article in National Geographic in 2007 once again turned it around and reports that researchers have determined that AIDS came from Africa to Haiti and then the U.S.: Avasthi, Amitabh. 2007. "AIDS Virus Traveled to Haiti, Then U.S., Study Says." *National Geographic News*, October 29. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/10/071029-aids-haiti.html>

For more on the controversy, see: Aayiti, Jafrik. 2007. "Who Says Africans/ Haitians Gave AIDS to the World? History Answers: Follow the Accuser's Thumb." *Global Research*, November 11, 2007. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/who-says-africans-haitians-gave-aids-to-the-world/7268>

<sup>xxiv</sup> Lunde, Henriette. 2008. *Youth and Education in Haiti*. FAFO-Paper ISSN 0804 -5135 <http://www.FAFO.no/pub/rapp/10070/10070.pdf>

<sup>xxv</sup> *Associated Press*. 2009. "Report: 225,000 Haiti children in slavery." *USA Today*, December 22. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-12-22-haiti-slavery\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-12-22-haiti-slavery_N.htm)

*Associated Press*. 2009. "Poor Haitian kids forced into slavery." *The Start*, December 23, *Shanghai Daily*, December 24.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Here is a quick breakdown in the math for proportion of girls in the 4 to 14 years age group who are *restavek*: Take 80 percent of the 300,000 *restavek* estimate (because the supposition is that 80 percent are female), and then take the ratio of that figure over the total Haitian population for the age group= $240,000/1,000,000 = 24$  percent. A clarification about the population data: Haiti had about 8.3 million people in 2003. Up until the earthquake the most common estimate remained at about 8.5 million. I notice that since the earthquake there has been a tendency to bump it up to 10 million. But with the high number who have moved to the Dominican Republic and elsewhere and

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the clear tendency to inflate numbers since the earthquake. For 2009 I go with 8.5 million. One million of those people are girls between the ages of 4 and 15 years.

<sup>xxvii</sup> The U.S. Department of State (2006) went even farther, describing thousands of Haitian children annually “trafficked” across the border to the Dominican Republic making it an international issue of trade in child slaves. They did this despite a 1998 USAID funded study of which I was part of a three-person team of anthropology Ph.D.’s from the University of Florida. We found that yes children were crossing the border. But all the children we encountered had done so either with their families consent and support or, if you can believe it, on their own.

An important component to the issue of migrating children involves the advantages that accrue to parents with children who have become members of Dominican families. Haitian children growing up in the Dominican Republic will learn Spanish and gain access to job and commercial markets that can translate to tremendous wealth by Haitian standards; “en sel ti moun ka sove yon fanmi” (a single child can save his family). Parents themselves gain a type of right when they have children in “peyi panyol” (Dominican Republic). Dominicans acknowledge the rights Haitian parents have to visit their children, visitations that can be timed to coincide with market days and other commercial activities. Yet another advantage to having a child in the peyi panyol, is that while Haitians emphatically assert they do not sell their children, Dominican’s “caring for” Haitian children express at least some sense of obligation to make gifts to the impoverished parents of their foster children.

A concern, however, is that Haitian children as young as 7 years of age leave home without telling their parents. The reaction of Haitian parents to child migration, particularly that which occurs without parental consent, is one of resignation. In areas where such migration is common, like Ti Lori and La Miel, respondents expressed dismay at the fact that Haitians have so little to offer their children while the Dominicans have so much to offer them. Parents report making little effort to track down children who leave home unannounced explaining: “nou pa gen mwayen” (we do not have the means) and “kouman? se pa peyi pa nou” (how? It’s not our country). In areas where child migration was reportedly uncommon, like Los Cacaos, parents seemed to express relief, and even pride, that children remained under their care until the late teens and early twenties: “nou pa gen sa isit. Se le ti moun gen 18, 20 an yo al Sant Doming” (we do not have that here. It is when children are 18, 20 years old they go to the Dominican Republic).

Going back to Ti Lori and areas where many children were crossing the border, the children we spoke to explained that parents are not so indifferent to their international voyages: “Y-ap cheche ou. Si yo jwenn ou, y-ap kal-o” (they look for you. If they find you, they whip you). But the children nevertheless emphasized their interest in crossing the border and searching for a Dominican family to live with, “nou pa nan cheche dlo, cheche bwa” (we do not have to go for water and wood), but indicate that going depends not so much on the opportunities they can find in the Dominican Republic as it does on the opportunities available at home, as when one boy explained “m pa nan koze Sant Doming, m lekol” (I am not thinking about the Dominican Republic, I am in school).

The children also seemed to think of migration as a normal course of events. Missing your family, particularly mothers, is clearly an issue. One twelve year old boy spontaneously began explaining: “si ou viv byen a mama ou, w-ap sonje li” (if you get along well with your mother, you will miss her).

The same boy, however, made no effort to hide his interest in going: “M ta ale. Le m sonje mama-m, m-ap vin vizite li. Min, m ta tounen anko” (I would go. When I missed my mother, I would come visit her. But I would go back again).

The children were also very certain about how the migration process was supposed to work. The same boys referenced above were asked if they ever looked for Dominican foster parents. The quick reply was: “It is the Dominican’s job to ask us. He better offer me a good deal. If I do not like what he says, I ain’t going.” (Panyol pou mande. Flate, fok li flate-m. Si m pa reme sa li di, m p-ap ale). When asked if they had ever heard of friends abused by Dominican foster families they were equally forthcoming, “no, nou pa-t janm tande sa” (no, we never heard of anything like that).

For anyone interested in that report, see Murray, Gerald F, Matthew McPherson; Tim Schwartz. 1998. “The Fading Frontier : An Anthropological Analysis of the Agroecconomy and Social Organization of the Haitian-Dominican Border.” *USAID/DR*. Gainesville, FL : Dept. of Anthropology, University of Florida, 1998. Available at the University of Florida Smathers Library, HD1841 .M87 1998, UF SMATHERS, Latin America - General Collection.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Specifically, teen pregnancy rates vary widely by race and ethnicity. In 2008, the pregnancy rate for non-Hispanic white teens was 43.3 per 1,000 women 15–19 years of age. The pregnancy rate for Hispanic teens was 106.6. For African-American teens it was 117. See page 2 of the Planned Parenthood Fact Sheet, by Katharine Dexter McCormick, Library Planned Parenthood Federation of America. OAH (Office of Adolescent Health) 2013 Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing.

#### Selected Latin American and Caribbean Adolescent Birth Rates

(births per annum per 1,000 women in age category: World Bank 2013)

Country	2008	2009	2010	2011
United States	38	36	33	30
Hispanics*	-	-	-	106
African Americans*	-	-	-	117
Trinidad and Tobago	34	33	33	32
Grenada	41	40	38	37
<b>Haiti</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>
Cuba	45	45	44	44
St. Vincent & Grenadines	58	57	56	55
Chile	58	57	57	56
Guyana	65	63	60	57
St. Lucia	60	59	58	57
Paraguay	71	70	69	68
Colombia	73	72	71	69
Jamaica	76	74	73	71
Panama	81	80	79	77
Ecuador	82	82	81	81
Honduras	92	90	89	87
Guatemala	106	105	104	103
Dominican Republic	108	107	106	105



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*World Bank 2013 Adolescent Fertility Rate (Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15=19.*  
*<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>*

UNFPA. 2013. "Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of the Evidence." Prepared by: Edilberto Loaiza, and Mengjia Liang. UNFPA: New York, 2013.

World Bank. 2002. "A review of gender issues in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica." Report No. 21866-LAC. December 11. Caribbean Management Unit, Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

<sup>xxxix</sup> For the Dominican aid workers shot, see: *Huffington Post*. 2010. "Dominican Aid Workers Shot In Haiti: WNBC." March 18.

<sup>xxx</sup> For girl killed while "looting," see: Carroll, Rory, 2010. "Haiti looting horror: Girl shot dead by police for taking paintings." *The Guardian*, January 20.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/20/haiti-earthquake-teenager-shot-police>

<sup>xxxi</sup> For the two men bound and executed, see: Penhaul, Karl. 2010. "Police kill man in Haiti over allegedly stolen rice." *CNN*, January 22.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/21/haiti.police.shooting/>

<sup>xxxii</sup> For the "looter" shot by a security guard, see: *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. 2010. "Looting and gunfire Security guard shot and killed one suspect fleeing appliance store; U.S. troops on patrol in the area calmed the violent confrontation." January 30. [http://www.stltoday.com/news/looting-and-gunfire-security-guard-shot-and-killed-one-suspect/article\\_9a48af50-d85c-5c32-b0e6-fab69ed29756.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/looting-and-gunfire-security-guard-shot-and-killed-one-suspect/article_9a48af50-d85c-5c32-b0e6-fab69ed29756.html)

<sup>xxxiii</sup> For vigilante justice, see: *DAILY MAIL*. 2010 "The horrifying moment lynch mob beats to death a looter and drags his body through the streets as Haiti descends into anarchy." January 17.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> For General Keen quotes, see: *Federal News Service*. 2010. TRANSCRIPT: "Lt. Gen. Keen updates Haiti relief operations." January 18. SPECIAL DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BRIEFING SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN RELIEF IN HAITI BRIEFERS: LIEUTENANT GENERAL KEN KEEN, JOINT TASK FORCE HAITI, AND DAVID LINDWALL, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE U.S. MISSION IN HAITI PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI. Federal News Service, Inc.

Hallward, Peter. 2010. "Haiti 2010: Exploiting disaster Part II." *Pambazuka*, November 18.  
<http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/68863>

For the Gates quotes, see: *CNN*. 2010. "Haitian authorities record 72,000 deaths from earthquake." January 20. Karl Penhaul, Alec Miran, Gary Tuchman and Justine Redman contributed to the report.

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<sup>xxxv</sup> For the Holmes quote, see: Landers, Kim, Lisa Millar and Craig McMurtrie. 2010. "Haiti's streets 'safer than before earthquake.'" *ABC News*, January 19.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> For Clinton and the airport shutdown on January 16, see:

Hagopian, Jesse. 2010. "Delaying aid for a photo-op." *Socialistworker.org.*, January 25.  
<https://socialistworker.org/2010/01/25/delaying-aid-for-photo-op>

"Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's touchdown in Port-au-Prince on Saturday, January 16: they shut down the airport for three hours surrounding her arrival for "security" reasons, which meant that no aid flights could come in during those critical hours."

Hagopian also made the claim, albeit I'm skeptical it is true,

"Defenders of Clinton will say that her lack-luster, monotone, photo-op speech was needed to draw attention to the plight of the Haitians. But no one can defend her next move. According to airport personnel that I spoke to during my recent evacuation from Haiti, she paralyzed the airport later that same day to have a new outfit flown in from the Dominican Republic."

<sup>xxxvii</sup> For H.R. Clinton quote, see: *The Guardian*. 2010. "US embassy cables: Hillary Clinton asks for action against 'distorted' Haiti media coverage." January 21.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/244272>

# 5

## *Disaster Inflation and the Death Count*

### NIGHT OF THE EARTHQUAKE

It's the night of the earthquake. Joseph, Ben and I are barreling down a deserted Dominican road. We're headed toward Haiti. I'm behind the wheel in my pickup truck. The headlights carve an illuminated tunnel into the dark night as we speed through shuttered pueblos and past empty town squares. My cell phone rings. It's a young Haitian woman I know. "The Hotel Montana is down," she gasps into the phone. "And the Palace," she sobs softly.

There was a feeling of cataclysm. She was talking about permanent monuments, indestructible fixtures, like the White House or the Waldorf Hotel. These buildings aren't supposed to collapse. Ever.

"Jesus Christ," I mutter.

"There's crying," she says, "and screaming in the streets."

I don't know what to say.

The phone clicks off.

Joseph is next to me in the passenger's seat. He's on his cell phone talking to State Department officials in Washington, "My residence is located next to the Caribe hotel... Yes, yes, that's right." He's saying, "Yes... My wife and daughter." And then his line goes dead too.

We continue barreling down the road, all three of us staring ahead into the tunnel of darkness, down empty stretches of the single-lane highway, through sleeping pueblos, past blurred desert brush, headed toward a disaster about which all we knew was that it was bigger than anything any us had ever experienced before in our lives.<sup>i</sup>



We're nearing the border now. No truckloads of injured people coming out. No truckloads of paramedics or aid going in. We pass a half dozen Dominican men. They walk, one limping as he leans on the shoulder of a colleague. A cluster of Dominican officials stand near the gate to Haiti. They look over our passports and write down our names. And then we're through. We're back in Haiti.

On the Haitian side a lone policeman sits in a vehicle working the radio. We drive past him, down the narrow, decrepit asphalt road. It is getting light now. We are driving around the edge of a lake. Here the old asphalt road was swallowed two years earlier by the rising lake. The new road is gravel and gully-ridden. I steer through massive puddles and over jostling bumps. Fifteen minutes later we round the end of the lake, ride up on potholed asphalt and the first Haitian communities come into view.

There is no hint of disaster. It's the same as it has been for the past 12 years that I've driven this road. A small taxi pickup truck has stopped in front of us. Several people are climbing into the covered bed. We pass people coming out of their houses, waking up. At one point a jeep shoots out from a small dirt feeder road and races ahead us. But if we didn't know about the earthquake there would be nothing to tip us off.

There are no houses down, no damage, nothing to indicate that only twenty miles further down the road, the National Palace is half crumbled and the Hotel Montana has collapsed.

As we approach the city all three of us are on alert, looking for damage. We see none. We drive through villages, past concrete homes, churches, and schools. No damage. More houses, standing, unscathed. We see one flattened wall. But that's it. No other evidence of an earthquake.

Now we are on the outskirts of the city. We turn up the road to the embassy. A three-story home has rolled off its foundation like a massive doll house and come to rest tilted, but still intact. Joseph asks me to stop. He gets out. Snaps a picture.

Everything else in the neighborhood is intact. Then we see a shopping plaza pancaked flat, one floor on top of another. The rear of a crushed car sticks out of the collapsed concrete. Joseph asks me to stop. He gets out. Snaps a picture.

We're driving past the Embassy. No damage. Across the street, a tin roof is peeled off the second story of a shop. But that is it.

Now we are winding our way up the hill, heading toward Petion-Ville, the elite suburb above the city. A downed billboard. Intact houses. Colorful little pickup trucks, tap taps, that transport people are on the road. We are behind one. A man hangs from the back. Just above his head, on the back of panel of the truck is the painted image of a rainbow, embedded in the colors are the words, *Mezi Jezi* (thank you Jesus).

We're driving into Petion-Ville. I'm thinking about the squatter neighborhoods nearby. They will come into view soon. They are built on the steep slope of a mountainside; at least 30,000, raw, gray cinder-block homes, congealed cement bulging out of their seams like cookie filler. A mountain of homes, mostly built since 2004 after one of the many coups in recent decades, part of a massive land invasion that occurred

in the ensuing political chaos. It was only a month before this morning that I sat on the roof of a local gym studying the neighborhoods and imagining that when an earthquake comes—it was no secret that Port-au-Prince was due for one—those hillsides were going to turn into a mass of rubble. There could be no doubt about it.

We top the hill. We drive slowly through a crowd of dazed Haitians, like zombies, they mill about as if with no destination. We drive past a row of intact buildings, past a collapsed building, a hospital reduced to rubble and then, there, on the hill above us, the neighborhoods: 30,000 bare cement homes, all of them standing. I cannot discern a single collapsed home.

## **BLOWING IT OUT OF PROPORTION**

“The road was terrible...It was covered with rubble. We had to wait days for it to be cleared,” says Steve McAndrew, the square-jawed Chief of logistics for the American Red Cross.

It's now three weeks after the earthquake and the night that Joseph, Ben and I drove into Haiti. I'm working as a guide and translator for *USA Today* reporter Ken Dilanian. We're at the headquarters of the International Red Cross sitting in the rubble of what was meant to be a Hilton Hotel. The raw, unfinished building is solid, but the room we are in looks like devastation from the earthquake: bare cement walls, window spaces with no glass or frames. The floor is littered with loose stones and broken cement. The ambience is definitively one of catastrophe. But this rubble has nothing to do with the earthquake. It's been like this for years. Or rather, it's been crumbling for years. Similar to the border crossing and the gravel road around the lake, it exhibits the consequences of political, economic, and administrative catastrophe. Instead of becoming a luxury hotel, as planned, the future Hilton remained a construction site.

The few empty shells of buildings withstood the tremors. The Red Cross has commandeered them for their emergency headquarters.

This guy we're interviewing, Steve McAndrew, the square-jawed American, is a seasoned veteran of disasters. He has been to them all over the world. And it shows. He's cool. He exudes control. While responding to our questions, Steve looks out the bare concrete space that would have been a window and never missing the focus of the conversation says powerful things, such as "This is a tragedy, but it is also an opportunity. Haiti can be rebuilt better than ever before."

Ken asks Steve why it took so long for the aid to get in after the earthquake. Steve has already told us that the very next day after the earthquake he came into to Haiti through the Dominican Republic. That's when he talks about the road and, explaining why they couldn't get supplies in, "The road was terrible," he says, "It was covered with rubble."

*What? I stop taking notes. That's the road that Joseph, Ben and I drove down. We drove down it 12 hours after the earthquake. There was no rubble on the road. It's the same road I've been driving back and forth on for 12 years. It's the same road that hundreds of trucks drive back and forth from the DR to Haiti every day. Aside from the rising lake, nothing had changed about it. You would not even have known there'd been an earthquake until you drove into downtown Port-au-Prince or into the poor neighborhoods of lower Port-au-Prince or the western side of the city. You could have driven right up to the building we are sitting in without ever have realized there had been an earthquake.*

"We had to wait days for it to be cleared," Steve adds.



Steve McAndrew was not alone in his revision of the disaster. Cassandra Nelson worked for Portland-based Mercy Corps and, like Steve McAndrew, she is a veteran of big disasters, from major earthquakes in Pakistan and Iran, to the Indonesian Tsunami. Cassandra arrived in Haiti on one of the first U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters to land in Port-au-Prince. Mercy Corps website published her description of what she found when she arrived:

...it is like opening a window on unprecedented levels of ruin...by far the worst devastation that I've ever seen...Phones and power lines were out, mothers wailed for trapped children, neighbors climbed past the bodies of the dead searching for survivors.

Cassandra spent 16 days in Haiti and when she got home she told journalists:

Literally everything is destroyed...The only thing I can compare it to is that scene in 'Gone with the Wind' at the end of the Civil War. People on stretchers as far as the eye can see. If you were a millionaire, you still didn't have anything to eat.<sup>ii</sup>

Not exactly.

When Cassandra arrived, you could certainly have encountered scenes something like that. And wherever you were in the world, you could have turned on the television, logged on to the internet, or opened a newspaper and found pictures that made you think that Port-au-Prince was like that. But if you were actually in Port-au-Prince at the time, to see those scenes you would have had to search them out. You would have had to go to the morgue or cemetery where the dead had been dumped, or to the general hospital or the Hotel Village Creole where the wounded had gathered to wait for help. To see the cataclysmic destruction you would have had to drive into the old part of the city where entire blocks of 100-year old buildings had collapsed or to the government district where 19 of 20 government ministries collapsed. To find trapped people you would have had to drive into those lower middle-class neighborhoods where the homes



had been built on fill dirt and asked people to direct you to survivors trapped in rubble. But it was definitively not the wholesale destruction the "experts" were telling us it was. It would be determined in the coming year that 93 percent of the buildings had *not* collapsed. And in areas such as Petion-Ville, 98 percent or more of the buildings had *not* collapsed. Above Petion-Ville, still part of the arrondissement of Port-au-Prince, none of the some 10,000 middle and upper class houses had collapsed. Lkening Port-au-Prince to a post-civil war disaster "as far as the eye could see" was simply not reality.

It was not a hellscape for Joseph, Ben and I, as we sat next to Joseph's pool and speared hunks of mango the morning after the earthquake. We were right smack in the middle of Port-au-Prince. And we drove five miles every day to get to the Embassy. That was days before Cassandra arrived. We drove around the entire city on day two with the Fairfax rescuers. We spent day three driving back and forth to the airport. Nor was it a hellscape for most wealthy people in Port-au-Prince. It didn't look like a battlefield around Mercy Corps headquarters in Petion-Ville where, as a director of the organization, Cassandra must have passed much of her time. If she had tilted her head in any direction, she would have noticed that 99 percent of all the buildings were still standing. She must certainly have gone to grocery stores, many of which, despite the international panic and aid stampede, were open within a week of the earthquake. Perhaps she worked out at Petion-Ville's Energy Gym, where I work out and which opened one week after the earthquake. Or perhaps she filled her rental vehicle at one of Port-au-Prince's many gas stations where Haitians—fearing a gas shortage and accustomed to having shortages that come with embargoes and political instability—lined up to buy gas on the second and third days after the earthquake, but where by day seven they could buy gas without waiting at all.

Charles Baker—white, blue-eyed, Haitian born, Oklahoma raised, perennial Haitian presidential candidate, owner of one Haiti's biggest factories, and who counts

among his clients K-Mart, Wal-Mart, and Sara Lee—would tell *The Washington Post*, “Within three days” his factory workers at SONAPI industrial park were producing what they were producing before the earthquake.<sup>iii</sup>

I’m not saying that there had not been a massive disaster. There had been. What I am saying is that the experts were not telling the truth. I’m saying that for whatever reason—a tendency toward the dramatic or outright lying to make matters look as bad as possible—experts who had visited and assisted at disasters the globe over were flying into Port-au-Prince and wildly exaggerating the extent of the damage.

They reported initial estimates of 70 to 80 percent of the city “destroyed.” That was enough rubble to top five football stadiums the size of New Orleans’ Superdome, or to fill 10,000 Olympic swimming pools. And U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Colonel Rick Kaiser called those “conservative estimates.” But it was wrong. It would turn out to be three times what seismic engineer Kit Miyamota and the Ministry of Work would, one year later, estimate was the maximum possible amount of rubble. And even Miyamota and the ministry’s estimate was three times the maximum possible figure based on the number of houses that were ultimately destroyed. In other words, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimated about 9 times the real figure (Miyamota based his estimate on the all the houses evaluated and marked red, for recommended demolition. But in the BARR survey we learned that 64 percent of red houses were re-occupied and never would be destroyed. Therefore, the maximum possible amount of rubble was 1/3<sup>rd</sup> what Miyamota and the ministry estimated).<sup>iv</sup>

Perhaps part of the problem was that most journalists and rescue workers who came in after the earthquake had never been to Port-au-Prince. Journalists would write things like, “Hundreds of thousands of people still without water and electricity” without seeming to realize that hundreds of thousands of people were without water and electricity before the earthquake.

Hans Jaap Melissen, a journalist for Netherlands Radio who had been in Haiti before the earthquake, and who had also covered disasters around the world, had something different to say. He wrote me and said, “As I was very quick to arrive after the quake in a country I had visited a lot, I was instantly mesmerized by the scale of distortion that went on here.”

But one never encountered comments like that in the news. Even NGO staff who lived in Haiti at the time of the earthquake were quoted in the press making astounding exaggerations. The day that the earthquake struck, Sophie Perez, Country Director for CARE International, reported on the group’s website, “The slums on the hills have also completely collapsed.” Now there was some news. Media outlets like London’s *The Guardian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* were all over it. But Perez was referring to the slums I described earlier, the ones above Petion-Ville that I expected to find turned into a landslide of rubble but that had not collapsed.<sup>v</sup> Haiti’s Consul General to the UN, Felix Augustin reported that, “Port-au-Prince is flattened.” Bloggers took the exaggeration even further, such as “the Reluctant Homemaker” who thought that not just Port-au-Prince, but all of Haiti had been destroyed, writing that, “the majority of the infrastructure in the entire country is destroyed.”<sup>vi vii viii</sup>

Nobody of prominence was saying anything to contradict the reports. The tendency was only to report the catastrophic and to exaggerate the destruction, often to radical extremes. It was a type of advocacy through sensationalism. But this was only the beginning. The exaggeration and misinformation would become official. And it would extend to more than buildings. It would include human lives. As will be seen, it was part of the pattern of untruths the humanitarian aid agencies fed to the press and that helped sustain donations at historically unprecedented levels. And woe to anyone who tried to contradict them.

## REALITY AND THE NUMBERS

“You lied to us! You tricked us!”

It’s January 14, 2011, 12 months and two days after the earthquake, and I’m sitting at the head of a long mahogany conference table in a room full of U.S. government officials, one of whom is shouting out me, “No one authorized you to estimate the number of people killed!”

What happened is that three months before this moment, the U.S. government, in the form of USAID, contracted me to estimate the number of people who had returned to their homes since the earthquake. To do that, I had to know how many people were killed. The guy who is hollering at me is a USAID official. He’s furious because I didn’t use the Haitian government’s official figure; which, by that point in time, had reached 316,000 dead, one out of every 10 people in the earthquake strike zone. Or more to the point, he’s furious because we found that one fifth that many people were killed.

“You tricked us,” he shouts, and then he’s on his feet, pointing at me, and shouting, “That was not your job!”



We called it the Building Assessment and Rubble Removal survey or, for short, the BARR Survey. It was a massive survey involving 18 university educated surveyors, myself, and two other PhD’s.<sup>ix</sup> The surveyors visited a random sample of 3,784 buildings which, at 1.36 residences per building, was a total of 5,158 family residences. In cases where the house was destroyed and/or residents gone, we asked neighbors how many of the residents who had lived in the house died in the earthquake (whether they had actually died in the house or elsewhere). We asked other questions as well, such as, “Where did the occupants go after the earthquake?”, “How long were they

gone?”, “When did they come back?”, and, if they were not present, “Where are they now?” For 1,928 of the residences we asked additional detailed questions about attitudes toward home repairs, home ownership, and plans for the future.

The validity of the data from the BARR Survey was corroborated by a census we did of one of Port-au-Prince’s hardest hit neighborhoods. In that case we had found about the same proportion of people killed per destroyed house as we did in the larger survey. It was also the nearly exact same kill ratio per destroyed house that an NGO—All Hands Volunteers—found when censusing destroyed homes in Leogane, the epicenter of the earthquake. And the validity of the BARR data was corroborated by the most reliable sources for population movements immediately following the earthquake. Specifically, cell phone data from Haiti’s main cell phone company, Digicel. It was also corroborated by data from the UN disaster coordination agency OCHA. These were not estimates of the number killed. They were estimates of where people went after the earthquake. But the fact that the figures were so close to the BARR Survey estimates for the same variables suggested that other findings from the BARR Survey were valid as well. And USAID agreed with the credibility of the survey data. They would go on to publish the report, but not before a storm of controversy. The angry USAID officer was only a beginning.<sup>x xi</sup>

Based on the data, we estimated, with a 99 percent probability, that the earthquake death toll was 46,190 to 84,961. That’s a pretty big spread. Statistically speaking it was like hitting the broad side of a barn with a softball at 30 feet. And that was the idea, we didn’t want to leave any room for doubt. Neither did the USAID officials who supervised us. Before we launched the survey, USAID reviewed, vetted and had us test the survey strategy half a dozen times over a period of two months. And despite the furious USAID official, we had no choice but to estimate the number of dead. The goal of the survey was to estimate the number of Haitians who had returned to their homes

since the earthquake. We could not know that had we not first known how many of those people were dead, a point so obvious as to make the angry USAID official and the onslaught of criticism to come absurd. Let me say it again, *the dead would not return home and therefore had to be subtracted from the count of absentees*. Had we used the Haitian government estimate of 316,000 fatalities and then combined that with what we also learned from the survey about the number of people who had returned home, we would have had some 250,000 extra people on our hands.

The problem now, however, was that we had produced an estimate that was one-fifth the number of people the government said had been killed. And perhaps more importantly, the NGOs, UN agencies and press had been repeating the Government figures in their donor drives. And they should not have been. Anticipating the controversy, we pointed out in the report that there was good reason to believe the death toll was even less than what we estimated it to be. We pointed out in the report that there was every reason for the “experts” to have known the figures were radically inflated. I had done a review of all the data from every source we could think of. Here’s what I had found:<sup>xii</sup>

### **Civil Sector**

- The Haitian government reported 30 percent of its 60,000 civil servants were killed in the earthquake, something that in her press conferences, U.S. State Department chief of staff Cheryl Mills—the one who had inexplicably doubled the number of rescues overnight—used as a baseline, saying that it was “upwards of 30 percent.”<sup>xiii</sup> In fact, the only data they ever released—and almost no one repeated it—was 1/15 to 1/30 of that figure.<sup>xiv</sup> Specifically, the police force was hit the hardest. Eighteen police stations collapsed and 21 sub-stations collapsed; 40 policemen were killed in a single precinct. On January 29, Police Chief Mario Andresol told reporters, “We lost 70 police officers, nearly 500 are still missing and 400 were wounded.” The implication was that most of the 500 missing police officers were dead. It was 17 days since the temblor. They left it at that. But in fact, months later, when all the police were accounted for, it turned out that only 77 of 10,544 Haitian police (0.73 percent) had been killed. Elsewhere, 27 of Haiti’s 28 ministry buildings were severely damaged or collapsed. The parliament

building collapsed as well. In the days after the earthquake, there were reports of ministers killed. But when all was said and done, how many politicians were killed? Two.<sup>xv</sup>

And that was all the data the government would ever release on civil servants. Never again, ever, would the Haitian government release a list of dead civil servants, neither specific numbers, nor names. Nor would there be any memorial walls or websites identifying those they were sure did die. And that was only the data from the government. There were plenty more reasons to be suspicious of the official death counts.

### **United Nations Employees, Embassy Staff, and Expatriates**

- The UN tragically lost 104 of 9,151 international staff to the quake. That's 1.1 percent. Although they would not publish the exact figures anywhere, nor would they respond to inquiries, it appeared that 101 of those were in the same building, the Hotel Christopher, the headquarters for the UN security forces, which had pancaked on itself.
- The U.S. Embassy lost one of 172 foreign staff members (0.58 percent) and six of 800 of its Haitian staff members (0.75 percent).
- Of the 43,000 U.S. citizens and residents in Haiti, 104 were killed (0.24 percent).<sup>xvi</sup>
- The Canadian Embassy lost 58 of 6,000 citizens in Haiti at the time (0.97 percent).
- The Dominicans lost 24 of 2,600 citizens in the country at the time (0.92 percent), 22 of them were female sex workers killed in the same building.

### **NGOs and Missionaries**

- Oxfam lost one of 100 employees in Port-au-Prince at the time of the earthquake (1.0 percent).
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS) lost none of its 100 employees who were in Port-au-Prince (0 percent).
- World Vision lost none of their 95 staff member in the area at the time (0 percent).
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) lost seven of their 800 national staff near the epicenter at the time (0.9 percent).
- The International Red Cross reported losing zero of 69 staff and an incredibly low one of 1700 national volunteers (0 percent).

- World Food Program (WFP) lost one of 102 staff in Port-au-Prince at the time (1.0 percent).
- Action Aid lost zero of 25 of its staff (0 percent).
- Save the Children lost one of 160 staff (0.7 percent).
- Haitian Baptist Mission lost two of 100 staff (2.0 percent).
- Food for the Hungry lost zero of 26 staff (0 percent).
- Compassion International lost zero of 74 staff (0 percent).
- God's Littlest Angels—featured on CBC, ABC, and CNN – lost zero of 200 staff and children (0 percent).
- International Organization of Migration (IOM) lost zero of 89 staff (0 percent).
- Feed the Children lost zero of 37 staff (0 percent).
- SOS Children's Villages lost zero of 500 children and staff (0 percent).
- Plan International lost zero of 143 staff (0 percent).
- New Missions located in Leogane, ground zero for the earthquake, lost seven of a reported 5,000 staff and children on sponsorship (0.01 percent).
- ACDI/VOCA lost zero of 580 staff (0 percent).

#### **Business Sector, all located in Port-au-Prince**

- Trilogy telephone company lost five of 576 employees (0.9 percent).
- Digicel telephone company lost two of 900 employees (0.2 percent).
- CEMEX cement company lost zero of 115 employees (0 percent).
- The Petion-Ville Club, located smack in the middle of the one of the hardest hit areas of the city, lost zero of 100 staff, not a single employee even lost a home (0 percent).

Those who would critique this data, would say that it included mostly middle class Haitians. But then, that's the point. It was the lower middle class that got hit hard.

Those who could afford cement houses and cement roofs. Yet, despite the numbers of people lost in their own organizations, virtually all the NGOs and international agencies reported 8 percent to 10 percent of the population killed. Oxfam reported on its website the government figure of 230,000 (there were 3.4 million people in the earthquake strike zone). CRS cited the same death toll. World Vision's website reported that "at least" 230,000 were killed in Port-au-Prince. MSF said the earthquake "killed



hundreds of thousands of people.” And the International Red Cross settled on 250,000 killed.<sup>xvii xviii</sup>

## THEY KNEW

As if there wasn’t evidence enough, the press and the politicians knew that there was some major fudging going on. Here’s the history of the early press coverage:

1. On January 13, the day after the earthquake, President Préval gave a sober report to the press corps on the number of people believed to have been killed in the earthquake. He estimated between 30,000 to 50,000 dead. “But,” he cautioned, “it’s too early to give a number.”<sup>xix</sup>
2. On the third day after the earthquake, January 15, the Red Cross gave a press conference during which its spokesperson officially estimated 45,000 to 50,000 dead. The same day the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) sent out a press release saying that 50,000 to 100,000 people had died.<sup>xx</sup>
3. But on January 16, the very next day, the Haitian government issued a press release inexplicably tripling the number of dead, issuing an official declaration of 140,000 dead.
4. On January 23, after Belgian disaster-response expert Claude de Ville de Goyet noted that “round numbers are a sure sign that nobody knows,” the government almost immediately offered a precise figure of 111,481 dead.
5. The next day, January 24, the Haitian government issued a new press release upping the figure to an even 150,000 killed, an increase of 38,000 over the day before.
6. The same day, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Edmund Mulet, head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, gave a press conference in which he put the figure at 112,350 dead, 194,000 injured. How had he come up with that estimate? He didn’t say.
7. One week later, on January 31, the Haitian government issued another press release that added an exact 100,000 to the UN figure, saying the death toll was 212,000.
8. Three days after that, on February 3, Haiti’s Ministry of Communications raised the official death toll to 230,000. President Rene Préval immediately added another 40,000 to the count, saying that the government had buried 270,000 bodies.<sup>xxi</sup>

Where the figures were coming from nobody knew. On February 3, the day that Préval arbitrarily upped the figure by 40,000, Associated Press reporter Michelle Faul called the Ministry of Communications to ask how the government was arriving at its figures. The Ministry's press secretary withdrew the statement, saying there was an error. Within minutes it was re-issued.

The next day, under pressure to explain the discrepancies, the ministry again said that it was a typo and the number should have read 170,000. But in the same conversation the Communications Minister Marie-Laurence Jocelyn Lassegue concluded, "For the moment we count 230,000 deaths." That's 60,000 more than she had said the day before. Even that was not definitive. Lassegue assured journalists, "It's a partial figure."

Miami Herald's Jacqueline Charles and Alfonso Chardy tried to figure out how the government arrived at the figures. They were told that the Haitian government organization CNE (National Center for Equipment) was counting. CNE officials referred questions to the prime minister's office. The prime minister's office referred questions to the Prime Minister's Secretary-General. The Prime Minister's Secretary-General could not be reached. Someone along the way said that it was not CNE that was counting; rather it was CP, Haiti's Civil Protection, they were doing the counting. CP director Alta Jean-Baptiste referred questions to Ministry of Interior Antoine Bien-Aimé who assured the journalists that, no, it really was CP that was doing the counting and that, "CP is doing a precise count and the numbers they give out are numbers that are proven." When the journalists asked how they arrived at the numbers, Bien-Aimé couldn't say.

The Associated Press reporter Michelle Faul took another crack at figuring it out. She went to the government sites and asked CNE drivers and workers exactly how they were counting. They told her, "No one has been keeping tabs." One of the workers

recalled, “The trucks were just dropping people wherever, and then we would move in and cover them up...It was impossible to do a count.”

Assad Volcy, a spokesman for President Préval, tried to clear matters up. “Experts,” he told the reporters, had devised a formula to calculate how many quake victims have been buried. When asked what that formula was, Volcy couldn’t explain.

On February 15, Haiti’s Civil Protection (CP) officially declared 217,366 people died in the earthquake.

After February 15 they never mentioned how they counted the dead again. None of them. Not the government, not the press, not the UN, the U.S. government nor any of the NGOs. They just cited figures.<sup>xxii xxiii xxiv xxv xxvi</sup>



The disturbing thing about all this, and what really suggests that regarding the number of people killed there was indeed a type of Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle complete with falsified data at the highest levels of the government and cover-ups at the highest level of the press, is that the press knew from the beginning that the government was inflating the figures. And by corollary, U.S. government bureaucrats knew. But instead of pursuing the truth, they mysteriously and quite suddenly dropped the issue.<sup>xxvii</sup> And once again, woe to anyone who should pursue it.

## **THE COST OF TELLING THE TRUTH**

“Timothy T. Schwartz is a spiteful piece of garbage,” were the first words that Michael Collins, host of the popular Haitian-Truth.Org website, had for me. He went on to refer to me as a “criminal,” alleging that I had “written a false and fraudulent report” because USAID had turned me down for a job (oddly he also then went on to criticize

USAID for giving me the job). Others accused me of “causing deaths” and of “libel written in oceans of blood.” I was called a “CIA agent,” “liar,” “monkey,” “incompetent” and one Haitian-American referred to me online as “a despicable vampire who feeds on Haitian blood.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

What happened was that on May 27, 2011, after USAID approved the BARR Survey, journalist Emily Troutman of the Agence France-Presse broke a story headlined: “US report queries Haiti quake death toll, homeless.” Four days later, the Associated Press followed up with their own story, “Haitian earthquake death and homeless figures questioned in US report.” From there the news shot around the world, from Fox to CBS to the BBC to the China Daily. “U.S. report: Haiti quake death toll exaggerated,” read one headline. “Report: Death Toll of Haiti Earthquake Much Lower Than Government Said,” went another. My name was in all of them.<sup>xxix</sup>

It was an enormously unpopular thing to do, questioning death counts for what might be the greatest natural disaster in human history. Even respectable international newspapers cited the figures with a hint that maybe I wasn’t just doing my job; maybe I had an ulterior motive. Rather than portraying me as a PhD specializing in statistical field methodology and who has been carrying out studies in Haiti since 1990 — which was why I was hired; or noting that I was a former student of H. Russell Bernard, one of the greatest living anthropological methodologists and who had pioneered techniques for estimating unknown populations, such as earthquake death tolls; instead, they referred to me as “an anthropologist who is vehemently opposed to foreign aid” and “a critic of aid in Haiti.”

I experienced an onslaught of cyber-attacks. My computer was infiltrated and a spy program installed. My blogs were intermittently jammed. When I tried to get to my blogs the message “blocked” would flash across the screen. My e-mail was hacked. The hackers selectively deleted e-mail queries as they came into my inbox. When the

Kellogg Foundation tried to contact me about a potential job the e-mails disappeared. When Kellogg made an appointment to speak on the telephone, the signal repeatedly dropped. That happened 13 times to the point where both I and the Kellogg directors simply quit trying. My former supervisor at LTL—the company that had handled the USAID contract for the BARR survey—informed me, ‘off the record,’ that the Haitian government had sent a letter of protest to the State Department in which they singled me out as personally responsible for the death toll estimate. USAID staff told me to make no comment to the press. I didn’t—not publicly. But I paid for it anyway.<sup>xxx</sup>



USAID in Haiti, which had vetted the study, never denied the validity of the results. USAID-Haiti director Carleene Dei told the Associated Press:<sup>xxx</sup>

“Any comment on the death toll of the tragic earthquake of January 2010 that affected so many, is beyond the scope of the commission and purely reflects the views of the author.”

But International USAID director and presidential appointee Rajiv Shah began the denial process telling the Associated Press that, “The first draft of the report contained internal inconsistencies with its own findings,” and that, “We are reviewing these inconsistencies... to ensure information we release is accurate.” What Shah was talking about I have not a clue.

The next official statement came from Mark Feierstein, USAID’s Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean. Feierstein told the Associated Press,

“The study didn’t include data from heavily damaged areas in Haiti’s countryside or from the number of houses that collapsed and killed people.”<sup>xxxii xxxiii</sup>

It was a misleading statement. Indeed, it was another lie, one reminiscent of DART's Tim Callaghan and the number of people rescued. Our sample was not perfectly representative of the total population of 3.4 million that the UN defined at that time as "living in the earthquake strike zone." But it was representative of 2 million of those people and they lived in the hardest hit areas of Port-au-Prince. When we generalized the BARR data to the remaining one million people we were sure to overestimate—not underestimate—the impact of the earthquake.

USAID knew this. The decision to use that population was deliberate, chosen in conference with USAID supervisors specifically because we wanted the findings to be as defensible as possible. And, of course we included collapsed houses in our study: not to do so would have contradicted the entire purpose of the survey, which was to estimate how many people had returned to their prior residences. In cases where a house was completely destroyed or no residents were present, we gathered data from neighbors.

USAID-Washington would go on to blacklist me. Three weeks after the report made it into the media, on my way to do an evaluation of food relief in Haiti, I was standing in line for a security check at the airport. My cell phone rang. It was a representative for the company that recruited me, FINTRAC, a contractor for USAID. The U.S. government had intervened with my hiring and refused to approve my appointment. It was something that had only happened once before in the company's history. It would happen to me five more times, that I know of. <sup>xxxiv</sup>

To the present—2016—I'm forbidden to work for my government in Haiti, the place I've studied and lived for much of the past 25 years. I'm not complaining, if anything it's brought me more work and has given me a type of honorable notoriety with Canadian, European and, more than anyone else, Haitian NGO workers among whom there is widespread suspicion of the U.S. government motivations in Haiti. Even

many U.S. aid workers seem to look on me and treat me with a special respect. But more importantly than that, it drives home the fact that something is seriously awry.

Why? Why the need to inflate the number of dead by five to ten times what it really was? Wasn't the earthquake bad enough? Even at 66,000 dead, it would still be one of the fifth deadliest earthquakes in the past 100 years. With the exception of Peru's 1970 Ancash earthquake—which reportedly killed as many as 100,000—it was far worse than any natural disaster that has ever occurred in the Americas. Why the need to defend the absurdly high number of deaths when there were so many deaths as it was? I will try to answer these questions in the next chapter, but first, one final word on the data and the politics of not telling the truth.



No professional statistical estimates were ever again published. In the year after the earthquake not a single media outlet, NGO, UN agency, branch of the U.S. government, credible academic institution or Haitian government ministry admitted publicly to taking a sober look at the issue or commissioned experts in statistical sampling methodologies to estimate how many people were really killed.<sup>xxxv xxxvi</sup>

All except for one instance. And for me that instance would provide at least some redemption.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

On March 11, 2013, three years after the earthquake, Richard Garfield, professor at the School of Public Health at Columbia University, would tell Jennifer Wells of the Toronto Star, "The government of Haiti had no methodology at all. They just put numbers on a page." Garfield is one of the world's leading experts on estimating disaster mortality rates. In the months following the earthquake, he was given data and financial support from Digicel, the dominant mobile phone company in Haiti at the time of the earthquake. "From that information," Garfield explained, "one could

extrapolate from phones to population a kind of crude estimate on how many people died.” Working with the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Garfield estimated 60,000 to 80,000 dead. The data was never published, “Because” Garfield explained, “we thought it would detract attention from the other uses of the cellphone information and would become a political matter instead of a humanitarian one, we just put it aside.”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> A few hundred meters below the road, invisible in the moonless night, is an expansive salt water lake. Years before, I came here for another disaster. Dominicans and the Haitian residents of a squatter settlement on the border town of Jimani awoke early in the morning to exploding doors and collapsing walls. An avalanche of water, gravel, boulders, and uprooted trees demolished their homes. The next day news cameras captured crocodiles in the lake eating cadavers. Officially, 648 people were killed. Those were Dominicans. The Haitians were never counted. People who lived on the edge of the stricken neighborhood told me that that as many as 2,000 Haitian immigrants died that night, their bodies buried under the gravel or swept into the lake. The Haitians who survived were put, concentration-camp style, in tents behind a ten-foot fence at the border. The Dominicans would be getting aid for years to come. Two years after the flood, in July of 2006, I was sitting in a middle-class neighborhood in Jimani, eating a sandwich at a vendor stand when a truck pulled in. The driver got out, opened the back and people came running from everywhere, out houses, and from little stores. Each carted off what he could carry. Perplexed, I asked the sandwich vendor what was going on. “Flood aid.” “But that was 2 years ago.” “Yeah, we still get a truck every now and then.” Several hundred Dominicans, most of whom, according to some among them whom I knew, had lost nothing at all in the flood, got brand new houses. As for the Haitians, they were quietly deported. And now, having driven through the night to the border, in the dull hue of approaching dawn appears the homes built for the Dominican flood victims. There is a school and playground in the midst. Soon we are passing through a large steel gate and into the Dominican customs area.

<sup>ii</sup> For quotes from Cassandra Nelson of Mercy Corps, see: Wilson, Kimberly 2010. “Mercy Corps veteran says of the many disasters she has seen, Haiti was the worst.” *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, February 02.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/02/mercy\\_corps\\_veteran\\_says\\_of\\_th.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/02/mercy_corps_veteran_says_of_th.html)

<sup>iii</sup> For Charles Baker’s quote, see: Forero, Juan. 2010. “Haiti’s elite sees business opportunities emerging from reconstruction,” *Washington Post*, February 15.



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<sup>iv</sup> For U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Colonel Rick Kaiser quote, see: Associated Press. 2010. "Rubble from Haiti quake could fill 5 Superdomes." *Boston.com*, January 30.  
[http://archive.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2010/01/30/rubble\\_from\\_haiti\\_quake\\_could\\_fill\\_5\\_superdomes](http://archive.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2010/01/30/rubble_from_haiti_quake_could_fill_5_superdomes)

<sup>v</sup> For CARE director Sophie Perez's quote about Haiti earthquake, see: Addley, Esther. 2010. "Thousands poured out, crying and carrying bodies." *The Guardian*, January 13.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/13/haiti-earthquake-eyewitness-stories>

<sup>vi</sup> Three days after the quake the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva—still being sober and responsible with estimates of 50,000 dead—reported that "in areas of the city that have been hit particularly hard... at least 70 percent of the buildings destroyed." For the very worst neighborhoods that was true enough. But as seen in the text, it was not true for Port-au-Prince as a whole.

See: Whitelaw, Kevin 2010. "'Everything Is Breaking Down' In Haiti." *NPR*, January 15.  
<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2010/jan/15/everything-breaking-down-haiti/>

<sup>vii</sup> Whitelaw, Kevin. 2010. "Death, Desperation Mark Haiti's Dark Hours." *NPR*, January 15.  
<http://www.npr.org/2010/01/15/122602342/death-desperation-mark-haitis-dark-hours>

<sup>viii</sup> See: Harvey, Travis Anna. 2010. Blog: *Confessions of a reluctant homemaker*. January.  
[http://confessionofareluctanthomemaker.blogspot.com/2010\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://confessionofareluctanthomemaker.blogspot.com/2010_01_01_archive.html)

<sup>ix</sup> True, I was lead on the LTL survey, but the team included one Ph.D. educated at Columbia University in New York and the other with a degree from the Sorbonne in Paris.

<sup>x</sup> All Hands Volunteers working in Leogane, the epicenter of the earthquake, found the almost exact same rate of deaths per destroyed residence than we found in Port-au-Prince: 0.27 for Leogane vs. 0.28 in Port-au-Prince.

**From:** Landon Mitchell <landon@hands.org>  
**To:** "schwartz833@yahoo.com" <schwartz833@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 22, 2011 11:43 AM  
**Subject:** Any advice for someone seeking reliable info in Leogane?

Hello Mr. Schwartz,

My name is Landon, and I work with a very small, volunteer-based organization currently operating out of Leogane. I hope you don't mind my writing you; I found this address in an online response of yours to an LA times article by Muggah and Kolbe from July. My intentions in writing to you are not especially clear even to

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myself, except perhaps to seek advice on where I might find more reliable sources of information.

If you will suffer a little backstory, I will try to explain where I'm coming from. I came to Haiti in mid-March of 2010 to volunteer with the organization at which I am now employed, All Hands Volunteers. The organization's initial response was to procure tools and start sending out as many volunteers as they could support into the neighborhoods of Leogane to begin clearing the debris. The goal being that the owners could return home, receive T-Shelters, rebuild, etc. Since March I have worked at perhaps 100 of these sites, both on the ground, and in the cage of one of the two Bobcat skid-steers that were donated to us. From March 2010 to the present, I have been away from the project for a combined total of about only 4 Months.

A couple of months ago I was offered the position of Debris Management Coordinator, which entails looking after the demolition, rubble removal, and machinery aspects of our operations. These programs are now winding down, and I am in the process of overseeing a follow-up survey of as many of the 260 sites that we have completed as possible. It may also include another 160 or so sites that were cleared by the Cash for Work program that we ran. The survey seeks information on demographics, employment, migration, shelter, rubble, etc. It is, if not based on, at least inspired by the BARR report that you authored.

As the results have begun coming in, I have been trying to put them in the context of Leogane and Haiti as a whole. This is where things became difficult. Whether the total volume of rubble is 3.1 or 20 million cubic meters, has an impact on the relative significance of the small portion we have moved. Not to the people for whom it matters, those whose homes we've cleared, but for this organization, and for the NGO community to know what needs are left and how best to address them.

In my experience, I have seen a slow but steady transformation of the city of Leogane. Our rubble program is winding down as much from a lack of sites as from our own volition. The problem is that I have almost no statistics, no verifiable information to tell this story reliably. Some UN estimates claimed that 80-90% of Leogane was destroyed or damaged in the earthquake. Besides being vague for my purposes, I personally believe this is also inaccurate. I have read somewhere that those estimates were reduced to 50%, but have not found the source of this information, much less the methodology.

For my own part, I have relied on the BARR report inasmuch as it related to the questions I was trying to answer. It is difficult, when even my own organization's website quotes UN and GOH figures. But so far the only criticisms I have found of it that are not quite obviously spurious and/or politically driven have been based on a level of understanding of advanced statistics that is well beyond my comprehension

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or comment. Even these, generally, relate to death tolls, which are not my primary interest.

[For what it is worth, my (very) preliminary findings of deaths per household match closely with your own. Of the 90 or so follow-ups we have completed, there have been an average of .0266 deaths per household. And these are household that are, by nature of us needing to rubble them, red tagged. Extrapolate this to the a population of Leogane generously estimated at 150,000, and ignoring that these were by nature the most dangerous homes, and still the Leogane death toll is 3990. Furthermore, I have stood on the mass grave; I helped our organization build a memorial there. In my opinion, if 30,000 people died in Leogane, the vast, vast majority could not have been buried there.]

Other organizations were rumored to have done similar studies. According to one inside source, Save the Children did a statistical survey and corroborated the BARR findings. But they never released the study. The data was never published. Just as telling, no statistical rebuttals of the BARR were forthcoming.

USAID would officially publish the BARR Survey, a recognition that it was valid (see [pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADY468.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADY468.pdf)).

Nevertheless, with no follow up USAIDs rejection of the survey, the story was dead. And it was just as well. The firestorm subsided. The critics, most so sure that USAID had put me up to it, were a little confused, but seemed satisfied. I was as relieved as anyone. But what's important here, what should be more important to us than anything else, is truth twisting, exaggerations and outright lies.

<sup>xi</sup> The United Nations organization, OCHA, estimated migration from Port-au-Prince to the provinces in the month following the earthquake; and Colombia University and Karolinska Institute's used Digicel cellular phone data for the 1st of December 2009 until June 11th 2011. OCHA reported 511,405 people migrating to the provinces; the Digicel data indicated 570,000 people had fled to the provinces. Both figures support the BARR estimate of 525,000 extrapolated from the total sample (the range of the BARR estimate is 465,246 to 584,754 at  $p < .01$ ). The Digicel data also corroborated the timing and dimensions of the reverse flow as migrants began returning to Port-au-Prince at the beginning of February 2011. There was nothing to argue about. It was Statistics 101. The sampling strategy and the findings were right on the money.

OCHA. "Haiti Earthquake - Population Movements out of Port-au-Prince" February 8, 2010. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/MNIN-82GQYS?OpenDocument&query=population percent20movement&emid=EQ-2010-000009-HTI](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/MNIN-82GQYS?OpenDocument&query=population+percent20movement&emid=EQ-2010-000009-HTI). Retrieved 11 May 2010.

<sup>xii</sup> Few things could have been more obvious than that the death count had been radically inflated. Not only had journalists been writing about it, one only had to ask around. While I was doing research for the BARR Survey, I tried to use NGOs to get insight into how many people had died in the earthquake. Most NGOs refused to respond. I wrote to thirty NGOs, businesses, and UN agencies and tried to confirm how many of their own employees, sponsored children, or aid

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recipients who were killed. Five responded. Two of these were businesses. Nevertheless, using data newspapers and inside sources, I was able to piece together a rather hefty dossier of death tolls that—putting the BARR Survey aside—suggesting the officially estimated death toll was really 1/10th the official estimates.

<sup>xiii</sup> For Mills and Shah claiming that the number of Haitian civil servants killed was over 30%, see: *U.S. State Department*. 2010. “Counselor Mills and Administrator Shah Hold Special Press Conference on Haiti.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOO-2De3DZg> Accessed 9/9/14

<sup>xiv</sup> For the police, if we figure that 80 percent are in Port-au-Prince—standard—then 0.9 percent of those in Port-au-Prince were killed.

<sup>xv</sup> It may be that fewer than 70 percent of Haitian Government employees even show up for work, ever, as a large and unknown portion of “workers” on the government rolls don’t exist. They are, in Haitian parlance, zombies, meaning their paychecks go to unscrupulous politicians, bureaucrats or to favored family and friends of the same. And anyone in Haiti can tell you that almost all those people who do work in government offices are long gone by 5 o’clock quitting time.

<sup>xvi</sup> At the time it was not exactly clear what the U.S. data was telling us. The U.S. Embassy could not locate 2,000 U.S. citizens. But this is not unusual at the best of times and because of benefits and inheritance, it seems likely that if someone were killed they would have been reported. In the interim it has become clearer that no more than that figure were killed. As of May 10, 2011, the official figure cited was actually less, 103 U.S. fatalities (see House of Representatives 1016 - Assessing Progress in Haiti Act (Lee, D-CA)

[http://rsc.jordan.house.gov/UploadedFiles/LB\\_051011\\_HR1016.pdf](http://rsc.jordan.house.gov/UploadedFiles/LB_051011_HR1016.pdf)

<sup>xvii</sup> Most of the figures given here are for staff, children and extension agents in Port-au-Prince at the time. But even for the few figures that are for Haiti as a whole—such as the UN total staff or police—we know that although 30 percent of the Haitian population is located in Port-au-Prince, 80 percent or more of all schools, civil servants, NGO, and UN employees, NGO workers in Haiti are located there. Port-au-Prince vastly dominates the entire country in terms administration, infrastructure and wealth. Everything outside of Port-au-Prince is known as “the province” or “andeyo” (outside). Most expatriates live in Port-au-Prince, as do the vast majority of returnee Haitians who also receive remittances or have pensions from work in the US or Canada. Port-au-Prince is, for most Haitians, the only place to live if you have money. All of which makes the numbers tolerable estimates of how many people were killed, a point even more poignant given that they were on average one tenth of the death toll that was being reported.

<sup>xviii</sup> As if all of this information and the survey were not evidence enough that about 1.0 percent to 1.5 percent of the population had been killed—and not 10 to 12 percent—we had done a second

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survey for USAID, a pilot survey for the BARR. And it was in fact not a sample survey where we only took a part of the population and used them to make estimates. It was a census. We conducted it in Ravine Pentad, a neighborhood USAID considered one of the most earthquake devastated slums in the entire strike zone. An NGO called CHF (now known as Global Communities) had taken charge of removing the rubble and cleaning up the Ravine Pentad neighborhood. Prior to the census their director of field operations told us that 2,000 of 6,000 residents had been killed. We found that neither of these figures was correct. We found in the census that 4,421 people lived in the neighborhood at the time of the earthquake; 142 were killed. That translates to 3.2 percent of that population, one of the most devastated neighborhoods in the city.

<sup>xix</sup> For Preval's preliminary "sober" report, see: *CNN*. 2010. "Haiti appeals for aid; official fears 100,000 dead after earthquake." January 13. Contributors included, Ivan Watson, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Susan Candiotti, Gary Tuchman, Chris Lawrence, Anderson Cooper, Brian Byrnes, Felicity Cruikshank, Hada Messia, Richard Greene and Mike Mount. [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-13/world/haiti.earthquake\\_1\\_haitian-president-rene-preval-earthquake-rubble?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-13/world/haiti.earthquake_1_haitian-president-rene-preval-earthquake-rubble?_s=PM:WORLD)

<sup>xx</sup> For first estimates of dead from Red Cross and other from Pan American Development Fund (PADF) saying that 50,000 to 100,000 people had died, see: *CBS News and Associated Press*. 2010. "Haiti Recovery Effort by the Numbers." January 15. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/haiti-recovery-effort-by-the-numbers/>

<sup>xxi</sup> For the changing government estimates of the death toll see, Faul, Michelle (Associated Press). 2010. "Haiti gives death toll of 270,000; no explanation." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, February 10. <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-haiti-gives-death-toll-of-270000-no-explanation-2010feb10-story.html>

Chardy, Alfonso and Jacqueline Charles (Miami Herald). 2010. "Haiti earthquake death toll remains a mystery." *Taiwan News*, March 9. <http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/1198356>

Beauchemin, Eric. 2010. "Haitian mayor also struggling with death toll." *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*. 25 February.

Romero, Simon and Neil Mac Farquhar. 2010. "Haiti's Many Troubles Keep Bodies Uncounted." *New York Times*, January 20. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/21/world/americas/21death toll.html>

Melissen, H. J. 2010. "Haiti quake death toll well under 100 000." *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, February 23.

<sup>xxii</sup> In his correspondence with me, Hans Jaap Melissen went on to explain his own experience in Haiti and relate it to other disasters that he had covered as a reporter:

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... it was not the first count or recount I did: the tsunami in Aceh 2004, Qana bombing in 2006 in Lebanon and other different mass killings ... Unfortunately, 'first truths' tend to stick, and Haiti will be a 220.000 death earthquake to the world (at least not many people wanted to get to GOH's 316K anymore). But Haiti did not win anything with it.

The world 'injured to killed' ratio for earthquakes also supports the probability that the death count was much lower. The ratio is derived from all the world's earthquakes. The best data comes from the 190 earthquakes that occurred from 1986 to 2008. The ratio is 6.9. This means that when an earthquake hits we should have about 6.9 injured people for every one that is killed. Obviously the number who die will be influenced by medical care, infrastructure, and health status of the population as well as enforcement of building codes, but it gives us a general idea of what to expect. And we can expect that the ratio to range from about 4.8 injured per 1 dead in the worst situations in underdeveloped countries to about 11.2 injured per 1 dead in developed countries. In the case of Haiti, 17 days after the earthquake the Haitian government reported that 200,000 people were injured and they eventually settled on the figure of 300,000 injured (Handicap International, having attempted to gather data from all improvised and permanent hospitals, estimated 1,000 amputations). No one ever contested those figures and given that they are based on actual number of people treated at hospitals, they should be more accurate than the death count, based on bodies that were burned and quickly buried. Using the maximum expected deaths per injured person (1 death per 4.8 injured) and the minimum expected deaths per person (1 death per 11.2 injured), the expected deaths in Haiti, based on 300,000 injured, would be 26,786 and 62,500. If we use the average of 1 death per 6.9 injured, the expected deaths from the Haiti earthquake is 43,378.

**The world 'injured to killed' ratio for earthquakes**

Dataset 1986-2008		
	Number of earthquakes	Fatalities to injuries ratio
World	190	6.9
Developing (no China)	53	4.8
Industrialized (no Japan)	20	11.2
China	35	2.8
Japan	6	47.5
Latin America	11	8.0
Turkey, Iran	26	3.6
Greece	5	11.2
Italy	5	7.0

*Data presented by Wyss, M. and G. Trendafiloski at Second International Workshop on Disaster Casualties 15-16 June 2009, University of Cambridge, UK. Second International Workshop on Disaster Casualties. "Trends In The Casualty Ratio Of Injured To Fatalities In Earthquakes." M. Wyss and G. Trendafiloski World Agency of Planetary Monitoring and Earthquake Risk Reduction, Geneva, Switzerland*

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NUMBERS AT A GLANCE	Total	SOURCE
Estimated Deaths	230,000	GoH – February 15
Estimated Number of Displaced Individuals in Haiti	2 million	IOM – April 5
Verified Number of Displaced Individuals in Settlements	1.3 million	UNICEF – August 26
Estimated Affected Population	3 million	UN – January 15

*From USAID August 27, 2010 Bureau For Democracy, Conflict, And Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Office Of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)*

<sup>xxv</sup> As time went on, all was forgotten and NGOs, UN agencies, and Haitian and foreign governments clung to the big numbers. On the first anniversary of the quake, the UN posted on their website, “The quake killed more than 200,000 Haitians and left more than two million homeless.”

- The U.S. embassy put the figure at 230,000.
- The OAS organization IICA put the figure at 300,000.  
[http://www.iica.int/Esp/regiones/caribe/Haiti/IICApercent20Bureaupercent20Document/BoletpercentC3percentADn\\_Tractores\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.iica.int/Esp/regiones/caribe/Haiti/IICApercent20Bureaupercent20Document/BoletpercentC3percentADn_Tractores_ENG.pdf)
- And to everyone’s surprise, Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive announced, “There were over 316,000 people killed.” No one asked him where he got the new figure. Nor did many of the government agencies and major NGOs dare to repeat it.
- See: *Reuters*. 2011. “Haiti revises quake death toll up to over 316,000.” January 12.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/haiti-quake-toll-idUSN1223196420110112>

Yet, despite the early skepticism, by five years after the earthquake even that bastion of accurate reporting, the *Wall Street Journal*, had adopted Bellerive’s estimate, putting the Haiti death count at 316,000. See: *Wall Street Journal*. 2015. “The Numbers: Deadliest Earthquakes of the 21st Century.” April 25. <http://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/04/25/deadliest-earthquakes-of-the-21st-century-the-numbers/>

<sup>xxvi</sup> At the same time all of this was going on, Radio Netherland’s Worldwide journalist Hans Jaap Melissen had been working on his own estimate. Five weeks after the earthquake, in pursuit of just how many people had really died, Hans went to the town of Jacmel. There he found that French NGO ACTED counted all the bodies pulled from the rubble and arrived at a figure of 145 deaths; the Jacmel mayor reported 300 to 400 dead; the Haitian central government put the figure at 4,000. In Leogane, the epicenter of the earthquake, where police had told me they had counted 1,600 dead, Hans found that the mayor reported a death toll of 3,364; the Haitian government claimed 30,000 dead. Hans then went to Port-au-Prince’s main graveyard. The manager of the graveyard said they registered 18,000 bodies buried. It was the same graveyard where the mayor of Port-au-Prince said 89,000 had been buried. Then Hans visited the government burial fields in the arid hills of Titanyen, outside Port-au-Prince. He walked the graves and estimated “a maximum of 20,000” bodies were buried there. The government put the figure at 70,000.

Taking all this into account, including the discrepancies in Jacmel and Leogane between mayoral and central government estimates, Hans made a low estimate of 52,000 dead. And to be conservative

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about it, he added that even if 30,000 people were still under the rubble and another 10,000 bodies were disposed of privately or burned, there were no more than 92,000 people killed.<sup>xxvi xxvi</sup> In the end, however, Netherlands Radio would drop the issue as well. Hans wrote me 18 months later, on June 7, 2012, and lamented that, “indeed it is an inconvenient truth where a lot of money is at stake.”

<sup>xxvii</sup> The sample strategy we used was basic. We randomly picked 55 points (clusters), interviewed people and or neighbors of the closest 90 houses to the point. For anyone interested in the details the report is available at USAID website: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADY468.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADY468.pdf)

<sup>xxviii</sup> For a good articles about the BARR an Disaster Inflation, see: Padgett, Tim. 2011. “Did Haiti Commit Disaster Inflation? A U.S. Study Raises the Possibility.” *Time*, May 31.

For criticism of me and the BARR Survey, see the following blogs:

<http://www.haitian-truth.org/us-flaws-in-death-toll-report-on-haiti-quake/>

<http://www.defend.ht/politics/articles/international/1121-us-state-department-report-scientific-it-is-not>

<http://www.voltairenet.org/article170408.html>

<http://world.time.com/2011/05/31/did-haiti-commit-disaster-inflation-a-u-s-study-raises-the-possibility/>

<sup>xxix</sup> “This is a great report. All this fuss is normal, it’s standard vetting procedure.” I’m sitting in room with the then sub director of USAID/Haiti, Tony Chan, my two USAID supervisors—one of whom was the person hollering at me in the meeting—and my supervisor from LTL, the organization that had hired me and managed my contract with USAID. To my astonishment I’m being congratulated. Sub-director Chan is now saying, “You should write a cover letter acknowledging your supporters.” He looks over at the supervisor who, not a month before, had been hollering at me. It was a moment of great relief. The report would be published. In the meantime, it was sent to Washington.

<sup>xxx</sup> The only reason I found out about Kellogg’s e-mail issue is because the first e-mail message they sent disappeared as I tried to open it.

<sup>xxxi</sup> For the Rajiv Shah quote about the USAID/BARR Survey, see: Daniel, Trenton. 2011. “Report questions official Haiti quake death toll.” *Associated Press*, May 31.  
<http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/americas/5077913/Report-questions-official-Haiti-quake-death-toll>

<sup>xxxii</sup> For the quotes from USAID-Haiti director Carleen Dei, see: *BBC*. 2011. “Report challenges Haiti earthquake death toll.” June 1. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-13606720>



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See also: Charles, Jacqueline. 2011. "A new report disputes the number of Haiti dead and displaced from the 2010 earthquake." *Miami Herald*. January 11.

Here is the full Press Release quote from Dei:

The U.S. Government, including USAID, remains steadfast in our support of Haiti and its people today, tomorrow and for the long-term. As we stated on May 27, USAID recently received a draft report from an external organization.

We tasked the organization to assess the impact of rubble removal and structural assessment efforts on the return of Haitians to neighborhoods and determine if, and how, we could improve upon our efforts. Any comment on the death toll of the tragic earthquake of January 2010 that affected so many, is beyond the scope of the commission and purely reflects the views of the author.

Carleene Dei  
Mission Director  
USAID Haiti

<sup>xxxiii</sup> For the quote from Mark Feierstein, Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, see: Daniel, Trenton (Associated Press). 2010. "U.S. official finds flaws in report of lower Haiti quake death toll." *The Star*, June 3.  
[https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2011/06/03/us\\_official\\_finds\\_flaws\\_in\\_report\\_of\\_lower\\_haiti\\_quake\\_death\\_toll.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2011/06/03/us_official_finds_flaws_in_report_of_lower_haiti_quake_death_toll.html)

The full statement:

"Mark Feierstein of the U.S. Agency for International Development said the report is problematic because the authors used a statistical sampling that was not representative. The study didn't include data from heavily damaged areas in Haiti's countryside or from the number of houses that collapsed and killed people"

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Why USAID-Haiti had different things to say about the BARR findings than USAID-Washington, and why they both went on to blacklist me is part of the politics of the Haiti recovery effort. In the wake of the earthquake, there were two U.S. government bureaucracies at work. USAID-Haiti had been promoting the repair of damaged and destroyed houses over the building of new ones. Being the decision makers, USAID-Washington and the State Department trumped them, insisting on pursuing the construction of massive new residential developments and, in the process, bogging the entire reconstruction process down in a quagmire of land tenure controversies, exorbitant and even fraudulent lawyer and surveyor fees, and controversies over what were habitable sites. While this was going on there was the evolving nightmare of tent cities largely filled with opportunists—albeit many of them poor—hoping to get one of the promised new homes. All of this I will get to in later

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chapters. The point for now, however, is that the BARR Survey had given USAID Haiti all the evidence to show the State Department they were wrong. The biggest point was that, yes, people had returned to their homes. But 68 percent of the homes that seismic engineer Kit Miyamota and the Ministry of Work had marked red, meaning they should be destroyed, were re-inhabited. The State Department had flubbed the reconstruction phase and now we had 300,000 people back in houses that were far less safe than before the earthquake. They could collapse at any minute. It was not what the State Department wanted flashed across every newspaper in the world.

In this sense, I had gotten caught in a bureaucratic battle between two U.S. government titans. When I called Joseph and asked why I was getting thrown under the proverbial bus he replied, “Dude,” and referring to his friends, the director and sub-director of USAID, “they’re worried about losing their jobs.”

<sup>xxxv</sup> Looking back on the death count, it’s impossible to conclude anything other than sober minded bureaucrats and journalists knew there had been a radical inflation of the death count and yet were warned off by their editors who in turn must have been warned of by politicians. For me, as a field methodologist, the real smoking gun—the point that makes it more clear than anything that significant decision making organizations—such as the Haitian government, UN, and USAID—really did not want to know and that they deliberately allow disaster inflation to take its course—is that estimating the death count was a simple statistical task. Despite a lot of hoopla from posturing scholars (such as Mark Schuller (see Schuller 2011, *Smoke and Mirrors*), Kolbe seen in Chapter 9, and even my own very astute professor Russ Bernard (a world renown pioneer in methods for estimating unknown populations who was recommended complex methods), the sampling strategy necessary to estimate the number of death from the 2010 Haiti earthquake is something that any undergraduate university student with an introductory course to statistical sampling could have come up with. Even at 50,000 dead, the sheer magnitude of the numbers meant that it did not call for statistical creativity. All that was needed, and what we used in BARR, was a straightforward, random sampling strategy. It was statistics 101.

The point of all this being that the task was simple and the obvious exaggeration begged any skeptic for an estimate. And for any thinking person, it had to be done. Indeed, people in positions to do it were contemplating the task. In the four weeks after the earthquake, the *Associated Press* asked me for a proposal to estimate the death toll, *USA Today* approached me to do the same, and the Pan American Development Foundation approached my former University of Florida professor, Russell Bernard, one of the great living anthropological methodologists—famous, as mentioned, for having settled the controversy over the 1985 Mexico earthquake death toll, a vastly more methodologically challenging task as it involved much fewer deaths and a more populous city. And that’s what I know of. There must have been dozens of institutions that considered estimating the death toll. Indeed, some surely did estimate the death toll. And then refused to publish the results. Whatever the case, all dropped the issue. And the reason they dropped it cuts to the core of the Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle: Money.

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The unavoidable conclusion is that the spiraling increase in official figures had to do, first and foremost, with the money that seemingly everyone was collecting off the disaster. In the first week the big question from journalists, aid workers, and the overseas public was how many people were killed. Initial estimates were that roughly 50,000 people had died. But with every day that passed the pressure was mounting for it to never happen, for the public to never know the truth. As the donor money poured in, and as the government arbitrarily increased the numbers, NGOs and UN agencies mysteriously quit issuing figures on their own dead. Eight days after the quake, the *Washington Post* declared, "UN says final death toll of Haiti earthquake might never be known." Meanwhile, the hundreds if not thousands of NGOs asking for money kept following the governments lead, upping the total figures, 50,000, 100,000, 150,000 .... 230,000. The Press, NGOs and UN agencies were soon publishing them as if fact. With every plea for aid and every new article about the tragedy in Haiti beginning with "230,000 people killed," and the aid dollars kept on coming.

For the Washington Post article, see: Lynch, Colum. 2010. "UN says final death toll of Haiti earthquake might never be known." *Washington Post*, January 20.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/20/AR2010012004621.html>

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Small NGOs and advocates for special interests had no problem making even wilder estimates. In a February 25, 2012 article for the *Huffington Post*, journalist and feminist activist Beverly Bell said that the most cited number of the dead was 250,000 (in fact, the most cited figure is 230,000). She then called that figure "utterly meaningless" and, turning the government's sloppy counting on its head, argued that because there was no count of the corpses buried in yards and mass graves, "the death toll was much higher."

Countless people are still missing. And multi-storied buildings everywhere contain flattened bodies - tens, hundreds each, who knows? You drive down the street and someone points. "You see that building? There are still 200 people inside there; they never got them out." City blocks are cemeteries.

*Beverly Bell, February 25th 2010, "Haiti: Grasses of Ginen." Huffington Post*

Jeanne Pocius Dorismond, head of the charity Instrumental Change and author of the book *Shaken But Not Stirred*, took it even further. Dorismond, who was almost killed herself in St. Trinity's Cathedral and who recounted having held eight dying people in her arms, concluded that as many as 1.5 million people were killed. That's 75 percent of the population of Port-au-Prince. One in every two people in the earthquake impacted area. To arrive at that conclusion, Dorismond, similar to Bell, turned the disaster inflation logic on its head. She wrote to me with the following explanation:

There appears to be a phenomenon in areas that suffer from natural disasters in which officials believe that if they UNDERestimate (sic) the numbers of those lost, they will have a better chance at receiving bigger amounts of aid.

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<sup>xxxvii</sup> Other academics, some of whom by their own admission knew little to nothing about methodology or statistics, and yet called the methods we used into question. Not least of all among them was Professor Mark Schuller a self-described “activist and anthropologist” of the City University of New York, Schuller called the methodology we used “questionable”—without ever explaining why. He wrote a scathing critique for no fewer than five major websites, including the *Huffington Post* and *CounterPunch*. The latter is one of the most widely read leftist intellectual platforms, with the motto, “Tells the Facts, Names the Names.” Both *Counter Punch* and *Huffington Post* closed the articles to comment. When I wrote *Counter Punch* and requested I be allowed a commentary they would not even respond to my e-mails.

In Schuller’s critiques he had leaned heavily on the one other major published survey that attempted to estimate the number of people killed in the earthquake. That survey was led by Athena Kolbe (a Social Work graduate student from the University of Michigan who is discussed at length in Chapter 8), Roy Hutson (a Social Work professor from Wayne State University), and Rob Muggah, of the Geneva Small Arms Survey. Together with two other professors and their Haitian survey supervisor and three other social scientists, they published an academic article on the survey findings. There were some glaring problems, including very good reasons to believe their survey never occurred. See Chapter 8.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Wells, Jennifer. 2013. “Researchers dispute Haitian government’s death toll from 2010 earthquake.” *The Toronto Star*, March 11.  
[https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/03/11/researchers\\_dispute\\_haitian\\_governments\\_death\\_toll\\_from\\_2010\\_earthquake.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/03/11/researchers_dispute_haitian_governments_death_toll_from_2010_earthquake.html)

See also: Crawford, Kilian. 2013. “Haiti: How many died in the earthquake?” Blog, March 23.  
<http://crofsblogs.typepad.com/h5n1/2013/03/haiti-how-many-died-in-the-earthquake.html>

# 6

## ***Dodging the Blame: Haiti's Crisis of Construction (and Privilege)***

In the seven years following the earthquake I remained in Haiti. I would not be working for USAID again. But nevertheless, over those seven years I worked for just about every other major NGO and UN agency in the country, from UNICEF and the World Food Program to CARE, CRS and World Vision. It's difficult for me to think of a single major organization that I did not work for in those seven years. I was hired for 47 consultant jobs, often by consortiums of UN and NGO clients. On their behalf I conducted more than 70 surveys and another 100-plus focus groups. The surveys covered topics including rape and gender based violence, camp relocations, detained prisoners and crime, children and their snack food, mothers and breast feeding, farmers and how they feed their chickens and plant crops and pick fruit, fisherman and how they catch fish, and dozens of other topics. And while doing that work, and managing teams of as many as 40 surveyors, visiting and interviewing businesses, NGO directors and hundreds if not thousands of ordinary Haitians, the truth—or, depending on how you want to look at it, the lies—have often surfaced. The experiences through these seven years of research have helped me piece together some of the higher profile incidences and cover-ups that shed light on just why it is that seemingly everyone in a position to influence the reported number of people killed in the Haiti earthquake—from the employees of NGOs and the UN to the U.S. government, the Haitian government, and the press—are bent on inflating the figures. I can't go over it all. So I'll

go over what I learned about the three biggest, or at least highest profile disaster sites of the 2010 Haiti Earthquake. Specifically, the Hotel Montana, the Hotel Christopher, and Palm Apparel factory.

## **COVERING YOUR AND THEIR ASS, AND BEING REWARDED FOR IT**

### ***Hotel Montana***

The Hotel Montana was a five story, four-star hotel with 145 rooms and an exquisite hilltop vista of the city below. At the time of the earthquake 200 guests were registered. The entire five story building immediately crashed in on itself. Afterward, 200 to 300 guests and employees were said to be missing. That figure stood until the one year annual memorial when the keynote speaker said that 80 people had been killed. And that's the only reference you will ever find that comes close to specifying how many people died in the Hotel Montana. The only one. Conspicuously missing from every article, memorial or internet chat discussion is exactly how many people died. And most references infer it was a lot more than 80 deaths. The hotel's internet memorial page still suggests it was hundreds, beginning, "Of the 300 people inside Hotel Montana we know the stories of some who perished in the earthquake." So if it wasn't really 300 people, why would they want the figures to be so high? Why don't they give an exact figure? A building does not fall down, all the rubble gets removed, and no one ever determines how many people were killed in it. And wouldn't that be the first thing written on the memorial, X number of people died here?

To give a little background, before the earthquake Hotel Montana was Port-au-Prince's premier haunt and temporary residence for journalists, humanitarian aid executives, and diplomats. Visitors such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt slept, dined, and drank here. It was here that the thinkers and planners of the aid community would come together for meetings, seminars, and workshops. Where, from the comfort of air conditioned meeting rooms, they could look out bay windows at the *paysage* of slums and urban squalor below while discussing the problems that afflicted Haiti and how to solve them. In a 2008 "special dispatch" the London

Review of Breakfasts summed up the hotel atmosphere this way, “Here amid the overhead fans, lazily-swaying palms and the trickle of a chi-chi waterfall, there’s a sense of isolated privilege you could cut with a butter knife.”

But it was never meant to be a hotel. The Montana started out as a residence for the elite Cardoso family. Taking advantage of the 1949 World Fair in Haiti, Frank Cardoso turned it into a guest house. After the Fair, when the guests and money continued to roll in, the family kept adding on to the building, ad hoc: no integrated plan, no inspection, no standards. They went up five stories. It was a monumental act of irresponsibility. Two weeks after the earthquake, California-based forensic and seismic engineer Eduardo Fierro would refer to the hotel design as “pseudo-engineering,” and ponder aloud to Miami Herald journalists the negligence that precipitated its collapse:

For the poor people who do their own building, you shouldn’t expect better. For the people who have a four-story building (*sic*), for the Hotel Montana, a fancy hotel where all the foreign visitors stay, you should expect better.<sup>1</sup>

Despite its \$150 per night rooms, the Hotel Montana wasn’t any safer than most of the slum dwellings in the ravines below. Indeed, it was less safe. In January, the same month of the earthquake, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) sent seismologist Susan Hugh and a team of nine other geologists to study why the Montana and so many buildings on the hill where the hotel was built fell down. They seemed to give everyone what they needed, concluding that, although most geologists dismiss it as “kind of a fluke thing,” topographic amplification can occur. In other words, it was some bizarre fluke of nature that the Montana came down. But they didn’t miss the fact that on that hill, “some well-built and well-anchored homes and other buildings survived the earthquake practically undamaged.” In fact, less than 25 percent had fallen down.<sup>2</sup>

I visited the area months later. We did a pretest for the BARR there. While the surveyors went around and interviewed people, a man who lived in the neighborhood showed me around. He was especially eager to show me why some houses had fallen and others had not. It wasn’t something I asked him to do. It was his idea. He led me to the side of a house where a pit

had been dug through some 10 feet of topsoil. He pointed to the bottom of the pit where the foundation connected to bedrock and explained that because the builder connected to the bedrock, the house had withstood the earthquake. It was, he assured me, as simple as that.

So why would seismologists from the USGS want to provide excuses for the Montana? And why the inflated numbers? The only thing that makes sense to me is that if I lost family in the hotel Montana, I wouldn't be thinking about "fluke seismic amplification." I would be looking at those undamaged homes, the ones that were "well-built and well-anchored." And if I found out that much, the next thing I would want to know is why in the hell the Montana wasn't one of them. And if my loved one had been working for USAID, the UN, IDB, or the World Bank, I would want to know why their banquets and seminars were being held on a seismic fault, in a pseudo-engineered building, that was not anchored to the bedrock. If destruction like that at the Hotel Montana had happened anywhere else in the world, or if they had not convinced us that it was a 'seismic fluke' or, getting to what might be the reason the U.S. State Department had been so severe about supporting the high death count and massively inflated amounts of rubble, if the Montana had not come crashing down with half the buildings in the city and the deaths of 230,000 people, then those institutions may well have been held responsible for negligence. And so, at least on paper, the more dead people and destroyed buildings the better. The bigger the tragedy, the more the dead, the less culpable USAID, the UN, and the world's major government lending institutions and NGOs. Indeed, what those institutions most needed at that time was big numbers.

None of what I'm saying here is necessarily to condemn the owners of the Montana as bad people. Co-owner Nadine Cardozo-Riedl herself spent four days trapped under the ruins of her hotel, and she had spent two horrible weeks kidnapped and tortured in 2005. The point is that something is rotten in this system. There is negligence and privilege and cover-ups that impede our capacity to adapt to such disasters and that go right on favoring the rich and those powerful institutions that should be held responsible. And whatever you believe, whether you buy the preceding argument about USAID, the World Bank and the UN avoiding culpability or not, instead of condemnation and lawsuits for the Hotel Montana owners and the institutions that



had patronized them for decades, the United States military cleaned up the Montana rubble and picked up the bill for it. Before the year was over the Inter-American Development Bank—which usually loans only to governments—gave the Montana owners, Cardozo-Riedl and her sister, a \$12.5 million loan. It came with a 5-year grace period and a one percent annual interest rate. For those who might be curious, that's 1/23 of the 23 percent that anyone else in Haiti gets from the bank and about 1/36 the 36 percent annual rate that NGOs charge the poorest of Haiti's poor. Few people noticed. No journalists wrote about it. And making it seem that much more unfair for those of us who did know about it, the loan was part of a \$31.5 million 270 hotel room project. The bank was paying 40 percent. It's logical. After all, the IDB can't be expected to use money from working class tax payers in developed countries to pay a rich family in a poor country to build a luxury hotel. To get the money, the Cardozos and other financiers had to put up 60 percent. Apparently they never did. Five years later, in 2016, there are still just 45 rooms, one-fifth what they were supposed to build. Nevertheless, business is fine. They have a remodeled dining room, new conference rooms, a 1,500-capacity convention center, and no shortage of UN, USAID, World Bank and IDB clients. Unlike the hotel they had built with their own money, this one meets all the international standards. And oh, while building that hotel, Nadine Cardozo-Riedl also built a new 5-star hotel in Santo Domingo's chic Colonial Zone, something she, her son, her daughter, and the Dominican Republic's Minister of tourism cut the ribbon for on May 12, 2014. It's not my place to say where she got that money, but yes, something's wrong here.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Hotel Christopher***

The second of our three cases is the five story, three star, and 74 room Hotel Christopher, where so many UN soldiers died. How many died exactly? I don't know. Over the past five years I have repeatedly scoured UN internet sites and memorials and newspapers to try to figure out exactly how many people died in the building. But I've never found a specific figure. I wrote UN press secretaries several times over the years and asked. I never got a response. The best I can say is that 104 UN personnel died in Haiti on January 12, 2010, and by all indications 101 of them were in the Hotel Christopher. Why does the UN refuse to clarify? Why are the

numbers of dead such a secret? Why won't they say specifically how many people died in the Hotel Christopher? They're not saying. But having studied the numbers, one thing stands out in my mind: if 101 of 104 UN personnel were killed in the Hotel Christopher — which is what I glean from the accounts — that means had they not been in the Christopher, the UN would have lost only three members. That's three of 9,151 personnel in Haiti. And there is very good reason to believe that they should not have been in the Hotel Christopher.

To give some background about the Hotel Christopher, it's owner is a former Haitian national named Gerard Desir, MD. Back in the 1960s, Desir had gotten a free medical school education from the Haitian State. Upon finishing his course work, Desir was supposed to repay his country for the free ride by performing two years of residency service among the Haitian poor. It's how Haiti gets doctors out into the impoverished rural areas, where there is only one doctor for every 100,000 people. But instead of doing his residency, Desir skipped out and went to the Big Apple. There, he got himself a residency at New York City's Jewish Memorial Hospital. He subsequently went on to pass the New York State medical exam, became a U.S. doctor, and 32 years later, in 2002, got nailed for bilking U.S. insurance companies with false medical claims. How long had Desir been ripping off U.S. taxpayers? That's anyone's guess. But he got nailed and confessed to doing it six times in 1999. He pleaded no contest, and signed off as "morally unfit" to be a doctor. As punishment, Desir got suspended for three years; all but 45 days of that were commuted. He spent thirty-four months and fifteen days on probation; he paid a \$5,000 fine.

All of that is disturbing. This is a guy who skipped out on repaying Haiti for his free education, got in the U.S. system and screwed us too. And it cost him a lot less than what must have been his cut on any one of the six criminal cases he got caught for. But the relevant part of the story for us is that one year before he got busted, in 2001, Desir had gone back to Haiti and, flush with cash from bilking U.S. insurance companies, purchased the Hotel Christopher. In 2005, he began renting it to the UN security forces (MINUSTAH) for a cool 1.14 million U.S. dollars per year. In the five years before the hotel collapsed and killed some 101 UN workers, Desir had made \$5.7 million off of it.

Similar to the Hotel Montana, the Hotel Christopher was apparently not fit for habitation. In 2009, the year before the earthquake—and four years after renting it—UN inspectors determined that it did not meet the UN’s own Minimum Operational Safety Standard (MOSS). They slated \$400,000 to bring the hotel into compliance. Did they bring the building up to standards? When I wrote the UN and asked them, they did not respond. What happened to the money? Need I say, they didn’t respond to that either.<sup>4</sup>

The UN had housed its senior staff in a hotel that it rented from a convicted criminal, that was located on a highly active seismic fault, and that it knew was not up to its own standards. Not a pretty picture.

Once again, the UN may not have set out to inflate the death count, but the more destroyed buildings and higher the number of dead, the less guilty the UN appeared for housing it’s members in an unsafe building.

Did Desir also get an IDB loan? Did USAID or the UN clean up the rubble and rebuild his hotel? Frankly, I don’t even want to know.

### ***Palm Apparel Factory***

The Palm Apparel factory is that building where the most people died in the 2010 earthquake. Or so they say. To be specific, *The New York Times’* Deborah Sontag would report that, “at least 500 and perhaps closer to 1,000 workers were crushed at the end of their shift.” I tried to verify that. I wrote to the owner, Alain Villard, and I wrote to three of the directors of Palm Apparel and asked each of them, ‘how many people died in the factory?’ I got no response. Not from any of them.

Over the years, in the online accounts that cite data from the factory, the number of those killed has settled down to 300 people. It’s still a lot of dead people and arguably the building where more people than any other were killed. But four years after the earthquake I visited the factory on other business and I learned something much different.

I’m sitting there talking to floor manager Alexandre Petion Telemaque. It’s a digression from my mission at the time—to find partners for an International Trade Center artisan

program—but it's a logical one, after all, it was a major event, so I ask him, "Didn't the factory fall down in the earthquake?"

"Yes," he says and goes on to tell me that he was in the building when it collapsed and that he helped orchestrate the rescue effort and recovery of bodies.

"So you were here?"

"Yeah, I was in the building. We were pulling people out. A lot of people died."

"How many?"

"Sixty-seven"

"How many?"

"Sixty-seven"

That's 233 people less than they still claim. So why? Why the lies?



We can assume by the fact that Palm Apparel factory collapsed, while other buildings in the neighborhood did not—as with the Hotels Montana and Christopher—there were construction issues. Had it occurred in the U.S. or another developed country, people would have wanted to know: was the building sound? Did the owners knowingly put the workers in an unsafe environment? There would have been investigations and, if the building was not safe, lawsuits. It may even be a bigger deal in the case of Palm Apparel because the contractor was Gildan Activewear Inc. of Montreal, this meant garment industry workers, one of the most explosive issues in Haiti.<sup>5 6</sup>

The \$100-billion garment industry is something the U.S. government had begun to cultivate in Haiti as far back as 1971 when, in exchange for supporting the continuation of the Duvalier dictatorship from father to son, the Haitian government agreed to create an environment hospitable to U.S. investors interested in the offshore assembly sector. Custom taxes were

eliminated, a low minimum wage guaranteed, labor unions suppressed, and U.S. companies given the right to repatriate profits. By 1980, there were some two hundred mostly U.S.-owned assembly plants in the country. To make the U.S.-Haiti industrial alliance successful, U.S. political sympathies have consistently been with those Haitian leaders who supported factories that produce for mega multinationals such as Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, Levi's and The Gap. Those Haitian factory owners and partners of multinationals were, of course, among the wealthiest people in Haiti. But popular politicians resisted and bitter disappointment came when those politicians sought to raise the minimum wages and levy taxes on the industry. Even greater and more bitter disappointment came when the struggle broke out into open violence and political turmoil, all but totally destroying the industry. The number of garment workers in Haiti went from 100,000 in 1990 to less than 20,000 in 1994. I'm not taking sides here. I don't care one way or another who was right or wrong: it's not for me to decide. The only point is that political instability in Haiti all but destroyed the industry. The 10 years leading up to the earthquake saw a concerted effort to bring the industry back to where it was, including the U.S. government's Haiti Hope program, an endeavor that tax-exempted products from the factories in Haiti.

At the time of the earthquake the garment industry was already, once again, the centerpiece of new U.S. plans for Haiti. The number of workers was up to 26,600 and climbing. But with appallingly low wages and pathetic conformance to international labor standards, the industry remained the political Achilles tendon of both USAID and the Haitian elite. It was the easiest target for disgruntled Haitian leftists and overseas activists alike. When the earthquake struck, Villard's employees at Palm Apparel—and by extension, employees of Gildan Activewear in Canada—were earning \$3.13 (125 gourdes) per 10-hour day. That's among the three lowest monthly garment sector wages in the world. It's one-third the next lowest garment wage in the Western hemisphere, Guatemala. Haiti garment factories also had one of the worst over-time compliance rates in the world.<sup>7 8</sup>

And so what does all this have to do with the death count and the collapse of Palm Apparel? Palm Apparel was the only one of the 22 garment factories in Port-au-Prince to

collapse. USAID had all but rented the building for Alain Villard. In the four years before the earthquake USAID funded CHF, a for profit U.S. contractor. They funded CHF to the tune of \$104 million, \$26 million per year from 2006 to the end 2009.<sup>9</sup>

The major focus of the CHF program was to improve the infrastructural conditions for the apparel sector. It was in that context that CHF rebuilt a mile of road and drainage systems, and renovated the road in front of the factory so that Villard could get trucks to the building. Villard, who already had a factory elsewhere, then renovated the three-story building and, in November 2009 put 1,500 Haitians to work in it. Two months later the earthquake struck and the entire building collapsed.

Before getting to the main point, I want to make it clear that I'm not suggesting that USAID or Alain Villard or anyone else wanted the workers to die. Nor as I already said, am I against the garment industry in Haiti. I'm personally in favor of it, if for no other reason than there are so many desperately poor people in Haiti who would like to work in a garment factory, even at what might strike most of us as below survival wages. What I'm against is buildings that fall down on the workers' heads. And, in the end, my interest in writing about Palm Apparel has nothing to do with the garment industry. I'm only trying to understand why it is that NGO executives and bureaucrats at the UN, USAID, and the U.S. State Department seemed bent on making the number of people killed appear as high as possible. And I'm trying to figure out why Villard and the other executives at Palm Apparel reported the number killed in their factory at five times what it really was. To answer those questions one has to ask, what was in it for these people? What were the advantage of lying?

When it comes to Gildan Activewear, nothing. In terms of disaster and the impact on business, reputation and sales, the fewer the dead the better. And in fact, in response to my inquiries Gildan executives wrote me and lamented the inflation of the number dead. USAID gave a serious response. Like so many NGOs and State agencies contacted during the course of the research for this book, they said they would follow up within five days. We never heard from them again. The best one can say is that it was congruent with what we might surmise as the U.S. and UN interest in high numbers for total earthquake fatalities because, as seen, the

higher the numbers, the less culpability for having housed their staff and consultants and held meetings and seminars in the Hotels Montana and Christopher.<sup>10 11 12 13</sup>

But what's with Alain Villard? Why wouldn't Villard also want to keep the numbers low?

Intuitively, like Gildan, Villard would indeed want to keep the numbers low. He would be to blame if the factory was not sound or if, during the \$30,000 worth of renovations that he had done to the building two months before it collapsed, someone noted that the building was not structurally sound. Except for one little fact: it's Haiti. There are no enforced building codes. Everyone already knew that. If there had been a functioning State then they, not CHF, would have been doing the infrastructural support programs. Nor is there a functioning civil justice system. So what did they expect of Villard? He didn't have to conform. He would unlikely ever have to pay a price for not doing do. On the other hand, Gildan, as indicated earlier, would have wanted low numbers, for they could have come under serious fire. They could have been implicated like Sohel Rana was in the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh. Gildan, one of the biggest names in underwear, 500 to 1,000 dead factory workers, no other factories down. Their stock (NYSE:GIL) could have plummeted.

So Gildan reacted, as they should. They rifled off 26,000 boxes of emergency rations and they immediately donated \$50,000 to the Canadian Red Cross. They also created a fund to help the families of the dead workers. And it is here that we get to the only reason I can think of why Villard, or anyone else at the factory, would want to put the number of dead at five times what it really was. By March 22 that fund had \$570,000 in it.

I don't know if Villard or someone else took the money for the 233 extra workers who they claimed were killed. I'm not saying he did. Maybe Villard divided the money among families of the factory workers who were killed. Or maybe he passed it out to needy children in front of the factory. It's difficult to verify because, as seen, Villard wouldn't respond to inquiries. But whatever the case, what we do know is that although he probably did not realize it when his building came crashing down, the earthquake would be a bonanza for Alain Villard. Instead of being subjected to suspicion and investigated, millionaire Villard found himself a beneficiary.

Within two weeks of the tragedy Villard had his surviving workers sewing again. Indeed, Villard barely missed a beat. On the 18th, only six days after the terrible tragedy, he pointed to a one-story section of the building that had not collapsed and told Wall Street Journal reporters, “I can get 500 to 600 people back to work there in a week.” And he did.<sup>14</sup>

Four months after the earthquake, his factory back up and running, USAID paid to fly Villard to Las Vegas for the massive 100,000 customer garment factor trade show, what Las Vegas promoters cheekily call as the MAGIC Show, where, as author and blogger Paul Jackson puns, “they make workers disappear.” There at the show, Villard, a Haiti earthquake survivor, must have been the center of attention. With the help from his main buyer, Gildan, Villard went on to pull together \$8.5 million for investment in a new plant. By the time I visited them in 2014, Palm Apparel had a brand new 160,000 square foot factory and 3,500 employees—up from 1,500 from before the earthquake. Today, Villard’s highest profile on the internet is not as a Rana Plaza death tycoon, but an entrepreneurial hero. Le Flambeau Foundation Inc., lauds his resilience:

Alain Villard’s story is equally impressive. Villard could have closed his Palm Apparel Group after 300 employees lost their lives in the 2010 earthquake. Instead he restarted production 15 days later and launched community initiatives that included helping local city officials raise money and coordinate reconstruction and relief efforts. Today Villard employs 4,000 Haitians. *Le Flambeau Foundation Inc.*<sup>15 16</sup>

As for Gildan, in June 2010, Canadian Red Cross awarded the company a recognition plaque.



The answer to the why executives at USAID in Washington and UN officials would have wanted the death count to be as high as possible should have been obvious to me. But it has taken me five years to realize it. In the case of the executives at humanitarian agencies, such as Steve McAndrew of the Red Cross or Sophie Perez of CARE International, the premium on high numbers was obviously related to donor drives. The more people dead, the more the good-



hearted people of the world would be inclined to give donations. It's a no-brainer. For the press it was obvious too. The bigger the tragedy, the more horrific the scenes and the more harrowing the tales, the more people would buy newspapers, log onto their internet sites or turn on their televisions and watch the news. But when we get to the UN security forces, USAID, and the Haitian business community and the owners of buildings—such as the Cardoso sisters who own the Hotel Montana, Dr. Desir who owned the Hotel Christopher, and Alain Villard of Palm Apparel—it's different. We can conclude that for these people, exaggerations had a lot to do with avoiding blame, getting sympathy, and getting lavish financial gifts and low interest loans. The fact is that the while yes, the Haiti earthquake was a crisis of biblical proportions, it was, as a 17-year-old Haitian teenager summed up in a conversation we were having, “a crisis of building construction.” It wasn't really much of an earthquake. At its source, the Chile earthquake that occurred 7 weeks later was 500 times more powerful. The destruction was comparable: about 300,000 houses (9 percent of homes) either collapsed or were considered too unsafe to occupy. But only 576 people were killed; 12,000 injured. A big part of the reason for the radically lower numbers is that Chile is a developed country with enforced building codes. Most buildings and homes that were damaged did not simply pancake, killing, maiming and trapping those inside. In Haiti, it was the opposite. There are no enforced building codes. Which is a good excuse for the poor. They can't afford to voluntarily meet high building standards. But it's not a good excuse for USAID and UN clients who housed employees, soldiers, and factory workers. Those buildings should have been inspected, if at the behest of no one else other than the UN, USAID, World Bank and corporate executives who had rented them. What in the hell were they thinking about?

And that's why massive destruction and excessive numbers of dead, inflated by factors of from six to 10 times where a good thing. They helped distract attention from responsibility for shoddy construction in buildings where poverty and ignorance were not excuses. It even made heroes out of those who should have done something before the earthquake—not least of all the UN and USAID who housed their employees in both the hotel Christopher and the Montana or Canada's Gildan Activewear Inc., Villard's main customer. Last but not least, it had the

serendipitous effect of attracting investors and massive low-interest loans for entrepreneurs who, had they been operating in developed countries, may have gone to prison. And woe be to anyone who should challenge any of this.

## PHOTOS



**Figure 1. Kiki is thrilled to be rescued by Urban Search and Rescue teams.**

The Iconic 'photo seen around the world', 8-year-old Kiki being rescued. (Source: Charlie Eckert)



**Figure 2. The Big Picture: The multitude rescuing Kiki and Sabrina.**

The bigger picture: more than 50 rescuers, all highly trained in first aid, standing around watching three rescuers pull Kiki and his sister, Sabrina, from a hole. Meanwhile a medical crisis of biblical proportions was unfolding elsewhere. (Source: Flickr. Virginia Beach Task Force-2 Team Members)





**Figure 3. Fabienne Cherisma killed by stray bullet.**

Fifteen-year-old Fabienne Cherisma was heartbreakingly killed by a stray police bullet while 'looting.' The image was captured by Swedish photographer Paul Hansen on January 19th, 2010 and would subsequently win Hansen Sweden's award for Best International News Image of the Year. At least one other photographer also won an award for a photo of Fabienne.



**Figure 4. Photojournalists flock to capture picture of Fabienne.**

The Bigger picture: Nathan Weber turned the camera on his colleagues leering and clicking photos of Fabienne. The photo won no awards but it sparked an electric debate over photojournalist ethics. No fewer than 14 photographers had gathered around Fabienne's body. Blogger Eric Kim analyzed dozens of the photos and found evidence the body was moved before Hansen took the picture at the top of the page (Figure 3), ostensibly to enhance its aesthetic value (Images used with permission of Nathan Weber/NBW Photo).



**Figure 5. Sarlah Chand, 65, rescued from Hotel Montana.**

The press corps and rescuers are apparently undaunted by the fact that she's in a neck brace and that her more than 50 hours being trapped means that without immediate medical care she may not survive. (Source; Wikipedia Commons, U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist First Class Joshua Lee Kelsey)



**Figure 6. A textbook example of a building that “pancaked.”**

(Source: Flickr, Daniel O’Neil)



**Figure 7. National Palace collapses.**

Haiti's destroyed National Palace, built by the U.S. Naval engineers in 1920 during U.S. occupation and later demolished by Sean Penn's NGO, JP/HRO. (Source: Wikipedia Commons.)



**Figure 8. Cheryl Mills addresses the press.**

U.S. State Department press conference on January 13, 2010. Cheryl Mills at podium. USAID Director Raj Shah at left and one of the U.S. SOUTHCOM Commanders, General Douglas Fraser on right. (Source: Flickr, U.S. State Department.)



**Figure 9. Bodies left outside the morgue in Port-au-Prince.**

(Source: Flickr, United Nations)



**Figure 10. View of destruction at street level.**

Typical picture of the most extreme devastation, from a neighborhood that most people in developed countries would considered destroyed even before the earthquake. (Source: Flickr, RIBI Image Library)





**Figure 11. Homes that survived the earthquake.**

Some of several hundred thousands of houses that did not collapse, and that did not make the news. (Source: Ansel Herz)



**Figure 12. Gas station open for business.**

Port-au-Prince gas station on January 20, eight days after the earthquake, (contrary to reports) was open and selling gas (Source: Wikipedia Commons, U.S. Military Photograph by Fred W. Baker III).



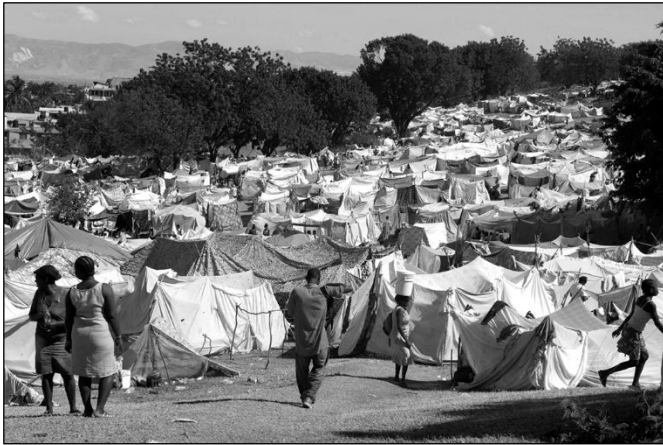
**Figure 13. 'Aid Bait': Wispy tents made of bed sheets set up outside of Port-au-Prince by hopeful aid recipients.**

(Sources: Top: Flickr: Esther Haven of Water Mission; Bottom: Flickr: Jon Winston)



**Figure 14. U.S. Army distributes food and water at Petion-Ville Golf Course.**

January 17, five days after the earthquake, U.S. Army 82nd Division's 1st Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Squadron giving food and water away on the empty Petion-Ville Golf Course. (Source: Wikipedia Commons, U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Laura A. Moore).



**Figure 15. Petion-Ville camp expansion.**

Four days later, January 21, a closer shot of same place as above, Petion-Ville Golf Course. U.S. Department of Defense employee Fred W. Baker III, who took the picture, wrote, "As many as 50,000 Haitians sleep in this earthquake survivor camp...It has grown by thousands since the U.S. Army 82nd Division's 1st Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Squadron started distributing food and water there last week. (Source: Wikipedia Commons, author, Fred W. Baker III).



**Figure 16. UN Troops outside of Cite Soleil.**

(Source: Ansel Herz)



**Figure 17. Freelance journalist Ansel Herz at Camp Immaculee, outside of Cite Soleil.**

(Source: Ansel Herz)

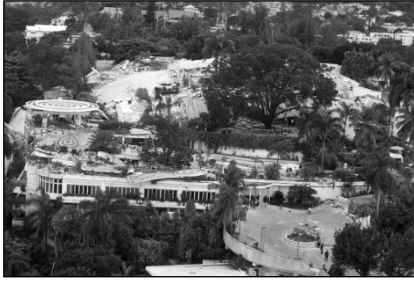


**Figure 18. Tent city never inhabited.**

Above: November 12, 2010, eleven months after the earthquake. An empty camp built by the government in the middle of Port-au-Prince: 518 new tents and 150 latrines complete with showers, all empty, never inhabited, never used, ever. The reason they were never inhabited is because the camp was built for people living at Champ de Mars, below, but the people at Champs de Mars, located next to the Presidential Palace, refused to leave their prime location on National Patrimony. The government eventually paid each family \$500 to vacate the area. (Source: Flickr, BBC World News)



**Figure 19. Tent City at Champs Mars.**



**Figure 20. The destroyed Hotel Montana on January 13, the day following the earthquake.**

(Wikipedia Commons, UN Photo by Logan Abassi of the UNDP).



**Figure 22. January 30, 2010, U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion hard at work cleaning up the Hotel Montana mess.**

(U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Spike Call)



**Figure 21. Nadine Cardoso-Reidl cutting ribbon for new hotel opening.**

Hotel Montana co-owner Nadine Cardoso-Reidl—earthquake survivor, kidnapping survivor, beneficiary of free-cleanup services for her collapsed hotel, and recipient of a very attractive IDB loan—cutting the ribbon on May 12, 2014 for the grand opening of her new 5-star Hotel Billini, in the Dominican Republic. At her left is Francisco Javier García, Dominican Minister of Tourism., at her right is her son Silvanh Riedl (Source: Listin Diario).



**Figure 23. Solvanh Riedl featured in Ritmo.**

An interesting aside: In 2014, shortly after opening Hotel Billini, Silvanh Riedl was featured in the Dominican Republic's premier social magazine, Ritmo, declaring on the cover, "Haiti is our country and here [in the Dominican Republic] we have been received with respect and love." Such may be the case when you qualify for 12.5 million dollar IDB loans. But only the year before, the Dominican Republic's Government disenfranchised all impoverished ethnic Haitians whose ancestors arrived in the country after

1929. They then rounded up and deported thousands of them.



**Figure 24. The McMurtie sisters as featured in Pittsburgh Magazine.**

The McMurtie sisters, who Pennsylvania Governor Rendell rescued along with 54 orphans. Pittsburgh Magazine used the image when featuring the sisters as “Pittsburgher’s of the Year,” (12/23/2010). The babies are from their Bresma orphanage.

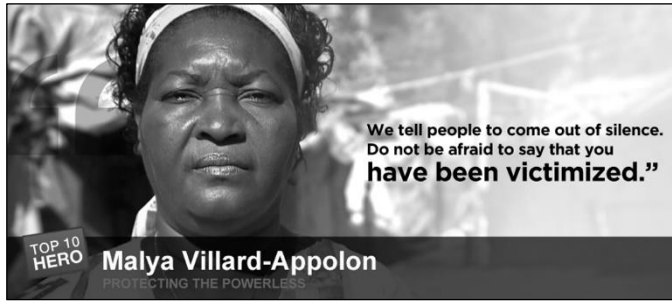


**Figure 25. Margarette Saint Fleur, as featured online.**

Margarette Saint Fleur, owner of Bresma Orphanage, severed ties with the McMurtie sisters in 2010. The image of Saint Fleur is from a screen shot of a 2016 paid video ad posted on Yahoo, YouTube and Good Housekeeping. In the video Saint Fleur claims that she started the orphanage to “help parents from the poorest communities, by sending their children to school rather than giving them up for international adoption.” It’s a convenient mandate, given UNICEF had all but ended international adoption from Haiti in 2012. The McMurtie sisters did the same thing: they opened a new charity called Haitian Families First, dedicated to avoiding the “devastating effects” of separating children from their families. Neither humanitarian mentioned having sent hundreds of children into overseas adoption, not least of all the 54 that Governor Rendell had whisked away, some without their parents even knowing.







**Figure 26. Malya Villard-Appolon: CNN candidate for Top 10 Heroes of 2012.**

KOFAVIV cofounder Malya Villard-Appolon, above, on CNN website as candidate for Top 10 Heroes of 2012. In 2014 both KOFAVIV founders, Malya Villard-Appolon and Marie Eramithe Delva, were granted humanitarian visas to the U.S., ostensibly because they were targeted by rapists for having spoken out against gender-based violence. Photo below is from KOFAVIV’s Facebook page January 2017, on which Villard-Appolon and Delva—both now living in Jenkintown Pennsylvania—implore readers to help them: “With no other options, we are turning to gofundme.com to request your help in paying our daily living expenses of food and shelter for ourselves and our children until we are permitted to work and support ourselves in a few months (you can file a request to work 150 days after you submit your asylum application).” The drive has been online for 26 months. (Source above: CNN, below: Facebook).



**Figure 27. Photo of Villard-Appolon used to promote donations.**



**Figure 28. Restavek, characterized as child slave.**

A chained restavek, commonly referred to in the media and humanitarian literature as a Haitian child slave. Based on 27 years working and living in Haiti, I'm confident that the typical popular class Haitian neighborhood would join together in stoning to death anyone who kept a child in chains as in the obviously staged photo above from the serious online news site LOOPHAITI. (Posted December 13, 2015)



**Figure 30. UNICEF Appeal for Haiti donations.**

Above, UNICEF appeals to the heart for donations. The misunderstandings upon which those donor drives are based and the egregious waste and mishandling of the money collected is also heartbreaking.



**Figure 29. Temporary shelter built by World Vision at Corail.**

Average Cost for such shelters in post-earthquake Haiti: \$5,265 each, about 6 times the \$910 cost for winterized temporary shelter provided to Afghanistan war refugees; and it was 18 times the \$300 local cost in Haiti for materials to build a 12x10 foot shack with a concrete floor, plywood walls and corrugated metal roof. (Source: Author).



**Figure 31. USAID Funded houses at Caracol.**

Cost: \$38,000 each, \$80 per square foot, up from \$25 per square foot before the earthquake and about 19 times the pre-earthquake \$2,000 that Food for the Poor was paying to building similar homes. (Source: Global Communities, Globalcommunities.org)



**Figure 32. Jennifer Balistra's Google page picture (left) and the stock photo it was taken from.**

Above left is a screen shot from the Google site of Jennifer Balistra, professor at Athena Kolbe's degree granting Institute of Social Work (ETS) and supposed wife of a U.S. consulate official. On the upper left corner of the screen shot is a photo of Balistra with a child. Suspicious ETS students ran the photo through Tineye's image search engine and discovered that it was a cropped version of the original stock photo on the right (iStock.com), confirming for the students that Balistra did not exist. When the students confronted Kolbe, all online traces of Balistra disappeared—Facebook page, Google page, blogs and any mention of her on the ETS website.



**Figure 33. The author interviewing fishermen on the Island of Cayemite, Haiti, June 2012.**

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<sup>1</sup> For the quote from seismic engineer Eduardo Fierro about the poor construction of Hotel Montana, see: Charles, Jacqueline and Curtis Morgan. 2010. "Lack of construction codes sealed Haitian capital's fate." *Miami Herald*, January 24.  
<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2010/01/24/82915/lack-of-construction-codes-sealed.html#storylink=cpy>

<sup>2</sup> For the scientific claims that explained the ‘fluke thing’ of poorly constructed buildings falling down, see:

Fountain, Henry. 2010. “In Studying Haiti, a New Angle on an Earthquake’s Intensity.” *New York Times*, October 19; on page D3 of the New York edition.

Hough, Susan E. Jean Robert Altidor, Dieuseul Anglad, Doug Given, M. Guillard Janvier, J. Zebulon Maharrey, Mark Meremonte, Bernard Saint-Louis Mildor, Claude Prepetit and Alan Yong. 2010. “Localized damage caused by topographic amplification during the 2010 M 7.0 Haiti earthquake.” Letters, *Focus*, Published Online, October 17.

<sup>3</sup> For Montana co-owner Nadine Cardoso-Riedl’s rescue and reference to her kidnapping see: “Earthquake fails to fell hotel owner with history of survival. *The Globe and Mail*. January. 18, 2010.

For Hotel Billini, her new hotel in the Dominican Republic and the ribbon cutting ceremony with the Dominican Minister of Tourism see:

Listin Diario 2014. “Billini Hotal: Un hotel para relajarse.” Las Sociales. Lunes, 12 de mayo.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note here that the nursing school (Ecole Nationale d’Infirmieres) was also known to be a potential disaster. In 2004 it was one of a very few buildings that were damaged when a tremor caused the main staircase leading in the College of Nursing to split on both sides. Walls and ceilings were covered with cracks. The newspaper *Le Matin* forebodingly noted, “The student nurses say that they are alarmed by this sword of Damocles hanging over their heads.”

<sup>5</sup> Palm Apparel in Carrefour, Haiti, opened its doors in 1998. The T-shirt manufacturer, which employs 1,500 people, works strictly for Gildan, a Montreal, Canada company. They signed their first outsourcing contract in 2002 - See more at: <http://outsourcing-center.com/2010-04-how-an-outsourcing-buyer-helped-its-service-provider-in-haiti-after-the-earthquake-article-37286.html#sthash.qbfi9PgK.dpuf>

Address: Thor 65, Rue Souchet, PAP, Haiti

<sup>6</sup> Of course they knew. Your factory does not fall down and people are not sure if it’s 500 or 1,000 workers who died inside?

<sup>7</sup> *International Labour Organization*. Sectoral Activities Department. 2014. “Wages and Working Hours in the Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Industries.” GDFTCLI/2014

<sup>8</sup> That’s 40 percent less than the minimum wage in Haiti for other sectors and \$5 (200 gourdes) per day; and at about US\$80 per month, that’s among the lowest three wages in the world.

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<sup>9</sup> For details on CHF expenses, see CHF website;  
<http://www.flashhaiti.com/business/detail/CHF-International>

<sup>10</sup> One other factory collapsed that I know of was located in SONAPI Industrial Park. I went to it three weeks after the earthquake and to my knowledge no one was killed. Nor have I found a reference anywhere else to factory workers having been killed in the earthquake. I wrote and asked Levi's, the GAP, and Gildan if they lost any other workers or if they knew of any other garment factories in Haiti that had. To back that up, I have also asked 24 SONAPI workers who participated in three different focus, none reported knowing of anyone killed in a factory other than Palm Apparel.

<sup>11</sup> For numbers of factories and different manufacturers in PAP at the time of the earthquake, see: "Bringing HOPE to Haiti's Apparel Industry: Improving Competitiveness through Factory-level Value-chain Analysis." Nathan Associates Inc. September 2009 PREPARED FOR CTMO-HOPE Commission as part of a technical assistance program sponsored by the World Bank.

<sup>12</sup> Palm Apparel was something different. USAID, the NGO CHF, would have been hoping for low numbers. They must have been hoping for the lowest numbers as possible. And not just because they are good hearted people. But because if the building was unsafe—and the fact that it collapsed suggests it was—then USAID, CHF and especially Gildan almost certainly would have been held responsible for not having known. Or worse, having known and not done anything about it. As seen, everyone in Port-au-Prince who listened to a radio or read a newspaper knew that an earthquake was imminent. Had any of them thought to inspect the buildings they were sleeping in or the factories they were cramming full with impoverished workers?

Indeed, the first question USAID, CHF and Gildan executives must have asked themselves when they heard that the Villard factory had collapsed was, how many people died? The next question must have been, did we inspect the building? The third question must have been, how many other buildings in the neighborhood fell down? And the fourth question, for Gildan, must have been how many other factories collapsed? Did any of The GAP's contractors buildings fall down? What about Hanes? Fruit of the Loom? Levi's?

Answering the last question first: It was already mentioned that none of the other 22 garment factories located buildings in Port-au-Prince collapsed. Four others were "seriously" damaged, but with no loss of life. Gildan had three sub-contracting factories. One was Palm Apparel. One of the other two was damaged to the point where it had to be shut down. So of Gildan's three factories, two were not constructed to a standard to resist the earthquake. As for Gildan's own 40 employees—those who worked directly for Gildan and who were in Haiti at the time: they were all in safe buildings that did not fall down on top of them. And no, none of the other subcontractors reported losing workers: not those of Hanes, the GAP, Fruit of the Loom, or Levi's. They were off the hook. Nor was there a reported loss of life in any other Port-au-Prince factory.

As for how many other buildings in the neighborhood fell down, the answer is none.

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As for the numbers, as seen, they first said 500 to 1,000. That's what they told Susan Sontag of the New York Times. Alexandre Petion Telemaque told me 67 workers had been killed. Yet, online, they settled for the figure of 300: that's 233 more than one finds. And so why the 300?

<sup>13</sup> On Mon, Aug 8, 2016 at 11:39 AM, Peter Debnam <noreply@usaid.gov> wrote:

Submitted on Monday, August 8, 2016 - 11:39am

Your Name: Peter Debnam

Your e-mail Address: peter.debnam@yahoo.com

Where do you live? United States

Would you like us to contact you? Please Contact Me

Subject of Your Message: Inquiry about Palm Apparel factory and Haiti earthquake

Comments: I am part of a team that is writing a book that includes a chapter about buildings that collapsed in the 2010 Haiti earthquake and am seeking information on USAID support of the Palm Apparel factory in Carrefour Haiti.

It has come to my attention that in the year before the earthquake USAID supported CHF/Global Communities in preparing the factory and training workers on behalf of owner Alain Villard. According to comments attributed to Villard, CHF had improved the roads leading to the factory and supported a remodeling of the building only 2 months prior to its collapse. I was hoping to find out if, during the course of refurbishing the building, USAID, CHF or any other party inspected the building to determine if it was structurally sound. And if so, what were the findings of the 2009 inspection. Any assistance is greatly appreciated.

From: "Haiti Task Team (USAID)" <htt@usaid.gov>

Date: August 10, 2016 at 4:14:47 PM EDT

To: peter.debnam@yahoo.com

Cc: Rosalie Fanale <rfanale@usaid.gov>

Subject: Inquiry about Palm Apparel factory and Haiti earthquake

Thank you your inquiry. It will take some time to research the situation and prepare our response. Please be assured that as soon as we can, we will be getting back to you with your answers

Yours,

The Haiti Task Team

open . (sent by shochenberg@usaid.gov)

Aug 8 (2 days ago) to me

Please see below a USAID Open inquiry. As the POC for USAID/Haiti, could you please follow up with the sender within the next 5 days?

---

Thank you for your attention to this inquiry,

<sup>14</sup> For the apparel industry in Haiti and the earthquake, see: Dugan, Ianthe Jeanne and David Luhnow. 2010. "Haiti Stakes Recovery on Clothiers." *Wall Street Journal*, May 13.  
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704635204575242552399558546>

For the Alain Villard quote, see: Sontag, Deborah. 2010. "Defiant Vow to Rebuild Amid Ruins and Bodies." *New York Times*, January 18.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/19/world/americas/19factory.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/19/world/americas/19factory.html?_r=0)

<sup>15</sup> Le Flambeau Foundation Inc.,  
<http://www.leflambeau-foundation.org/?p=7992>

<sup>16</sup> *Fibre2Fashion.com*. "H&H Textiles opens new apparel factory in Haiti." October 24, 2013 (Haiti)  
[http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textile-news/haiti/newsdetails.aspx?news\\_id=154515](http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textile-news/haiti/newsdetails.aspx?news_id=154515)

# 7

## ***Big Lies About Little People: UNICEF, Save the Children, and the Orphanages***

Following the January 2010 Haiti earthquake there were a lot of exaggerations, truth-twisting and outright lies. But perhaps none exceeded those that came from the mouths of child protection workers and orphanage owners. With UNICEF and Save the Children leading, orphanages fanning the flames, and the press publishing almost anything anyone said—no matter how scant the facts—the scramble to save Haiti’s children took on apocalyptic dimensions. They told us that there were over 1 million lost, separated or abandoned children, conjuring up images of little children aimlessly wandering through the ruins of Port-au-Prince. As time went on the experts added images of sexual predators and slave hunters prowling the rubble in search of the children. They told us that people were selling children for \$50. It came to be known around the world as the “Haiti Orphan Crisis.”

Almost none of it was true.

As will be seen, the number of orphaned, lost or separated children was inflated by factors that ran into the hundreds and perhaps thousands. No network of slave hunters or perverts was ever verified. Nor was there ever a confirmed case of someone selling a



child. But for those organizations that were feeding the untruths and exaggerations to the media, and for the media itself, the Haiti Orphan Crisis was a gold mine.

## THE BIG LIE

On day three after the January 12, 2010 Haiti earthquake the *London Evening Standard* headline read:

“Up to two million children are feared orphaned  
or at least separated from their parents in Haiti.”<sup>i</sup>

January 15, 2010

That information came from Save the Children’s Emergency Director, Gareth Owen, a seven-year veteran of natural disasters around the world. “This isn’t a safe place.” Owen told *Agence France-Presse* reporters, “The prison’s collapsed and lone children are vulnerable.”

By day seven the rest of the press was picking up on the story of the peril in which 25 percent of all Haitian children had been suddenly thrown:

“Crisis of the one million Haitian orphans as UNICEF  
warns the devastation has jumped to ‘unbearable proportions’ ”

*Daily Mail*, January 19, 2010

“One Million Orphans in Haiti”

*The Daily Beast*, January 19, 2010

“One million children left orphans in Haiti horror”

*The Express*, January 20, 2010

There never was anywhere near one million children orphaned or separated from their families. There were probably fewer than a thousand of them. Indeed, there may not have even been one-hundred. And it is hard to conclude anything else but that "experts" at UNICEF and Save the Children knew it. On March 9, eight weeks after the earthquake, UNICEF would report that it had registered only 300 lost or separated

children. And for those children who really were lost or separated, UNICEF wasn't doing much to get them home. Ten weeks after the earthquake UNICEF had only reunited twenty children with their families. Yes, twenty. In view of these figures, UNICEF and Save the Children's claims of 1 million lost, orphaned or separated children can be understood as outright lies.<sup>ii iii</sup>

At least one expert in child protection wasn't playing along with it. On January 19, one week after the quake, the CEO for the United Kingdom's SOS Children's Villages, Andrew Cates, posted a blog pointing out that, "Claims of a million earthquake orphans are clearly false and those making them are being irresponsible." Cates went on to say that, "Memories it seems are short in the media. Already we have stories of 200,000 dead with a million earthquake orphans." He noted that final estimates for children orphaned by the Asian tsunami that killed 230,000 people were between five and six thousand children, about 3 percent of the death toll. And, in a stroke of what would turn out to be near perfect prescience, Cates explained,

The reason I want to remind you about the Asian tsunami is to remind you that ten days afterwards stories were circulating in the media claiming 1.5 million affected children "mostly orphans." ...That claim and the one of ship loads of Thai child snatchers landing on beaches turned out to be part of the myth that arose and disappeared. The cynical amongst us might say part of an attempt to whip up human emotions in an unfair way.

History was about to repeat itself.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AGENCIES**

Ten days after the earthquake, on January 22, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rupert Colville, stood up at a press conference and announced, "Child enslavement and trafficking is an existing problem and could easily emerge as a serious issue over the coming weeks and months." Next to him was Jean Luc Legrand of

UNICEF who then took the podium and claimed that child snatching was already underway. “We have documented,” Legrand claimed, “...15 cases of children disappearing from hospitals and not with their own family at the time.”

Anyone who read the warnings from CEO Andrew Cates of SOS Children’s Villages and now listened carefully to Colville and Legrand would have noticed that we were witnessing an exact reconstruction of the Asian tsunami untruths and exaggerations, misrepresentation that had also originated with UNICEF.<sup>iv</sup>

Then too, five years before the Haiti earthquake, the panic had been built on exaggerations, hearsay and second-hand accounts from UNICEF. And just as we will see was the case in Haiti, a year after the tsunami disaster UNICEF’s own reports would show that the figures had been inflated by factors of hundreds and thousands. Not UNICEF nor any other entity or person ever produced any evidence to verify the claims of slave hunters; not UNICEF, not their ‘partners’ not the police. And just as in Haiti, no admission of error or apologies to donors would ever be forthcoming.

Indeed, in the wake of the Haiti earthquake UNICEF acted as if the earlier untruths and exaggerations regarding the tsunami were historical facts. Legrand likened the situation in Haiti to the aftermath of the tsunami, describing to the press post-tsunami kidnapping and slave networks “springing into action immediately after the disaster and taking advantage of the weakness of local authorities and relief coordination ‘to kidnap children and get them out of the country.’ ” Now, Legrand insisted, it was happening again in Haiti, “This is going on,” Legrand told AFP journalists, “This is happening now. We are starting to have the first evidence of that. This is unquestionable.”

But if one scrutinized what Legrand was saying it appeared that not even he was sure of himself. In making the announcement, Legrand had declared, “*Let’s say around 15 cases of children disappearing.*” AFP reporters observed that UNICEF officials “were

unable to give details on the missing children or their condition, or to connect the anecdotal observations in post-earthquake chaos with trafficking.” But lack of evidence got in the way of neither UNICEF or the rest of the press. On the contrary, the press sounded the alarm. The next day headlines around the world read:<sup>v</sup>

“Agencies Fear Traffickers Will Target Haiti’s Displaced Children”

*Fox News*, January 23, 2010

“Trafficking fears as Haiti children go missing”

*ABC News*, January 23, 2010

“UNICEF fears orphans being sold abroad”

*Herald News Services*, January 23, 2010<sup>vi</sup>

“Aid agencies in Haiti race to save ‘orphans’ from child traffickers”

*The Times of London*, January 26, 2010

## **THE ORPHANS AND THE ORPHANAGES**

Why UNICEF and Save the Children had so inflated the numbers is surely a byproduct of donor-drive frenzy. But to understand what drove humanitarian aid professionals to spin such a convoluted web of untruths, you have to understand that the struggle for donations to developing-world children and control over the lives of those children goes back way before the earthquake. It goes back to a struggle between the child protection agencies versus the mostly evangelical orphanages that compete with them for donations. To understand that struggle it is necessary to first understand what author Kathryn Joyce (2013) has called the evangelical ‘contagious call to adopt.’<sup>vii</sup>

The adoption movement has deep roots in U.S. Christianity. It began at least in the first half of the 20th century and grew significantly over the past 30 years, becoming what Joyce calls a “perfect storm of a cause for many Christians,” justifying anti-abortion fervor, demonstrating that Christians care for children outside the womb,

fulfilling the call to spread the faith and, not least of all, fulfilling that holiest of acts, adopting another human being as God adopts true believers.

The movement reached such a feverish pitch in the years leading up to the Haiti earthquake that U.S. evangelicals were staging marches in Washington, D.C., such as “Step Forward for Orphans.” Evangelical organizations like Focus on The Family launched the “Cry of the Orphan Campaign” to save the world’s 143 million orphans; and the Christian Alliance for Orphans sponsored “Orphan Sundays.”

With it all came an explosion of Christian books bearing titles such as “Called to Adoption: A Christian’s Guide to Answering the Call” and “Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches.” Adding fuel to the spiritual fire, the movement was buoyed in the U.S. with tax credits, government subsidies, unsecured and no-interest loans, no interest credit cards, tax-deferred savings options, and employee adoption benefits.

How it transpired that Christians began to reach out across international borders and into countries like Haiti to adopt children is related to the availability of adoptable children. Critics of adoption in the United States have called the early to mid-twentieth century the “Baby Scoop Era.” This was a time when abortion was illegal, contraceptives scarce and conservative social values tagged those women who became single mothers as immoral and unchristian. Young women from good families who made the mistake of getting pregnant often found themselves being quietly shipped off to homes for unwed mothers where they were pressured to legally relinquish custody of their newborns so that they themselves could return to ‘normal lives.’

Homes for unwed mothers created a steady supply of adoptable babies for barren middle and upper class Christian families. It also created a lucrative opportunity for those who brokered the transactions. Adoption fees ran into thousands of dollars. Closed adoptions cinched the deal. Biological parents and their offspring typically knew

nothing of one another. Records were sealed or destroyed. Many children never even knew they were adopted.

At the height of the industry it got rather ugly. The most famous U.S. example was the scandal surrounding the Tennessee Children's Home Society. In the 1920s, "The Society" facilitated thousands of private adoptions. Adoptive parents included celebrities such as Joan Crawford—about whom a movie of tyrannical motherhood was made in 1981 (*Mommie Dearest*). Among the children adopted and who had no idea where they came from was the famous U.S. wrestler Dusty Rhodes and my own, not so famous, grandfather adopted into an elite Southern Baptist family. But in the 1950s, thirty years after they got started, investigators revealed that many of the babies were obtained from mental hospital patients or taken from unwed mothers, some of whom were told their babies had died. Records were falsified. Others destroyed.

Similar highly profitable operations existed throughout the United States. Not least of all, American Indian children, a rich source of babies, were being removed from their homes at 16 times the rate of non-American Indian children. And as racist as much of the U.S. was at the time, even impoverished Black Americans were becoming a source of adoptable babies. In 1971, 2,574 Black American children were adopted into White families.<sup>viii</sup>

And it was not just the U.S. The same baby scoop phenomenon was occurring in Britain, Spain, Canada, France, Australia and Argentina. They all had their version of baby scoop era adoption industries. Socially conservative South Korea is still in the throes of a baby scoop era. But for most developed countries, a shift began to occur in the 1970s.

Increasing availability of contraceptives, declining fertility levels and, not least of all, the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision in the U.S. and similar laws in other developing countries made abortion legal. A change of sentiment toward adoption was close

behind. Mothers who had relinquished their children began to publish accounts of their anguish. Thousands of adopted children looking for their biological parents published their own accounts of frustration over lost identities. Closed adoption—the concealing of the origins of adopted children—swiftly came to be viewed as a type of humanitarian crime against the children, biological parents, and even a crime against the communities of origin, as with American Indian tribes and Black communities. Insistence on open adoptions became the norm.

And so the domestic availability of babies began to dry up. The rate of relinquishment for unwed mothers in the mid-1970s was one-fifth what it had been in the previous decade and by the 1990s had fallen to one-tenth the 1960 figures. Tribal protests beginning in the 1970s brought a screeching reduction in the number of Native American children available for adoption. Protests from Black activists brought the number of Black children adopted by Whites to almost zero.<sup>ix</sup>

It was right about this time that middle-class Christians in developed countries began to notice the millions of needy orphans in developing countries. International adoptions to the United States went from 3,100 in 1972 to 5,800 in 1982 and steadily climbed from there to a peak of 22,991 in 2004. Orphanages started popping up all over the developing world. In Haiti for example, 90 percent of the 723 orphanages in UNICEF's 2014 list were founded after 1970. It seemed the poorer the people, the more troubled the country and the weaker the State, the more likely the international adoption industry would appear. Paraguay, Brazil, Guatemala, Nepal, Colombia, Vietnam, Cambodia, , Liberia, Ethiopia, and Haiti are all examples of this phenomenon.

The orphanages claimed, of course, to be rescuing parentless children from war, poverty, and disease. But similar to the baby scoop era in developed countries, the high profits that came with adoption services were an ingredient for unscrupulous business practices. A plenitude of scandals hit the newspapers: cajoling, tricking, misleading,

purchasing, and outright lying to parents in efforts to gain custody of their children (see the Schuster Institute webpage for a long list of journalistic accounts from around the world). In Guatemala there were credible reports of babies stolen and suspicions that soldiers even killed parents and sold their babies.

For at least a decade before the 2010 Haiti earthquake UNICEF had been going about the globe frantically trying to stamp out the worst of the corruption. Some would say they were trying to stamp out international adoption altogether.

And they'd been doing a good job. Using their World Government status—i.e., as the United Nations—UNICEF brought pressure on orphan receiving countries to place moratoriums on international adoption. And they put pressure on sending countries to sign the Hague Adoption Convention—a list of basic background checks on both children and the parents who would adopt them. As an increasing number of child sending countries signed on to the Hague Convention, the number of international adoptions in the U.S. plummeted, going from a high of 23,991 in 2004 to 8,668 children in 2012. Globally the numbers fell from 45,000 in 2004 to an estimated 25,000 in 2012. The suggestion is that, indeed, there had been a lot of shady adoptions taking place.<sup>x xi xii</sup>

xiii xiv xv

Getting back to post-earthquake adoptions, when the earthquake struck, Haiti was not yet one of The Hague Convention signees. Thus, for better or worse, the earthquake, as with the tsunami before it, presented a massive economic opportunity for the orphanage owners and a chance for hopeful adopting parents. With graphic images of disaster, claims of Armageddon-level violence and as many as one million newly orphaned children, adoption of a Haitian child went from what one hopeful Christian adoptee called a “fair trade” to a “rescue mission.”

The earthquake unleashed nothing short of a humanitarian adoption stampede. Bethany Christian Adoption Services would receive more than 20,000 inquiries to adopt



Haitian children. Already with 500 orphanages in the country, in the months following the earthquake another 223 opened their doors. The Catholic Church began planning “Operation Pierre Pan,” a reenactment of the 1960 “Pedro Pan” when 14,000 orphans were airlifted out of communist Cuba. And that was the crux of what was happening in the weeks after the earthquake: UNICEF and the child protection agencies had been trying to head the orphanages off.

When UNICEF’s Legrand talked about an “existing problem” and trade networks setup “to kidnap children and get them out of the country,” he was talking about nothing other than the orphanages. “UNICEF,” Legrand had said, “has been working in Haiti for many years and we knew the problem with the trade of children in Haiti that existed already beforehand. Unfortunately, many of these trade networks have links with the international adoption ‘market’.”

The problem for UNICEF was that the orphanages had turned the tables and stolen the show. UNICEF’s message was being drowned out by a stampede to save the one million plus children. Indeed, the message had backfired. Instead of sympathy for UNICEF’s international campaign to stop orphanages engaging in the adoption market, headlines went to the orphanages themselves, and the heroics of people like Governor Rendell and the McMutrie sisters.<sup>xvi xvii xviii xix xx</sup>

## **THE HEROIC GOVERNOR AND THE MCMUTRIE SISTERS**

On January 18, six days after the earthquake, the U.S. State Department granted “humanitarian parole” to all Haitian children in the adoption process. That meant reduced restrictions on adoption and instant visas. Orphanages throughout Haiti sent out distress calls. One of them was BRESMA Orphanage (Brebis de Saint-Michel de L’Attalaye). Since at least day two after the earthquake Jamie and Ali McMutrie, two sisters from Pittsburg Pennsylvania who most newspapers accounts presented as

owning the orphanage, had been frantically appealing to Pennsylvania politicians for help. With newspapers reporting their orphanage destroyed and 54 children left sleeping in the street with no food or water, Republican Mary Beth Buchanan, a former U.S. Attorney and aspiring congressional candidate, responded. Buchanan began organizing a relief mission. The tension built. So did the publicity. On January 19, two days after the State Department announcement, BRESMA tweeted the distress call, “almost out of water.” That’s when Buchanan’s political rivals stepped in, Pennsylvania representative Jason Altmire and Governor Ed Rendell.<sup>xxi xxii</sup>

Democrats Altmire and Rendell scooped Republican Buchanan. Using contacts in the White House, Homeland Security and the U.S. military, Rendell and his federal judge wife chartered a jet and managed to fly into Haiti’s packed airport—the same one where the U.S. military was, at that very moment, rerouting planes loaded with emergency medical supplies.<sup>xxiii</sup> His mission and the plight of Haitian children went politically viral. The next day, while Rendell, his wife, the McMutrie sisters and 53 Haitian orphans were in what the governor described as a “tense standoff” with Haitian officials, his political colleague and friend Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was in Washington D.C announcing that, “One area we are urgently focused on is the plight of Haitian Orphans,” and that “we will not let red tape stand in the way of helping those in need.”

Anyone who knew the BRESMA orphanage and had been following the story would have been perplexed by some of the facts. The orphanage was not destroyed. None of the children were killed or even hurt. And for those of us in Haiti at the time, if the McMutrie sisters needed food or water they could have bought it just about anywhere: on the street, at the wholesale retailers in Petion-Ville, or in any one of the supermarkets that reopened within a week of the earthquake. Moreover, it would turn out that all of the orphans had at least one parent, some of whom didn’t even know

their children were being taken out of Haiti. No one knew how much money was exchanging hands, but with total fees running in excess of \$10,000 per child, it was a massive windfall for the McMutrie sisters who claimed to own the orphanage or, if not them, the Haitian woman, Margarete Saint Fleur, who really did own it.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Something was indeed rotten about the orphan crisis and no one knew better than UNICEF and the child protection agencies that had initially exaggerated the numbers and panicked us all with reports of disappearing children. But by the time Rendell had safely landed back home in Pennsylvania on January 19, politicians from President Obama to his French counterpart Nicolas Sarkozy were jumping on the bandwagon. And with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton championing the adoption cause, the Haitian government conceded as well. Restrictions on adoption applications were lifted. Orphanages throughout Haiti emptied, sending at least 1,223 children into the waiting arms of overseas adoptive parents, almost all of whom were in the U.S. That made tiny Haiti, after China and Ethiopia, the United States' third highest 2010 adoptee sending country.

It infuriated UNICEF. And that's when Legrand and UN High Commissioner Colville upped the ante.

## **SEXUAL PREDATORS AND SLAVE HUNTERS**

On the 26th of January, UNICEF spokesman Kent Page told *The New York Times* that, "we are concerned that unaccompanied children will be exploited by unscrupulous people who may wish to traffic them for adoption, for the sex trade or for domestic servitude."<sup>xxv</sup> The very next day, on January 27, in an interview with *Time* magazine and an article headlined, "Human Predators Stalk Haiti's Vulnerable Kids," an unnamed UNICEF spokesperson drove the point home: "Traffickers fish in pools of vulnerability, and we've rarely if ever seen one like this." *Time* then gave us the most

graphic and perhaps the closest thing to a first-hand account of a predator that anyone reading the press would ever get to see after the earthquake:

Mia Pean's heart sank last week when she saw the Toyota pickup truck cruising the debris-cluttered streets of Leogane, ground zero for the earthquake that has devastated Haiti. Each

time the driver saw a child—especially a young teen—he would stick his head out of the window and shout, “Manje, manje,” Creole for “eat.”

*TIME*, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2010<sup>xxvi xxvii</sup>

Similar to the reports of violent looting and gang fighting seen in Chapter 3, it was a case *par excellence* of shoddy and sensationalistic journalism. *Time* got the story secondhand from Mia Pean, a Haitian-American who doesn’t live in Haiti but had come to work as a consultant for the Andrew Young Foundation. The *Time* article even tells us that Pean encountered the ‘predator’ a second time and she asked him, “What are you doing with all those children?” The man replied, “Don’t worry, we’re going to put them in safe homes” and then he drove off. That’s it. That was the whole story. No escaped victims, no house of horrors, no international network of child slaves. Yet, *Time* magazine, that paragon of American truth, endorsed Pean’s, “doubts that altruism is the motive.” They then took conjecture to an extreme, using a quote from Pean to conclude, “I really fear, that most of the kids you see being picked up on the streets in Haiti right now are going to become *restavek* or victims of sexual trafficking.” Other major newspapers and television networks wasted no time getting the word out:

“Haiti Orphans ‘Extremely Vulnerable’: Aid Groups Worry Up To 1 Million Kids without Proper Care At Risk of Disease, Child Predators”

*CBS News*, January 27, 2010

“Traffickers Prey on Hordes of Haiti Quake Orphans”

*The Sun (UK)*, January 27, 2010

For the press, no matter who was on top—UNICEF or the orphanages—it was all terrific copy. The public ate it up. As CNN’s Jessica Ravitz aptly summed up:

There’s nothing like images of infants and children in distress to make outsiders yearn to help, which is why the unfolding story of Haiti’s orphans—the most helpless of earthquake victims—has kept people riveted.

For UNICEF, it was only the first stage in what may have been a carefully orchestrated media campaign against evangelical orphanages. The next step would be to show the public that it was in fact mostly evangelical orphanages that were preying on the children. But if we pause here for a moment and look back at sexual predation in the years leading up to the earthquake, the really interesting thing is that if there were perverts and child snatchers stalking Haitian children after the earthquake, the legal evidence suggested that there was as much or reason to believe that if there really were sexual predators pursuing children in post-earthquake Haiti there was as much or more reason to believe they would have been working for the UN or the Catholic Church, the very institutions that were exaggerating the crisis.

## CONVICTED PERVERTS

The year before the earthquake, soldiers working for the UN had been accused of systematic rape and having sex with young adolescent girls. And the Catholic Church—which was at that time proposing project “Pierre Pan” to airlift tens of thousands of children out of Haiti to their Miami Diocese for safe keeping—had a string of embarrassments. In 2007, Canadian Mounties arrested Denis Rochefort and Armand Huard, the latter once called “a veritable Father Teresa” but known to the Haitian orphans he was having sex with as “Papi.” In 2009 Catholic priest John Duarte was charged with sexually abusing nine Haitian boys he was “helping.” Father John would go on to plead guilty to three of the charges. The same year, American Jesuit brother Douglas Perlitz was arrested for abusing 23 boys while he ran a Catholic-funded “street kids” organization. Brother Perlitz would subsequently plead guilty as well.

It’s a disturbing legacy that those few perverts who had been caught in the years before the earthquake were actually working within the corridors of some of the very institutions most responsible for exaggerating the crisis and collecting millions of

dollars for doing it, specifically, the UN and the Catholic Church. But I don't want to be misunderstood. This doesn't mean all orphanages were innocent. Although there were not legal cases, I could share plenty of anecdotes about both foreign and Haitian orphanage owners having their way with the orphans. Just as with the child protection agencies and the Catholic Church, what better position for predators than guarding the sheep. And all that is deeply disturbing. But, in trying to get the facts straight and understand what justified the existence of these institutions and where the money came from to sustain them, we have to look to those organizations that we depend on to give us accurate facts: UNICEF and the child protection agencies such as Save the Children. Even before the earthquake they had largely fabricated a phantasma of uncared for orphans, child slavery and slave markets, precisely what was now justifying the panic and rush to save Haitian children.

## **UNICEF'S UN-ORPHANED ORPHANS**

Long before the earthquake, back in the 1990s, UNICEF re-defined a Haitian orphan as a child who had lost not two, but one parent. UNICEF even counted children who didn't have a legally recognized father, either because the man refused to take responsibility or because the mother could not or would not identify the father. Globally, it is this definition that gave Christian adoption fever the rallying cry of "143 million" — meaning 143 million orphans, precisely how many orphans UNICEF claimed were, at any given moment, in the world. In Haiti, it is that broad definition that enabled UNICEF to make pre-earthquake claims of 380,000 orphans in Haiti alone. That would be, by the way, about 10 percent of all children under 16 years of age. It fed the fever and justified the massive growth of orphanages. By the early 2000s Haiti, with 500 orphanages and a population of 10 million, had more than 1/3 the number of orphanages as Russia, a country with 134 million people and 1,344 institutions.

It's difficult to overlook the fact that twisting the definition of orphan is a powerful technique for raising funds. But it's also misleading. To most of us in the developed world when we say "orphan," we mean "a child whose parents have died." The term conjures up the image of an unprotected and helpless child, as with Little Orphan Annie or Oliver Twist. These are children who are not only poor, they are alone, they face the world without the love and affection of a mother or father; no one to protect them from the hard reality of poverty and the scumbags who prey on the vulnerable. But to expand the definition to having lost one parent is a distortion of the original meaning and an obvious play for donor sympathies. People give to orphans precisely because the children have no parents or family. And yet, as UNICEF and the child protection agencies have increasingly come to realize, through material inducements-- better living standards, education, food, access to visas and even adoption-- the orphanages were actually encouraging the separation of children from their families. With UNICEF's definition as a base, there became no need for two parental signatures to adopt a child. If a Haitian mother or father wanted to send his or her child to the U.S. to live with a family of strangers, and they wanted to do it without the consent of the father or mother, they could go right ahead. A stroke of one parent's pen and the child became an orphan. Back in the U.S. a similar situation would qualify a child to get his or her picture on the back of school milk carton and make whoever did it—Mom or Dad—a candidate for INTERPOL's list of international child snatchers.

So with their definition of an orphan as a child with one parent, UNICEF had actually laid the ground work for orphanages to make claims of massive numbers of orphaned children and to get those children into the international adoption pipeline. But manipulating definitions to make 10 percent of all children in Haiti orphans was only part of UNICEF's trail of prevarication. What UNICEF kept referring to with regard to a 'history of child "slavery"' was not slavery at all. It was none other than the



domestic service seen in Chapter 3, what some argue is the most important mechanism of social mobility for lower class Haitian children seeking to get an education and break out of the cycle of poverty.<sup>xxviii xxix xxx</sup>

And so for a very long time there had been a lot of lies and exaggerations coming from humanitarian aid professionals. But getting back to the earthquake, as of January 27, despite all the claims of slave trafficking and sexual abuse, there were still no confirmed slave and sex traffickers. Neither UN soldiers nor the Haitian police had apprehended a single one of them. Nor had any of the 1,918 international police and firefighter rescue workers scouring the country for earthquake survivors encountered a child being abducted. Yet, UNICEF and Save the Children continued to insist they were out there. And the press kept publishing their claims.<sup>xxxi xxxii xxxiii</sup>

Then it finally happened. They finally caught some ‘predators.’

## **THE IDAHO MISSIONARY-CHILD-TRAFFICKERS**

Sixteen days after the earthquake, on January 28, when it was becoming painfully clear that UNICEF and its allies were, as Andrew Cates of SOS had warned, “whipping up human emotions in an unfair way,” the child protection agencies finally got their big break. The Haitian National Police arrested 10 Americans trying to smuggle a bus load of 33 orphans across the border to the Dominican Republic. For journalists and aid workers who had been warning of traffickers, the arrest could not have come at a more opportune moment. The story was to make headlines around the world:

“American Arrested Taking Children Out of Haiti”

*Reuters*, January 30, 2010<sup>xxxiv</sup>

“Haiti arrests US nationals over child ‘abductions’ ”

*BBC*, January 31, 2010<sup>xxxv</sup>

“10 Americans accused of smuggling Haitian kids”

*The People’s Daily*, February 01, 2010<sup>xxxvi</sup>

It was the proof child protection agencies had been waiting for. Organizations like Stop Child Sex Slavery and Godlike Productions rejuvenated their donation drives with blog posts titled, “Pedophiles Scoopin’ Up Haitian Kids.” Even SOS Children’s Villages—whose United Kingdom CEO Andrew Cates had only nine days before warned the press about fabricating fictive child snatchers—got caught up in the excitement. SOS regional coordinator Patricia Vargas told *The New York Times*, “This has called the world’s attention because it is the first clear piece of evidence that our fears have come true,”<sup>xxxvii xxxviii xxxix xl</sup>

A sober look at the “smugglers” wasn’t so encouraging, not for those who hoped they had found evidence to support claims of sexual predators and slave hunters. They all came from Meridian, Idaho. They were all bona fide members of the Central Valley Baptist Church. The leader of the group, Laura Silsby, was two years into a church sponsored plan to construct an orphanage for Haitian children in the Dominican Republic. Amongst her team were two teenagers and a mother-daughter pair. No member of the group had ever been convicted or associated with pornography or sexual abuse of children. Nor, for that matter, had any of them ever been convicted of anything. Moreover, rather than having operated in secret, Silsby had been in touch with the Haitian police before they arrested her. Only days before her arrest she had written to the UN imploring them to help obtain legal paper work from a non-functional Haitian government and declaring that, “We have been sent by the Lord to rescue these children, and if it’s in the Lord’s plan, we will be successful.” And not to take the side of Silsby—who I think is as dangerous as UNICEF, albeit on a much smaller scale—but anyone who believed press reports about one million “orphaned, abandoned, and separated children” and “slave traffickers stalking” them, might

indeed think it their moral duty get children out of Haiti. And anyone who believed the U.S. State Department's claim that 30 percent of Haitian civil servants had been killed in the earthquake, might also wonder just how in hell Silsby was supposed to get the paper work to save the children.<sup>xli</sup>

No evidence of perversion or slavery existed. Indeed, all the evidence suggested that Silsby and her colleagues had every intention of trying to drop the orphans into the lap of luxury. She had rented an entire resort hotel in the Dominican Republic's chic beachside town of Cabarete. Within weeks, even the most ardent critics seemed to concede that Silsby and company were simply naïve evangelicals. But by this time the debate and accusations began to take on an entirely different tone. Soon it was an internet cyber shit-storm about "American theocratic arrogance" and "holier than thou missionaries." Most commentators seem to have forgotten all about the original claims of slavery and sex trafficking. Most commentators seemed to have forgotten, as all too often happens, about the children themselves. But we should not. We should not forget the human dimension to the story and the plight of those children who really were vulnerable and in need of our help. One of those children was a boy name Sonson.<sup>xlii</sup>

### ***Sonson: Part 1***

The first report on Sonson came from the Associated Press on June 19, 2010:

It was three weeks after the earthquake passed before anyone noticed the 3-year-old. Two women saw him playing by himself on top of a destroyed house and assumed his parents were nearby. But after four days and nights, they realized he spent all day on top of the rubble by himself. Then they noticed his belly was getting bigger, a sign of malnutrition. He was picking through the rubble for trash to eat.<sup>xliii xliv</sup>

The next time Sonson appeared in the media was on a blog from Worldfocus Associate Producer Mohammad Al-Kassim who visited him several weeks after he had been saved.<sup>xlv</sup>

Sonson is a Haitian boy who was found in a garbage dumpster two weeks after a calamitous earthquake hit his hometown of Port-au-Prince. Salvation Army workers found Sonson and brought him to the University of Miami medical field hospital located near the airport in the Haitian capital. Doctors there treated Sonson for worms, bacteria, and superficial cuts on his foot. Despite the awful conditions he was found in, Sonson is in fairly good shape physically according to medical personnel.

Three-year-old Sonson would embark on a journey that would take him through the heart of the Haitian post-earthquake orphan mayhem. Accompanying him part of the way was an American woman named Tamara Palinka, who the Associated Press described as an “athletic blond.” When the Haiti earthquake hit, Tamara was working as an administrator at a Texas oil refinery. She took a leave of absence to help earthquake survivors, volunteering at a University of Miami field hospital. When Salvation Army workers dropped off Sonson, Tamara Palinka was there.

Tamara Palinka watched as caretakers took Sonson outside. She watched as he grabbed a fistful of dirt and stuffed it in his mouth. She watched in the cafeteria when he ate in gulps until he could eat no more. She watched him hide a box of food under a table. She watched and she couldn’t help but feel his desperation and loneliness. Palinka would recall to AP journalists that all the other children in the pediatric ward had parents nearby. At night, the mothers would crawl into the cots with them. Sonson had no one. At some point Tamara couldn’t take it anymore. One night, “on a whim,” she climbed into the bed and cuddled Sonson up next to her. The next morning, she changed him. She bathed him in a plastic laundry tub. She rummaged through the donations flown in from Miami and found him fresh clothes and a playpen.

Sonson was recalcitrant at first. When Tamara spoke to him he looked at his feet. When she tried to clip his toenails, “he pulled in his feet and curled them into little balls.” But it wasn’t long before Sonson began to respond. At first, he gave her furtive glances. Then he began to play with her. He blew on her stomach, making the sound of

a motorboat. By the second week, “Sonson was transformed.” He played drums with a stick and a Styrofoam container. He sang and danced. Finally, one morning, Tamara lowered him into his playpen and, as she turned to leave, Sonson threw up his arms and cried out, “Momma!”

A week later she would write on her Facebook page, “Tamara Palinka wants to take Sonson home! Will start the process tomorrow.”

Sonson, it seemed at the time, would be at least one true orphan whose post-earthquake odyssey had a happy ending. But there were forces at work that would sabotage Sonson and Tamara’s emerging dream.

## **HAITI’S ORPHANAGE SCOURGE**

As the group of Idaho missionaries entered their second week in a Haitian jail, their families back in Idaho were with Senior Pastor Clint Henry, worried sick and praying up a storm over them. Supporters throughout the United States began to pressure the authorities. Just what did the police have on them? Where was the evidence? The case was crumbling. That’s when Frantz Thermilus, then-chief of Haiti’s National Judicial Police, called a press conference and gave the child protection agencies and the press corps exactly what was needed to keep the story alive. Chief Thermilus announced that,

There are many so-called orphanages that have opened in the last couple of years that are not really orphanages at all. They are fronts for criminal organizations that take advantage of people who are homeless and hungry. And with the earthquake they see an opportunity to strike in a big way.

The Chief gave no examples of organized criminal activity. Neither police nor journalists had verified any networks of smugglers. Indeed, foreign journalists seemed to have completely missed the fact that when it came to the issue of orphanages and the

incarcerated Baptists, most Haitians were not thinking about sex and slavery. Most were not even thinking about human trafficking. They were thinking about trafficking in human body organs.

For those who do not know, the ‘organ market and orphans’ is an urban legend that seems to sprout up in any poor country where international adoption becomes common. It’s been investigated by most international intelligence agencies and to date no evidence for organized illicit harvesting of body organs from children has been found. Nor, for medical reasons, does it make sense. But it is, nevertheless, the number one fear for Haitians who otherwise regard orphanages, not as a bane, but as an opportunity.

Now, seeing the panic that UNICEF and Save the Children had helped unleash, the Haitian public made their own conclusions. When *USA Today* journalist Ken Dilanian and I asked a crowd of people on the street what should be done with the imprisoned smugglers if they were found guilty, they responded with shouts of, “Death! If they’re guilty, give them the death penalty!” And it wasn’t just ordinary Haitians. The day before the missionaries were arrested, Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive had told CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour, “There is organ trafficking for children and other persons also, because they need all types of organs.” A befuddled Amanpour noted that Prime Minister Bellerive “did not give specifics.”<sup>xlvi xlvii xlviii</sup> The Idaho missionaries themselves learned about body parts and the fear of organ traffickers when, shortly after their arrest, Haitian officials from UNICEF and IBESR (the government child welfare service) showed up at the court house. Laura would recount to a co-prisoner’s father that:

The children were not allowed outside for all those hours, and then someone came in and told them in Creole that we intended to sell them for their body parts. They started crying, and then Social Services came in and videotaped their distress.<sup>xlx</sup>

Returning to the earthquake and the announcement by Police Chief Frantz Thermilus that there were “so-called orphanages” that were really “criminal organizations,” the Chief gave no examples of organized criminal activity. Journalists who would repeat the claims did not offer up a shred of evidence either. Didn’t matter. Headlines the next day read:

“Haiti Orphanages Often Fronts for Criminal Gangs”

*The New York Times*, February 7, 2010

“Exploitation of Haitian Children Increases”

*U.S. News*, February 7, 2010

“After Quake, Fear that Orphans are at Even Greater Risk in Haiti”

*Boston Globe*, February 7, 2010

“Orphanages of Haiti Offer Bleak Portrait”<sup>1</sup>

*The Hindu*, February 7, 2010

Neither journalists nor the Haitian National Police ever found any links to traffickers. None. But now, with the cue from the Chief of Police, orphanages in Haiti were inundated with international journalists. What they found was not networks of smugglers or perverts raping children. What they found was the Haitian orphanage industry, plain and simple.

## **THE HAITIAN ORPHAN INDUSTRY**

In its best form, it is an industry where middle-class American missionaries take in neglected or abandoned Haitian children, give them attentive care, a solid education, and send them into adulthood. Some of the children, a small minority, get adopted and go overseas to live with a middle to upper-class family in a developed country. In its ugliest form it’s an industry where children are recruited from impoverished families and, rather than being put to work or raped, they sit around in dirty clothes, sick and underfed, mindlessly doing nothing while the Haitian pastors who “care” for them try

to collect donations from naïve church congregations in the U.S. and Europe. Ginger Thompson of *The New York Times* reported on the latter:

Many are barely habitable, much less licensed. They have no means to provide real schooling or basic medical care, so children spend their days engaged in mindless activities, and many die from treatable illnesses.<sup>li</sup>

At an orphanage called The Foyer of Patience, *The New York Times'* journalists found "50 children crammed into two bedrooms... Some of them scampering around in clothes that were either too big or too small, and others wearing no clothes at all." They interviewed the owner of the orphanage, Enoch Anequaire, who said he opened the center five years earlier but had no time to get a license. He told them that he provided an education to the children, "but there was not a single book, piece of paper or pencil in the house." He said he fed them three meals. But, "several said that they had had nothing to eat." And there seemed to be little doubt that the children were recruited:

Mr. Anequaire, whose own clothes were pressed and shoes polished, said he had been overwhelmed with new children since the earthquake. He pointed out five boys who arrived last Wednesday and said that an aunt had brought them in because their homes had collapsed, and that their mothers were unable to feed them.

Some of the children, however, said Mr. Anequaire had come looking for them.

"He came to my house and told my mother he needed 10 more kids," said one of the boys, whose names were withheld from this article to protect them from retribution.<sup>lii</sup>

When *The Wall Street Journal* investigators visited Ms. Samedy of the Orphanage Foyer de la Nouvelle Vie (New Life Center) they zeroed in on the motivations for recruiting orphans. Ms. Samedy told them that she collects \$200 per month from hopeful adoptees for each child in her care and then bills as much as \$25,000 for other oddities such as blood work and birth certificates. And that's not including lawyer fees.



Those averaged another \$10,000 per child. As if tongue-in-cheek, *The Wall Street Journal* reporters noted that most people in Haiti live on less than one dollar per day. Ms. Samedy admitted, “It’s quite a sum,” and then explained, “But it is because the cost of living is very high in Haiti and we can justify every cent.”

Whatever one might think about orphanages, there is definitely an economic side to them. As mentioned earlier, according to UNICEF, Haiti had 500 orphanages before the earthquake. Within six months, that number increased by 50 percent. Humanitarian orphanage-entrepreneurs were responding to humanitarian-market opportunity. Laura Silsby, leader of the Idaho Baptist missionaries was clearly one of them. But in terms of being guilty of anything, that was all anyone could pin on her. By late February, it was all but certain that Silsby was neither a pervert nor a child slave trafficker. She was, however, an inveterate entrepreneur. She owned a failed dot.com business that had driven her into debt. She subsequently got caught in the housing bubble as well and defaulted on her mortgage. An entrepreneurial failure, losing her home and still in debt, God had apparently called Silsby to help Haitian orphans.

And what’s wrong with that?

## **ORPHANAGES FROM A CHILD’S PERSPECTIVE**

From the perspective of an impoverished Haitian child one does not need a great deal of imagination to see the material advantages of going to live with a middle-class U.S. family. They rocket from the diseased and illiterate ranks of the poorest people in the Western hemisphere—where, if we accept accounts from organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children, life is usually short, nasty and brutish—to the one of the most privileged and opportunity-studded societies that has existed since the origin of the human species. And it’s not just adoption. Even when the children make it no farther than a statistically typical orphanage—the majority of them—it’s still a huge

improvement over material conditions in most Haitian homes. In a 2014 survey that we conducted at the request of UNICEF and the Haitian Department of Child Welfare (IBESR), myself and 20 co-investigators found that children in the average orphanage vs. average urban Haitian home were four times more likely to sleep in their own bed, twelve times more likely to have access to a flush toilet, twice as likely to have any toilet at all, fourteen times more likely to have a water source on the premises, twice as likely to have electricity, three times more likely to have a television, and 23 percent more likely to be in school. And that's comparing the orphanages to urban homes. Forty-five percent of the children in the orphanages were from rural areas where the differences are drastically more extreme.

Yes, most children love their families and want to grow up with them. Haitian kids are no different. But the children are not stupid—not most of them anyway. They recognize opportunity and creature comforts. When we asked a sample of 155 children in 30 randomly selected orphanages if they wanted to go back home, 70 percent said no. When we asked why, only 6 percent cited abusive parents; 2 percent said because their parents wanted them to stay in the orphanage; 8 percent said they didn't know why; the remaining 84 percent said things like "I live good here" and mentioned clothes, food, school, recreation, and television. When we proposed a hypothetical situation and asked who was better off, a child living in the orphanage versus a child living with a non-biological family in a fosterage situation—as UNICEF is currently proposing for Haitian children—100 percent chose the orphanage.

The bottom line is that life in a typical Haitian home is hard. The children have to fetch water, clean and cook. For the poorest 20 percent, the future doesn't hold much more than the specter of more work, harder work, illnesses, poor nutrition, and poor healthcare. Moreover, harking back to the point about most Haitian children not being stupid, Haitian children themselves are active, they want out. They want to break out of

the cycle of poverty and while I've tried to make my analysis and commentary as objective as possible here, I know this only too well. I've taken in four of them. My own research into cross-border child migration extends back to 1998 when I sat somewhat dumbfounded and listened to Haitian children, some of whom were as young as 7 years old, explaining to me their strategies and plans to get into Dominican households, to cross the border on their own volition and offer their services to Dominican families in exchange for room and board and education. Regarding the study described above—in which I designed the research strategy and led a team of 20 Haitian surveyors to visit 120 orphanages, interview staff and children, and develop a profile of the institutions—a tip to how militant UNICEF is about children re-unification, the survey was never published. Nor did they pay the balance owed. Indeed, they were livid.

**Table 1. Average Orphanage vs. Average Home in Haiti**

Comparison of Material Conditions

Variables	Centers (N=51)	Households EMMUS-V 2012 (N=13181)
Sleeps in bed	95%	58%*
Sleeps in own bed/alone	89%	20%*
Flush toilette	96%	8%
Flush toilette or Latrine	100%	56%
Water on premises	100%	7%
Purchase or self-treated water	96%	68%
Electricity	100%	38%
Television in home	92%	29%
Radio in home	87%	55%
Car or truck	79%	5%
Access to primary school	100%	77% <sup>1</sup>
Access to secondary school	100%	25% <sup>2</sup>

\*FAFO 2002

**Table 2. Children in Orphanages Who Want to Return and Live With Family**

Category	Response	Count	Percent
Desire to return home (n=155)	Wants to return home to live	46	30%
	Does not want to return home to live	109	70%
	Children who have ever tried to return	6	4%
Reasons given for not want to return home (n = 109)	I live good here, bed, cloths, comfort	79	72%
	School only	32	29%
	Food only	7	6%

Getting back to the earthquake, with the press sounding the alarm about sexual predators and child snatchers, and Baptist missionary Laura Silsby and the nine other Baptists caught red-handed trying to cross the border with no papers for the children, the child protection agencies had the world's attention. And they attacked.

UNICEF's Marie de la Soudiere told *Time*, "Our answer, is 'no' to orphanages." UNICEF, she assured journalists, was busy putting processes in place that would,

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to children 6 to 11 years

<sup>2</sup> Refers to children 12 to 17 years of age

“make people like orphanage directors and clueless missionaries ‘think twice’ before unlawfully scooping up lost or abandoned kids.” The Haitian government was now with them. “We had a disaster here,” declared Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive—who, as seen earlier suggested that organ trafficking was a major industry for crooked orphanages—“but we still have laws. We won’t accept people trying to take advantage of this disaster to traffic children.” Doing an about face, the Haitian government slammed the door shut on overseas adoptions. And once again, developments at the top had a very real and even tragic impact on the actual orphans and those who would care for them. Sonson’s adoption was denied.<sup>liii</sup>

## ***Sonson: Part 2***

As recounted by the Associated Press:

The order came from Miami. The rainy season was starting. The hospital needed to downsize. None of the orphans had medical conditions that required them to stay. Palinka was tasked with contacting the government to transfer them to orphanages...Within days, the orphans—including Sonson—were registered with the state’s child welfare agency. A 6-minute video shot on a co-worker’s Blackberry phone shows Palinka’s final moments with Sonson before he was taken away. He is sitting on her lap in the backseat of an SUV. He pinches her lips together, like a fish. Then he leans forward and kisses her over and over again. When the SUV pulled away, Palinka waved until the car had driven out of sight. Then she sobbed until she started dry heaving in the hospital’s parking lot.

*Rukmini Callimachi, Associated Press 6/20/2010<sup>liiv</sup>*

Instead of keeping them from the dank and lonely walls of parentlessness, a new UNICEF-supported decree meant that children like Sonson were headed, not overseas to eager families, but to the cold corridors of an institution. The AP journalists summed up the situation: “Sonson had become an orphan for a second time.” But all hope was not lost.<sup>liv</sup>

## THE CHRISTIANS STRIKE BACK

The orphanages and their Christian allies hit back. Evangelical blogger Doug Phillips of Rescue Haiti's Children published a February 26 blog entitled, "Haiti's children held hostage by UNICEF's agenda." He accused UNICEF officials of "harassing Christian orphanages," of making "official visits without the authority of the Haitian Government," of "mounting an international publicity campaign to shut down international adoptions" for which UNICEF "teamed up with the Hollywood actors." Perhaps most damning of all, Phillips accused UNICEF of, "the emotionally charged claim that adoptions lead to child sex-trafficking," a thought, Phillips added, "so repugnant that the mere mention of the charge is sometimes enough to shut down debate." Yet, "to date, there have been no documented cases of child sex-trafficking connected with American adoptions."

The orphanage counter-offensive also included the charge that, because they had succeeded in getting a moratorium placed on visas for Haitian children, UNICEF and its Child Protection Agency partners were causing the deaths of injured children. Elizabeth Greig, the field hospital administrator for the University of Miami medical facility, told *The New York Times*, "At least 10 other children have died or become worse while waiting to be airlifted out of the country." *The New York Times* added that, "Dozens of children are in critical need of care, and there has been no shortage of American hospitals or pilots willing to take them."<sup>lvi</sup>

They pointed to UNICEF's own inaction, Phillips pointing out that while "UNICEF's plan is now to register and take greater control of Haiti's orphans" they had, "according to UNICEF's own spokesman, registered a mere 130 of the nation's 350,000 plus orphans," something that was, Phillips added, "not a whopping number." Orphanage owners and Christian missions cited this as evidence of UNICEF's "not working for the good of the children." Dixie Bickel, director of the high profile Haiti's

God's Littlest Angels orphanage—which had hosted post-earthquake news crews from CNN, CBC, and ABC—went on Larry King Live and called UNICEF “the only organization that isn't working for the good of the children.”

And for anyone who thinks this was just a couple of disgruntled missionaries with no backing, when UNICEF and its partners went after the orphanages they slammed into an aggregate of organizations arguably as powerful as UNICEF itself. Groups like the 16 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, a U.S. religious order second in size only to the Catholic Church and with \$1.4 billion annual revenues and \$40 billion in property holdings. Only a few months before the earthquake, the Baptists passed a resolution calling on members to “prayerfully consider whether or not God was calling them to adopt.” There was also the Christian Alliance for Orphans, a pro-adoption coalition of eighty U.S.-based Christian ministries with 6,300 radio facilities in 164 countries speaking 15 languages and reaching a daily listening audience of 220 million people. In 2010, the Alliance for Orphans had enough spare money on hand to run a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl.<sup>lvii</sup>

And it was not just the media that began to listen. The Christians grabbed the attention of politicians like Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu who took the case to the U.S. Senate floor, declaring to her fellow lawmakers, “Either UNICEF is going to change or have a very difficult time getting support from the U.S. Congress.”<sup>lviii</sup>

But back on the streets of Port-au-Prince, those children that really were in need, but had entered the system, were stuck in limbo.

### ***Sonson: Part 3***

Sonson found himself in the Foundation Infant Jesus Orphanage. Associated Press journalists went with Tamara to visit him:

Sonson was sitting apart from the other children. He stared at the floor. When an orphanage worker asked him, "Who is your momma?" Sonson whispered "Mara." "Do you miss her?" Sonson nodded. When Tamara finally obtained visitation rights, two weeks later, the child case worker led her through the halls.

The other children rushed at her, screaming.

"Where is he?" Tamara asked.

"Don't you recognize him? That's him," said the woman pointing to the child sitting by himself on the floor. Tamara didn't recognize him. His head had been shaven.

She crouched on her knees. "Sonson?" she said.

He looked up and then away.

She scooped him up in her arms.

Sonson held on tightly. He made no sound, until they tried to pull him away. And then he screamed.

The social worker went to pull him out of her arms.

Sonson turned his face and dug his hands into her clothes. He kicked his legs. He screamed as they carried him away.

Tamara covered her mouth to hold back the sobs.<sup>lix</sup>

Even the most hardened UNICEF employee would have to agree that something had gone terribly wrong. Sonson had entered what the AP called "the bureaucratic labyrinth of Haiti's adoption limbo." Over the next two months, Tamara was allowed to visit Sonson only twice, for 20 minutes each time. She was told that she would have to wait at least six months for him to be declared an orphan. After that, with Tamara paying for his expenses, she and Sonson could expect to wait the customary three years before they would be reunited. That was as long as Sonson had been alive. He would be six when he got out of the orphanage.



The orphan crisis left the media, the general public and hopeful adoptive parents confused. We were told by the press and Child Protection Agencies that there were one to two million lost, separated or orphaned Haitian children. Then we were told of an underworld of sex and slave traffickers that was preying on them. Then we were told that it was the orphanages who were traffickers and that the orphanages were poorly managed and did not adequately care for children. Then the orphanages hit back with their own accusations of UNICEF and the child protection agencies working against the good of the children. Then we had separated children like Sonson getting thrown into the orphanages in the name of family reunification. Something was definitely amiss. Then came another development that left everyone completely confused: it turned out that most Haitian orphans have parents.

## **ORPHANS WITH PARENTS**

All of the 33 children that Silsby and the Idaho Baptists were caught trying to ferry across the border to the Dominican Republic had parents. UNICEF fanned the flames and acting as if it had not been them who had, in the first place, defined orphans as having parents, took every opportunity to point out to the press that it was a fact that before the earthquake 80 percent of all children in Haitian orphanages had at least one parent.

Further digging revealed that all the 53 “orphans” that Pennsylvania governor Rendell airlifted to the United States also had at least one parent. All of them. Several were taken without their parents even knowing. The famous McMutrie sisters, who had swayed Rendell to come to Haiti and rescue the children and had been declared by Pittsburgh Magazine as the “Pittsburghers of the Year,” were soon refusing to talk to the press. They would go on to sever ties with the BRESMA orphanage.<sup>lx lxi</sup>

The overseas public was disgusted. When asked about whether France would welcome Haiti's orphans, then-President Nicolas Sarkozy, who only weeks before had been leading the charge to save Haitian orphans, now said, "As long as they are true orphans and not children who are taken away from their families." Then, in an effort to figure out just what the hell was going on, Sarkozy sent into post-earthquake Port-au-Prince Arno Klarsfeld, son of famed Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld. Klarsfeld's job was to make recommendations on how to properly regulate adoptions. But Klarsfeld came away as confused as the rest of us. He went back to Paris and told reporters, "Something here isn't morally correct. It's a vicious circle. The more orphanages open, the more parents are tempted to give their kids away."<sup>lxii</sup>

It would soon come to light that many poor and middle class Haitian families had been using international adoption to get free education and visas for their children and even for themselves. Many Haitian parents of "orphans" expected foreign adoptee families to help the entire family, to send goods and money. And most adoptee families do help. Wall Street Journal reporters recounted that:

When David Aitken, an Internet entrepreneur from Provo, Utah, traveled to Haiti last year to meet a girl he was in the process of adopting, he was shocked to find out that her mother worked at the orphanage. "When we learned the mother was there, we thought, 'We can't adopt her.' I couldn't imagine taking a child from her mother," he recalls.

But the mother insisted and in the end David was happy to take her. When he embarked for the airport with the daughter, "Her mom was smiling on the porch waving," he recalled to the journalists, "It was surreal."<sup>lxiii lxiv lxv lxvi</sup>

## **THE ORPHANAGE OPPORTUNITY**

I have never found an article that succinctly summed up the labyrinth of exploitation and conflict and confusion that swirled around the orphan crisis. But what

we were seeing was a very specific mélange of interests and exploitation. On the one side of the equation are those who want to adopt and on the other are those who want to be adopted or want their children to be adopted. For the ones who want to adopt, there are often tax breaks and other material incentives that motivate them. But by and large would-be adoptee parents in the U.S. are as sincere and sentimental as any group of humans on earth. I've met dozens of them and listened to their stories. They fly in and out of Haiti for years while waiting for the adoption process to be completed. They visit these children whom they barely know; they pay exorbitant fees to stay in "approved" hostels. They fork over support money every month and they pay inflated medical bills and educational expenses. The internet is replete with their stories. They write of picking the child and the child picking them; of fate and destiny. Typical is adopting parent John Seabrook who wrote a piece for the *New Yorker* describing the moment when he was shown a picture of his Haitian "daughter" for the first time:

"What's her name?" I asked.

"Rose," Noah said.

I froze. Rosalie was Lisa's mother's name, and that was what we had been planning to call the girl we never had. I knew, gazing at the photograph Noah e-mailed after we hung up, that I was looking at our daughter. Lisa felt the same way: it was fate.<sup>lxvii</sup>

During the long three-year average wait to complete the adoption process the new parents, their families and friends begin to refer to the child as their own, they write of bringing their child "home." And with every one thousand dollars spent, the yearning seems grow deeper.

On the other side of the equation are the impoverished children themselves and—for the many who have them-- —their parents. At least some of these people desperately want to get their own kids into the care of middle and upper class evangelical Christians who can afford the adoption process and who, if they don't help

the rest of the family, will see their children to an age and competency level where the child herself can help the family.

Into this equation steps orphanage owners. The good ones might collect fees but they earnestly want to get children to hopeful adoptee families and they want to do it as fast as possible. To those truly needy children and the associated adults on both sides of the equation, these orphanage owners are nothing short of saints. But there are also orphanage owners and biological parents who would prefer that hopeful adoptee parents continue to pay the fees and support the children without ever actually getting to adopt them. And there are corrupt State officials who are more than happy to drag the process out as long as possible and collect all the fees they can.

And then come the child protection agencies. They see the worst of it all. They see the orphanages encouraging parents to give up their children; adoptive parents encouraging the orphanages; they see the money; the fees; the greed; and they want it to stop.

There is a rather basic materialist logic to it all. There is a want, nothing short of the most powerful human emotion, the desire to care and succor a child. There is a need, nothing short of the need to survive and escape from some of the most extreme conditions of hunger, disease, and deprivation on earth. And then there are a series of exploitative individuals and institutions profiting enormously from it all. By the time the 2010 earthquake struck, adoption had become a veritable industry in Haiti. Orphanages, hostels that host parents, and Haitian state officials were pulling in an average of what some claim was \$30,000 per child. The Haitian government was making millions on paper work. UNICEF seemed to have a point: the whole tangled orphan mess reeked.

But UNICEF and the Child Protection Agencies were anything but innocent. Whatever their differences, UNICEF and the orphanages had some powerful things in

common. It was in fact UNICEF that, in its own earnest desire to collect donations, had first gotten the ball rolling with their modification of the definition for the word “orphan.” It was arguably UNICEF that had created the conditions for the international adoption industry to flourish. They too had been collecting hundreds of millions of dollars off of it. And they had done less to help Haitian children than anyone. Indeed, UNICEF, after 60 years working in Haiti, was more helpless and confused about what was going on with Haitian children than the vast majority of orphanage owners.

### ***Back to UNICEF’s Original Sin***

As seen, long before the earthquake, UNICEF had defined a Haitian orphan as a child who had lost not two, but one parent. They extended that definition to children that simply lacked a legally recognized father. Or one whose mother or father simply said the other parent didn’t exist. UNICEF also turned informal Haitian fosterage and hosting school children who did domestic chores into child slavery. We’ve seen all that. But what UNICEF did next is almost unconscionable and, while I’m not a Christian, smacks of religious persecution. Citing the worst abuses and generalizing them to other mostly evangelical orphanages, it attacked those who had come to help, arguably doing more harm to children than good. The reason I say this is that, for those children who really did need help, the most likely place they were going to find it was in a Christian orphanage.

Indeed, the orphanages had reached such a scale that the institutions had become a mechanism of social mobility and aid for the poor and even for middle class families. But now, in the wake of the earthquake, UNICEF was hell-bent on fixing the problem it had created. Never mind that many of the children and their families had found a significant mechanism to escape extreme poverty. Never mind that UNICEF its partners Compassion International since 1952, Save the Children since 1976, and World Vision since 1978. And never mind that, prior to the earthquake, there was not a single

documented case of any of them exposing an orphanage for smuggling children or trafficking in child slaves. Never mind all that. The point is that UNICEF was and is singly incapable of establishing an effective child reunification program. And they knew it. Even as they continued to slam the orphanages and collect a mountain of donations, they knew it. “In my experience,” Marie de la Soudiere, the head of UNICEF’s Haitian Children Registry Program, told CBS’s 60 Minutes, “95 percent of the families can be found.” But how many children had UNICEF—10 weeks after the earthquake and after collecting more than \$100 million in donations—reunited with their families? We saw the answer earlier, “Twenty.” Yes, twenty. If children needed to be reunified with their families, it was clear that UNICEF wasn’t going to be the one to do it.

Nevertheless, with the donations pouring in, soon to reach \$291million for UNICEF alone, UNICEF and the other Child Protection Agencies were hell-bent on eliminating orphanages. They were talking about massive reunification, something that that they had never been able to achieve before and that was completely anathema to the interests of the Haitian poor, many of whom saw orphanages and international adoption as a vehicle of social mobility. It was a twisted pack of lies and word games extending back 20 years to the definition of an orphan and then to the creation of the child slave and now to the earthquake’s one million or more lost, orphaned or abandoned Haitian children and the battle over who was going to get to protect those phantom children. Just how twisted the entire affair had become can be seen in developments with Sonson.

#### ***Sonson: Part 4***

Sonson it turned out was not an orphan. What had separated Sonson from his family was not the earthquake. It was the Salvation Army aid workers. They had pulled him from a pile of rubble and never checked to see whether or not it was, in fact, his

backyard. When Sonson was taken away, he had been in the care of his aunt. The “trash heap” on which he was allegedly feeding was next to his house. His mother, very much alive, had been in the Haitian countryside getting food from their farming relatives.

Moreover, it was not UNICEF or Save the Children that would discover that his family was alive and looking for him. Nor did employees from the Foundation Infant Jesus Orphanage—the institution to which he had been entrusted—locate Sonson’s family. The orphanage was content to keep Sonson and let Tamara continue to pay his room, board and medical bills. The person who located the family was Tamara Palinka. Sonson had been taken away from her. After almost a year of waiting in vain for a sign the adoption would be processed, she had lost hope. Of her own volition, Palinka returned to where Sonson was first picked up. And there, she found his family.

Sonson’s story demonstrates the abysmal misunderstanding and assumptions of foreigners that underlie the tragic orphan phenomenon. Professional aid workers and many journalists dismissed skepticism, did not heed warnings from organizations such as SOS, whose Britain chapter’s CEO had quite precisely identified that the rhetoric and phantasma child snatchers and perverts being created in the wake of the Haiti earthquake was due to the same trolling-for-donations that had followed the Indonesian tsunami. They did little research into past disasters, and were citing numbers of orphans that were hundreds to thousands of times greater than the real figures. At the same time, disaster experts and aid workers—most of whom had come to Haiti for the very first time in their lives—were convincing themselves that it was true, that Haiti was home to an underworld of perverts and human traffickers. The journalists who interviewed them spread this myth to the overseas public and Haiti was flooded with overseas ‘wannabe’ heroes such as Governor Rendell and Silsby. The irony is that Haitian families, like that of Sonson’s, didn’t need to be fearful that traffickers would snatch their children. There was little to no evidence there were any.

The biggest fear they should have had was that their children would get plucked off the street or out of the yard by professionals working for an international child protection agency. Even after Sonson's family learned he was in an orphanage, it took months for them to get him free.

## **THE DÉTENTE**

The damn had not burst. No one, other than orphanage owners, had yet turned on the child protection agencies and attacked them. But the state of confusion had reached a point where none of this was reflecting well on UNICEF and other child protection agencies. They had told the world there were upwards of one million orphaned, lost, separated or abandoned children after the quake. They had collected hundreds of millions of dollars in donations to save them. They attacked the orphanages and as a result the Christians were now hitting back with revelations about UNICEF's failure. The Christians were outraged at the secular NGO world's hostility toward their adoptions and the orphanages associated with them. And how could they not be outraged? It was UNICEF and the child protection agencies that had claimed that child slavery was rampant in Haiti, that claimed the earthquake had unleashed an apocalyptic orphan crisis. And just what the hell had they been doing about it. Instead of helping, all UNICEF seemed to be doing was railing against would be saviors such as Silsby and the Idaho missionaries. Yet, after months of investigations by journalists and police there was not a shred of evidence that Laura Silsby and her missionary crew were anything other than good-hearted, if naive and opportunistic Christians. Even ton was stepping in to negotiate on their behalf.

Indeed, the truth about the orphan crisis was poking out through cracks and crevices and seemed to be about to explode into the full view of the public eye. What if the public were to start asking where the one million orphans, abandoned and lost



children went? What if they were to start asking about all the money? Something had to give.<sup>lxviii lxix</sup>

And give it did. UNICEF changed their rhetoric. By the end of March, UNICEF was no longer talking about “people like orphanage directors and clueless missionaries,” but rather its 430 “partners,” most of which were orphanages.<sup>lxx</sup>

And so, for the moment, it died quietly, without UNICEF or Save the Children or any of the other child protection agencies ever acknowledging that they had duped the world with their images of one million orphans, lost and separated children, and sexual predators and slave hunters prowling the rubble. Without the world ever understanding just what the hell was going on with the orphanages in Haiti.<sup>lxxi</sup>

## **IS UNICEF GUILTY?**

Was UNICEF guilty of lying and deceiving donors? Did they know what they were doing? It may be that UNICEF did not claim there were over one million children. Despite the press repeatedly saying so, I could find no case of a UNICEF spokesperson or employee having ever actually said so. It was Save the Children and the press that said that UNICEF said it. But UNICEF did nothing to stop them. They never publicly corrected the claims.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Ten weeks after the earthquake, when it was becoming clear that Andrew Cates of SOS was right and that experts like Garth Owen had wildly exaggerated the situation in Haiti, CBS’s *60 Minutes* had asked Marie de la Soudiere, the head of UNICEF’s Haitian Children Registry Program,

“How many children are really out there?”

“The answer,” Mme. Soudiere replied, “is we don’t know.”

But then Soudiere added, “We feel it’s upwards of 50,000.”

Saying 50,000 was considerably less of an exaggeration than the one million figure that child protection agents such as Save the Children's Kate Conradt were still, at that time, claiming had been separated, lost or abandoned. But it too was a radically irresponsible assessment of the situation. The worst part about that claim is that by that point in time, 70 days after the earthquake, UNICEF did know better. They had only registered 600 children, one one-hundredth of what Soudiere "felt" was the minimum still out there. And as seen, they had only reunified 20 children, despite Soudiere's "experience that 95 percent of the families can be found."

A year later, when the press was no longer interested in the issue, UNICEF would quietly publish the information that could confirm they had duped us. Specifically, UNICEF's 2011 annual report claimed that it and its "430 partners" — not UNICEF but essentially every orphanage and child protection agency in Haiti that claimed to have taken in a separated child — had registered 4,948 children who were "orphaned or separated from their parents." Only 1,265 of those children had been reunited with their families. That's about 1/10th the lost and separated children that Soudiere said were in Haiti the year before; and the reunification record is a dismal one in four (25 percent) of the children registered. But the biggest disappointment is that even those claims were a type of lie.

Of the 1,265 children reunified, 506 had nothing at all to do with the earthquake. They were separated from their parents *before* January 12, 2010, a clarification you would have had to go to the endnotes to discover. Moreover, UNICEF didn't reveal the exact figures, but it admitted that most of the remainder were also not "lost or orphaned." They were *restavek*, child domestic servants whose parents had "given them away" — the "child slaves" seen earlier — another absurd and much exaggerated UNICEF donor pitch.

## THE MONEY

So why did they do it? The number of orphaned, lost or separated children was inflated by factors that ran into thousands of times the real figure. No network of slave hunters or perverts was ever verified. Nor was there ever a confirmed case of someone selling a child. But for those organizations that were feeding the untruths and exaggerations to the media, the Haiti Orphan Crisis was a gold mine. Save the Children, that organization that first made the claim of one million orphans, originally called for \$9.8 million in donations. With the help of the “orphan crisis” they reached that figure in a matter of weeks, whereupon their “need” increased to \$20 million; then to \$36.6 million; then to \$65 million; by August 1, 2011, Save the Children had collected \$87 million, almost 10 times their original request. World Vision, another major child protection agency, asked for \$3.8 million; as the money poured in they upped their demand to \$8.1 million; then \$12.5 million; then \$100 million; seven months after the earthquake they had collected a total of \$191 million, 50 times what they had originally asked for. UNICEF, the king of child protection and the king of untruths about Haitian children—both before and after the earthquake—originally called for \$120 million. When they brought in \$229 million in six months—almost double what they requested—they decided they needed another \$127 million. By the end of the year UNICEF had collected \$291 million, 17 times their 2009 budget ceiling for Haiti.

Did they need the money? Did they even know how to spend the money?

Did UNICEF and the Child Protection agencies help Haitian children?

Did the combined \$500-plus million we gave them improve the lives of these children in any way?

## UNICEF'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I originally intended, at this point, to craft into this chapter how UNICEF had in fact done some good. I mean, they must have. I retrieved from the internet a UNICEF report released two years after the earthquake entitled "Haiti earthquake: How UNICEF has helped." I couldn't find a single point that I could defend.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

If we look at what UNICEF claimed to have done in the two years following the earthquake:<sup>lxxiv</sup>

"Over 120,000 children in nine departments benefit from structured activities and referral networks in 520 Child Friendly Spaces managed by 92 different community-based organisations supported by UNICEF"

These were tents with cordoned off areas where for several hours per day children could come to play under the supervision of local UNICEF staff.

"All ten departments equipped with psychosocial rehabilitation services specialized in emergency response."

Sounds grandiloquent, "Psychosocial rehabilitation services." Drawing on my experience on the survey we conducted for UNICEF, they must be referring to Haitian Child Protection Agency (IBESR) agents. We worked with them during the survey I mentioned earlier on. Or rather, we tried to work with them. They did not get paid. Not by UNICEF. Not by IBESR. Not by anyone. They are volunteers, something that doesn't work very well in impoverished Haiti. I suppose their capacity to provide "services" means they attended a seminar.

"13,440 children living in 336 of the estimated 650 residential care centres have been registered to provide social documentation, improved case management and family reunification where possible" and "care centers have been evaluated with standardized tools and a directory of all Residential Care Centres has been launched by IBESR, with UNICEF support"

Again, we worked for UNICEF in 2014. They hired me to lead the first ever in-depth evaluation of the orphanages so that they would have a statistical profile of the institutions. They gave me and my team the entire list of 723 care centers. Thirty percent of the institutions listed by UNICEF did not exist. What the evaluations of the rest meant were, even by UNICEF and IBESR's own admissions, anyone's guess.

*"18,000 children screened at border points"*

I crossed the border at least once a month, every month, for the first two years after the earthquake. I often did so in groups that included children and I never once saw a UNICEF agent. For the most part border agents ignore children. The Haitian-Dominican mother of two of my own children had the habit of not bothering to have their passports stamped at all. Indeed, anyone who knows the Haitian border has watched children wandering back and forth peddling goods and would find the claim absurd.

Two years after the earthquake in UNICEF's list of material contributions:

*"80,000 children in 'temporary schools.' "*

*Meaning tents.*

*"750,000 children and 15,000 teachers receiving "learning and teaching materials"*

*Meaning pencils pens and chalk boards.*

*"1,487,900 children receiving "hygiene materials including soap."*

*Meaning bars of soap.*

So the 291 million dollars we gave UNICEF didn't buy much. But it's when it comes to child reunification, that's where things really begin to stink.

UNICEF claims to have set up the "Separated Children Call Centre." They claimed to have done this "immediately" after the earthquake. If they really did it "immediately" they never told anyone. Not the press, not donors, not anyone in Haiti. It

was not until June 16, six months after the earthquake that we see any evidence or reference to the system, not even on the UNICEF website.<sup>lxxv</sup>

More disturbing to some, not least of all Haiti's poorest children, is where UNICEF clearly did have an impact. While I am trying to stay neutral, if you were to ask needy Haitian children and their parents, they would surely say it's a negative impact. And that was in compelling the controversial Bureau of Child Welfare (IBESR), whose agents we saw earlier accusing the Idaho missionaries of procuring the children for body parts, to limit international adoption of Haitian children to only closed adoptions.

What closed adoption means for Haitian children and those with living parents, or even a single biological family member, is that those who were put up for adoption would now lose contact with their natural families. They could not know their biological identity, not know who their biological parents were, could not contact them, could not send them money to help them cope with poverty, could never petition for visas for their biological parents to come to the United States. Nor could they know their brothers and sisters and help them out of poverty. In short it meant—and this was surely UNICEF's intention—that there was nothing in it for the biological parents. Fewer of them would agree to give their children up. Voila: reunification. UNICEF was solving their reunification conundrum with a stroke of the legislator's pen.

They would subsequently follow up that law with one that aimed at criminalizing what they called the "abandonment" of children. An impoverished Haitian parent that left their child in the care of another person and did not follow the guidelines defined by UNICEF would become a criminal, so putting an end to the "slave children," or rather, what we saw earlier was the impoverished children of Haiti's premier mechanism for social mobility and, for many, their only means to access town and city secondary schools.

How did UNICEF prevail on IBESR—a Haitian institution that should have been acting in the interest of Haitian children—to close adoptions? How did they prevail on the them to propose criminalizing child domestic service? They did it by giving IBESR \$800,000 per year in support. That’s only 1/363 of the \$291 million in donations UNICEF brought in after the earthquake, but still one helluva lot of money. It’s an especially large budget for IBESR, who’s prior budget, when they received anything at all, was reportedly less than \$100,000 before the earthquake. IBESR itself got no public donations after the earthquake.

## **THE SWINDLE**

Whatever their intentions, it was a massive swindle. The world’s largest child protection agencies, UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, Compassion International and others, together with the orphanages and the world’s three largest news services, Agence France-Presse, Reuters and the Associated Press, used untruths and exaggerations about children to precipitate a media hysteria that sustained an avalanche of donations from concerned citizens in almost every country on earth. The success of that swindle is not only in the money they brought in. Nor is the success of the swindle limited to the fact that more than 90 percent of the money went to internal expenses, including pension plans, salaries, school tuitions for the children of UNICEF staff and the staff of those organizations to which UNICEF distributed money. The most outstanding mark of swindle is that when it was all over, after having never apologized or even publicly acknowledged the duplicity, UNICEF officials were still looking into cameras, gushing with heartfelt sincerity, and asking for more money to help the Haitian children.

And they were getting it. The Haiti earthquake helped UNICEF carve out a new niche in the donor market. Moving far beyond once a year trick-or-treating children, six

years after the earthquake, American Airlines pilots were still finishing every flight to Haiti with a request that passengers give UNICEF a donation. A flight attendant then conspicuously walks down the middle of the aisle and, similar to church collections at the end of a service, holds a bag out for donations, turning to look at each row of passengers. Those that don't give, they must not love the children.

What about the real Haitian orphans, those forgotten and neglected children who don't have any family to care for them? What about the ones who many donors had in mind, but who, because of their helplessness and vulnerability, do not get a coveted place at the aid table and that most international staff at child protection agencies would unlikely be able to identify even if the child bit one of them in the ass? I can answer that question. But I'll let someone else do it. There's one case of a journalist asking the question, not to an aid worker with 3-year desk assignment to Haiti, but to a legitimate expert, anthropologist Gerald F. Murray who fluently speaks Haitian Kreyol and Spanish (and 11 other languages), and who spent much of the past 40 years living in both Haiti and the neighboring Dominican Republic and studying the respective cultures. Several months after the earthquake *Newsweek's* Katie Paul asked Murray, "What will happen to the orphans?" Murray told her, "Just as Haitians themselves had to dig out those buried under the rubble so it will be ordinary Haitians, not their government, that care for children orphaned by the earthquake."

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<sup>i</sup> Wilkinson, Emma. 2010. "Haiti children face ongoing disease and trauma Emma Wilkinson Health reporter." *BBC News*, January 15. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8461064.stm>



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AFP. 2010. "Children 'orphaned, petrified, in danger' after Haitian earthquake." *Australia's Herald Sun*, January 15. <http://www.news.com.au/world/children-orphaned-petrified-in-danger-after-haitian-earthquake/story-e6frfl09-1225819581341>

Randhawa, Kiran. 2010. "Fears for two million children alone in Haiti earthquake wreckage." *News.Com.Au*, January 15. <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/fears-for-two-million-children-alone-in-haiti-earthquake-wreckage-6755389.html>

ii **Scrutiny from organizations such as SOS suggested that even those children who arrived in orphanages had been placed in them, not by the earthquake, but their own impoverished parents or family members trying to access aid on behalf of the children.** Paying people to take their children back, reportedly common after the earthquake, almost certainly encouraged the practice. Here's and excerpt from a USA Today article:

In the week after the quake, SOS announced on the radio that the orphanage had room for more orphans. The next day, the orphanage nearly doubled in size after staff found around 120 children lined up outside the gate. In the three months since, the orphanage has tripled in size.

But SOS quickly realized that most of the new arrivals were not in fact orphans, said spokeswoman Line Wolf-Nielsen. One mother posed as a stranger dropping off three of her own children, whom she claimed were 'orphans' found after the quake. Others sent in their children with neighbors or friends, making it more difficult to find the family. One family instructed three boys to memorize a fictitious last name to complicate efforts to find their real parents.

Organizations helping abandoned children are even offering supplies to families that take back their kids. In the case of the three boys, their family received three sleeping bags, a tent and a one-month supply of food. They were driven back to a muddy alleyway that leads into a maze of tents where children play with kites made by tying a discarded plastic bag to a piece of string.

See: Callimachi, Rukmini (Associated Press). 2010. "Desperate parents abandon children in Haiti," *USA Today*, May 9. <http://thegreatone22.wordpress.com/2010/05/09/>

iii Elliot, Debbie, 2010. "In Haiti, Quake's Orphans Long For A Home." *NPR*. March 09. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124464928>

iv Some of the Tsunami articles and humanitarian aid claims were so similar to what we saw after the Haiti earthquake:

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Aglionby, John, Jonathan Steele, and Brian Whitaker. 2005. "Criminals may be trafficking orphans." *The Guardian*, January 5.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jan/05/tsunami2004.internationalaidanddevelopment>

Nwe, Yin Yin (UNICEF). 2005. "Children and the Tsunami, A Year On a Draft UNICEF Summary of What Worked." November. <http://www.unicef.org/emerg/disasterinasia/files/WhatWorked.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Here's an excerpt from the UK's *The Times* 1/23/2010. It's worthy to repeat here because it sums up the extremity of assumptions and misinformation:

Save the Children, World Vision and the British Red Cross have called for an immediate halt to adoptions of Haitian children not approved before the earthquake, warning that child traffickers could exploit the lack of regulation.

Nearly 30 agencies helped by the UN peacekeeping mission and the Haitian government are urgently pooling information and resources to counter the threat. They are touring hospitals and orphanages, broadcasting radio messages, and increasing surveillance of road traffic, the airport and the border with the Dominican Republic.

The scale of the problem is potentially enormous. Haiti is awash with children, with 45 per cent of its population younger than 15. One UN official estimated that between 40,000 and 60,000 children were killed, orphaned or separated from their families by the earthquake, which struck while most were still in school, and anecdotal evidence suggests many have been left to fend for themselves.

One small orphanage visited by *The Times* yesterday said it had turned away ten children because its buildings were badly damaged. A World Vision official in Jimani, a town just across the border in the Dominican Republic, said eight orphans and 25 unaccompanied children — many injured — had turned up there by Tuesday. A UN official spoke of people driving to the airport in expensive cars and putting children on outgoing flights without any documentation.

The alarm is particularly acute given Haiti's dire record of child abuse. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported in 2008 that 29 per cent of children under 14 were already working, and roughly 300,000 were '*restaveks*' (a creole corruption of '*rester avec*') whose impoverished parents send them to work for wealthier families in the hope they will receive food and shelter.

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Some were cared for and educated, but others were “sexually exploited and physically abused; and are unpaid, undocumented, and unprotected”. When they turn 15, and must by law be paid, many are turned on to the streets to join as many as 3,000 other children who survive on the streets of Port-au-Prince as vendors, beggars or prostitutes.

Even before the earthquake, Haitian children were regularly sent to the Dominican Republic to work in sex tourism, or recruited by armed gangs. A Haitian women’s organisation documented 140 rapes of girls younger than 18 years in the 18 months to June 2008. Haiti’s many orphanages—there are said to be 200 in Port-au-Prince alone—are poorly regulated, and some are mere fronts for international child traffickers.

See: Fletcher, Martin. 2010. “Call for halt to Haiti adoptions over traffickers.” *The Times*, January 23. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/americas/article2002006.ece>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www2.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=3f7000a8-6c95-4260-9ffd-f9e73be4940b>

See also: *Agence France Presse*. 2010. “Children missing from Haiti Hospitals: UNICEF.” January 22.

<sup>vii</sup> Good summaries of Joyce’s research can be found here:

Joyce, Kathryn. 2013. “The Problem With the Christian Adoption Movement.” *Huffington Post*, June 2.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathryn-joyce/christian-adoption-movement-problems\\_b\\_3367223.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathryn-joyce/christian-adoption-movement-problems_b_3367223.html)

Joyce, Kathryn. 2010. “The Evangelical Adoption Campaign: As Bill Clinton works to spring U.S. missionaries charged with kidnapping in Haiti, the case highlights a new evangelical strategy: Adopt Third World babies and convert them.” *The Daily Beast*, February 6.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/02/06/evangelicals-adoption-battlecry.html>

<sup>viii</sup> For black children adopted into white families, see: Buckwalter, Rebecca. 2014. “America’s Unseen Export: Children, Most of Them Black.” *Pacific Standard*, June 24.

<http://www.psmag.com/navigation/politics-and-law/outgoing-adoption-americas-unseen-export-children-black-84084/>

For a summary of the history of mainstream Americans adopting Indian children, see: Mahapatra, Lisa. 2013. “Indian Child Welfare Act: More Than 800 Native American Children Were Adopted In 2012. How Many Could Be Affected?” *International Business Times*, August 19.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/indian-child-welfare-act-more-800-native-american-children-were-adopted-2012-how-many-could-be>

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<sup>ix</sup> *The Associated Press*. 2012. "International adoption rates plummet, domestic numbers rise." May 10. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/25/international-adoptions-us-parents-2012\\_n\\_2547549.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/25/international-adoptions-us-parents-2012_n_2547549.html)

Historical statistics on adoption in the United States, plus statistics on child population and welfare compiled by Wm. Robert Johnston. June 22, 2014

<sup>x</sup> *Reuters*. 2013. "International Adoptions By U.S. Parents Fell In 2012, Continuing Multi-Year Decline." January 24.

<http://www.nairaland.com/385977/massive-race-traffick-haitian-children>

The Associated Press. 2012. "International adoption rates plummet, domestic numbers rise." May 10.

Raquel Bernal, Universidad de Los Andes, Luojia Hu, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Chiaki Moriguchi, Northwestern University, and NBER Eva Nagypal, Northwestern University. "Child Adoption in the United States: Historical Trends and the Determinants of Adoption Demand and Supply, 1951-2002." Preliminary and Incomplete.

According to the latest research by the National Council for Adoption, private domestic agency adoptions have risen steadily from 14,549 in 1982 to 20,254 in 2007.

While domestic adoption continues to grow, international adoption has declined significantly over the past several years, with just 7,092 adoptions in 2013, down from 8,668 in 2012, 9,319 in 2011 and 11,058 in 2010.

In 2010, the countries with the most U.S. adoptions were China (3,401), Ethiopia (2,513) and Russia (1,082).

See: Darcy, Claudia Corrigan. 2013. "Adoption Relinquishments by the Numbers." Adoption Research & Statistics, Relinquishment, The Adoption Industry. January 30.

<sup>xi</sup> *Associated Press*. 2012. "International adoption rates plummet, domestic numbers rise." May 10. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/25/international-adoptions-us-parents-2012\\_n\\_2547549.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/25/international-adoptions-us-parents-2012_n_2547549.html)

Johnston, William Robert. 2014. "Historical statistics on adoption in the United States, plus statistics on child population and welfare." last updated 22 June. <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/adoptionstatsintl.html>

<sup>xii</sup> In 2010, the countries with the most U.S. adoptions were China (3,401), Ethiopia (2,513) and Russia (1,082). For references see following endnotes.

<sup>xiii</sup> According to the latest research by the National Council for Adoption, private domestic agency adoptions rose steadily from 14,549 in 1982 to 20,254 in 2007. While domestic adoption continued

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to grow, international adoption subsequently declined significantly, 11,058 in 2010, 9,319 in 2011, 8,668 in 2012, to 7,092 adoptions in 2013.

See: *Reuters*. 2013. "International Adoptions By U.S. Parents Fell In 2012, Continuing Multi-Year Decline." January 24. <http://www.nairaland.com/385977/massive-race-traffick-haitian-children>

Bernal, Raquel, Luoia Hu, Chiaki Moriguchi, N. Eva Nagypal. 2007. "Child Adoption in the United States: Historical Trends and the Determinants of Adoption Demand and Supply, 1951-2002." *ResearchGate*.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242494149\\_Child\\_Adoption\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_Historical\\_Trends\\_and\\_the\\_Determinants\\_of\\_Adoption\\_Demand\\_and\\_Supply\\_1951-2002](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242494149_Child_Adoption_in_the_United_States_Historical_Trends_and_the_Determinants_of_Adoption_Demand_and_Supply_1951-2002)

<sup>xiv</sup> Associated Press. 2012 "International adoption rates plummet, domestic numbers rise." *Christian Science Monitor*. May 10. <http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Family/2012/0510/International-adoption-rates-plummet-domestic-numbers-rise>

Historical statistics on adoption in the United States, plus statistics on child population and welfare compiled by Wm. Robert Johnston. <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/adoptionstats.html>

<sup>xv</sup> Some more references for UNICEF panic and trafficking fears in post-earthquake Haiti:

*ABC.net*. 2010. "Trafficking fears as Haiti children go missing." January 24. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-01-23/trafficking-fears-as-haiti-children-go-missing/1219762>

Nairaland Forum. 2010. "The Massive Race To Traffick Haitian Children (This Is Not Right )." Politics. January 22.

<sup>xvi</sup> For the McMurtrie sisters 'Pittsburghers of the Year,' see: Wander, Jonathan. 2010. "Pittsburghers of the Year: Jamie & Ali McMurtrie." *Pittsburgh Magazine*, December. <http://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/Pittsburgh-Magazine/January-2011/Pittsburghers-of-the-Year-Jamie-amp-Ali-McMurtrie/>

<sup>xvii</sup> Haiti's first lady, Elisabeth Delatour Preval, unintentionally added to the hysteria saying to the press, "The children of Haiti, unless they get help, they will have lost their childhoods, their innocence."

See Sontag, Deborah. 2010. "Haiti's Children Adrift in World of Chaos." *New York Times*, January 26. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/27/world/americas/27children.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/27/world/americas/27children.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>xviii</sup> For Clinton Press conference, see: UPI. 2010. "Clinton pledges to speed Haiti adoptions." January 20. [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/US/2010/01/20/Clinton-pledges-to-speed-Haiti-adoptions/UPI-98631264038353/#ixzz3GloDAcBB](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/01/20/Clinton-pledges-to-speed-Haiti-adoptions/UPI-98631264038353/#ixzz3GloDAcBB)

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<sup>xix</sup> Branch, Kirsten Edmondson. 2010. "Broadcasting the SOS call of the #BRESMA Orphans." *Salon*. January 17.

[http://open.salon.com/blog/kirsten\\_edmondson\\_branch/2010/01/17/broadcasting\\_the\\_sos\\_call\\_of\\_the\\_bresma\\_orphans\\_of\\_haiti](http://open.salon.com/blog/kirsten_edmondson_branch/2010/01/17/broadcasting_the_sos_call_of_the_bresma_orphans_of_haiti)

<sup>xx</sup> *The New Yorker*. 2010. "The Last Babylift Adopting a child in Haiti." May 10.

<sup>xxi</sup> Pennsylvania politicians began to fall all over themselves to take part in the heroics of saving Haiti orphans, see: Roman, Andrew. 2010. "Ex Attorney Loses in Political Skirmish Over Haitian Orphans." *Main Justice: Politics, Policy, and the Law*. January 19.

<sup>xxii</sup> I'm not sure if I am unusual but when reading about the sisters I was instinctively thinking 'orphans' and 'sisters' and assuming that they must be Catholic 'Sisters', meaning nuns. It was not until much later, while conducting the research for this book, that I realized they were in fact siblings.

<sup>xxiii</sup> U.S. Department of State. FY 2010. "Annual Report on Intercountry Adoptions." December 2010.

Thompson, Ginger. 2010. "After Haiti Quake, the Chaos of U.S. Adoptions." *New York Times*. August 3.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/04/world/americas/04adoption.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/04/world/americas/04adoption.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>xxiv</sup> In 2016, a Good Housekeeping Video that popped up on my Yahoo (Yahoo's Lifestyle). The video claimed the Bresma orphanage was founded because, "Margarette Saint Fleur wanted to help parents from the poorest communities, by sending their children to school rather than giving them up for international adoption." The video alluded to the horror of becoming slave children, saying that St Fleur was saving children from slavery. The video claimed that 50% of Haitian children were not in school—when in fact the figure at that point was about 20% of children not in school. And perhaps most amusing of all the video claimed that "Since the orphanage opened in 2001, Margarette had educated over 2,000 children." No mention was made that St Fleur had been the partner of Ali and Emma McMurtrie and that together they had sent hundreds of children into overseas adoption, not least of all the 54 that Governor Rendell had whisked away, some without their parents even knowing. In effect, after UNICEF made international adoption all but impossible, Margarette St Fleur changed tactics and out-manuevered the new UNICEF family reunification

See: *Good Housekeeping*, Videos. 2016. "Margarette Saint Fleur Runs A Children's Orphanage and School in Haiti."

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/margarette-saint-fleur-runs-children-211205099.html>

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<sup>xxv</sup> For the TIME quote about Mia Pean and the phantom trafficker, see: Padgett, Tim and Bobby Ghosh. 2010. "Human Predators Stalk Haiti's Vulnerable Kids." *Time*, January 27.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Note that the last bona fide case of a rescue pulled from the rubble was on January 27, exactly when the cry 'predators' went up.

<sup>xxvii</sup> In the same article, *Time* reported the only solid case of Haitians reporting someone stalking their children. In doing so, they unwittingly documented what Haitians in popular neighborhoods do to someone they think might be trying to prey on their children:

In the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Petite Place Cazeau... a crowd of quake survivors living in tents surrounded a pickup truck and beat up the driver, saying he had for several days been trying to kidnap young girls. Bleeding from his nose, mouth and scalp, he managed to get back in his truck and flee. (The angry crowd then threatened to beat up a journalist for even asking questions about child trafficking.)

See: Padgett, Tim and Bobby Ghosh. 2010. "Human Predators Stalk Haiti's Vulnerable Kids." *Time*, January 27.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The legal definition—and what most people in the U.S. think of as an orphan—is a child who has lost both parents. But then as legal things go, the issue can get hazy. A child who has lost one parent and the remaining parent cannot care for them can be declared an orphan. A child whose father has not recognized them and whose mother is unable to care for them can be an orphan. But anyway you cut it, the child has, *de facto*, lost *both* parents. The definition for children born outside the U.S. and seeking immigration status is "a child with a sole or surviving parent who is unable to provide for the child's basic needs, consistent with the local standards of the foreign sending country, and has, in writing, irrevocably released the child for emigration and adoption." From U.S. Legal Definitions Web site, June 9, 2011  
<http://definitions.uslegal.com/o/orphan/>

<sup>xxix</sup> On February 1, UNICEF's Rebecca Fordham said in an UN Radio interview that, "Prior to the quake, many of the children who were in institutional care already did have living parents."

<sup>xxx</sup> Twenty-five percent of the Haitian population is between the ages of 4 and 15 years; and 32 percent between the ages of 4 and 18 years.

<sup>xxxi</sup> For two examples of the extreme blogs trolling for money by turning the Haitian guardians of Haitian children into trolls, see:

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<http://www.godlikeproductions.com/forum1/message976170/pg1> 1/28/10

[http://stopchildsexslavery.blogspot.com/2010\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://stopchildsexslavery.blogspot.com/2010_01_01_archive.html) 1/28/10

<sup>xxxii</sup> That same week, the second week after the earthquake, the facts hit the U.S. Senate floor. Senator Mary Landrieu from Louisiana declared to her fellow lawmakers that:

Haiti had 380,000 orphans, as defined by UNICEF, before the earthquake. We don't know if this number has doubled, tripled or potentially quadrupled, but I promise you it has increased. We are here today to advocate for a more modern model to identify orphans in Haiti and try to reunite them with their families or find them a family somewhere in the world as quickly as possible.

Elsewhere:

On the 28th Prime Minister Max Bellerive and First Dame Elizabeth Preval added their concern as well. The first lady said that, "The children, unless they get help, they will have lost their childhoods, their innocence. It is them we must go to first."

See: *The Sun*. 2010. "Traffickers prey on hordes of Haiti quake orphans." January 27.  
<http://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/scotsol/homepage/news/2827993/Traffickers-prey-on-hordes-of-Haiti-quake-orphans.html>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Delva, Joseph Guyler. 2010. "American Arrested Taking Children Out of Haiti." *Reuters*, January 30. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/01/30/us-quake-haiti-arrests-idUSTRE60T23I20100130>

<sup>xxxiv</sup> *BBC*. 2010. "Haiti arrests U.S. nationals over child 'abductions.'" January 31.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8489738.stm>

<sup>xxxv</sup> *The People's Daily*. 2010. "10 Americans accused of smuggling Haitian kids." February 01.  
<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90852/6884520.html>

<sup>xxxvi</sup> *New York Times*. 2010. "Bleak Portrait of Haiti Orphanages Raises Fears." February 6.  
[http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2010/02/07/world/07trafficking\\_span-CA0/07trafficking\\_CA0-articleLarge.jpg](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2010/02/07/world/07trafficking_span-CA0/07trafficking_CA0-articleLarge.jpg)

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Gauthier-Villars, David, Joel Millman and Miriam Jordan. 2010. "Missionary Case Illuminates Plight of Haiti's Orphans." *Wall Street Journal*, February 3.  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704259304575043691704446642.html>



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Lacey, Marc. 2010. "Haiti Charges Americans With Child Abduction," *New York Times*, February 4. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/world/americas/05orphans.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/world/americas/05orphans.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

*The Daily Mail*. 2010. "Ten U.S. missionaries charged over attempt to kidnap and smuggle Haiti 'orphans.'" February 5. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1248671/Ten-U-S-missionaries-charged-attempt-kidnap-smuggle-Haiti-orphans.html#ixzz2SfFe1JfT>

*BBC News*. 2010. "US missionaries in Haiti charged with child abduction." February 5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8499401.stm>

<sup>xxxviii</sup> For SOS's UK CEO, Andrew Cates' quotes, see: *SOS Children's Villages*. 2010. "Haiti Earthquake Appeal: False claims of 'million orphans.'" January 19. <http://www.soschildrensvillages.org.uk/news/previous-emergency-appeals/2010-haiti-earthquake/falseaccounting>

<sup>xxxix</sup> With encouragement from orphanage owners, other journalists immediately raised the stakes. Nick Allen of wrote in the *Telegraph* that, "The first confirmed case of a child being offered for sale since Haiti was devastated by a 7.0-magnitude earthquake on Jan 12 took place near Gonaives, 150km north of Port-au-Prince." Allen got the confirmation from none other than Noel Ismonin, a Canadian pastor who claimed to rescue orphans in the area. Pastor Noel Ismonin had himself been "scouring camps of Haitians left homeless by the quake for orphans to bring back to Gonaives." He wasn't having a lot of luck. According to CBC News he "found his offers sometimes rejected outright. 'They're going to be abused,' cried one Haitian man at one tent city, to Ismonin's dismay." (CBC Jan 22, 2010: Haitian children at risk of trafficking: UNICEF). Then, lo and behold, Pastor Ismonin was approached by a man offering to sell him the boy Allen learned about. Interestingly the pastor refused, putting into doubt any claims of "confirmation." In fact, Pastor Ismonin claimed that he subsequently got the child for free. So much for selling children. When his hometown Ottawa news station followed up, the good pastor "refused to directly talk about the incident." Nor did Nick Allen and the *Telegraph* offer any second or third cases of confirmed sales of children. In short, it was more shoddy journalism. But knowing an opportunity to plug for donations when she sees one, Save the Children spokeswoman Kate Conrad was there to back the claim when she reminded Allen that "There are an estimated one million unaccompanied or orphaned children, or children who lost one parent. They are extremely vulnerable."

See:

Allen, Nick. 2010. "Haiti earthquake: orphans for sale for \$50." *The Telegraph*, January 28.

*The Telegraph*. 2010. "Haiti earthquake: orphans for sale for \$50." Nick Allen. January 28. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7086466/Haiti-earthquake-orphans-for-sale-for-50.html>

Pickup, Oliver. 2011. "Haiti earthquake children sold by their parents for less than 76p each to traffickers, say UNICEF." *Daily Mail*, February 22. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1359152/Haiti-earthquake-children-sold-parents-80-PENCE-traffickers.html>

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Westwood, Kris and Kenneth Jackson. 2010. "Ottawa Pastor Rescues Haitian Orphan From Being Sold." *QMI Agency*, January 28. <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2010/01/28/12650526-qmi.html>

<sup>xi</sup> For Silsby's contact with the UN, see : Colson, Nicole. 2010. "Top of Form Christian Right kidnappers." *Socialist Worker*, February 17. <http://socialistworker.org/2010/02/17/christian-right-kidnappers>

<sup>xlii</sup> The significant evidence of wrongdoing—indeed the wrongdoing itself—was that the missionaries had been trying to cross the border with children who had no papers. The problem with that accusation, however, was that if we believed the press and organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children, there were 1 million "orphaned, abandoned, and separated children" desperately in need of help; slave traffickers and perverts trying to capture them; the Haitian government was in shambles with 30 percent of civil servants killed and no one reporting to work. So while I have little compassion for Silsby, just how in hell, Silsby defenders must have wondered, was she supposed to get the paper work to save them. Indeed, anyone who believed the press reports might very well have thought it their moral duty to get as many children out of the country as possible. It's arguably bizarre that the press and the Haitian government had been making all those claims and then suddenly Haiti "still had laws" and Silsby had no right to "flaunt" them. And while I also have little sympathy for those in the orphan business, the idea of "smuggling" children across the border just seems like so much rhetoric to me. Even during the best of times, thousands of Haitians and Dominicans cross the border every day without papers. Children go with little to no scrutiny. After the earthquake, any Haitian police on the border were stopping no one. Nor were the Dominicans. The Dominican authorities simply waved through the thousands of do-gooders who had come to help.

<sup>xliii</sup> A few examples of the 100s of blogs on Silsby:

Presler, Titus. 2010. "Haitian Orphan Rescue Mission brings disgrace to Christian mission." February 4. <http://titusonmission.wordpress.com/2010/02/04/haitian-orphan-rescue-mission-brings-disgrace-to-christian-mission/>

Greiner, Marley. 2010. "Clueless in Boise: Charisa Coulter Still Doesn't Get It." March 16, [dontadophthaiti.blogspot.com/.../clueless-in-boise-charisa-coulter-still.htm](http://dontadophthaiti.blogspot.com/.../clueless-in-boise-charisa-coulter-still.htm).

Kopsa, Andy. 2010. "The problem with Baptists and Haiti." February 2. <http://akopsa.wordpress.com/2010/02/02/the-problem-with-baptists-and-haiti/>

<sup>xliii</sup> *The Associated Press*. 2010. "Child rescued from Haiti rubble is orphaned again." published on *The Grio*, June 22.

<sup>xliv</sup> On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the *Palm Beach Post* wrote, "Despite his circumstances UNICEF workers and other child advocates actually consider the story somewhat of a success" because Sonson, "could

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have fallen prey to child traffickers who began trying to exploit the most vulnerable of Haiti's survivors immediately after the tragedy" (Duret 2010).

<sup>xlv</sup> For *World Focus* blog and quotes from Mohammad Al-Kassim, see: Al-Kassim, Mohammad. 2010. "A young orphan in Haiti steals a volunteer's heart." March 2.  
<http://worldfocus.org/blog/2010/03/02/a-young-orphan-in-haiti-steals-a-volunteers-heart/9881/>

<sup>xlvi</sup> Evans, Tom. 2010. "Traffickers targeting Haiti's children, human organs, PM says." *CNN*, January 27.

<sup>xlvii</sup> For an early summary of the Urban Legend Orphan-Organ Market, see: Leventhal, Todd 1994. "Child Organ Trafficking Rumor: A Modern 'Urban Legend': A Report Submitted To The United Nations Special Rapporteur On The Sale Of Children, Child Prostitution, And Child Pornography By The United States Information Agency." *United States Information Agency Washington, D.C.*, December.

<sup>xlviii</sup> So the police chief was not specific about "criminal organizations and orphanages." The Prime Minister however was very specific when he singled out the organ market. People on the street also feared that foreigners may be taking children to harvest organs. But there was no history and no evidence to back up organ trafficking. No NGO experts with numbers. And the accusation was so horrible there would have to be proof. But "slavery" and "sexual predators." that was something that NGOs and the UN backed up. It didn't call for rigorous evidence. And it made sense to the overseas journalists.

<sup>xlix</sup> Quoting directly from M. A. Coulter:

American Paul Waggoner learned that lesson in December 2010. After selling all of his personal possessions, he moved from Massachusetts to Haiti to help earthquake victims. Co-founder of a relief organization that delivered medical supplies and assisted with trauma victims, he was present when a 15-month-old baby died at a hospital after the earthquake. The child's distraught father was convinced Waggoner and attending doctors, kidnapped and drugged his son to harvest body parts. The father's first attempt to have Waggoner arrested for kidnapping was unsuccessful, due in large part to a doctor's signed death certificate and affidavit. Out of fear, Waggoner left Haiti but later returned after he thought the matter had been resolved. The boy's father convinced a second judge to order the volunteer's arrest. Waggoner was held in a federal prison for two weeks during the ensuing investigation. He was formally cleared and released in late December. Proof of innocence in Haiti is a burden left to the accused. Guilt, as the 10 American volunteers and Waggoner discovered, is presumed from the outset.

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See: Coulter, M.A. 2011. "Aftershock: A Journey of Faith to Haiti." *WestBow*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>i</sup> Thompson, Ginger. 2010. "Bleak Portrait of Haiti Orphanages Raises Fears." *New York Times*, February 6.

<sup>ii</sup> A fuller excerpt from Thomson's article:

At an orphanage called The Foyer of Patience, the New York Times reporters found "50 children crammed into two bedrooms .... some of them scampering around in clothes that were either too big or too small, and others wearing no clothes at all." They interviewed the owner of the orphanage, Enoch Anequaire, who said he opened the center five years ago but had no time to get a license. He told them that he provided an education to the children, "but there was not a single book, piece of paper or pencil in the house." He said he fed them three meals. But, "several said that they had had nothing to eat." And there seemed to be little doubt that the children were recruited:

Mr. Anequaire, whose own clothes were pressed and shoes polished, said he had been overwhelmed with new children since the earthquake. He pointed out five boys who arrived last Wednesday and said that an aunt had brought them in because their homes had collapsed, and that their mothers were unable to feed them.

Some of the children, however, said Mr. Anequaire had come looking for them.

"He came to my house and told my mother he needed 10 more kids," said one of the boys, whose names were withheld from this article to protect them from retribution.

*Thompson, Ginger. 2010. "Bleak Portrait of Haiti Orphanages Raises Fears."  
New York Times, February 6.*

<sup>iii</sup> A month before the earthquake I had sat at the Montana having beers with the cultural attaché from the U.S. embassy. She was telling me about how the adopting lawyer fees alone averaged \$10,000 per child, all of it going to the lawyers. She had called me to see about participating in further research. We never got a chance. Her house was destroyed in the earthquake. She and her husband miraculously survived but with serious injuries.

<sup>iiii</sup> Padgett, Tim and Jessica Desvarieux. 2010. "UNICEF Seeks to Keep Kids Out of Haiti Orphanages." *Time*, February 18.

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<sup>liv</sup> Callimachi, Rukmini (Associated Press). 2010. "Some Haitian Children Orphaned Twice." *NBC News*, June 20. [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/37789568/ns/health-childrens\\_health/t/some-haitian-children-orphaned-twice/#.V\\_6wAPkrLX4](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/37789568/ns/health-childrens_health/t/some-haitian-children-orphaned-twice/#.V_6wAPkrLX4)

<sup>lv</sup> Thomas, Marie-Thérèse Labossière. 2010. "The big business of haitian adoption." *AlterPresse*, March 15.

<sup>lvi</sup> Urbina, Ian. 2010. "Paperwork Hinders Airlifts of Ill Haitian Children." *New York Times*, February 8. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/09/world/americas/09airlift.html?scp=1&sq=10percent20children&st=cse>

<sup>lvii</sup> This is extrapolating from the most recent data I could find: In 2007 The Southern Baptist Convention brought in \$1.4 billion in "gifts" and missions. They owned \$40 billion in property. (Source: "SBC giving, financial data compiled by Wm. Robert Johnston. last updated 23 November 2008" and last access July 15, 2012. <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/baptist/sbcddata2.html>)

<sup>lviii</sup> Other advocates include Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, senators like Sam Brownback and James Inhofe.

Families for Orphans Act, drafted by the Families for Orphans Coalition, whose executive committee includes DiFilipo, Luwis and Johnson. The bill, which Landrieu's office will reintroduce this year, would create a special State Department office to oversee adoptions and offer—critics say condition—developmental aid to countries that help obtain permanent parental care for orphans, including through international adoption. In an op-ed published in the *Washington Examiner* in March 2010, co-sponsors Landrieu and Inhofe dangled the promise that the office could facilitate the placement of tens of thousands more Haitian children with US families.

*From Joyce, Kathryn 2011. "The Evangelical Adoption Crusade." Blog. April 21*

<sup>lix</sup> Modified from AP article: Callimachi, Rukmini. 2010. "Adoption restrictions separate Canadian aid worker from boy." June 19.

<sup>lx</sup> Steffan, Melissa. 2012. "Haiti Orphanages Are Overflowing—But Not with Orphans Facilities face closure because 80 percent of 'orphans' have at least one living parent." Blog. December 7.

<sup>lxi</sup> Carpenter, Mackenzie. 2011. "Fallout felt from airlift of Haitian orphans." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 12.

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<sup>lxii</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. 2010. "Earthquake Exposes Haiti's Faulty Adoption System" By David Gauthier-Villars, Miriam Jordan And Joel Millman. February 27.

<sup>lxiii</sup> In my survey research in North West Haiti, I found that irrespective of whether or not parents are alive, 25 percent of all Haitian children are raised not by their parents but by their grandparents, most often mother's parents and most particularly the grandmother. Thus, being an orphan in Haiti doesn't really tell us much about the child's needs. To be exact—and I calculated it from surveys—controlling for age, the average Haitian has 10 full and half brothers and sisters; 20 uncles and aunts (including parent's half siblings); about 35 first cousins (reducing the average lifetime total by a factor of 4); a maximum of 12 living grandparents (4 grandparents and a total possible 8 great grandparents); as many as 40 great uncles and aunts (the siblings and half siblings of his or her grandparents). In addition to these blood relatives, a Haitian child has two fictive mothers and two fictive fathers (godparents). For a summary, see: Schwartz, Timothy. 1999. "The Most Vulnerable: A Needs Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions Serving Vulnerable Populations in the Northwest Department and the Northern Artibonite." Report for *CARE International*.

<sup>lxiv</sup> UNICEF has been in Haiti since 1949; Save the Children since 1978; World Vision since 1978; CARE since 1954, and Compassion International since 1968. See their respective websites.

<sup>lxv</sup> In short, recipient of children from lower class families, most Haitians parents who bring their children to the orphanage are emphatically not "giving their kids away" as so commonly stated in the press. They are most often seeking to further the child's education and access aid for themselves and other family members. What I am describing, this Haitian understanding of orphanages and schools as an opportunity to access aid, befuddles outsiders. They don't know about the advantages and most can't even fathom them. Foreigners who have come to help don't readily see what is happening. What they see is parents giving away children and it becomes a mindboggling Catch-22. But this is precisely why, when French President Sarkozy sent Arno Klarsfeld to post-earthquake Port-au-Prince to make recommendations on how to regulate adoptions, Klarsfeld came back to Paris and said "Something here isn't morally correct. It's a vicious circle. The more orphanages open, the more parents are tempted to give their kids away."

See: Gauthier-Villars, David, Miriam Jordan and Joel Millman. 2010. "Earthquake Exposes Haiti's Faulty Adoption System." *Wall Street Journal*, February 27.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704625004575089521195349384>

<sup>lxvi</sup> It might be difficult for many of us to fathom but we're talking about bridging the span between the poorest people in the western hemisphere and the wealthiest. We're talking about leaving behind the risks of child mortality as high as 20 percent, about leaving behind certain malnutrition, illness, semi-literacy, intensive and arduous daily labor regimes. It's a no-brainer for most poor people: anyone who would try to interfere with them accessing orphanages could be nothing short of heartless.

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<sup>lxvii</sup> Seabrook, John. 2010. "The Last Babylift: Adopting a child in Haiti." *The New Yorker*, May 10.  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/05/10/the-last-babylift>

<sup>lxviii</sup> See: Joyce, Kathryn. 2010. "The Evangelical Adoption Campaign: As Bill Clinton works to spring U.S. missionaries charged with kidnapping in Haiti, the case highlights a new evangelical strategy: Adopt Third World babies and convert them." *The Daily Beast*, February 6.  
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/02/06/evangelicals-adoption-battlecry.html>

<sup>lxix</sup> In their zeal to act and save the one million, the executives of the child protection agencies had overlooked that fact that most of their programs exist in name only. After a collective 260 years in Haiti, not UNICEF, World Vision, Save the Children, or Compassion International had any monitoring in place. Two years after the disaster none of them could/would even respond to inquiries about how many children they had on sponsorships or how many had been killed in the earthquake. The best I got was the following, but never, despite follow-up, a response to how many had been killed, which almost certainly means they do not know, which almost certainly means that they are not in regular contact with these children they collect monthly checks on behalf. Indeed, for me the 100% failure on the part of any sponsoring agency to respond to my requests regarding sponsored children who died in the earthquake or to report it anywhere else—on their websites or to the press—could only mean one thing: they are not maintaining contact with these children, i.e., they're misleading us about what they do with the money we give to sponsor the children. In the following message from Save the Children, sent on May 16, 2013, note that their sponsorship had doubled since the earthquake.

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

Thank you for contacting Save the Children.

We apologize for the delay on getting these statistics to you. Below is the information on Save the Children sponsorship coverage in Haiti before and after Haiti Earthquake:

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Pre-Earthquake Post-Earthquake  
(as of now)

Number of children enrolled  
into sponsorship: 18,900 24,000

Number of active sponsorships: 2,400 5,000

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

We appreciate your generous support to Save the Children, and our programs that create real and lasting change in the lives of children.

Best Regards,

Response Center Team

Donor Services

Save the Children

[twebster@savechildren.org](mailto:twebster@savechildren.org)

800-728-3843 (calling within U.S.); 203-221-4030 (calling from outside U.S.)

54 Wilton Road, Westport, CT 06880

Save the Children is the leading independent organization creating lasting change for children in need, with programs in 120 countries, including the United States.

New Missions is another example. They claimed to have 5,000 staff and children on sponsorship, all located in Leogane, ground zero for the earthquake. Although they would not respond to my inquiries, they only list seven fatalities on their website:

We remember these who died during the January 12, 2010 Haiti earthquake:

Manoucheka Calixte, age 20, from our Ambas-Pere church and elementary school.  
05082

Duroucher Mickerlange, age 6, from our Signeau church and elementary school.  
22302

Presumay Lovelie, age 12, from our Marechal church and elementary school. 15849  
Sainthilus Leane, age 4, from our Brache-Gilles church and elementary school.  
23785

Masse Kerrytoine, age 7, from our Brache-Gilles church and elementary school.  
20471

Malise Valliere, age 20, from our Ambas-Pere church and High School. 03556  
Nadege Bertrand, Kindergarten teacher at our Bordmer elementary school.



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Typically, some readers were amazed that so few had died, attributing it not to phony sponsorships but faith in God. One commentator wrote:

Jackie Novick: it is just amazing that only a few people died after something that big happend. that just shows how strong the people in newmissions faith is...

See: New Missions Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/new-missions-official-page/remembering-those-we-loss/276348994356/>

<sup>lxx</sup> UNICEF silence on the issue in fact suggests that many inside the organization knew better or were at least skeptical. And just as damning, they allowed the press and Save the Children to make the claims, to attribute them to UNICEF, and they never debunked them. And just as damning, they allowed the press and Save the Children to make the claims, to attribute them to UNICEF and they never debunked them.

<sup>lxxi</sup> For the record, SOS had claimed in their blog that in the end the number of children orphaned by the Indonesia Tsunami was 2 to 3 percent of the death toll. That is intuitively too small a proportion; but even if it were ten times that, the point stands, there was massive exaggerations and even in the event a Haitian child loses his or her parents Haiti is not like developed country where few family members are willing to take the children. On the contrary, the reasons orphanages in Haitian can't get many 'real' orphans is because they have so many family members who want them.

See: *SOS Children's Villages*. 2010. "Haiti Earthquake Appeal: False claims of 'million orphans.'" January 19. <http://www.soschildrensvillages.org.uk/news/previous-emergency-appeals/2010-haiti-earthquake/falseaccounting>

<sup>lxxii</sup> For example, on UNICEF's Facebook page, UNICEF Haiti shared a link. May 21, 2013

"International advocates for children estimate that there are 250,000 *restaveks* in Haiti—children working as unpaid domestic servants after their parents, who cannot afford to raise them, give them away."

Sontag, Deborah. 2010. "The Ultimate Have-Nots in a Society of Have-Nots." *New York Times*, May 21. <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/20/haitis-child-servants/?hp>

[https://mbasic.facebook.com/UNICEFhaiti?v=timeline&timecutoff=1394203717&page=10&sectionLoadingID=m\\_timeline\\_loading\\_div\\_1388563199\\_1357027200\\_8\\_10&timeend=1388563199&timestart=1357027200&tm=AQBgqKc6R1oxVK5O](https://mbasic.facebook.com/UNICEFhaiti?v=timeline&timecutoff=1394203717&page=10&sectionLoadingID=m_timeline_loading_div_1388563199_1357027200_8_10&timeend=1388563199&timestart=1357027200&tm=AQBgqKc6R1oxVK5O)

<sup>lxxiii</sup> In understanding why UNICEF and the other child protection agencies were attacking the orphanages and suddenly claiming they could track the children, a Haitian friend of mine offers an alternative explanation. He sarcastically calls both the "child collection agencies." What my friend

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means is that UNICEF and the child protections agencies vs. the orphanages were really in a battle over the avalanche of money from overseas donors who want to help needy Haitian children. On the one hand, UNICEF and the child protection agencies want the money meant to sponsor the children, meaning that ideally they would act as custodians, leave the children at home, help with their education, help subsidize feed and caring for them. And on the other side are the orphanages that would take the children away, caring for most and transferring a minority to families overseas—for rather lavish fees. So both sides are engaged in the “collection” of money and in a sense, also the “collection” of children.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> For UNICEF accomplishments, see: Haiti earthquake: How UNICEF has helped, <http://www.unicef.ie/NewsMedia/Haiti-earthquake-How-UNICEF-has-helped-72-294.aspx>  
“Haiti Two Years On: UNICEF in Action.” January 11, 2012. <https://www.unicef.ie/stories/haiti-two-years-on-unicef-in-action/>

<sup>lxxv</sup> For the call center supposedly set up “immediately” after the earthquake, see:  
Summary Report: Lan Timoun. “A Six-Month Report on the Triumphs, Challenges and Failures of Providing Services to Children in Haiti.” <http://jointcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Triumphs-Challenges-and-Failures-of-Providing-Services-to-Children-in-Haiti.pdf>  
See: “UNICEF Call centre responds to needs of separated children in Haitian quake zone.” [http://www.unicef.org/protection/haiti\\_53986.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/haiti_53986.html)  
Summary Report: Lan Timoun. “A Six-Month Report on the Triumphs, Challenges and Failures of Providing Services to Children in Haiti.”  
*UNICEF Ireland Blog*. 2010 “Call centre responds to needs of separated children in Haitian quake zone.” By Cifora Monier, June 18.

# 9

## *Politics of Data: The Pretenders*

### COMING OF AGE

In 1994 a young woman named Lyn Duff came to Haiti. At the tender age of just 18, Duff knew what she wanted to do with her life. She already had a job working as a reporter with “Flashpoints,” a program of the politically far-left San Francisco Pacifica Radio KPFA, and she had come to Haiti to found what would become one of Haiti’s major radio stations, *Radio Timoun* (The Children’s Radio Station). While working on creating the radio station, Duff lived in a Port-au-Prince orphanage owned by then President Jean Bertrand Aristide, newly returned from exile. Duff would live in the orphanage and help with the children for the next three and a half years. While there she became an admirer of President Aristide. When Aristide was deposed for a second time in 2004, ostensibly with the support of U.S. Delta Force, Duff would recall that:

Over three and a half years I worked and often lived with the children of *Lafanmi Selavi*, a shelter for some of the nation’s quarter of a million homeless children [sic]. It was there that I came to know Jean Bertrand Aristide, not just as the president of the poorest country in the western hemisphere, but also as a father, teacher, a friend, and a surrogate dad for hundreds of parentless street kids.<sup>i</sup>

Duff left Haiti in 1997. In the next two years she would get posted in strife torn countries such as Israel, Croatia, Iraq, Vietnam as well as several African countries. When the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001, she found was posted at the front lines of the combat. But upon Aristides' 2004 ouster, she returned to Haiti. Now, at 28 years of age, a seasoned international correspondent. Duff had come to set the record straight. Declaring that, "The Jean Bertrand Aristide I know is markedly different from the one that is being portrayed in the media," Duff proceeded to defend the Aristide regime and assail the abuses of the UN and United States supported regime that succeeded him. Once again working for Radio KPFA, Duff issued blistering reports that included: <sup>ii</sup>

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A report from Lyn Duff on a member of Lavalas  
in hiding from the death squads.

*Radio KPFA, March 29, 2004*<sup>1</sup>

Lyn Duff reports from Haiti on the continuing violence against  
pro-democracy activists and the arrest of high level Aristide Officials.

*Radio KPFA, April 26, 2004.*

Lyn Duff in Haiti talks about the children who are targeted by the  
U.S.-supported death squads because of their work  
with the youth-run radio station.

*Radio KPFA, June 1, 2004*<sup>v</sup>

## ADAPTING

Duff's reports had little to no impact. Aristide remained in exile and the UN proceeded to install an interim government highly sympathetic to Aristide's right wing enemies. It was at this point, sometime in 2004, in the midst of writing the articles cited above, that Duff went to Michigan and enrolled in Wayne State University's School of

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<sup>1</sup> Fanmi Lavalas (English: Lavalas Family, Lavalas is Haitian Creole for The flood), is a leftist political party in Haiti led by Aristide.

Social Work. She enrolled under the name, not of Lyn Duff, but Athena Kolbe.<sup>vi</sup> While matriculating as Athena Kolbe, she continued to publish articles as Lyn Duff, increasingly focusing on the topic that had proven so politically effective in toppling the 1991-1994 military junta: accusations of politically motivated rape. She issued reports such as:

“Rape as weapon of war: World cried out for Bosnia, why not Haiti?”

by Wilma Eugene as told to Lyn Duff<sup>vii</sup>

“Haiti Rapes”

by Lyn Duff, *ZNET*, February 24, 2005

“Flashpoints special correspondent Lyn Duff interviews a Haitian survivor of politically motivated mass rape as the international community fails to respond.”

*KPFA*, March 2006

And then came the big bomb.

## THE LANCET SURVEY

As seen in the previous chapter, in August 2006 Kolbe and her advisor at Wayne State, Roy Hutson, published the findings of a survey claiming that in the 22 months since Aristide had been overthrown—a time when the United Nations installed and supported an interim transition government that ruled the country—35,000 women had been raped and 8,000 people murdered in Port-au-Prince. The survey became known as the Lancet Survey, named after the prestigious British medical journal in which the results were published.<sup>viii</sup>

To put these findings in perspective, if the greater Port-au-Prince area in question had 1.5 million people, the estimate for that year, this was an annual homicide rate of, in the terms that demographers calculate such things, 291 homicides per 100,000 people per year. That’s 38 times the 7.6 international homicide rate at the time, and six times

the rate of violent death in Iraq for the years 2003 and 2013 (52.7 per 100,000). It was four times higher than the estimates from the UN for Port-au-Prince at the time, and three times the 2015 world leader, Honduras at 90.4 per 100,000 people per year.<sup>ix</sup> As for the rapes, as seen in the previous chapter, 35,000 rapes over a period of 22 months among a population of 1.5 million translated to 1,073 rapes per 100,000 people per year, 80 times the average 12.5 per 100,000 people per year documented by the UN in 2002 for 50 reporting countries and 9 times the highest rate in the world, that of South Africa at 115 per 100,000.<sup>x</sup>

All that's pretty shocking. But what made the study even more shocking was that 46 percent of the killings and 28 percent of the sexual assaults were attributable to authorities, gangs, and paramilitaries that supported the new government. All the rest were attributable to non-aligned criminals. Putting it another way, none of the raping or killing was attributable to the deposed leftist Aristide government, the leader of which Duff was so fond. None of it. Not to the deposed government or to its supporters. And what that meant, if it were true, is that the situation was a repeat of the military junta that had ruled the country in 1991-1994. In fact, this time it was worse, far worse. The right-wing ruling elite was, as seen in the statistics above, engaged in a frenzy of raping and killing on a scale undocumented anywhere else on earth.<sup>xi</sup>

### ***Fact or Fiction?***

Aristide defenders were overjoyed with the Kolbe and Hutson findings. Aristide's lawyer, Ira Kurzban, published an opinion piece in the *Miami Herald*, proclaiming that *The Lancet*, "the respected medical journal of the United Kingdom," had "scientifically analyzed the brutality of the regime," and confirmed "everyone's worst suspicions."<sup>xii</sup>

Forgetting for a moment about the radically high figures, the problem for most observers was that it didn't make sense. Indeed, it flew in the face of what the

mainstream press and Haitian feminist organizations had been reporting. Even KOFAVIV had been claiming that it was Aristide paramilitary supporters who were behind the new wave of rapes. Moreover, the balance of power had changed radically in the 10 years since the 1991-1994 military junta. Yes, the interim government was repressing the opposition. But they no longer had an army. With UN support, Aristide had disbanded the army upon his return in 1994. And it wasn't the same humbled masses of 1991-1994. This time the more radical elements among them were armed. The two years following the coup was a period when Port-au-Prince descended into a simmering civil war. On the one side was the new government and the traditional elite. But on the other side was the deposed and disgruntled Aristide partisans, with guns. And it was not just the press and feminist organizations accusing them of violence. The vast majority of people in Port-au-Prince at the time believed it was, in fact, the Aristide partisans who were most responsible for fomenting the violence. The largest urban slums were bastions of Aristide supporters ruled over by paramilitary groups. The neighborhoods were being ripped apart by turf wars. Neither the UN nor the Haitian Police could even get into the neighborhood of Cite Soleil, what they called at the time, "the most dangerous place on earth."<sup>xiii</sup> It was the major bastion of pro-Aristide supporters. It had a population of 350,000 people and thirty armed paramilitary organizations. There was abundant evidence in the form of dead bodies and kidnapping ransoms that paramilitary organizations in these neighborhoods were using them as refuges from which they launched home invasions, kidnappings and killings. The violence and predation was so extreme that activist anthropologists and consultants whom I personally know became victims. Professor Mary Catherine Maternowska--formerly an ardent supporter of Aristide--was car jacked in 2005 as she passed Cite Soleil. She thought she would be killed and was so terrified by the incident--understandably so--that she left Haiti. Even before the coup, Ira Lowenthal and Alexis Gardella, two anthropologists who had helped dozens of high level Aristide partisans

escape persecution in 1991, both left Haiti after their best friend and co-worker, another consultant, was shot in the head during a robbery, and the executioner turned out to be 16-year old Aristide supporter who Lowenthal claims had been armed by other Aristide militants. Even Kolbe's advocate-journalist peers had trouble reconciling Kolbe and Hutson's findings. Journalist Amy Wilentz, who had befriended Aristide in the 1980s and written a widely-acclaimed book about him and the political movement he led, had by 2003 radically changed her opinion saying:<sup>xiv xv xvi xvii xviii xix</sup>

His government has repeatedly failed to apprehend perpetrators of the grossest human rights abuses, including assassinations of his former allies and friends and of journalists of all stripes. More repugnant, a man who embodied the movement against Duvalier and his Tontons Macoute, or secret police, now has numerous secret armed militias working on his behalf and spreading terror among the opposition... Aristide has been a bitter disappointment...<sup>xx</sup>

As for the Lancet Survey and its claims of one-sided violence, a British citizen named Charles Arthur recalled that, "Having read these articles and being puzzled by certain aspects of the survey's findings, I did some searching on the Internet." Arthur discovered that Kolbe was also the journalist Lyn Duff, supporter and associate of Aristide.<sup>xxi</sup>

The implication of using two names was that, at best, Duff did not want people to challenge her scholarly findings based on her political sympathies. At worst, the implication was that she had contrived the data and she did not want anyone to know that she had used the status of scholar to fraudulently gain sympathy for Aristide. Fearing the worst of the two scenarios, Charles Arthur wrote a letter to *The Lancet* revealing that Kolbe was really Duff. *The Lancet* responded with an internal investigation. In the meantime, the sparks began to fly.

Condemnation of Duff and *The Lancet* raged. Author Michael Deibert said the data, "flies in the face of the on-the-ground reporting of journalists who have worked in Haiti



for the last two years.” Gérard Latortue, then interim President of Haiti responded calling the study and *The Lancet* article, “part of a well-funded pro-Aristide campaign to distort news and repair Aristide’s reputation.”<sup>xxii</sup> It was right about then that Kolbe/Duff claimed she was herself becoming a victim.<sup>xxiii</sup>

“You are a dog ... you should die. We are going to necklace you,” a voice whispered over the phone. Kolbe/Duff reported the threats to Jeb Sprague and Joe Emesberger, who like Duff, were two advocate-journalists who had devoted themselves to defending Aristide and his twice-toppled populist government. Sprague and Emesberger published Kolbe’s account in the online journal Counter Punch, entitling it, “Death Threats Against Lancet’s Haiti Human Rights Investigator.”

Suddenly it was eminently logical that Duff would have concealed her identity. She could die. The people who were after her were, rather obviously, precisely those who had outed her. The voice that had threatened her on the phone had a British accent. *The Lancet* was a British journal. The Haiti support group to which Charles Arthur had belonged was British. Charles Arthur was British. And now a British voice was whispering death threats over the phone. It did not take a genius to conclude that Charles Arthur might be part of a British conspiracy. There were other accusations of death threats from UK. According to Kolbe/Duff, a major investigation ensued. Scotland Yard got involved and tracked the calls to a British ex-con whom “someone” had hired to make the threats and who had been using disposable cell phones. Arthur, now on the defensive, denied having anything to do with pursuing Kolbe, saying that the accusations were, “totally, categorically and unequivocally untrue.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

In the end it was impossible to tell what was and what was not true. For whatever reason, Scotland Yard had, according to Kolbe/Duff, dropped the issue—if they had ever really been involved. *The Lancet* had an expert investigate Kolbe’s data and they concluded that Kolbe should not have concealed her double identity, but they could

otherwise detect no irregularities in the data. Critics noted that the person who reviewed the data for them was none other than Kolbe and Hutson's Wayne State University colleague, Eileen Trzcinski—who would soon join them in mining Haiti for data and publishing refereed academic articles needed to get tenure. As for Wayne State University administrators, they were not so forgiving. They terminated Kolbe's PhD program, sending her off with a Master's degree.

Being an analyst and a surveyor, there is for me one flag more outstanding than any other that should have stopped Kolbe defenders dead in their tracks, something that no one seemed to have noticed at the time. And that is this: Kolbe and Hutson—two foreign, white scholars—were sending researchers into impoverished Port-au-Prince neighborhoods during an epidemic crime wave, having them knock on doors and ask perfect strangers if anyone in the house had been raped. If the respondent replied 'yes,' the researcher was supposed to ask what exactly the rapist used to perpetrate the crime: penis or another object? Then they were supposed to ask where the rapist put the penis or other object: was it in the victim's mouth, anus, vagina? Kolbe and Hutson were quite frank about it:

The majority of sexual assaults perpetrated involved penetration of the victim's mouth, anus, or vagina with the perpetrator's genitalia or some other object (92.1%; 95% CI 86.6–97.6). The remainder of assaults involved sexual touching without penetration and the forced watching of sexual acts. *[Lancet 2006 p 5]*

It's stunning that the prestigious Lancet was not taken to task for this, or that no one even seemed to notice. First off, we are talking about a highly sensitive topic: traumatized victims who were still living in fear of the perpetrators. Indeed, Kolbe and Hutson's point was that the government was doing this. But the same government was still in control when the findings were published. And everyone in each neighborhood would have known who was interviewed. It would not have been a secret. But even

without the obvious danger, even if the interim government and its thugs had by that point been removed—and they had not—it was highly questionable in terms of academic ethics. If Kolbe and Hutson had followed ethical guidelines from the World Health Organization, they would have had to conduct multistage interviews. They would have had consent forms and private interviews in safe spaces removed from the respondent's home. And it would have been even more stringent given that half of the “victims” being grilled were children under 17 years of age. None of this was even mentioned in the Lancet article. <sup>xxv</sup>

Indeed, Kolbe and Hutson had apparently done the interviews without seeking approval or advice from anyone. In their acknowledgements, the researchers were affiliated with no Haitian research or educational institution. Nor did the Lancet editors make any mention of the Institutional Ethics Review Committee, considered obligatory for social researchers doing surveys, particularly surveys that touched on such sensitive topics as rape and murder, and particularly when children are involved.

But for those readers who are concerned, don't be. It is highly unlikely that anyone ever asked those questions and, if they did, it is even more unlikely that Haitians who were political rape victims were telling perfect strangers the answers. They would have been no more welcoming than people in Kolbe's then hometown of Detroit, Michigan. But then that's the point: there were red flags associated with Kolbe and the research, red flags that went far beyond her having concealed her advocate-journalist identity. <sup>xxvi</sup>

## **THE CREDIBILITY GAP**

### ***A Suspect History***

As will be seen, there were a lot more things to come that made no sense about Kolbe/Duff's research and surveys. And what's most interesting about all this is not so

much that Kolbe/Duff might be an academic fraudster, but what it tells us about the credibility of research in the humanitarian sector in Haiti. With the publicity and the publications in big time academic journals like the Lancet, other PhD's were attracted to Kolbe. There were soon PhD's and professors clambering aboard her research wagon. Although not a single one of them had ever before studied Haiti or spoke Kreyol, their academic credentials would bolster Kolbe's credibility and, in turn, the access she gave them to original data would bolster their careers. I'll get back to that in a moment. First, a closer look at Duff, her past and what she's been up to since the earthquake suggests that if she invented the Lancet Survey data, it was likely not the first time she had done something like that.

According to Wikipedia, Lyn Duff began her life in the public eye as an eighth-grader in a South Pasadena Junior High School when she was kicked out of school for founding an underground newspaper called *The Tiger Club*. The American Civil Liberties Union came to her rescue, sued the school, and won. But instead of going back to South Pasadena Junior High, Duff went straight to California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA). She soon declared herself gay, whereupon her mother committed her to a Utah mental institution and she became one of the last people in the U.S. to ever get shock therapy for being homosexual. After six months in the mental institution she escaped, got back to California where she lived homeless for a while, was then adopted by a gay couple, legally divorced her parents and became a hero of the gay community. She even made it into the pages of a book called *Uncommon Heroes* published in 1994 by Fletcher Press. And then in 1994, as recounted, at the tender age of 18, she began a journalist career with Pacifica Radio's KPFA, first coming to Haiti to found *Radio Timoun*, and then going on to publish articles in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, Salon online, the *Utne Reader*, *Sassy Magazine*, *Washington Post*, *Seventeen*, the *Miami Herald* and the *National Catholic Reporter*.<sup>xxvii</sup>

It's quite a story. And if one reads the Wikipedia entry about Duff, born in 1976, she had, between the ages of 18 and 24 and with only one year of formal university education, accomplished what most journalists would hope to do in a lifetime. Quoting Wikipedia:

By the late 1990s, Duff was a well-established international journalist with postings in Haiti, Israel, Croatia, several African countries, and Vietnam. After the United States invaded Afghanistan, she traveled to the front lines as one of the few non-embedded Western journalists.

So that's the Lyn Duff story. But there are some problems with it. The stories of her exploits only exist on Wikipedia, online biographies and chat records that Duff may very well have written herself. None of the references in Wikipedia are sources that can be traced to legitimate publications. With the exception of Haiti, there is not a single article written or referenced or remembered where a reporter by the name of Lyn Duff or Athena Kolbe wrote about any of the countries where she was supposedly a front-line war correspondent. Not even KPFA Radio in San Francisco published a report where Lyn Duff or Athena Kolbe is mentioned in association with any of the Wikipedia cited war-torn countries, other than Haiti. Nor was she the founder of *Radio Timoun*. She worked for *Radio Timoun* but was fired.<sup>xxviii</sup> And when I followed up on claims about the Civil Liberties Union and Pasadena Junior High School newspapers, I found nothing there either. The reporter I contacted at the school newspaper found no one who remembered her. As for *The Tiger Club*—the underground school newspaper the Wikipedia entry claims she was expelled for founding—it is Pasadena High's school newspaper. It was founded in 1913, sixty-three years before Duff was born. Moreover, after changing her name to Kolbe she claimed in the interview published in Counterpunch that Kolbe had been her father's surname, and that "in late 2004 Kolbe decided to go by her father's surname rather than the hyphenated name she had been using previously." The problem with that claim is that nowhere is there any evidence of

her ever having used a hyphenated last name. Ever. Not in published articles or online chat rooms or in her job with *Radio Timoun*. Not even on Wikipedia is there any evidence that she ever used a hyphenated last name. Indeed, to this day (12/6/2016) there are separate Wikipedia entries for Lyn Duff and Athena Kolbe; neither recognizes nor mentions the existence of the other.<sup>xxix xxx</sup>

So, if anyone had investigated Duff's past—and apparently no one ever did, not even the journalists and activists who defended her—there were good reasons to suspect the legitimacy of Duff's early legacy years. But what concerns us here is what she and those who work with her have been up to in Haiti more recently and what that tells us about the sources of data for the humanitarian sector in Haiti. The 2006 Lancet study appears to have been a case of questionable journalistic ethics if not outright fraud, but what happened in the years since is arguably far more revealing.

### ***The Pot Calling the Kettle Black***

Following the Lancet blowout and getting pushed out of Wayne State University, Kolbe/Duff enrolled in a PhD program at the University of Michigan's School of Social Work. Soon she and Hutson were back at it again. This time they joined forces with Rob Muggah. Muggah defines himself on LinkedIn as an Oxford University graduate and advisor to the International Development Bank, United Nations and World Bank who for two decades has "tracked gun smugglers from Russia to Somalia, counted cadavers in Colombia, Haiti and Sri Lanka, and researched warlords from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Papua New Guinea." With Muggah's support, Kolbe would soon become one of the most important sources of data in Haiti. In 2009-2010, Kolbe and Muggah joined Hutson on a University of Michigan and United Nations-funded, 1,800 respondent, pre- and post-earthquake survey discussed in the previous chapter. That survey, referred to by some as "The University of Michigan Study", also just happened to touch on the earthquake death count, which is how I first came to know of

Kolbe and Muggah. When the BARR Survey and its low death count finding went viral, the two weighed in on the controversy. They published an opinion piece in the Sunday edition of the *Los Angeles Times*. They entitled it *Haiti: Why an accurate count of civilian deaths matters* and they gave it the powerful subtitle:

Numbers can influence the political response to a natural disaster such as the country's earthquake. Social scientists must act responsibly in coming up with such life-and-death estimates.

*Los Angeles Times, July 12, 2011, By Robert Muggah and Athena Kolbe<sup>xxxi</sup>*

In the article, Muggah and Kolbe criticized the BARR Survey and, singling me out by name (despite the presence of two other PhD authors), said that although I was correct when I had written, "the higher death toll estimates were not supported by research or other evidence" it amounted to the "the pot calling the kettle black." They went on to say that it was "inconceivable" that the BARR Survey had been representative and touted their own survey that "had support from the United Nations and the International Development Research Center" and was overseen by "our North American-Haitian team of researchers."<sup>xxxii</sup> With their study—the University of Michigan Survey—they were able to "carefully examine the costs and consequences of the unfolding crisis on the ground." In the end, Kolbe and Muggah concluded that:

Establishing Haiti's post-earthquake death count is not an academic exercise. Too often, spurious numbers are invoked to justify specific ideological viewpoints... It is vital that social scientists get their methods right when counting deaths and injuries after crisis. This is not just a matter of scholarly integrity. It has life-and-death implications for potential aid recipients. A vigorous discussion of estimates is to be encouraged, but these must be premised on good science and not on politics or other types of bias.

The irony of these declarations was that neither Kolbe, nor Muggah nor any of the other co-authors ever contacted me to discuss the survey. They never asked me about my methodology. And they never discussed with me theirs. I then sent to the authors of

the academic study—via Kolbe—an explanation of the BARR methodology along with a list of inconsistencies I had found with their survey findings. I requested a discussion. No “vigorous discussion of estimates” ever ensued. Not even an e-mail.

The point here is to illustrate the mechanisms that squash the truth in favor of activist agendas. Kolbe and Muggah were correct, surveys are indeed, “not just a matter of scholarly integrity”; and they do have, “life-and-death implications for potential aid recipients.” But the irony of Kolbe and Muggah themselves having written and published this proclamation in the *LA Times*--the largest metropolitan newspaper in the U.S. and the newspaper with the fourth largest circulation--is that they may very well never have even done the University of Michigan Survey, the very survey they were using to give themselves authority to write the article and criticize me and the work I participated in.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

### ***A Suspect Survey***

Kolbe, Muggah, Hutson and the other professors claimed that in conducting their survey they had, “tracked down more than 90% of the original sample, many of whom had spread across Haiti or relocated to the Dominican Republic, Canada and the United States.” This was six weeks after the earthquake, a time when 30 to 40 percent of the Port-au-Prince population was living in camps, the street, or homes of other families. Another 25 percent had fled the capital for the countryside. And 10 percent had left for Miami and the Dominican Republic. To illustrate how difficult it was to find people at this time, Tim Schwartz (a different Tim Schwartz than the author) had created an app that tracked the number of people in Haiti whose relatives in the U.S. reported as missing. Ten weeks after the earthquake, 50,000 people who otherwise had not been reported killed were still missing. Professor Mark Schuller offered an even more dramatic example of how hard it was to find people. In 2009, Schuller had co-directed a film of five Haitian women. The film was called *Poto Mitan* and it showed in some 30



universities and four different countries. The five women premiered in the film became aid superstars. They were all community organizers, well connected members of activist networks and with whom Schuller writes that he maintained close contact. Yet after the earthquake it took Schuller three months to find the women. Three of them he found in camps.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Yet Kolbe, Muggah and the professors claimed to have successfully located and interviewed 1,674 of 1,800 of their original survey respondents, people they didn't even know, all in a space of 14 days. And given that the same researchers estimate that 120 of the original interviewees were dead, they had in fact contacted 99.6 percent of the original living sample.

I can attest from having done more than 100 surveys in Haiti that this wouldn't be possible if the two surveys were done back to back during the best of times. It certainly did not happen six weeks after the earthquake. As for the findings:

- Kolbe, Muggah, Hutson and the professors claimed their findings revealed 0.37 percent of the population had been raped in six weeks. That's a figure 20 times greater than Kolbe and Hutson had found in 2006—a figure that itself, as seen, was 80 times the 50-country UN reported average in 2002.
- They found that six times as many children 0 to 12 years of age had been killed in the earthquake as people over 12 years of age, something so peculiar that it would have made the earthquake demographically unique in the world. Specifically, based on the population structure, the expected proportion of dead was one child under 12 years of age to every 2 people killed over 12 years of age (30 percent of the population at the time of the earthquake was under 12 years of age and 70 percent were over 12 years of age). Moreover, Handicap International the opposite, "the proportion of children with severe injuries under the age of 18 is noticeably less than in the total population." Specifically, in an assessment data for the age-specific population of people severely injured during the earthquake, the Handicap researchers found that the age group 0 to 17 made-up only 27 percent of the injured versus the expected 44 percent (expected based on the proportion of the population in that age group. That data came from emergency medical practitioners, hospitals and clinics.<sup>xxxv</sup>
- Similarly, Kolbe and Muggah et al., found that children 0 to 12 years of age were 11 times more likely to have died of injuries after the quake. Yet a CDC study of survival rates in improvised post-earthquake hospitals found more adults died from injuries.

And Handicap International—which sent people to hospitals and studied the issue—found that it was in fact adults over 18 years of age who most suffered injuries. And that’s exactly what would be expected. Drawing on a summary by pediatric surgeon and author S. K. Kochar:

...numerous observations have shown that patients from the pediatric population recover more frequently and more fully than similarly injured adults. Although this might be euphemistically ascribed to the “physiologic reserve” of the child, it suggests that injured children respond exceedingly well to preservation of cerebral oxygenation and perfusion.

*Principles and Practice of Trauma Care (Kochar 2013:445)*<sup>xxxvi</sup>

- Kolbe and Muggah et al., claimed to have found that 25 percent of all people who died from the earthquake were not immediately killed but died in the month following the earthquake from injuries. But based on a study by CDC, we can expect that about 3 to 6 percent of the death total was from people who died in the *five* months following the earthquake.<sup>xxxvii xxxviii</sup>
- And if the survey had indeed occurred, Kolbe and Hutson, once again, had their surveyors ask perfect strangers—including children—about the details of rape. And apparently without following WHO or any other recommended guidelines respecting the privacy and impact on the respondents, they claimed to have found:

There was considerable variation in the types of sexual violence committed against women and girls. Of the 29 individuals in the sample who were sexually assaulted after the earthquake, 16 were subjected to rape with penetration, seven were forced to have oral sex, five reported unwanted sexual touching, and one was forced to witness sexual acts. These attacks were most often carried out in tents, on the street or in a public place. There were three reported cases of sexual assault in the home, one in the workplace and one in a car. Virtually all attacks against people under 18 took place in tents or on the street, while cases involving adults over 18 displayed more variation in relation to the location of assault...

*[AR Kolbe, 2010: 289]*<sup>xxxix</sup>

In at least one respect, what Kolbe and the professors reported, or the likelihood that the survey even occurred, doesn’t matter. Few to no institutions or scholars cited the figures at the time. Nor did the media pounce on this particular study. One can only

conclude that, because the data was so out of whack with what we knew from other surveys, they simply dismissed it. But, those findings were accepted by one of the largest newspapers in the U.S.: the *LA Times*. Even more damning, they were published in at least two refereed academic journal (specifically Routledge's *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* and *Emerging Themes in Epidemiology*). And far more ominous, the authors would go on to become the most dominant and recognized sources of data in post-earthquake Haiti.

## THE REWARDS OF FEEDING THE BEAST

Kolbe/Duff and her former Wayne State University professor, Hutson, were soon directing post-earthquake surveys for the World Food Program; whereupon Eileen Trzcinski—the same scholar that the Lancet had tasked with evaluating the credibility of Kolbe and Hutson's controversial 2006 survey—joined them and began publishing academic articles on child health and nutrition.<sup>xl</sup> With Rob Muggah's support, Kolbe went on to become a master of security surveys and political opinion polls, pre-eminent expert on Haitian gangs, crime and arms. The two even engaged in rural impact evaluations as food security experts when, after the tropical storms Isaac and Sandy in 2012, they did a massive United Nations survey among rural farmers.

The reason for their success brings us back to the humanitarian aid organizations that hire them: despite the bizarre findings from the post-earthquake survey, Kolbe/Duff, Hutson and her new partners Muggah and Trzcinski were giving the humanitarian aid agencies and the press what they craved. All their surveys reported on disaster, violence, intensified suffering, and the need for more aid.

In March 2012, Kolbe and Muggah reported, “dramatic escalation in criminal violence with Haitians reporting declining confidence in police institutions during the last six months.” In the space of four months the murder rate in Port-au-Prince spiked

to 61 per 100,000, ten times the 7 homicides per 100,000 that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported for 2011, 40 times Port-au-Prince's 3 homicides per 100,000 that Kolbe and Muggah themselves had reported to ever credulous Associated Press journalists in 2009, and 25 times what Kolbe and Muggah had found only months earlier in 2011. And once again, the Associated Press was all over it:<sup>xli xlii xliii</sup>

"Study: Violent crime has spiked in Haiti's cities"

By Trenton Daniel, Associated Press, March 4, 2012

Not satisfied with the Associated Press coverage and sensing opportunity, Kolbe and Muggah began publishing their own articles. Regarding their finding of skyrocketing violence they wrote in London's *The Guardian* that:

Virtually everyone agrees that rates of violent crime have soared in recent months. This spike must be set against Haiti's impressive gains in safety between 2007 and 2011. However, Port-au-Prince's homicide rate spiraled to more than 60 homicides per 100,000 people by February 2012.

"Virtually everyone" did *not agree*. This was precisely an epoch when myself and those people I know who live in Port-au-Prince were breathing a great sigh of relief at violent crime being lower than we had remembered for decades. It was in fact the first year of the Martelly administration. But Kolbe and Muggah were not finished. Never letting on that they had in fact done the survey, they cited themselves:

Recent surveys conducted by the Igarape Institute [presided over by Muggah] reveal that despite some fluctuation, it has shifted upwards to roughly 72 per 100,000 by late July. By way of comparison, the global average homicide rate is closer to 7 per 100,000.<sup>xliv</sup>

This was exactly the kind of information and publicity the humanitarian agencies welcomed. Skyrocketing murder rates was good news for any member of the UN security forces or humanitarian agencies protecting the Haitian poor and getting paychecks 3 to 20 times what they made back home. It meant they were needed and

that they might be able to get more donations to continue their work. And indeed, Kolbe and Muggah not only bemoaned the violence, they promoted aid. In the short 658-word article just mentioned, they managed to hit the most important buzz words to do with those hyped donation-driving afflictions seen in earlier chapters: “victimized children,” “*restavek*” (child slaves), “sexual violence.” They even managed to plug for NGO aid with the most recent *a la mode* aid packages to the poor: low interest loans, more money for those working with the justice system and, of course, medical assistance and counseling so that children are not “traumatized for the rest of their lives.” With the earthquake fading into the background, Kolbe and Muggah were helping define new crises to deal with. They were becoming research superstars.

One couldn’t ignore that there still seemed to be a bit of activist agenda lurking behind some of Kolbe’s findings. The “impressive gains in safety between 2007 and 2011” that Kolbe and Muggah lamented had been lost, were precisely when Preval — once known as “Aristide’s twin” — was president. Their “spiraling” and “soaring” crime rates at a time when I and those I know were marveling at how safe Port-au-Prince seemed, occurred in the first months of the administration of the U.N. and U.S.-supported President Martelly, arch-nemesis of Aristide. Nevertheless, what seemed to most be driving Kolbe and her colleagues was the aid agencies who were funding them, and the attention that was accruing to them for telling the agencies and the press what they wanted to hear.<sup>xlv</sup>

### ***Firsthand Account of a Brutal Rape***

The extreme to which they exploited the press and to which the press latched onto their claims is evident in a second article Kolbe and Muggah published in 2012. In November, Kolbe and Muggah penned their own *New York Times Sunday Edition* article. It was a firsthand account of one of their surveyors who was “brutally raped.” It occurred while Kolbe and Muggah were conducting the post-hurricane surveys.

Dramatically entitling the article, “Haiti’s Silenced Victims,” Kolbe and Muggah recounted how they were “a three-hour drive over washed-out roads from the nearest town,” when one of their surveyors was raped. “We quickly located a doctor,” they related, and then detailed how they had to deal with callous justice officials and health care workers. The police asked Wendy—the fictitious name they gave the victim—“What did you do to make him violate you?” The doctor “refused to examine Wendy.” She was forced to remain unwashed for 16 hours. “Her clothes were ripped and dirty. Dried blood matted her hair where the rapist had slammed her head against a wall.”

It was powerful stuff and once in that role of witness and with all the authority of the most prestigious newspaper in the United States—the *New York Times Sunday Edition*, no less—Kolbe and Muggah did the same thing they had done in their article in *The Guardian* on skyrocketing homicide rates: they referenced their own work. This time it was Kolbe’s. Without ever letting on to readers that it was in fact her research, Kolbe and Muggah cited her earlier studies as evidence that there was indeed a massive rape epidemic in Haiti. Specifically:

Haiti’s brutal dictatorships used rape as a political tool to undermine the opposition. A 2006 study reported that some 35,000 women and girls in Port-au-Prince were sexually assaulted in a single year. In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, residents of the capital’s tent cities were 20 times more likely to report a sexual assault than other Haitians.

*Haiti’s Silenced Victims, by Athena Kolbe and Robert Muggah.  
The New York Times. December 8, 2012*

In doing this, in using her credibility as scholar and UN researcher, Kolbe had done something that she apparently only fantasized about 12 years earlier: she transformed herself into a journalist for the world’s most important mainstream media outlets. Once in that role, she then validated her academic work, not least of all that which had gotten her terminated at Wayne State University. It was genius.

For skeptical readers, however, there were problems, even with the rape account. First off, if the rape ever occurred, Kolbe and Muggah were nowhere near it. Kolbe/Duff, the woman who claims to have been “on the front lines in Afghanistan” and posted in Vietnam, Croatia, and Iraq, would not have been limited in terms of what she could accomplish in the field; obesity, a heart condition, and heavy dependence on medications preclude any strenuous hiking or psychological stress. Indeed, she might not survive the “3-hour drive” over Haiti’s bad roads, especially those where the rape occurred in the South of Haiti. And even had she been there, the fact that she speaks no French and very little Kreyol means she would not have understood much about what was going on and certainly would not have been doing the talking herself. As for Muggah, he speaks no Kreyol, but he does speak French and he could probably jog the 3-hour drive. But he wasn’t there either. He was in Brazil, where he lives with his family and runs his Igarape Institute, “a think and do tank devoted to evidence-based policy and action on complex security, justice and development challenges in Brazil, Latin America, and Africa.”<sup>xlvi xlvii</sup>

It’s fantastic to me that Robert Muggah, as well as all the cited professors would lie; that they would put their reputations and careers on the line and deliberately falsify data and even project themselves to places where they were not. So why did they do it? I suspect they only partially did it. I suspect that it was Kolbe/Duff who was doing most of the lying. And this brings us back to what so ails the aid industry, encourages the untruths we’ve seen over and over throughout this book and makes it possible for someone like Kolbe to dupe major newspapers of the world and prestigious academic journals: it was what everyone in a position to disseminate information wanted to hear. From her PhD colleagues who got academic publications and their names in the newspapers to the humanitarian organizations that thirst for data useful in donor drives to the headline hunting journalists and editors who thrive on the lurid stories and

doomsday images that their readers so crave, to academic journals that build reputations on cutting edge research, it was what they needed to keep their paychecks coming, to build their careers, get promoted, and get tenure. Slave children, rape, sky-high murder rates, impending famine, homicides, insecurity, this was news. And it was the type of news and data the humanitarian agencies needed to get more donations.

## **THE VERY SPECIAL PLACE WHERE NO ONE CAN CALL YOU A LIAR**

For people who don't know, Kolbe had stepped into a very special niche for people who like to make things up. No one did, could, or would check her data. Not even her colleagues, none of whom spoke Haitian Creole or even knew her surveyors. This is true for several reasons. First, it's unethical. Human rights priorities mean researchers cannot divulge informants' names. Every survey begins with a promise that the information and identity of the respondent will be kept secret. In cases such as surveys on crime, political opinions, and human rights abuses, the logic is obvious: to divulge the identity of respondents might open them up to retribution. No one checks the survey. No one knows what the original respondents really said or even if they really existed: prime turf for sloppy work, liars or activists bent on making a case for their cause.

So Kolbe might well have been fabricating it all. Or at least paying for data that she herself had not verified. And then she was publishing it and using it to make conclusions that satisfied the needs of her clients, the aid agencies and the United Nations and, not least of all, the press and overseas readers. But it gets worse. Kolbe/Duff's use of social media, her transformation back to being a journalist and her publication of stellar articles based on what could only have been bogus or at least extremely shoddy and manipulated survey data was only part of her brilliance. Her



most brilliant move of all was to create a Haitian school of social work and social science called *Enstitu de Travay Sosyal* (ETS).

## **THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL WORK (ETS)**

With Kolbe as sole owner and chancellor, ETS offered Haitian youth bachelor's degrees, and even master's degrees in social work. Fees were reasonable. Indeed, at \$500 per semester it was a bargain basement deal on University education, something that lower middle-class Haitian youth is in desperate want of.

To encourage enrollment, Kolbe cleverly crafted the description of the school as an "Internationally supported degree-granting educational institution located in Haiti" that provides "a four-year course of study for the Bachelor in Social Work (BSW)/Bachelor of Arts (BA) or the Master in Social Work (MSW)/Master of Arts (MA) degree," all prerequisites to becoming "licensed social workers." She also associated the school with the University of Michigan. Indeed, for the first couple of years most students thought they were attending the University of Michigan. She offered all students 50 percent scholarships (the real fee was \$1,000 per semester). But to get the scholarship, the hopeful young Haitian student had to sign a contract committing to several hundred hours of work-study each semester — without pay.

Through the University of Michigan, where she was still a graduate student working on her doctoral dissertation, Kolbe solicited other U.S. graduate students and professors, offering them accommodations and access to the ETS school research facilities at reasonable prices. The U.S. researchers were as fooled as the Haitian students. Most read the description of the "internationally supported degree-granting educational institution located in Haiti"; they saw the lists of courses offered, all of which were word for word descriptions of courses they themselves had taken back in the U.S.; they participated in registration of the students; and they saw the references

and Facebook pages from other graduate students and even professors such as Wayne State's Eileen Trzcinski. They saw that Kolbe was an accomplished researcher allied with other accomplished researchers such as Muggah and the Igarapé Institute; and with scores of publications on blogs, major newspapers, and academically refereed journals. They saw all that and they simply assumed that Kolbe and the school were credible. U.S. researchers came to the school and paid Kolbe/Duff for room, board and Kreyol lessons given by the unpaid student teachers. Meanwhile, although the school was an "English language University," the courses were run almost entirely by Haitians, none of whom had anything beyond a high school diploma and all of whom were instructing the students in Kreyol or translating English to Kreyol for Kolbe/Duff and the graduate students.<sup>xlvi</sup>

The school had no license. Not from the United States. Not from the Haitian government. In fact, despite claiming in her online introduction to the University that it was founded in association with, "only a handful of foreigners as well as several dozen Port-au-Prince based Haitian social workers," neither the school nor Kolbe had any association with Haitian academics at all. Since transforming herself into a scholar, the one connection Kolbe had to a Haitian academic was before the earthquake when she allied with Haitian professor Sergio Balistra. Balistra had gotten his PhD from the State University of Haiti where, according to a biography of the authors for a paper he was to give with Kolbe at the American Public Health Association, he was a member of the faculty in the Department of Sociology. The problem with that is that the University of Haiti had no PhD program at the time. The Sociology Department never had a faculty member named Sergio Balistra. And none of Kolbe's Haitian assistants ever met Sergio Balistra. Following the earthquake, Kolbe would report that Sergio had been tragically killed in the disaster. The University of Michigan commemorated his passing. Kolbe/Duff wrote the eulogy.<sup>xli</sup>

Not unlike the situation with UNICEF and the orphans, or KOFAVIV with the rapes in camps, there came a point in time when it all looked like it would come crashing down around Kolbe. Sometime in late 2013 students began to realize that the school had no accreditation inside or outside of Haiti. In January 2014, the students wrote to a series of University of Michigan administrators, including then dean of the School of Social Work, Laura Lein, complaining that they thought they were studying under the auspices of the University of Michigan. They got no response.

When the students complained directly to Kolbe/Duff, she made them even angrier. In a move that many students interpreted as punishment, Kolbe retroactively increased tuition rates, telling students they now had to pay \$600 per term—an extra \$100 more than the standard \$500 tuition. And they had to pay it, not only for the upcoming terms, but for every term they had ever attended the school. This meant that students who had been at the school for three years had to cough up US\$900 or have their studies terminated and get no credit. <sup>1</sup>

The students, still hopeful that someone would honor their years at the Institute of Social Work, faced their first major dilemma: challenge Kolbe by not paying and, if they were wrong, lose the credits they had worked for; or pay and keep hoping.

Twenty-nine of them challenged her. They didn't pay. They wrote a letter to the U.S. Embassy complaining that Kolbe had defrauded them.

The Embassy never responded to the students. But Kolbe did.

It was right about this point in time that another Balistra appeared. This Balistra wasn't Haitian. She was from Agua Caliente, Peru. Her name was Jennifer and it just so happened that she was married to a member of the U.S. foreign service who worked at the U.S. Consulate in Haiti. Balistra intervened. She sent an e-mail to Kolbe and her partner in the school, Marie Puccio. The message explained how Balistra's husband had

discussed the student's complaints with his fellow consulate officials. The officials had assured Balistra's husband that they knew all about Kolbe and ETS (the Haiti acronym for the school), they had "a great impression of you, Marie, Rob [Muggah], etc. and appreciate all the work you are doing in Haiti. They have no negative views on you or on your work." The consulate was also aware of the "erratic behavior" of some students and if the students did not get together and recant the accusations of their disgruntled colleagues, "students from ETS will likely not be able to get visas to the U.S. at all." Specifically, the person at the consulate explaining all this to Balistra's husband concluded that, and this is all a direct quote from the letter:

...the only way for them to resolve this would be to send a letter that clearly states:

The e-mail was sent in their name but was not authorized by them.

They don't agree with the views expressed in the letter.

They are not being exploited at ETS or by the ETS administration.

Whatever concerns they have about their social work education can and are being resolved by the administration in Haiti. That they recognize that all social work students have problems with the unpaid internship requirements in social work education.

They are being treated with respect and are not accusing anyone Athena, Marie or anyone else at ETS of lying to them or abusing them. That they were not forced to sign papers or agreements by the ETS staff against their will.

That they are satisfied with the progress being made to get recognition from the Ministry of Education.

That they apologize for the unprofessional behavior of others however, the other individuals listed on the e-mail are not actually ETS students.

That the individual or individuals who sent the letter may have other reasons to send it; that students are sometimes upset when they obligated to leave school for financial reasons or for other reasons.

That they hope this does not tarnish the good reputation of ETS and the faculty, staff, and students of ETS.

The letter was inadvertently circulated to the entire student body.<sup>li lii</sup>

Many of the students, fearing they would lose their college credits and worse, be forever denied a visa to go to the U.S., did recant. But some of the more clever students asked Kolbe/Duff if they could have a face to face meeting with Jennifer Balistra. Kolbe told them Balistra was sick. When they persisted, Kolbe told them that Balistra was in fact a paraplegic introvert and couldn't come to the school. Some of the students then went to Jennifer Balistra's Facebook page where they found over one hundred pictures of themselves—the ETS students. There were no pictures of anyone but ETS students. None of Peru or Jennifer's family or friends. There were not even any pictures of Jennifer Balistra herself. The only picture the students could find of Jennifer Balistra was on her Gmail account. In that picture Jennifer appeared healthy and she had a young Peruvian-looking child next to her. When one of the more tech-savvy students popped the picture into TinEye—a photo search engine—the picture turned up on over 15 sites. It was a cropped stock photo. When the students went back to Kolbe and said they didn't believe that Balistra even existed, Balistra's Facebook and Google accounts were gone the next day, as were any mention of her on ETS sites. Suddenly Balistra had never existed at all (except for the fact that much of these pages had been saved).

Apparently undaunted, but anticipating the imminent intervention of the Haitian Ministry of Education—to whom the students had also been complaining—Kolbe put together a board of American scholars and applied to the Haitian Ministry of Education for a license. On the board was herself, her partner, and several other University of

Michigan graduate students, none of whom had a PhD at the time. Kolbe would soon learn that foreigners could not get a license to open a private University in Haiti. Only Haitian citizens could do that. And to open a University someone had to be a Ph.D. Being a graduate student was not enough. According to a U.S. graduate student who worked with Kolbe, the next application was in the name of a Haitian PhD, a woman who had the first and rather suspicious, if humorous, name of Sophony (So-Phony).

## **THE SAD TRUTH**

Kolbe/Duff's story would not be anything more than that of one more foreign opportunist cranking out shoddy data and preying on impoverished Haitians in a country where there are few enforced administrative laws, if it were not for the impact she had. By 2012, Kolbe had become one of the most important sources of quantitative data on crime, political opinions, and even food security in Haiti. She was providing information to both the humanitarian sector such as the Red Cross and CARE International, and to the United Nations security forces. She had twice claimed and provided evidence for a Haitian rape epidemic more severe than any known on earth at the time, claims she had managed to get into the pages of one of the most respected academic journals on the planet and that had such an impact as to draw the personal attention of the president of Haiti. She had brought the post-earthquake rape epidemic to life in the Sunday edition of the New York Times in a detailed firsthand account of trying to help a rape victim for which she was not present. She was also making a play to position her School of Social Work (ETS) to the status of gatekeeper for all social science research in Haiti by means of a sitting ethical review board over which she presided and that would give her the power to filter the research of other scholars working in Haiti while approving research for herself, at least some of which would never have been allowed in the U.S. (such as the 2006, 2009, and 2010 studies of rape).

And perhaps as incredible as anything, she had not accomplished all this by charming people or baiting them with sweetness and sympathy. She had accomplished it by baiting them with promises of original research and publications and facilitating access to Haiti and to CV-building experiences at a fake University. She made a good first impression. But she had left in her wake scores of disgruntled Haitian students and staff, as well as foreign researchers and graduate students, at least four of whom had written letters of complaint to the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Chief among their complaints was that Kolbe was lying to students, financially exploiting them, and that the education they were getting was substandard. None ever got a response. In 2015 she was awarded her PhD from the University of Michigan and, with some 13 academic publications to her credit, became a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Social Work at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. As for the Institute of Social Work (*Enstitu Travay Sosyal* or ETS), her University lives on.<sup>liii</sup>

## **CONCLUSION: THE PSEUDO SCHOLAR INDUSTRY IN DEVELOPMENT**

Although this chapter has focused almost entirely on Kolbe/Duff, and to lesser extent Professors Roy Hutson Robert Muggah, Ph.D., and the some four other University academicians who supported Kolbe/Duff and whose careers benefitted from the data she provided them and the publications they co-authored, what I'm recounting is not really about Kolbe/Duff. It's about the whole aid and scholar industry and manufacturing of data that supports what the NGOs and UN agencies are doing in Haiti. It's about how pseudo-scholars and the international media's indiscriminate promotion of their data supplanted serious methodologists, making helping the poor in Haiti that much more difficult. This particular team of researchers is not an anomaly. The commonality of pseudo-scholarship and support of bogus and even fraudulently

based aid donor drives is even better illustrated by the work of Professor Mark Schuller and the many researchers he endorsed and helped to get published.

In the wake of the earthquake Mark Schuller Ph.D. became the most widely published academic spokesman for Haiti earthquake survivors, particularly those living in camps. Schuller is, like me, a cultural anthropologist. That means he studies society and, more specifically, the social behavior of people and institutions found in developing countries. An expert on cross-cultural understanding, at the time of this writing Schuller is a member of nine professional anthropology associations, has published two dozen chapters in anthologies and peer-reviewed articles, authored two books of his own, and co-edited five more. In 2006 he was a third-prize winner of an award from the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology. In 2015 he was winner of the American Anthropological Association's prestigious Margaret Mead Award, one of the highest honors that can be bestowed on an anthropologist. He is currently on the faculty at Northern Illinois University where he identifies himself as a "Professor of NGOs." There seemingly could have been no more accredited scholar than Mark Schuller to vet fact from fiction regarding what was going on in post-earthquake Haiti. But like Kolbe/Duff, Schuller did not just miserably fail in the endeavor, he too did the opposite and deliberately obscured the truth. In Schuller's case he arguably went even further than Kolbe/Duff in that he tried to extend the prestige that came with his position as an academic to others.<sup>liv lv</sup>

In 2013 Schuller published a type of post-earthquake activist magnum opus entitled, *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti since the Earthquake* (Kumarian 2013).<sup>lvi</sup> It was an anthology composed of works, claims and data written by many of same experts seen in previous chapters, those who have egregiously misrepresented what is going on in Haiti and helped humanitarian agencies collect donations and fight human afflictions—many of which don't even exist. The book begins immediately with the declaration that



316,000 people were killed in the earthquake and one in seven of all Haitians were left homeless. The same baseless statistics are repeated over and over throughout the book, indeed, taking it to even more absurd extremes with claims such as 86% of all Port-au-Prince homes built since 1990 were destroyed. But the book is far more than just another recitation of bad data. The book gives the authors of the bad data a level of academic credibility they never could have achieved without the assistance of being associated with a bona fide University “scholar” and all the credibility that supposedly comes with it.

The false pretenses begin on the very first page of the book when Schuller and his co-editor Pablo Morales quixotically proclaim that they are facilitating a new perspective, lamenting that “The points of view presented to date [ostensibly those put forth by the aid agencies] are dominated by white, foreign do-gooders, either volunteer missions or professional humanitarians.” Schuller and Morales—both white, non-Haitians working in the humanitarian aid sector—then go on to present the 46 “scholars, journalists, and activists”, 33 of whom are also foreign, white, and whom we can infer are “do-gooders” as well and who were some of the most prolific journalists and bloggers of post-earthquake Haiti. All either had an activist agenda or little to no experience in Haiti.

Among the authentic Haitian contributors are Mario Joseph, leader of the IJDH, that organization seen in previous chapters that was founded by Aristide’s lawyers and has been the fulcrum for activism against the political right and that has manufactured accusations of politically motivated rape for over 20 years. Another is Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique—anthropologist and self-defined vodou priestess who also happens to be the daughter of Max Beauvoir, the MIT chemist and Vodou priest who, as seen in Chapter 3, convinced Wade Davis that zombies exist. Indeed, Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique is the very person who, at sixteen years of age, acted as Wade Davis’s guide

and translator as he went around and collected what real scientists unanimously dismissed as bogus zombification powders. And there is Marie Eramithe Delva and Mayla Villard-Appolon, the founders of KOFAVIV, source of the post-earthquake rape epidemic.<sup>lvii</sup>

I want to make it clear that I do not object to activism. I don't even object to zombie powders. There is nothing wrong with taking a stance for social justice—however one might define it—and nothing wrong with believing in the supernatural. Nor do I have anything personally against Schuller. What I object to is exploiting the role of scholar, usurping that role, and misleading those who work in NGOs—many of whom are genuinely searching for ways to effectively aid the poor. Those academics like Schuller and Kolbe/Duff who have done this, who have deliberately politicized their scholarship while trying to usurp the tools of science and replace them with their contrived data or intuition, have given credibility to voices of activists such as Marie Eramithe Delva and Mayla Villard-Appolon of KOFAVIV. In doing this, in co-authoring research with these activists and even using their data and repeating or supporting their claims, Schuller, Kolbe/Duff and her five co-authors --all professors at internationally accredited Universities--elevated those people to the status of experts and legitimate sources of data. These are people who, in a developed country, might well be imprisoned for fraud and embezzling funds meant for the poor. In the case of Kolbe/Duff, she may have deliberately manipulated data, but at best, she depended on shoddy data that she covered up and fudged over. In the case of Schuller and Morales, they either deliberately intended to dupe the public, journalists, and donors, or without the tools of science to guide them and by indiscriminately latching onto numbers that supported their arguments, they themselves were duped by people like Delva and Villard-Appolon. Either way, by consequence they participated in duping donors, NGOs and

the public who count on their scholarship and credibility to get us accurate information and help us to help the poor.

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<sup>i</sup> Duff, Lyn. 2004. 'Jean Bertrand Aristide: Humanist or Despot?' published by Pacific News Service on 2 March 2004.

<sup>ii</sup> At a certain point, seemingly fed up with the lack of sympathy from the international community, Duff issued what sounded like a threat that Aristide's supporters were now justified in launching violent reprisals entitling an article, "We Won't Be Peaceful and Let Them Kill Us Any Longer" (Interview with Haitian Activist Rosean Baptiste, interviewed by Lyn Duff, 4 November 2005).

<sup>iii</sup> During the first coup years, from 1991 to 1994 when, as seen in Chapter 8 with the history of rape accusations, a right wing military Junta ruled Haiti, the organization FRAPH evolved into what U.S. Embassy's Military Attaché had called "a sort of Mafia." They organized and recruited members throughout neighborhoods and these organizations became accustomed to using "force to intimidate and coerce." The military protected them and derived "political and especially material benefits from their relationship." When U.S. government and the UN returned Aristide to power his government began to plan for them to never experience the humiliating ease with which they had been ousted in and persecuted in 1991. They urged people in the popular neighborhoods to form defense groups, called *brigad vigilan*. They were essentially different political ends of the same phenomenon. Indeed, they were the same people. According to U.S. memo entitled MO Overlapping Membership, whether right wing like FRAPH of the 1991 to 1994 era, or left wing Aristide, the men were the often the same members FRAPH and the *brigad* as "development" organizations, not unlike CARE, or CRS, or UNICEF. Neighborhood toughs and thugs turned the opportunity into a profession.

<sup>iv</sup> Another difference this time was that there was no army. With U.S. and UN support It had been disbanded by Aristide in 1994 when he returned. And this time Aristide supporters were armed. And what we know is that all of urban Haiti was experiencing a crime wave unprecedented in Haitian history. Both sides—right and left—had armed *brigad* in impoverished urban neighborhoods. People at all levels of Haitian society had been complaining since the late 1990s about what they called "chimere," left-leaning bogey men associated with the deposed Aristide regime.

<sup>v</sup> Some more reports Duff wrote for Radio KPFA and the San Francisco Bay View:

"Lyn Duff in Haiti visits a penitentiary where journalists are being detained." *Radio KPFA*, June 4, 2004.

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“Lyn Duff interviews a Haitian woman whose son was shot in the back by a Haitian military death squad.” *Radio KPFA*, December 23, 2004.

“‘Why would I trust this fake election?’ Haitians sound off on elections, rescheduled for January by Lyn Duff.” *San Francisco Bay View*, December 6 2005.

Ex-soldiers in Haiti get back pay, refuse to disarm by Lyn Duff. *San Francisco Bay View*, December 7, 2005.

“Haitian mother: ‘Just because a child lives in the poor neighborhood, the police assume he is a criminal’” Story told to Lyn Duff.” *San Francisco Bay View*, February 15, 2006.

[www.sfbayview.com/021506/haitianmother021506.shtml](http://www.sfbayview.com/021506/haitianmother021506.shtml)

<sup>vi</sup> Sprague, Jeb And Joe Emesberger. 2006. “Authors of Lancet Medical Journal Study On Haiti Claim To Be Targets Of Intimidation Campaign,” Counter Punch, September 11.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2006/09/11/death-threats-against-lancet-s-haiti-human-rights-investigator/>

<sup>vii</sup> Haiti Action Committee, March 29, 2006. <http://haitisolidarity.net/article.php?id=120>

<sup>viii</sup> Kolbe, Athena R and Royce A Hutson. 2006. “Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: a random survey of households.” Published Online August 31, 2006 DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69211-8. *Wayne State University, School of Social Work, Thompson Home*, 4756 Cass Avenue, Detroit, MI 4802, USA (R A Hutson Ph.D., A R Kolbe MSW)

<sup>ix</sup> For Iraq homicides, see:

Staff writer. 2010. “Iraq War Logs: What the Numbers Reveal.” *Iraq Body Count*. October 23. <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/warlogs/>  
Retrieved 5/4/16

Staff writer. 2012. “Civilian deaths from violence in 2003–2011.” *Iraq Body Count*. January 2. <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2011/> Retrieved 5/4/16

Staff writer. 2012. “Civilian deaths from violence in 2012.” *Iraq Body Count*. <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2012/> Retrieved 5/4/16

Staff writer “The War in Iraq: 10 years and counting.” *Iraq Body Count*. <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/ten-years/> Retrieved 5/4/16

<https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>

<sup>x</sup> For the United Nation homicide rate that was one-fourth of the that in Kolbe and Hutson’s Lancet article, see: Duncan Campbell. 2006. “Lancet caught up in row over Haiti murders.” *The Guardian*. September 8.

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<sup>xi</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2003. "The Eighth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2001 - 2002)."  
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/Eighth-United-Nations-Survey-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html> Accessed 8/19/2016

<sup>xii</sup> Kurzban used it as the evidence of a *Miami Herald Opinion* piece, claiming in a short preface to his article that, "A recent study in the British Medical Journal, The Lancet, confirms the worst suspicions about the Interim Government's police and paramilitary allies."

<sup>xiii</sup> For most dangerous place on earthquake, see:  
<http://www.globalcommunities.org/node/33795>. November 24th, 2009. Building the Road out of Poverty for the Community of "The most dangerous place on earth"

<sup>xiv</sup> It was an epoch when, by all accounts of everyone I know living in Port-au-Prince—rich, poor and middle class—levels of crime and violence were indeed at their worse (I am referring to the 2004 to 2006 years).

<sup>xv</sup> For two years before the coup, the opposition had been claiming that the government and its supporters were killing and using rape as a means to punish political opponents. This government had now been overthrown. And since the coup there was abundant evidence that those paramilitaries, angry at being kicked out of power, had gotten worse.

As seen in Chapter 8, in a May 16th 2004, three months after the coup, an article in the Miami Herald claimed that:

Hundreds of women and girls—some younger than 6—were raped, often by police and pro-Aristide gunmen called *chimeres*, with impunity, according to human rights observers and local women's shelters.

They say the situation for the last two years had already rivaled the terror that the military regimes and death squads of the early 1990s inflicted on women.

See: *The Miami Herald*. 2004. "In Haiti's chaos, unpunished rape was norm," May. 16,  
<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/haiti/rape.htm>

But Kolbe and Hutson's Lancet Study turned these claims on their head and placed the blame for the new wage killing and politically motivated rape entirely on the new government.

<sup>xvi</sup> It may be—just maybe—that the government and its supporters were more abusive than the former government and their thugs. Personally, I'm inclined to believe they were. They set about

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hunting down and arresting democratically elected government officials, including the former Prime Minister and the Interior Minister who they locked in prison for two years. But the idea that the former government was so clean that the sample could not detect them having committed a single rape or murder while the government was responsible for one-third to one-half of all of them was tough to swallow. By the very logic Duff had used in her reporting—that Aristide government had been unfairly overthrown and his partisans were now being viscerously repressed—we should have expected retaliation from the more militant elements among them, of which there were many. And they did retaliate.

<sup>xvii</sup> Even before the coup that deposed Aristide in 2004, Olga Benoit, head of SOFA, the largest feminist organization in Haiti would refer to military rule in the early 1990s saying that “rape was used as a form of political repression,” and then add that that, “We can see now that the situation was repeated during Aristide.” And the *Miami Herald*, citing both Olga Benoit of SOFA and Yvette Jeanty of Kay Fanm (the other major mainstream feminist organization in Haiti), reported that, “women’s advocates have received reports of political rapes by only pro-Aristide groups...”

And elsewhere, “We have seen around 1,000 cases of rape,” said Anne Sosin, of Haiti Rights Vision. “What our evidence overwhelmingly suggests is that all groups are implicated in abuse against women. It’s important that scientific journals such as the *Lancet* are used to hold all perpetrators to account for human rights violations and abuses.”

See: Campbell, Duncan. 2006. “Lancet caught up in row over Haiti murders.” *The Guardian*, September 8. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1867372,00.html>

<sup>xviii</sup> Maternowska, Catherine. 2005. “Haiti Eyes,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 24. [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/24/magazine/haiti-eyes.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/24/magazine/haiti-eyes.html?_r=0)

<sup>xix</sup> The UN wouldn’t be able to enter Cite Soleil until year 2007 when UN tanks rolled in at 2 a.m. and fired some 20,000 rounds of 55 mm ammunition into the walls of Port-au-Prince’s poorest homes.

<sup>xx</sup> Wilentz, Amy. 2003. “Haiti: A Savior Short on Miracles,” *LA Times*. October 12. <http://articles.latimes.com/print/2003/oct/12/opinion/op-wilentz12>)

<sup>xxi</sup> On September 4, 2006, the UK-based daily newspaper, *The Independent*, published a piece about The Lancet article entitled, “Police and political groups linked to Haiti sex attacks.”

<sup>xxii</sup> For Diebert’s critique, see: Deibert, Michael. 2006. “Debate: *Human rights, not politics, should be priority for Haiti.*” *AlterPresse*, September 12. <http://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article5133#.VuG5fkrLX4>

<sup>xxiii</sup> Sprague, Jeb And Joe Emesberger. 2006. “Authors of Lancet Medical Journal Study On Haiti Claim To Be Targets Of Intimidation Campaign,” *Counter Punch*, September 11.

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2006/09/11/death-threats-against-lancet-s-haiti-human-rights-investigator/>

<sup>xxiv</sup> It seems rather bizarre that the British were suddenly battling each other over Haitian politics and reaching across the Atlantic to menace American scholars who didn't agree with them. The last British ambassador to Haiti, Gerard Corley-Smith, was expelled in 1962 because he complained about treatment of foreign nationals. The British have not seemed to care much about Haiti since. Nor are there many Haitian immigrants in Britain. At the time of the Lancet report there were 164 of them. It's unlikely that there is British immigrant in all of Haiti. And the British government never reopened an embassy. Today, Haiti doesn't have an embassy in Britain and Britain does not have one in Haiti. The Haiti Support Group for which Arthur was associated is a non-partisan British organization that supports civil sector organizations and is itself supported by British NGOs like OXFAM, Christian Aid and Amnesty International and members. It has not taken sides with either the right or the left: not in the near civil war that was brewing at the time, nor in their presentation today of who did what and was more at fault for Haiti's underdevelopment. Indeed, putting aside Graham Greene's novel *The Comedians*, it was probably the first time in at least 100 years that anyone or anything British had been mixed up in Haiti politics. It was all about an article written in a medical journal. Suddenly you had Brits making death threats and, ostensibly, sending fake bombs and dead rats to the U.S. And they were sophisticated enough not to get caught by Scotland Yard.

<sup>xxv</sup> For ethical issues and trauma victims see, for example: Seedat, Soraya (MBChB, FCPsych, MMed), Willem P. Pienaar (MD, MPhil), David Williams (Ph.D., MPH), and Daniel J. Stein (MD, Ph.D.). 2004. "Ethics of Research on Survivors of Trauma." In *Current Psychiatry Reports*: 6:262–267 Current Science Inc. ISSN 1523-3812.

Zimmerman, Cathy and Charlotte Watts. 2003. "Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women." WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data. *WHO*. [http://www.who.int/mip/2003/other\\_documents/en/Ethical\\_Safety-GWH.pdf](http://www.who.int/mip/2003/other_documents/en/Ethical_Safety-GWH.pdf)

<sup>xxvi</sup> In the subsequent surveys, that of 2009 and 2010, the 10 authors claimed that "This study was approved by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board." If it's true, shame on the University of Michigan. But it's hard to believe it could possibly be true. More likely is that they told the review board one thing and then did another.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Phillip Sherman & Samuel Bernstein (1994), "Uncommon heroes: a celebration of heroes and role models for gay and lesbian Americans", page 150. Fletcher Press

<sup>xxviii</sup> In fact, technically, Duff had resigned from KPFA, the San Francisco radio station that came to Haiti to found Radio Timoun in 1997. She claimed in her resignation letter that management had mistreated her. Specifically, in a confrontation over the release of Aristide interviews—Duff had refused to turn them over to management—the director of KPFA in Haiti had screamed at her,

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"I'm management, don't you understand that? You're so stupid you can't understand that? .... fuck you...you're through at KPFA.... get out of the movement... you're too stupid and out of it to know what's going on."

And so Duff resigned. She finished her resignation letter by saying that

"As far as my personal plans, I've started doing regular commentaries for KQED and Monitor Radio, and I'll start doing them occasionally for NPR as well. I'm working full time at Pacifica News Service as an editor,"

This resignation letter from whence I've gotten the above information was posted on Google Groups on 4/21/97 by someone named Lyn Gerry. There was also an interesting commentary accusing the woman who had pressured Duff and apparently fired her of exploiting the fact that Duff had been "tortured", apparently a reference to her shock treatments when institutionalized in Utah. Here are the comments:

From: m...@netcom.com (Mark S. Bilk)  
Message-Id: <1997041812...@netcom12.netcom.com>  
Subject: Lyn Duff's History and Resignation  
To: progress...@tango.rahul.net  
Date: Fri, 18 Apr 1997 05:46:38 -0700 (PDT)

This is Lyn Duff's resignation letter. She was a reporter with "Flashpoints" on KPFA.

Thanks for posting this, Lyn!

It is worthwhile to look up Lyn Duff in DejaNews and AltaVista.

For example, at this Web page is an interview she did with Jean-Bertrand Aristide:

<http://www.pacificnews.org/yo/issues/1996/6.2/duff-aristide.html>, "This is the Family of God": An Interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide by Lyn Duff

Regarding the reason she left KPFA, Lyn has described on Flashpoints and on national TV, how, as a 15 (I think) year old lesbian, she was kidnapped by thugs hired by her parents, and imprisoned in a mental hospital in Utah (ironically called Rivendell) run by extremely homophobic Mormons.

She and hundreds of other homosexual kids were variously subjected to drugs, electroshock, solitary confinement for days on end, sometimes in the dark, "four-point restraints" (hand cuffs and leg irons), "aversion therapy" (being forced to breathe ammonia while looking at pictures of people of the same gender), and were held down and sat on by strong adults and screamed at violently for hours at a time. They were told that they were mentally ill perverts and child-molesters and would never be able to live happy lives unless they changed.

All this was done to them solely to force them to stop being homosexual, which was the only reason they were put in the facility. Of course it failed, and several of those



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whom Lyn knew personally committed suicide as a result of this treatment, which is \*still\* being used there on gay and lesbian teenagers.

Lyn is in fact a survivor of prolonged torture, and has told her story in public in various forums, including KPFA. It seems extremely likely that (certainly by last Fall) Amina Hassan knew Lyn's history, and, consciously or unconsciously, subjected her to the same kind of prolonged authoritarian screaming, threats, and verbal degradation that she knew Lyn had experienced before, and that would reawaken in her the same feelings of terror.

This is unforgivable.

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/misc.activism.progressive/PtHscOTsg-E> Accessed on 9/3/2016

<sup>xxix</sup> As if all this is not enough, the name Athena Kolbe also just happens to be a combination of nomenclature for the Greek goddess of wisdom, useful arts, and prudent warfare—Athena—and the Catholic patron saint of journalism—Saint Maximilian Kolbe.

<sup>xxx</sup> The exact hyphenated name that Duff claimed to have been using is “Athena Lyn Duff-Kolbe.” But prior to 2006 that name never appears in any of her Haiti reports, nor anywhere else.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Muggah, Robert and Athena Kolbe. 2011 “Haiti: Why an accurate count of civilian deaths matters,” L.A. Times, July 12. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jul/12>

<sup>xxxii</sup> I can only understand the reference to their “team of North American researchers” as a kind of self-promotion and academic slight of my team. My team was composed of me, a Haitian Ph.D. and one from Martinique. But for those who care about degrees and pedigrees—I don't—the Haitian was Yves Francois who got his Ph.D. in Sociology from Columbia University in NYC and from Martinique, Eric Calpas, who got his Ph.D. in Sociology from Sorbonne in Paris.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> As for why Kolbe had published Opinion pages of the *LA Times*, of all places, as it turns out that editor of the LA Opinion pages is none other than the husband of Amy Wilentz, author of the *Rainy Season*, the major work defending the rise of Aristide. Wilentz and Lyn Duff were both advocate-journalists working with Aristide in the mid-1990s. Wilentz was unhappy with the death toll controversy and the negative impact that many thought it had on Haiti recovery effort.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Pyles, Loretta. 2009. *Progressive Community Organizing: A Critical Approach for a Globalizing World*. Routledge: New York. Page 194.

<sup>xxxv</sup> For the Handicap International Report see, O'Connell, Colleen, Aleema Shivji, and Thomas Calvot Earthquake of 12th January, 2010 - Haiti Preliminary findings about persons with injuries Greater Port au Prince Area 15-26 January, 2010. See page 5 of the report.

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<sup>xxxvi</sup> Kochar. S.K. 2013. *Principles and Practice of Trauma Care*. Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers (P) Ltd: New Delhi. pp. 445

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Using data from the first field hospital established in Port-au-Prince after the earthquake--University of Miami Global Institute/Project Medishare (UMGI/PM) established on the 13th of January--the CDC found that 2.9 percent of those injured in the earthquake died in the five months following the quake. If we use this as a proxy figure for all the hospitals, and we multiple it by the 300,000 people estimated to have been injured in the earthquake, that yields 8,700 who died after the earthquake. I give more details on the validity of these figure below, but to get to the main point first, if we use the same estimate of 222,570 dead that the CDC used, the suggestion is that it is about 4 percent of the death toll. If we use Kolbe and Muggah's estimate of 158,000 dead, then the suggestion is 6 percent. If we use the BARR midpoint estimate of 65,575, its 13 percent. In short, while there is reason to expect that not all people who died made it to a hospital--as seen in chapter 5-- the figures are radically different--especially using Kolbe and Muggah's 158,000 death toll estimate--making it one more among many findings in the Kolbe and Muggah data that is inconsistent with what we expect from other data.

To elaborate on some of the figures above: we know, as discussed in chapter 5, that a death toll of 222,570 is way too high. But the CDC cited figure of 300,000 people injured not only has not been challenged by any experts, it is easier to accept. The medical staff kept records. It also consistent with killed/injured ratio from earthquakes. If we take a worse-case-scenario of killed/injured ratio--based on past earthquakes in developing countries--the expected estimate is 62,500, remarkably close to the 65,575 mid-point estimate in the BARR survey (see endnote xxxvii in chapter 5).

Regarding extrapolating the CDC's 2.9 percent estimate for those who died in five months after the earthquake: The CDC found that 28 percent of all patients treated at the University of Miami Global Institute/Project Medishare (UMGI/PM) hospital in the 5 months following the earthquake (January to May 2010) were injured in the earthquake. Of those, 12 percent were transferred to other facilities, 2.9 percent died, and the rest were released. Mind you, we do not know how many of the 12 percent who were transferred died. Presumably most lived. Nevertheless, we can expect some died and that would increase the 8,700. However, we are also talking about a five-month period whereas Kolbe and Muggah's 25 percent was referring only to those who died in the single month after the earthquake. In summary, any way you cut it, the suggestion is that 25 percent of earthquake victims having died in the month after the earthquake excessive. (For the CDC study see, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5951.pdf>)

<sup>xxxviii</sup> If one had followed the surveys of Duff/Kolbe, Muggah, Hutson, et al., they would have found even more inconsistencies. Their WFP survey of Cash-for-Work participant turned up only 3 of 5,000 individuals in the earthquake strike zone who had lost a fellow household member in the earthquake. If they had used that as a sample to estimate the number of people killed, they would have gotten 9,000 dead. That should have been enough to shut the show down. But perhaps stranger than anything, and the reason all of this is important, is that the aid community and UN either remained silent on findings or, more often, accepted them. No one was vetting the process. No one was questioning the findings. Perhaps they simply assumed that being academics from no

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fewer than five U.S. and Northern European institutions the co-authors of the study must be credible.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Kolbe, Athena R., Royce A. Hutson , Harry Shannon , Eileen Trzcinski, Bart Miles, Naomi Levitz, Marie Puccio , Leah James , Jean Roger Noel and Robert Muggah. 2010. "Mortality, crime and access to basic needs before and after the Haiti earthquake: a random survey of Port-au-Prince households." In *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*.

<sup>xl</sup> Hutson, Royce A, Eileen Trzcinski, and Athena R. Kolbe. 2010. "Features of Child Food Insecurity after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake: Results from Longitudinal Random Survey of Households." *PLOS* Published: September 10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0104497>

<sup>xli</sup> Athena Kolbe and Robert Muggah. 2012. "*The economic costs of violent crime in Haiti.*" *The Guardian*, 22 August. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/22/haiti-violent-crime-economic-costs>

<sup>xlii</sup> GLOBAL STUDY ON HOMICIDE. The 2011 Global Study on Homicide was prepared by the Statistics and Surveys Section under the supervision of Sandeep Chawla, Director, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs. Core team Research coordination and study preparation Angela Me, Enrico Bisogno, Steven Malby. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/ UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME. Vienna. 2011 GLOBAL STUDY ON HOMICIDE TRENDS, CONTEXTS, DATA

<sup>xliii</sup> Daniel, Trenton (Associated Press). 2011. "Recent study shows significant homicide drop in Port-au-Prince." *Boston Herald*, November 18. <http://www.bostonhaitian.com/2011/recent-study-shows-significant-homicide-drop-port-au-prince>

<sup>xliv</sup> Kolbe, Athena and Robert Muggah. 2012. "The economic costs of violent crime in Haiti." *The Guardian*, August 22. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/22/haiti-violent-crime-economic-costs>

<sup>xlv</sup> See, Kolbe, Athena R., Royce A. Hutson , Harry Shannon , Eileen Trzcinski, Bart Miles, Naomi Levitz, Marie Puccio , Leah James , Jean Roger Noel and Robert Muggah. 2010. "Mortality, crime and access to basic needs before and after the Haiti earthquake: a random survey of Port-au-Prince households." In *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Kolbe, Athena and Robert Muggah. 2012. "Haiti's Silenced Victims," *The New York Times*, December 8.

As if evidence of rape, the article provides a picture of a camp under which is written the caption,

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“A tent city in Port-au-Prince in July. After the 2010 earthquake, residents of the capital’s tent cities were 20 times more likely to report a sexual assault than other Haitians.”

<sup>xlvii</sup> To be exact, Duff/Kolbe, speaks no French, a smattering of Kreyol and she understands even less than she speaks. I would estimate her Kreyol at the linguistic capacity of a 3- year-old, an observation corroborated by the many students I know who have worked with her and by Glen Smucker, another U.S. Ph.D. fluent in Kreyol who was baffled by how she has accomplished so much in Haiti while so linguistically limited. Indeed, I was rather stunned to learn this myself when I first met her. This is a person, a scholar no less, who has been working and intermittently lived in Haiti for 27 years. Yet, she is not functional in the common language. Nor does she make any pretense otherwise. She uses translators with her students and she does not participate in teaching Kreyol to foreigners in the courses she offers. Indeed, to my knowledge Duff/Kolbe has never made an effort to systematically learn Kreyol or French.

<sup>xlviii</sup> From Duff/Kolbe’s LinkedIn account:

Scholarship for Haitian students to study Social Work and Social Science - deadline quickly approaching!

Athena Kolbe Joint Ph.D. program in Social Work & Political Science at University of Michigan

Dear Friends on LinkedIn:

I’m hoping you will all help me get the word out regarding two important – but time sensitive – scholarship application deadlines. The scholarships are partial and do not include room/board; they are for either undergraduate or graduate study at Enstiti Travay Sosyal ak Syans Sosyal (Institute of Social Work & Social Science) in Petionville.

A generous end of the year gift has enabled us to offer three scholarships to promising female students and two work/study scholarships to students of either gender. The details are below. Applications are being accepted beginning last week (!) and will continue to be accepted until a decision has been made. Since the scholarship review committee meets weekly it’s best for the student to apply sooner rather than later. The next term begins in less than two weeks and these scholarships are for the January 2013 term.

Students are required to complete a degree program in Social Work (BSW or MSW) as well as a second degree in a Social Science (BA or MA in psychology, political science, economics, sociology, or anthropology). The program includes extensive English language and research methods classes as all graduates are required to demonstrate fluency in English, French (and written Creole) as well as the ability to conduct original qualitative or quantitative social science research. Academic classes are taught by professors who hold a graduate degree in their discipline. The

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language of instruction is Creole although visiting professors may also teach in French or English (with Creole translation).

More information on the institute and our classes can be found at [www.travaysosyal.com](http://www.travaysosyal.com). If you'd like to refer a student for one of these scholarships please send an e-mail to [jean.almathe.ets@gmail.com](mailto:jean.almathe.ets@gmail.com) and cc me at [Athena@travaysosyal.com](mailto:Athena@travaysosyal.com) with "Scholarship referral 2013" followed by the student's full name in the subject line. A description of the scholarships and their requirements can be found online at <http://www.travaysosyal.com/student.handbook.html>. Please note that we also have several less urgent, but more competitive, scholarships available for students of both genders which provide partial tuition to ETS. You can always make a general referral for a student to attend our program and we can try to match them with available scholarships (the cost of tuition is USD \$1800 annually though students are rarely obligated to pay this much as we can usually find some support for them). Best wishes for the holiday season and the New Year!

Athena Kolbe  
Director of Social Work Education  
Enstiti Travay Sosyal ak Syans Sosyal  
Petionville, Ouest, Haiti  
[www.travaysosyal.com](http://www.travaysosyal.com)

<sup>xlix</sup> I know far more about Duff/Kolbe's work than fits appropriately into the main text. But it should be documented somewhere, hence this endnote. I had in fact worked with Duff/Kolbe on the WFP survey mentioned earlier. After Muggah and Kolbe published the Op/Ed in the LA Times criticizing me, Kolbe contacted me. I took the opportunity to plug for the "vigorous discussion of estimates" but she was evasive, promised to pursue the issue with the other professors and never got back to me. Not on that anyway. What she did was pay me to run one of the WFP surveys. In effect, they had slammed me and my credibility in a major U.S. Newspaper and then called and offered me \$10,000 cash to do a 1-week survey. At this point I had been black-listed by USAID and was out of work. I took the job. One of the first things I did was asked to see the questionnaire they had already applied to 5,000 respondents. The questionnaire was incoherent, both grammatically and linguistically. There was no way that a Haiti speaker could have had any idea what they were asking about. Roger Noel, co-author of the earlier Michigan Study was responsible for the questionnaire. When I insisted I could not be associated with the survey questionnaire and that my surveyors could not apply it, Kolbe called Noel and told him to come back with his survey team to the United Nations "log base" (logistics base) in Port-au-Prince. He subsequently had "car problems." We wouldn't see him again for several months. This meant a lot of things. This was November 2011, they'd already done 5,000 surveys, and the instrument is incoherent. This also meant that Duff/Kolbe who had been working in Haiti at this point for 17 years, and doing surveys for 6 years, had no idea what was on the survey instrument. She was not literate in Kreyol and neither, apparently, was Noel very literate. That particular survey subsequently melted down when Duff/Kolbe discovered a case of a

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World Vision employee who had been using food to induce a 14-year old girl to have sex with him. Suddenly the survey was not so important. More pressing was the 14-year-old, something, whether true or not, Duff/Kolbe recounted to me had reduced the assistant WFP country director, Stephen Kearney, to tears. Whatever the motivations behind the discovery and the reactions, it was the type of development we see over and over in Kolbe's history, an appeal to emotional and politically charged events that distract everyone from the credibility of research. One more thing all this meant, apparently WFP had never had anyone literate check the survey instrument. Not before nor after the surveys were done. Nor apparently, did they ever detect that the questionnaire had been radically modified after I was hired.

One interesting aside to all this is that while I was basically kept in the eaves, I became friendly at the time with the new WFP director responsible for surveys, Byron Poncesegura, who had read and appreciated another book I had written, *Travesty in Haiti*. At some point Royce Hutson who was apparently a principal consultant flew to Haiti to meet with WFP about the surveys. But he never met with Byron, who was furious about the incident, i.e., about being avoided. Nor did I get to meet Hutson. After Hutson left, Kolbe mentioned that Hutson was so upset about the surveys that he had hung up the telephone on her. Again, I was nothing more than a very highly paid field director for a very small part of the overall survey and I was largely kept in the dark, but what all this suggested to me was that, a) Hutson and the University professors must have realized the survey was a mess, if not bogus, and b) WFP never really followed up on anything to do with the survey, not the data, nor the questionnaires. No even after Byron had been shirked by the Principal Consultant.

One last relevant word on all this, I wrote to Royce Hutson on April 13, 2016, told him I was publishing this book, that it included my suspicions about Kolbe and evidence that the surveys they conducted were either bogus or extremely shoddy. I concluded saying, "I don't want to drag your name through the mud without giving you a chance to clarify your role in all that." He never responded. I sent the same e-mail with slight modifications right before publishing this book, on October 29, 2016. Hutson did not respond to that one either.

<sup>i</sup> Three semesters per year, 3 years (3 x 9 = 9); \$100 back pay per semester; 9 x \$100 = \$900

<sup>ii</sup> So not to overwhelm the reader, I've omitted some facts regarding Balistra. She first appeared as a new administrator in e-mails to the students when Kolbe's head of staff—a 27-year-old high-school educated Haitian woman—accused her of unwanted sexual advances (from Kolbe). Still thinking the school was somehow more than Kolbe's own concoction, the woman complained to a US Doctoral student from the University of Michigan and newly signed on administrator for ETS. Balistra introduced herself in an e-mail to the U.S. doctoral student:

From: Jennifer Balistra  
[mailto:balistra.jennifer.ets@gmail.com]  
Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 11:41 AM  
To: Athena Kolbe; Erica.Childs.ETS@gmail.com  
Subject: Re: sexual harassment complaint

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Dear Erica:

My name is Jennifer and I teach some of the Anthropology classes. We haven't met yet since I was at ETS before you came.

I've been asked to investigate a sexual harassment report that was made to you. This is the fifth Code of Conduct violation report I have investigated at ETS, so I have done this a number of times already. The process is designed to minimize the number of times that the complainant is required to retell their story.

The first step is for the reporter (you) to create a written record of what was alleged. Please be as detailed as possible and include dates or times (e.g., the afternoon after a particular class) that the incident took place. Please also include the circumstances in which you were told of the sexual harassment and the approximate date and time you were made aware of the allegation. Send this report to me and please do not share the report, store it on a common drive, or discuss it with anyone.

I will review your report to assure that it meets the definition of sexual harassment. I will then review the existing records of investigations to assure that this is not a repeat report (e.g., a second or third report of something we have already investigated). If it meets the definition of sexual harassment and has not yet been reported and investigated, I will contact the complainant to see if she wants to pursue an investigation. If she does then I may need to ask you some additional follow up questions.

Please let me know of any questions or concerns.

Best wishes,

Jennifer

lii

From: Jennifer Balistra <balistra.jennifer.ets@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Sep 21, 2014 at 3:17 PM

Subject: LO visa situation

To: Athena Kolbe <kolbe.athena.ets@gmail.com>, Marie Puccio  
<puccio.marie.ets@gmail.com>

Good afternoon. Sorry for the delay in responding and for calling you ten times like a stalker this morning.

As I said earlier, I asked my husband to intervene regarding the LO visa situation .....

I spoke this morning with Suzanne who explained a few things:

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1) The embassy in PAP as a great impression of you, Marie, Rob, etc. and appreciate all the work you are doing in Haiti. They have no negative views on you or on your work.

2) ETS has developed a poor reputation at the consulate because of the erratic behavior of your students, the constant e-mails and phone calls from students claiming to be mistreated, etc. The fact that students have called and e-mailed to say that there's no international support for ETS when the consulate knows about the support ETS receives and the fact that they make false claims regarding the University of Michigan, CSWE [United States Council of Social Work Education], and the ministry of education makes the ETS students appear to be malicious or dishonest.

3) The letter claims that Athena went to court and testified to a judge regarding ETS at the hearing of a woman accused of stealing from her. The consulate attended the criminal hearing .... Since the consulate was involved in this case and knew the facts, it was clear that that part of the letter was false.

4) All social work students in the U.S. are required to do unpaid internships, this is not exploitation. Claiming that it is makes it appear that your students or former students are trying to make a legal claim or unjust complaint so that they can immigrate to the U.S. or get monetary compensation from ETS or the U.S. government. This makes the students appear erratic.

At this point, she says that students from ETS will likely not be able to get visas to the U.S. at all. The students just have a very bad reputation. I think the only way for them to resolve this would be to send a letter that clearly states:

1) The e-mail was sent in their name but was not authorized by them.

2) They don't agree with the views expressed in the letter.

3) They are not being exploited at ETS or by the ETS administration.

4) Whatever concerns they have about their social work education can and are being resolved by the administration in Haiti. That they recognize that all social work students have problems with the unpaid internship requirements in social work education.

5) They are being treated respect and are not accusing anyone Athena, Marie or anyone else at ETS of lying to them or abusing them. That they were not forced to sign papers or agreements by the ETS staff against their will.

6) That they are satisfied with the progress being made to get recognition from the Ministry of Education.



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7) That they apologize for the unprofessional behavior of others however, the other individuals listed on the e-mail are not actually ETS students.

8) That the individual or individuals who sent the letter may have other reasons to send it; that students are sometimes upset when they obligated to leave school for financial reasons or for other reasons.

9) That they hope this does not tarnish the good reputation of ETS and the faculty, staff, and students of ETS.

The students should only write this if it is true for them. IF they do have problems with ETS, the problems should be resolved. And I don't know if they can write it given the misinformation spread by some people. And I don't know if this will resolve the problem either.

JB

<sup>liii</sup> But through her position as ostensibly longstanding eminent scholarly authority on Haiti and chancellor of ETS she cowed the foreign academics. Her apparent support from the University and her seeming omniscient knowledge of Haitian 'viktim' got her a long way.

The students had complained. Graduate students had complained. Many had written to University of Michigan and gotten no response. Not even remotely fluent in Haitian Kreyol, she none the less became an expert on Haitian security and crime. Even United Nations Intelligence agents were listening to her and following her research (I know this from the fact that the UN was hiring her to do surveys and personal discussions with two directors of the UN intelligence unit in Haiti, once in 2013 and another in 2015). She weighed in on wildly disparate subjects as far afield from her own supposed expertise as food security. Indeed, she would weigh in at a critical moment with supposedly valid survey data—that was never vetted—to encourage a flooding of Haiti with food aid in 2012, something anathema to those interested in revitalizing the Haitian economy, but lucrative to the NGOs and UN agencies that thrived off the aid.

<sup>liv</sup> For a summary of Schuller's accomplishments and publications, see: *Northern Illinois University Website*, [http://www.niu.edu/anthro/faculty\\_staff/faculty/schuller.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/anthro/faculty_staff/faculty/schuller.shtml)

<sup>lv</sup> Schuller is a quintessential expression of the repudiation of science and embracing of activism. For him, as with most activist-anthropologists, Schuller came to anthropology, not as means for learning and understanding the world, so much as a mechanism to further his activism:

I became an anthropologist because of my experience as a grassroots organizer. Anthropology seemed to me then as it does now the academic discipline most capable of supporting long-lasting, grassroots social change.

(Schuller, Mark. 2010. "From Activist to Applied Anthropologist to Anthropologist? On the Politics of Collaboration," *In Practicing Anthropology*. Winter. Vol. 32, No. 1. Page 43)

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The methods that Schuller and activists choose are not tools the scientific anthropologist uses to achieve some measurable degree of objectivity. Schuller's interpretation of anthropological methods leaves them out altogether. In the words of Schuller, "Our core methodologies most resemble that of grassroots activism: participation, holistic listening, and a humanistic approach to caring, understanding, and working with real people." The priority for Schuller is "engaging" and "empowering" the poor. The extremity of the point is made by Schuller himself. He describes the transition from community organizer to scholar and the prestige that becoming a scholar brought with it:

... I learned an important lesson. Because of the scholarly tone and its independence from activist groups, it [an article Schuller had written] was used by a wider audience than this union's European solidarity partner....Had it been authored by the union, or the same group that publicized their efforts, or had it been written more like the activist action alerts that I cut my teeth on, it would have been easier to discredit, to marginalize, or to ignore. In the meantime, I was becoming an anthropologist. As it turned out, it was more useful than being an organizer or activist to some NGOs and particular causes... I offered legitimacy that an "activist" would not have.

[See, Schuller, Mark. 2010. "From Activist to Applied Anthropologist to Anthropologist? On the Politics of Collaboration," *Practicing Anthropology*. Winter. Vol. 32, No. 1.]

And indeed, lest there be any mistake that Schuller is deliberately trying to use his prestige as a scholar to achieve credibility for an activist agenda, Schuller states elsewhere,

All of my professional energy, my time, my Ph.D., my resources that I can bring to the table, the credibility that the doctorate brings and that the professorship brings, all of it is in the service of the people that I work with and the social justice vision that we share.<sup>lv</sup> [Interview with Mark Schuller, *Anthropology of Contemporary Issues* April 2012]

Lest the absurdity of what Schuller is saying be missed, who are "the people" and how is it that Schuller comes to decide that he will work with them? And how do anthropologists like Schuller know that they "share" their "social justice vision"? Do they tell them so? A scientist would answer those questions by citing statistical tools for identifying the underprivileged, powerless and the poor. But without those tools, and without understanding how to apply these tools, anyone can claim to be "the people" and anyone can solicit money for social justice and anyone, as seen in this and earlier chapters, can make up claims of rampant child slavery, rape, violence, and massive orphan crisis. Indeed, for anyone wanting to collect money in the name of the poor, the activist anthropologist is a perfect broker as their mission does not separate truth from fiction, but is precisely to represent those who want to get media attention and donations.

<sup>lvi</sup> Schuller, Mark and Pablo Morales, eds. 2013. *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti since the Earthquake*. Sterling, VA: *Kumarian Press*. Haitian Creole edition.

<sup>lvii</sup> The most scientifically reputable of all the scholars in Schuller and Morales' anthology is Anthony Oliver-Smith, who happens to be former professor of mine when I studied at the University of

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Florida. Oliver-Smith never mentioned Haiti in any of the three classes I took with him, and prior to being invited to contribute to Schuller's anthology, Professor Oliver-Smith had never studied nor written anything at all about Haiti. Indeed, to my knowledge he has never even visited Haiti.

# 10

## *The Uses of the Camps*

### **BEING AN EARTHQUAKE "VIKTIM"**

“When they see us coming they run out with their sheets and they throw up a tent.” It’s July 9, seven months after the earthquake and I am talking to Maria who is working in the camps. Maria is middle class, fiftyish, from Honduras. I haven’t asked her for this information, she’s volunteering it. We are in a restaurant having dinner. My Foreign Service friend, Joseph, is with us, as well as another aid worker, a woman from Rwanda. I asked Maria about her job and she started telling me about the camps. “Many of these people, they have homes,” she says with a tone of exasperation. “In some areas we work they were not even effected by the earthquake.” World Vision, her employer, has assumed

responsibility for 15 camps. She describes what happens after the aid workers arrive,<sup>1</sup>

“When we take over a camp or move people to places like we did on the border, every week there are 100 more people. They have their bed sheets over their rickety little wooden frames... No one is living there. But when they see a World Vision vehicle, they come running.”

Maria is not telling me anything I don't already know. But what is surprising to me is that it's so obvious even to her. She speaks no Kreyol and no French. She has no special insight that would help her see or understand anything about Haiti that anyone else cannot see and understand. She has not been out living in camps or doing hard core research to get this information. She just visits camps as part of her job. Yet, that very day Nigel Fisher, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti, had declared in the United Nations official '6-Months After Report', "a staggering 2.3 million internally displaced persons," of which 1.5 million were living in camps. That would have been 46 percent of all 3.375 million people in the entire strike zone; 58 percent of those living in urban areas. But Fisher didn't say anything about the fake tents. Maria doesn't understand why. "It is," she's telling us,

“obvious.” And it bothers her. “It is like no one cares whether the recipients need aid or not.”

Lest Maria and I be misunderstood, let me step back for a moment and explain something. Maria was not talking about the tents and makeshift shelters where people moved all the possessions they could scavenge from their collapsed home. There were many of those shelters. Tens of thousands. Maria was describing another kind of shelter and camp; the kind that, if any aid worker or journalist had done the math or a survey—and I’m getting ready to recount that we did both—they would have known there were even more of. And they would have known that most were bogus. These shelters had no clothes hanging to dry on a line, no charcoal fires, no pots and pans, no people sleeping in them. If you poked your head inside one of them, you would more than likely have found them empty and you would often have found a surface on which no one possibly could or would sleep: rocks on the floor, tree roots sticking up.

These were what my Foreign Service pal Joseph called “aid bait.” They sprang up throughout Port-au-Prince and in a 40-mile radius around the metropolitan area and even in some towns and cities as far as 100 miles away from the earthquake

strike zone. Haitian Vilmond Joegodson, who grew up in Cité Soleil, one of Port-au-Prince's poorest neighborhoods, and who moved into several of the camps, described the process:

All that was needed was eight long sturdy branches and some sheets to hang from them to represent walls... The NGOs decided to visit them and to distribute whatever tents or tarps they still had. To qualify for those donations, or other aid, Haitians needed to have a place etched out in one of the camps and to have demonstrated some proof of residence.

Everyone kept their ears open to find out where the NGOs were distributing the tents most generously. The objective was to go to that camp and demonstrate a presence. Then wait. Sometimes people squatted in a number of camps at the same time in order to cover all their bases.<sup>2</sup>

*Joegodson 2015*

## **ABSURDITY OF THE NUMBERS**

You did not have to take my or Maria or even Joegodson's word for the fact that many of those people in the camps were not really "viktim" of the earthquake. By the time that Nigel Fisher was declaring 1.5 million people in 1,555 camps, it was already reasonably certain that it was not 70 percent of the buildings in Port-au-Prince that had collapsed. It was 7 percent of the buildings. Another 13 percent were damaged such that demolition of the structure was recommended. That

meant that a total of 20 percent of the buildings were unfit for habitation. And that meant that no more than 20 percent of the population should have been what the authorities were calling IDPs (internally displaced persons); at least, not if the criteria for being an IDP was that the home you were living in was destroyed. If we extend the definition of an unfit home to include the yellow houses—the 26 percent of houses that were damaged but still reparable—there could logically have been no more than 46 percent of the population homeless, which is closer to the 68 percent of the population the UN reported as IDPs. The remainder of the houses were “green” which meant that they had no significant structural damage. But there were still big problems with the calculations. <sup>3</sup>

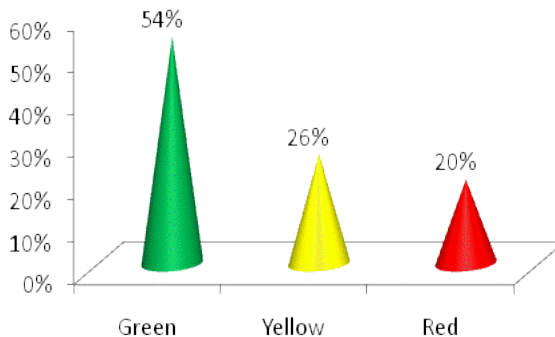


Figure 34: MTPTC Coded Houses

Over the period of February 2010 to January 2011 the engineers evaluated 382,256 Port-au-Prince buildings. They marked 205,539 green (54%), 99,043 yellow (26%), and 77,674 red (20%).

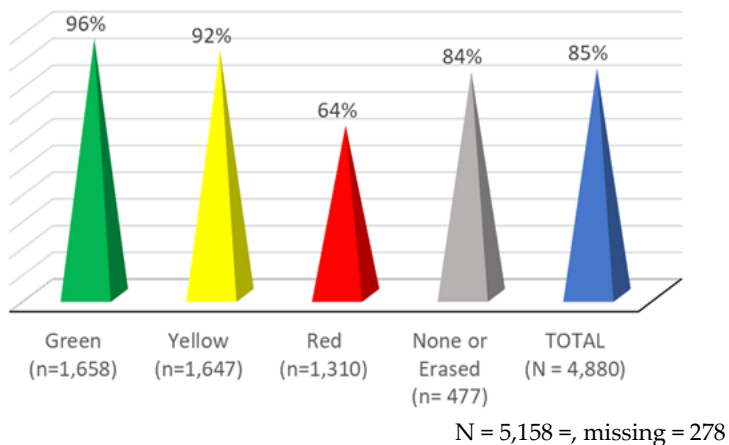
For those of us who lived in Port-au-Prince, we knew that most homes were abandoned after the earthquake had been



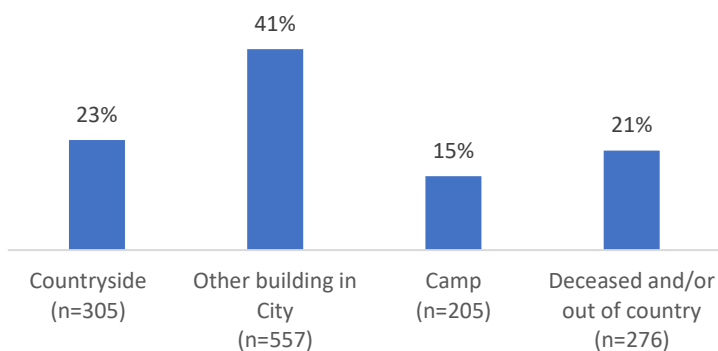
reoccupied within a couple of months of the disaster. And once again, you didn't have to take our word for it. In the BARR Survey we found that at the height of the exodus exactly 68 percent of residents in the earthquake impacted region left their home. That extrapolates to 2,040,000 people. But not all of those people went to camps. The UN estimated that 24 percent of the IDP population had gone to the countryside or were living in the homes of family or friends. BARR, UN's OCHA, and the University of Columbia working with Sweden's Karolinska Institute all found similar figures. Others were living in the street in front of their home. In short, less than half of the IDPs went to camps; or more precisely, 900,000 people or 30 percent of the total population in the earthquake strike area went to the camps. But they began returning home within weeks of the earthquake. BARR tells us that 70 percent of people who had left their homes had returned to them by July 2010, when IOM—that organization that the UN had designated as responsible for coordinating aid to camps in Haiti—was estimating there were 1.5 million people in the camps. At the one-year anniversary of the earthquake, when IOM estimated there were still 1 million people in camps, BARR tells us that 85 percent of those people who had left their homes were back in them. Even the 78,000 red-tagged-structure residences—those recommended for demolition—had a re-occupancy rate of 64 percent. For the 100,000 yellow-tagged residences—those damaged but reparable—the reoccupation rate was 92 percent; and for the 206,000 green-tagged structures—those that were undamaged—the re-occupancy rate was 96 percent (see

Figure 35, below, and Figure 36, next page). Even if we were to include all the missing variables from the survey for reasons of non-reporting, we had solid data that at least 80 percent of people had re-occupied their homes one year after the earthquake. So once again, even if we're liberal about the estimate, at the one-year earthquake anniversary no more than 20 percent of the population—about 675,000 people—should have been IDPs. That's not people in the camps; that's IDPs, meaning people who had not returned home. Based on reports in the BARR survey, of the 1,356 residences with absentee members, only 15% of those absentees were still located in camps (see Figure 36, below). This meant that of people from the earthquake impacted area, no more than 101,250, people who had been living in Port-au-Prince at the time of the earthquake were living in a camps. Yet, the camp counts from the government and OIM found—or claimed—that there were still 1 million people in camps. Some of these extra people people could and certainly where from outside the earthquake strike area living in camps, but the point is that something was definitively out of whack with reality.

In some Port-au-Prince area counties, there were more people claiming to live in camps than the total number of people living in the county when the earthquake hit. <sup>4 5 6 7 8 9</sup>



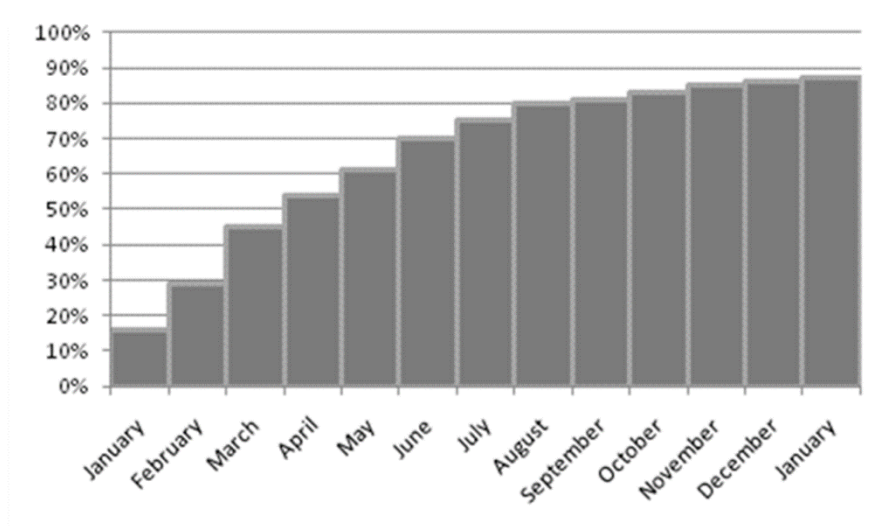
**Figure 35. Port-au-Prince Household Occupancy**  
Levels per Residence per MTPTC Color Code one year after the earthquake



**Figure 36. Reported Location of Absentee Household Members**  
Data is from the 1,928 resident BARR sub-sample

## **EVEN WITHOUT THE NUMBERS, THEY KNEW**

So those are the numbers. But the fact is that you didn't even need the numbers. Everyone in any position of authority knew damn well that many people in the camps were only pretending to be IDPs. One of the first things USAID/OFDA representatives told me about when they briefed me for the BARR Survey was the massive opportunism. The two women who briefed me, one from OFDA and one a consultant for the U.S. State Department, told me point blank, "We know that a lot of the tents are empty." They explained that SOUTHCOM (U.S. Southern Command) had been into the camps at night with infrared goggles and many of the tents were empty. "And," the woman working with OFDA added, "we know that people in the camps are splitting families to occupy multiple tents so that they can get more aid." So when UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti, Nigel Fisher, announced to the world that there were 1.5 million people living in camps, there is simply no way that he himself could have believed the figure was remotely accurate. Once again the leaders of the humanitarian aid effort were flat out lying to us.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 37. Home Returns by Month USAID/BARR Survey 2010**

Table 1. Comparison of Camp Population to Total Population of Commune

	Population of Camps July 2010	Total Population 2009	Population Urban 2009	Ratio of Pop. in Camps to Total Population	Ratio of Pop. in Camps to Urban Population	Proportion all residences Red tagged	Proportion Urban Residences Red tagged	Ratio of proportion population in CAMPs, to proportion of residences that were tagged Red	Ratio of proportion population in CAMPs, to proportion of urban residences that were tagged Red
CARREFOUR	195,755	465,019	430,250	42%	45%	17%	17%	247%	265%
CITESOLEIL	70,273	241,055	241,055	29%	29%	6%	6%	483%	483%
CROIX-DES-BOUQUETS	105,064	227,012	84,812	46%	124%	23%	23%	200%	539%
DELMAS	352,675	359,451	359,451	98%	98%	19%	19%	516%	516%
GANTHIER	6,111	56,869	19,948	11%	31%	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
GRAND-GOAVE	34,665	124,135	19,874	28%	174%	4%	27%	700%	644%
GRESSIER	47,916	33,152	13,043	145%	367%	53%	53%	274%	692%
JACMEL	26,115	170,289	40,108	15%	65%	3%	13%	500%	500%
LEOGANE	166,799	181,709	85,044	92%	196%	30%	30%	307%	653%
PETION-VILLE	102,482	342,694	271,175	30%	38%	11%	11%	273%	345%
PETIT-GOAVE	52,062	157,296	91,797	33%	57%	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
PORT-AU-PRINCE	303,529	897,859	875,978	34%	35%	18%	18%	189%	194%
TABARRE	73,001	118,477	118,477	62%	62%	13%	13%	477%	477%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,536,447</b>	<b>3,375,017</b>	<b>2,651,012</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>20%</b>		<b>230%</b>	<b>290%</b>

## SO WHY THE LIES (AGAIN)?

What we were seeing with the growing camps was in part a scramble to get aid that the humanitarian organizations were giving away. But what the humanitarian aid professionals and the press seemed to miss was that for the poorest people it was more about escaping rent payments and gaining access to free land, i.e., land invasion. Just like the poor and middle class throughout the world, urban rents are a huge burden for those who have to pay them. The first goal of most independent household heads is to own their own home, and the earthquake presented a golden opportunity to get one. I'll get to that in just a moment. It's interesting and useful because it helps us make sense of Haiti and the impact of humanitarian aid. But just as interesting, for me, and in the context of this book, was the exaggeration, indeed, outright lying from the humanitarian sector. For despite the obvious mathematical distortions, despite the fact that even common aid workers like Maria were aghast at the scale of the opportunism,

despite that behind closed doors we all went on at length about the rampant opportunism, the leaders of the Humanitarian aid community, like UN director Nigel Fisher, kept a straight face while bewailing to the press and overseas public absurd numbers of homeless. In that respect it was very much like the orphans and rapes. And just as with the orphans and rapes, lurking behind it all was pursuit of money from sympathetic overseas donors.

### THE MONEY (AGAIN)

The NGOs were pouring aid into the camps. Or at least they appeared to be. Olga Benoit, the director of SOFA, the largest women's organization in Haiti—seen in chapter 8 on the rape epidemic—recounted that, “it was like an invasion of NGOs. They went to the camps directly. This camp was for CRS, this camp for World Vision, this camp for Concern.”

Some might think that's alright. Why not? Even if many people in the camps were not direct victims of the earthquake, they must have been in need. Yolette Jeanty of *Kay Fanm*, the second major feminist organization in Haiti tells us why that really wasn't alright:

The great majority of 'sinistre' (desperate people) were and still are inside the neighborhoods. Those people didn't want to go to the camps, they stayed home. Even those in the camps, many don't sleep there. They go home to sleep. They only come to the camps during the day to get water or whatever they might be giving away. But the NGOs, they all go to the camps.

By ignoring the neighborhoods, the humanitarian aid workers were able to avoid that major impediment we saw in early chapters of this book: security. In the weeks after the earthquake, the press had not only sold a lot of newspapers with sensational stories of gangs and street battles, they had also frightened the hell out of everyone, not

least of all the humanitarian professionals working for NGOs and UN agencies. In 2013, criminologist Arnaud Dandoy wrote about the absurdity of what he calls “moral panic” among the humanitarian community in Haiti. The typical NGO headquarters in Port-au-Prince was secured behind ten-foot walls topped with concertina wire. Its employees were restricted by curfews, forbidden to even roll their windows down in certain neighborhoods or enter others, precisely those neighborhoods most in need of humanitarian aid. So, the aid agencies had a dilemma on their hands: they had severely limited their capacity to aid the very people they were getting money to help. And that’s where existence of the camps solved a lot of problems. Despite the fact that the NGOs and the grassroots organizations such as KOFAVIV were reporting skyrocketing violence, the camps could be patrolled. UN soldiers were stationed at camps where NGOs worked. Security experts could monitor the situation. And at night, when things supposedly got really bad, the aid workers weren’t there. They went back to the elite districts, to their apartments and hotel rooms located, once again, behind high walls and in guarded compounds.<sup>xi</sup>

The problem with focusing on the camps, from a humanitarian perspective, is that they were missing a lot of the real victims. But what’s worse, from the perspective of helping, is that it was precisely the indiscriminate giving, the protection of the camps, and the *carte-blanch* certification of camp residents as legitimate that encouraged opportunists to pour into the camps. The camps grew for seven months after the earthquake, long after the last aftershock. They went from 370,000 people living “under improvised shelters” on January 20th (IOM), to 700,000 on January 31st (USAID 2010), to 1.3 million on March 1st (UN 2010), to Nigel Fisher’s claim of 1.536 million in 1,555 camps on July 9th. Among those numbers were a lot of opportunists who sought to benefit from the aid, many of whom already had little grey concrete homes near the camps, homes that had not fallen down. And most of whom had some means of earning



a living, however meager. And it's unfair to those in need that such people would pretend to be victims left homeless by the earthquake. But more to the point here, it's hard to overlook the fact that those who most benefitted from the lies and from permitting opportunists to indiscriminately pour into the camps were not the impoverished opportunists feigning to be homeless. Those who most benefitted from the lies were the foreign humanitarian aid agencies and their workers, many of whom were living in \$50,000 per year hotel rooms and apartments. And it's here where we can best understand why the United Nations and the NGOs were spewing untruths and omitting facts about the camps.<sup>xii</sup>

The camps brought in donations. Whether deliberately or by default, the humanitarian aid organizations used the camps in much the same way as the people pretending to live in them: as aid bait to get overseas donors to give. The NGOs and UN agencies presented the camps to the overseas donors as a humanitarian aid smorgasbord of ills. Hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people in central locations with every imaginable need: food, water, shelter, security, lighting, sanitation, health, therapy. They were getting paid to take care of those ills. And by making a show of their efforts, taking lots of photo opportunities, it was as an easy solution to make it look like they were doing something. They didn't have to go to the neighborhoods. *Didn't have to implement rigorous mechanisms for vetting real victims from the pretenders.* In this way the aid agencies essentially conspired with those pretending to live in the camps by not telling the truth about them and by wanton distribution of the aid. What makes it sad and distressing, if not criminal, is that those most in need, the weakest and most vulnerable who had gone to camps were, by and large, not getting aid. In the six years since the earthquake, I've listened to it over and over in focus groups:

The camp committee took everything that was given for the camp. They took the tarpaulins and if you needed one you had to buy it from them for

250 or 300 gourdes. If not, you lived in the rain. Sometimes we saw trucks come with food. But they took everything to store at their houses. They didn't give us anything. Some of these people had houses in good condition. The camps offered them more advantages than staying in their own houses.

*Erns Maire Claire (Female; 43 years; 3 children; teacher):  
Focus Group for CCCM OCHA Cluster, March 12, 2016*

What I saw happening was that they sold the food. Sometimes they made arrangements with other people and gave them food several times. These people sold the food and shared the money with them.

*Focus Group for CCCM OCHA Cluster, March 13, 2016  
Cadio Jean; Male; 43 years old; 4 children; mason/ironworker)*

So there was waste and the NGOs were doing a lousy job getting the aid to the people who really needed it. There was massive embezzlement and hoarding. But if most of the people in the camps were not really earthquake victims and most were not getting anything from the humanitarian aid agencies, why did several hundred thousand people continue to live in camps for years after the earthquake? The answer is something that everyone seemed to speak about constantly but no one, not even journalists seemed to realize was driving the camps. The answer is because they were renters and they hoped to get a piece of land and a home. Indeed, it was a consummation of Haitian historical trends, the invasion and expropriation of land, and most recently that of the invasion of Haiti by NGOs and the emergence of being a *viktim* as an opportunity to escape poverty. The poorest people and relative newcomers to the city were mobilizing their status as “earthquake victim” to seize land.

## **HISTORY OF LAND INVASION**

To understand what drove the “real” and the “not-so-real” IDPs to move into camps, or at least act like they had, one has to first understand two things: urbanization and the history of land acquisition in Haiti. Like most developing countries, over the

past 65 years Haiti has been the site of massive migration from rural areas to towns and cities. The entire country has gone from 13 percent urban in 1950 to more than 50 percent urban today. While in 1950 Port-au-Prince had a population of less than 150,000 residents, today there are over 2 million. And that's just within the city's borders. There are some 3 million in the entire Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. One-third of the population of Haiti. And the driving force behind much of that urbanization and, similarly, what made being a *viktim* one of the major economic opportunities for the Haitian poor, had a lot to do with U.S. economic policies.

### ***The American Plan***

In the 1970s Haiti, like many countries in Central America and the Caribbean, was still largely rural. Its inhabitants were small-scale farmers. It had poor roads, and inadequate communication, educational, and health systems. It was underdeveloped. And that underdevelopment was arguably a more pressing problem in Haiti than in other small countries in the region because, at 168 people per square kilometer in 1970, Haiti had a population density twice that of neighboring Cuba (76 people per square kilometer) and almost twice that of the neighboring Dominican Republic (91 people per square kilometer).<sup>xiii</sup> Over 95 percent of Haiti was reportedly deforested, causing erosion so severe that reputable scholars were already referring to it as the worst in the world.<sup>xiv</sup> The erosion wasn't just a problem for Haiti. The runoff was impregnated with sewage, plastic bags, bottles and petroleum residues. It billowed out from Haitian rivers, forming huge underwater clouds that contributed to the destruction of ecologically sensitive coral reefs throughout the Caribbean. Something had to be done.<sup>xv</sup>

The United States was the country that for almost one hundred years had taken upon itself the task of policing Haiti and its neighbors. It had already invaded Cuba four times, the Dominican Republic three, Honduras seven, Nicaragua seven, Panama four, Guatemala and El Salvador once each, and Haiti twice.<sup>xvi</sup> Moreover, there were

new opportunities on the horizon. The promotion of overseas sales of U.S. corn, wheat, cotton, and rice was high on the U.S. congressional agenda. Subsidies for these products was as much as 38 percent in any given year. France and Germany—both of which would join the U.S. in dumping massive amounts of surplus food on the Haitian market-- were also aggressive promoters of their own farm products. The EU subsidized its grains at an even greater rate than the United States, 48 percent.<sup>xvii</sup> There was also the offshore industrial sector, particularly the \$100-billion garment industry of which Gildan and Palm Apparel, seen in Chapter 6, would become a part. The U.S. government had begun to cultivate the garment sector in Haiti as far back as 1971 when in exchange for supporting the continuation of the Duvalier dictatorship from father to son, the Haitian government agreed to create an environment hospitable to U.S. investors interested in the offshore assembly sector. Customs taxes were eliminated, a low minimum wage guaranteed, labor unions suppressed, and U.S. companies given the right to repatriate profits. By 1980, there were some two hundred mostly U.S.-owned assembly plants in the country.<sup>xviii</sup>

It was at this juncture that the U.S. government, working through USAID and the planners at the world's major international lending institutions—the U.S. and secondarily EU controlled World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—adopted new policies that would, with perhaps the best of intentions, all but destroy the Haitian economy of small farmers. Calling it “economic development,” the growth prospects of the assembly industry meant that migrants to urban areas were economically useful as factory workers, something that justified eliminating farming as an alternative livelihood strategy. The objective conveniently coincided with those of U.S. agricultural interests and the conservationist goal of moving peasants away from destructive hillside cultivation of bean and corn crops that caused so much erosion. The logic seemed overwhelming.

So a plan was hatched. At the time they called it the “American Plan.” For the rural areas, the policy planners envisioned neat rows of high tech agriculture, coffee, mango, and avocado plantations, and modern factory-style poultry barns. For the urban areas they envisioned burgeoning industrial parks where peasants who had been displaced to make way for agro-industries could be transformed into factory workers. The USAID designers described to Congressional oversight committees a new Haiti that would undergo, “an historic change toward deeper market interdependence with the United States,” a relationship that would release the “latent Haitian agro-industrial potential waiting to explode.” The scheme, as USAID Administrator Peter McPherson testified before the U. S. Congress, would ultimately “make the prospects for Haiti as the ‘Taiwan of the Caribbean’ real indeed.”<sup>xix</sup>

## **HOW TO DESTROY AN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY**

It might not have been such a bad idea. Haiti clearly needed help. But it didn’t happen like they said it would. A good example was the Haitian rice industry. Until the 1980s, Haiti was almost entirely self-sufficient in rice consumption, something made possible, in part, by laws protecting Haitian farmers from the heavily subsidized rice produced in the U.S. and Europe. Twenty percent of the Haitian population was directly involved in the industry. But in the political chaos of 1986—the year that the last Duvalier regime was ousted from power—USAID used the promise of continued political and financial support to negotiate a lowering of tariffs on rice from 35 to 3 percent. U.S. rice—subsidized at a rate that varied during the 1980s and 1990s from 35 percent to 100 percent—flooded into the country.

By 1996, 2,100 metric tons of U.S. rice arrived in Haiti every week, an annual loss to impoverished Haitian cultivators of about 23 million dollars per year.<sup>xx</sup> Haitians were not even left the luxury, at that point in time, of controlling the importation process.

About half of the imported rice came in under a sweetheart contract held by RCH (The Rice Corporation of Haiti). RCH happened to be a U.S. corporate subsidiary of Comet Rice, a subsidiary of ERLY Industries, the largest rice company in the U.S., one that, according to the Washington Office on Haiti, had been investigated for possible involvement in money laundering, illegal arms deals, illegal lobbying, and that had been debarred from U.S. government contracts. But not surprisingly, ERLY had a high-rolling team of lobbyists in Washington D.C. and, despite all their earlier woes, they wound up with control of half of Haitian rice imports. As if the low taxes were not enough, the ERLY-Comet subsidiary (RCH) bribed port officials, saving themselves over one million dollars. When the Aristide administration caught them doing it in year 2000 and tried to arrest those involved, the U.S. Senate used the Haitian government's action as part of justification for a subsequent four-year freeze on aid to Haiti. Three years later, in 2003, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) convicted ERLY of the crime. For Aristide, it didn't matter. By that time the Aristide government was on the verge of collapse. It would be ousted the following year. For the Haitian elite it was a good thing. They would take back control of actually importing the rice. But Arkansas farmers still had their market. And Haitian farmers were still losing theirs.<sup>xxi xxii</sup>

## FLIGHT FROM POVERTY

By the time I came to Haiti in 1990, the rural exodus that the American Plan helped precipitate was in full swing. Not unlike the generations of my own parents and grandparents in the United States, the youth were fleeing the farms. No one in Haiti wanted to be a country bumpkin. People in the towns and cities, the children and grandchildren of country folk, saw their rural cousins as ignorant and uncivilized. They referred to them as *abitan* (hick), *moun mon* (hillbilly) *dan wouj* (red teeth) and *pye pete*

(cracked feet). The peasants themselves desperately sought to get their children to towns and cities to get them educated, something that fueled the *restavek* phenomenon seen in an earlier chapter. And it wasn't just a social movement. The urban slums with their festering sewage might seem awful to most people reading this book, but it's those who remained in the countryside who suffered most. They were and still are the poorest and most malnourished people in Haiti.

What a crashed rural economy and migration toward the cities meant was that everyone wanted a home in the city, no matter how poorly constructed, undesirable the neighborhood, or vulnerable to flooding the plot on which the house was built. Houses in towns and cities were the first step to getting out of rural areas. Unless one sent their children to work in the homes of family, friends or acquaintances, owning a house in town was the only way of getting children a secondary education. Even for those who still farmed, houses in town and urban areas became critical to do business and to sell farm produce on the more lucrative informal urban market. This was true for the female household head or co-heads' who trade rural produce, bringing it in from rural areas and selling it to urban market women. And it was true for those male family members who wanted to seek temporary work in the city or to learn a trade. Having a house in the city also increased the potential for building social capital by extending hospitality to rural family, friends or neighbors who did not yet have a house in the town or city. People sometimes rented rooms or homes, but the objective was to have your own home in the city. Adults who could not afford to construct second and third houses in urban areas invested in family members who could construct one. They sought some kind of stake in the town and urban based homes of relatives, or friends. Indeed, it became unthinkable that one did not have somewhere to stay in town or the city. And the city that people wanted if not needed a foothold more than any other was Port-au-Prince.

## **PORT OF THE PRINCE**

“The Port of the Prince” is the Haitian “Big Apple,” where people are proud to live; where is located 80 percent of all secondary schools and 95 percent of universities and state technical schools; where more than 90 percent of public employees work, and 87 percent of all government expenditures are made; from whence flow all political decisions, the commandments and revolutions that have shaped modern Haitian history and where today all foreign NGOs have their headquarters. To have a house in Port-au-Prince, no matter how small, is considered the critical component to social mobility, to escaping rural poverty, educating children, getting them into the work force and, if God be willing, getting them overseas and into the US, Canadian or French work force, the holy grail for all Haitians.

As seen, it’s not true that 70 to 80 percent of households in Port-au-Prince were inhabited by renters at the time of the earthquake. It was the contrary: only about 40 percent were renters. At least 50 to 60 percent of people living in Port-au-Prince owned the house they lived in. And if we consider the rapid rate of migration from rural areas, one could conclude that just about everyone who had been in the city for any length of time owned their home. We can surmise that the 40 to 50 percent that did not own a home were relative newcomers. So if everyone is so poor, how did they get those homes? This is where so many of the humanitarian agencies and the media miserably failed to understand what was happening in Haiti. To understand that, it’s instructive to take a brief look at more distant history.

## **HAITI’S HISTORY OF LAND INVASIONS**

In the decades following Haiti’s 1804 declaration of independence, the only successful slave revolt in modern history, the new government attempted to restore the plantations and set the former slaves to work on them as serfs and sharecroppers. The



efforts failed miserably. Revolt, flight to more remote areas of the island and passive resistance eventually meant that to generate tax revenue for the ailing state, Haitian leaders were increasingly compelled, not to take land away from the former slaves, but to give them more. They gave land to soldiers and eventually to those peons who had not already seized land. By 1842 there was no turning back. What had been the world's most productive plantation economy—the former French Colony of Saint-Domingue—was becoming a country dominated by small peasant plots. Haiti became that country with as equitable a distribution of land as any on earth. Struggles and frequent warfare between the peasants—who had informal title to the land—and the elites—who used the formal legal system to make timber and mining concessions to multinational corporations—punctuated the next 100 years of history. The struggles were fierce and it is a fascinating history. But what's important here is that while the poor were more often the losers of military and political battles, for the entire 206 years leading up to the 2010 Haiti earthquake they had been winning the war for land.

A thriving land market of small parcels evolved. The 1950 census found that 85 percent of farmers owned land.<sup>xxiii</sup> The 1971 census found that there were 616,700 farms in Haiti (pop 4.1 million). Average holding was 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres). Holdings typically consisted of several plots. The largest farms made up only 3 percent of the total number and comprised less than 20 percent of the total arable land. And even those were generally not big. One would be hard pressed today to find a land owner in all of rural Haiti with more than a couple hundred acres. The few vast tracks that the rich still own are precisely in Port-au-Prince. And they've been having a tough time holding on to them.

As the urbanization seen earlier took hold and rural immigrants increasingly moved into Port-au-Prince, the process was repeated. In this case, those left as guards and caretakers of land owned by people who had fled into political asylum or who had

gone to work overseas soon began to sell it. They sold the land to rural in-migrants. Places like Ravine Pentad and Martissant—subjects of the BARR Survey—began this way. With political turmoil that followed the fall of the 1986 Duvalier dictatorship, the process accelerated. When one sees the masses of pastel concrete housing above Port-au-Prince (Jalousie)—colored with government subsidized paint—what one is looking at is 30,000 houses built over the past 20 years, and on land that was expropriated from elite, formal sector land owners. As a wealthy friend of mine who owned land there recounted to me, when he tried to get his land back from the squatters the lawyer he had approached for help asked him, “What do you value more, your land or your life?”

Indeed, the ironic thing about all of this is that it’s not the Haitian peasants and slum dwellers who are insecure about land. It’s the elite. Those who suffer land insecurity in Haiti are predominantly the wealthy, largely absentee landowners who for 200 years have, as with the informal economy in general, watched the extralegal land tenure system of the poor devour their formal system. And after the earthquake they were sweating bullets.<sup>xxiv xxv</sup>

“I said to myself right then, ‘Uh-oh. You’re in trouble.’ ” Haitian landowner Joseph St. Fort recounted to *New York Times* journalists in 2010, “I started feeling panic because I knew it would be very difficult to get rid of them.” Wealthy land owners could not, in front of the thousands of international press cameras, activists, humanitarian aid workers and, not least of all, the United Nations with all its charters defending war refugees and migrants, start kicking “earthquake survivors” and their children out of “IDP camps.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

With every NGO and U.N. employee who stepped off the plane the power of the poor grew. Renters, urban home-owners and migrants from rural areas alike staked claims on every piece of green space they could find. Many of them then rested comfortably knowing that the international community was keeping an eye on the elite

and the government. Hence, the 6 months of growing camps. Even the Haitian country club where Sean Penn had set up his NGO was an attempt to fend off squatters gone wrong. The manager of the club, Bill Evans, knew exactly what was coming. Three days after the earthquake, Evans cleverly delivered a letter to the U.S. ambassadors' house ceding the use of the country club to the U.S. military. Then Evans got on a helicopter and left. The expectation was that the ambassador's acceptance meant the U.S. military would also be responsible for protecting the facilities from, not least of all, squatters. It didn't happen that way. Instead of protecting the property, the U.S. army—as clueless as the press and the NGOs—turned it into an IDP camp. They began giving food and water away. People realized the land was not protected and in a matter of days it became covered with thousands of “IDPs” from the surrounding neighborhoods. And just like the rest of the camps, people would continue to erect tents on the golf course for the next seven months. None of this is to say that the director of the club, Evans, is not a compassionate person who cares about the poor. I happen to know he is. And he wound up becoming an ardent defender of the 50,000 people who invaded and squatted on the club's golf course. But what it shows us is a microcosm of what was happening all over Port-au-Prince. <sup>xxvii</sup>

## **DEFENDING THE LAND**

By October, 2010, landowners were getting sick of it. Evans, under heavy pressure from his 300 club members, was trying to sue the U.S. government for having allowed the invasion of the golf course. And it wasn't just elite land owners, nor even Haitians. “This used to be a beautiful place,” U.S. Church of God missionary Jim Hudson told *New York Times* journalists. After the earthquake the church had “shared meals” with 4,000 people who sought refuge on the property. Ten months later 500 of them refused

to leave: "... these people are tearing up the property," Hudson complained. "They're urinating on it. They're bathing out in public. They're stealing electricity. And they don't work. They sit around all day, waiting for handouts."

On July 14, 2010, precisely at the height of what some elite were calling "the other occupation" —as opposed to the UN occupation— Sharif Abdel Kouddous of *Democracy Now* would report that:

...this issue of the land...is at the crux of the matter, when we were in Port-au-Prince, that's what everyone was saying: Where are all these people going to go? These tent cities literally are on every street in Port-au-Prince, just teeming around the city. And from aid activists—-from activists to people on the ground, organizers, community organizers are all talking about this issue of land: Where are all these people going to go?

*Abdel Kouddous. Democracy Now. July 14 2010<sup>xxviii</sup>*

The ever-perspicacious Kim Ives responded:

...the principal fault-line in Haiti is not geological but one of class. A small handful of rich families own large tracts of land in suburban Port-au-Prince which would be ideal for resettling the displaced thousands [...]. However, these same families control the Haitian government and, more importantly, have great influence in the newly formed 26-member Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC) [...]. The IHRC is empowered for the next 18 months under a "State of Emergency Law" to seize land for rebuilding as it sees fit [...], but the elite families on this body in charge of expropriations are not volunteering their own well-situated land to benefit Haiti's homeless.<sup>xxix xxx xxxi</sup>

*Kim Ives. Democracy Now. July 14, 2010*

The elite were under serious pressure. Every activist group in Haiti would soon be talking about the right to housing. Illustrating where all this was to lead, on the second anniversary of the earthquake a coordinated onslaught of speeches and press releases from nine of Haiti's most active activist organizations were summed up in a joint statement:<sup>xxxii</sup>

We raise our voices to denounce with all of our might, before the national and international community, the threat of forced eviction.... We ask all the institutions involved (the president, the government, the mayor, NGOs assisting displaced people, human rights organizations, etc.) to press, press our case ... to respect the rights that we have as people. As Article 22 of this country's constitution and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declare, "All people have the right to housing."

*January 12, 2012, Joint press conference of the  
International Lawyers' Office (BAI) and residents of Camp Mariani*

Even KOFAVIV ladies turned from rape to housing, cleverly blaming the rape on the lack of housing:

As in other countries, good human principles and protocols that humanitarian organizations and the state need to apply have been established. But we observe that in Haiti up until today, these principles are being trampled on, causing women and young girls to be ever more exposed to rapists.

*[Eramithe Delva and Malya Villard-Apollon], Tectonic Shifts, 2012:164*

If 1.5 million people had decided to defend their claims in camps, there would have been nothing anyone could do to get them off the land. And with the humanitarian community bound to respect international standards, they would have had to protect the poor against eviction. But the elite had been one step ahead of them all. In March 2010, a scarce 3 months after the earthquake, they had already come up with the answer that would largely defuse the land invasion: Canaan.

## **CANAAN: LAND OF MILK AND HONEY**

In March 2010, while the Camps were still growing, word began to leak out that the Haitian and U.S. governments were planning a new city at Corail-Cesselesse, a 30-square mile swath of land to the north of Port-au-Prince. It seemed perfect. If before the earthquake one had stood on the mountain above Port-au-Prince and looked down, one saw below the most densely populated city in the Caribbean, a sea of concrete slums. But then, looking to the North, on the far side of those slums, was Corail-Cesselesse, a vast swath of empty land. It began on the plain, extended up the foot of a different mountain range and into the unseen heights of Haiti's Central Plateau. All empty. Impoverished Haitians would soon call it Canaan, after the biblical land of milk and honey that God gave to the Israelites. It was, however, no land of milk and honey.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

The reason it had been empty was that there was not a single spring nor source of water. No shade trees. Yet, with the Haitian government leading the charge, the plans for a "Zen city" began to form. Transitional shelters, the government declared, would

be built for 300,000 people. Each would have a permanent frame that could be expanded into a six-room house. In the midst of the neighborhoods global investment firms would build garment factories, stores and restaurants. The rumor was that Bill Clinton backed the plan. The U.S. State Department was on board. Indeed, it seemed that everyone was on board: UNICEF, World Food Program, The American Refugee Committee, The Red Cross, CRS, World Vision, Oxfam, Save the Children, Samaritan's Purse. "The idea," a smiling senior Haitian Government advisor, Leslie Voltaire, told Associated Press journalists, "is to pick up all that imagination and wealth and put it in that mountain... It's going to be a hit."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The new Canaan was kicked off with a planned community of 2,000 homes. The U.S. military bulldozed the land. Sean Penn's NGO (JP/HRO) began an info drive to get people to voluntarily leave the golf course and move to Canaan. Calling it the "Beat the Rain campaign" — a reference to escaping the torrential seasonal rains in Port-au-Prince — *Rolling Stone* journalist Janet Reitman recounts:<sup>xxxv</sup>

On Saturday, April 10th, 2010, the first group left the golf course in a caravan of buses, the exodus chaperoned by United Nations peacekeepers. They arrived, disembarking onto a dusty, cactus-strewn patch of land in the shadow of a denuded mountain ... Their new homes — bright white tents set up on the baking gravel — were both hot and flimsy; three months after the refugees arrived, hundreds of the tents would blow away in a heavy windstorm. There were no schools, no markets, and the closest hospital was miles away. There were also no jobs... To return to the city meant a long walk to a bus stop followed by a several-hour commute. They were marooned.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

*Rolling Stone* 2011

Two weeks after the windstorm, IOM issued a report that major sectors of Canaan chosen for settlements were "prone to flood and strong wind... flooded regularly at least once a year." In other words, it was a barren and dry desert that, when it did get rain, flooded. By that point in time Samaritan's Purse had built hundreds of shelters in

an area where water had to rise 14 inches before it even began to drain. World Vision had done the same. And it would get worse. USAID consultant Bill Vastine explained to Reuter's journalist that one site, "had an open-mined pit on one side of it, a severe 100-foot vertical cliff, and ravines."<sup>xxxvii xxxviii</sup>

There were lot of regrets and blame deflection. UN-Habitat director Jean-Christophe Adrian lamented that they had "opened a Pandora's Box." World Vision representatives "felt the process was rushed." Julie Schindall of Oxfam told journalists, "I have no idea how they selected that camp. It was all done very last minute—we had to set the entire structure up in a week." American Refugee Committee (ARC) director Richard Poole, disavowed ARC's role overseeing the movement of people into Canaan, saying, "ARC did not have a say in the planning of the Corail Camp [Canann]" and went on later to dismiss the project entirely saying, "the location of the camps far from Port-au-Prince with little or no prospect of economic activity was a mistake... Without an economic base, however, the plan was doomed to fail." Similarly, Hélène Mauduit of Entrepreneurs du Monde would say that "sure, there are shelters, a hospital and a school, but there is no future for the people of Corail (Canaan) because there is no work, there are not roads and there's no electricity... They either need to destroy it and put people somewhere else, or they need to say to themselves, 'Ah, these are human beings who live at Corail!' " Typically candid Sean Penn would tell *Rolling Stone* journalist Janet Reitman, "I feel like shit. I hope those guys are OK when it rains out there. I feel an extra responsibility—of course I do. But we were betrayed."<sup>xxxix xl xli</sup>

The bottom line was that those international humanitarian workers who really were trying to help the Haitian poor, like Sean Penn, had been duped. They had been duped by the poor, they'd been duped by the rich, and they'd duped themselves. They'd been duped by the poor in that most of the people in camps did not go there because they had nowhere else to go. They went to the camps because of the



opportunities, most importantly the chance to own their own home in Port-au-Prince. They had been duped by the government and the rich because when they tried to help the poor get homes they wound up initiating a massive migration onto land unsuitable for human habitation. And they had duped themselves because the international players in all this were never going to make huge investments in housing. They were too busy spending the money on themselves, their own salaries, administrations, rental cars and consultants. There wasn't enough money to give housing to the poor. Indeed, none of the humanitarian organizations, nor the government lived up to their promises to pay for the original \$64-million piece of land.

The land that was the original Corail (Canaan) was owned by a corporation called NABATEC, a small consortium of Haiti's super rich. Gérald Emile "Aby" Brun the president of NABATEC described the agreements that morphed into a massive land invasion as a, "15-year, US\$2 billion project, and everyone had already given their approval, including the Haitian government and the World Bank." In that way, at least some of the Haitian elite got duped as well. NABATEC claimed to have spent over US\$1.5 million on the project. They never got a dime. In 2013, three years after the land had been completely overrun and all hopes of developing it dashed, Brun would lament. "A dreamed of new city was killed by narrow minded and greedy people, under the tolerant observation of the international community."<sup>xlii</sup>

There would be no Zen city. No factories. No up-scale NGO conference centers. Not at Corail-Cesselesse (Canaan). But the most fascinating thing about it all, and what most Haitian elite understood all along, is that it didn't matter. The government and its announcements coupled with a mysteriously zero defense of land meant that, by that point in time, the 10,000 squatters had been joined by another 40,000. More were coming every day. They swarmed onto the land. By the first anniversary of the earthquake there were more than 100,000 people. "It was like the gold rush," a UN

official told *Rolling Stone* journalist Janet Reitman. "Within about a week of people moving to Corail, you had all these other people rushing out there to stake their claim. People were up there buying and selling plots of land—completely illegally."

One of those people was Vilmond Joegodson, seen earlier describing the opportunism in the camps. In May, Joegodson left his camp in Port-au-Prince and with his fiancée made his way to Corail-Cesselesse, what he and other hopeful homesteaders called Canaan, the land of milk and honey. His cousin had a friend who'd claimed some plots of land and was selling them for 1,000 Haitian dollars (US\$120 at the time). Joegodson and his friend Paul Jackson described the process,

The first squatters to arrive in Canaan claimed their land as did people in such camps all over Port-au-Prince: they placed posts at the corners of their plot or drew a border around a site with rocks. Once they had their own land, the speculators would then trace out secondary and tertiary plots that they would be able to sell to newcomers as time progressed. It was as simple as making a parcel of land look inhabited. By general agreement, that was accepted as ownership .....

As bulldozers flattened the fields and constructed rudimentary facilities, the speculators started to cash in. At one point, a plot of land was selling for 100 Haitian dollars, about \$US 17.00. Now, they are going for ten times that price... However, the buyers get no deed in return for paying the speculators who simply remove the signs of occupation and welcome the newcomer to the neighborhood.

*Joegodson and Jackson, 2015<sup>xliii</sup>*

And it is here, in this massive land invasion, and not in the free tents, food and water the NGOs were giving away, that we can understand what was ultimately driving the camps, as well as the government's dream of a Zen city, and the failure of the resettlements.<sup>xliv</sup>

Corail-Cesselesse was nothing less than a tactical ruse. The most useless land in all of Port-au-Prince; half flood plain, half barren and dry land, it was fit only for goats. But

it was arguably a necessary ruse. And this is what the international participants and the press never seemed to understand. When Paul Jackson asked Joegodson, “What if the state decides that it doesn’t want people in Canaan?” His answer, “Too late, says Joegodson on behalf of everyone that is in his position. It would mean civil war if the state tries to clear all of these communities...”<sup>xlv</sup>

And that was indeed the crux of it. Without a place to go, without Canaan, it would have been civil war in Port-au-Prince. The elite would have had to give up their land in Port-au-Prince or there would have been widespread rioting. And this is where the tide switched. The poor had used the earthquake and then the incursion of the NGOs, not so much for the services they gave out—most of which, aside from medical care, were relatively meaningless as the poor could have managed without them, such as in the case of water—but in a bid for a piece of land in Port-au-Prince on which to build a house. Indeed, that was the poor’s ruse, albeit one that the humanitarian agencies eagerly latched on in promoting their own interests—donations. The poor capitalized on their perceived needs, none of which are met any better today than they were before the earthquake. The humanitarian aid agencies, the activists, and their journalist allies became international leverage for the poor: their brokers in a humanitarian claim to land. Because of the zeal with which both advocates and humanitarian agencies accepted and even defended the legitimacy of the “IDPs” it made those claims good for everyone. It made them good for renters who did not own a home in Port-au-Prince, good for any of the millions of rural people who wanted to come to live in Port-au-Prince but could not hitherto afford to, good for the many living in Port-au-Prince who owned homes in the worst neighborhoods and wanted to move, and good for those who wanted second homes or rental properties. It was a massive opportunity. But now, with Canaan, everything changed. The promise of a “Zen City” and the massive land invasion that followed, siphoned off hundreds of thousands of

people. By January 2011, IOM estimate for people in the camps was down to 1 million. By March it was down to 680,000.

## **THE ALMOST BREAKING DAM—AGAIN**

Although the camps had been significantly reduced in population, they nevertheless remained a massive problem for the aid agencies. As seen, the humanitarian agencies had little real impact. The aid they brought was being embezzled and siphoned off. The impact of what they did deliver was highly questionable. And it wasn't long before some journalists, smelling a good story, turned on the humanitarian agencies and began to ask where all the money went. And with good reason.

The humanitarian aid agencies didn't know how much to spend on what and where. They gave out 96,000 tents; 38,000 of which went to the people of Jacmel, a town of 36,000 people where, contrary to official estimates, more than 95 percent of homes came through the earthquake in nearly unscathed condition. Twelve weeks after the earthquake, in rural Leogane, ground zero for the earthquake, 300 empty, tattered and wind-torn tents flapped in the breeze, no sign that they had ever been inhabited. At an average of \$2,000, it was \$600,000 squandered aid dollars. A few miles down the road from the tents, 100 transitional shelters sat empty. At a cost of \$5,265 a pop it was another 526,500 wasted dollars. Six months later they had vanished entirely and a private orphanage stood in their place. In downtown Port-au-Prince, in September 2010, nine months after the earthquake, Camp Jean Marie Vincent had 48,000 inhabitants living in scrap wood and makeshift shelters with a grand total of 115 latrines—421 people per latrine. Across the street sat 518 new tents and 150 latrines with showers, all empty. The latrines and showers would never be used; the tents would never be inhabited. Six months later the government would replace them with a warehouse.

Those are the ones that I know about. That I actually visited. And that's only tents. <sup>xlvi</sup>

xlvi xlviii

Much of the aid that was given away was indicative of an appalling lack of cultural understanding. The sub-director of Save the Children, which had gotten \$87 million in donations, told me, "They gave me 30 million and told me I had to get rid of it in six months." She drops her jaw and looks at me as if to emphasize the absurdity of the task. With a "Hmff" she went on to tell me about a guy in her office who bought 2,000 basketball hoops for the camps. Ninety percent of Haitians have never played basketball; they play soccer, and most camps had nowhere to put a basketball hoop. "It was surreal," she continued, "We had them under our desks, in the closets."

Save the Children, as well as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and UNICEF, decided to spend unknown millions of dollars of donor money setting up "child-friendly spaces" where children could come and spend hours each day relieved of the stresses of daily life. Calling them a "sustainable solution," UNICEF alone claimed to have provided such spaces to "almost 100,000 children." But the idea of temporarily relieving children of stress while not even giving their parents a job cleaning up rubble or injecting the money meant for victims of the earthquake into the local economy is not only unsustainable, it's an absurdity. <sup>xlix</sup>

Those who work for the child protection agencies and read the above will surely cite the importance of babysitting the children for their parents. And I know that might sound like a good idea to people in developed countries. After all, for those of us who have children, paying for daycare is expensive. And after such a terrible earthquake, free childcare might be a good thing. But UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision—three agencies that collectively have 120 years working in Haiti—should know better. Free childcare to the poor in developing countries is an oxymoron. That's not the way culture operates in developing countries. With regard to Haiti, we're talking about

a country where the average child has a grand total of 50 close relatives who could care for them. We're talking parents, grandparents, godparents, siblings, half siblings, uncles, aunts, and first cousins. I'm not making this up. I've calculated it (see the notes). Most of those people are not just glad to care for the children, they're eager to. Haitians are raised looking after each other. And we're talking about a moment in time when most were out of work and sitting around with nothing else to do. Indeed, Haitians were up to their ears in people who could baby sit. They did not need the NGOs to do it for them.<sup>1 li</sup>

And then there was millions spent on therapy, such as the case of the Red Cross which, with all their different branches, had collected \$1.2 billion. The Red Cross only provided 814 portable latrines to 27 camps, but they claimed to have provided psycho-social services to 93,484 people.<sup>lii</sup> The therapy was overwhelmingly conducted by "experts," many of whom had never met a Haitian in their life before the earthquake. As seen in Chapter 8, Haitian social worker Maile Alphonse, goddaughter of Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean, quizzically complained to me:

These foreigners, they come here and they want to go into the camps and do therapy. They don't speak the language, and they don't know the culturally patterns expressions of frustration and stress. They don't know anything about the culture. They go in with a translator. You can't do therapy with a translator. They have their pet therapies.... And they don't want to work with the Haitian organizations and the people that have been doing this work.

As for the services to the people in the camps, in reality it wasn't clear who spent how much and on what. In explaining to donors, the NGOs almost always listed the same four categories: food, water, sanitation, and shelter. But with no details. They lumped "latrines, showers, and water distribution points" in sanitation. They threw blankets in with "shelters and kitchen utensils..." They referred to feeding tens of thousands of people without pointing out that they may have fed each of them just

once. The Red Cross provided water to 100,000 people. What did that mean? Was it a single bottle of water to each of them—which means that if they really did need water they would have died from thirst in three days anyway—or was it a truck of water to a camp with 100,000 people? They listed millions of liters of water. What does that mean? Did they spray it from a truck? I happen to know that in most cases the answer is yes, that’s exactly what they did, sprayed it into buckets from a truck. Actually, in most cases it was not even the humanitarian aid agencies that did it. They paid private water trucks to deliver water. And most of that water was not potable. When they said “clean drinking water,” that usually meant water purified with tablets or chlorine. It might still sound impressive to someone sitting in an apartment building in Philadelphia: ‘1 million liters of clean drinking water.’ It is not impressive. I could have reached into my own pocket for one week of consultancy fees (\$2,500), and done the same thing, provided 1 million liters of clean drinking water. Here’s the math: forty-eight 5,000-gallon trucks of water at \$50 per truck for a total of 960,000 quarts/liters of water and then with the remaining \$100, two-hundred \$0.50 liters of bleach and presto! I’m as big a water distributor as the multinational aid agencies. And then there were those NGOs that were even more vague, such as Mercy Corps, recipient of \$21.6 million, which did not give any breakdown on their expenditures at all, saying only that they had “provided emergency assistance to help 830,000 people after the devastating Haiti earthquake.” What in the hell does that mean? And for those who think all you had to do was call them up and ask for clarification, think again. As seen in the introduction, they wouldn’t respond. Out of 196 NGOs that Disaster Accountability Project wrote and inquired about specific expenditure, 176 would not respond.<sup>liii</sup>

Just as with the rapes and orphans, there came a point in time where it seemed like the dam would burst and the aid agencies would have to fess up to what they’d done with the more than the 1.2 billion spent on the camps. It was about that time, the first

year anniversary, when just over half of the aid money that donors had entrusted to humanitarian aid agencies had been spent, that the press corps turned on their humanitarian allies. Questions and critiques became a chorus, of “Where did the money go?” Advocate-journalists inundated newspapers with the phrase. Major publications unleashed a slew of articles condemning the earthquake aid as a failed undertaking.<sup>liv</sup>

“Who Failed on Haiti’s Recovery?”<sup>lv</sup>

*TIME*, January 2011

“NGOs Have Failed Haiti”<sup>lvi</sup>

*NPR*, January 2011

“Where Haiti’s money has gone”

*Reuters*, August 22, 2011<sup>lvii</sup>

“How the World Failed Haiti.”

*Rolling Stone*, August 2011

But again, just like the rapes and orphanages, the proverbial dam did not burst. By mid-2011, with the vast majority of the aid money almost gone—mostly into the pockets of consultants, therapists, aid workers, the bank accounts of the Haitian elite who were gouging them all, and the coffers of NGO and UN headquarters with their overhead expenses as high as 50 percent (something they almost all cleverly lie about)—IOM announced the end of support to the camps. They quit collecting trash. They quit pumping out the toilets. They quit delivering water or cut off what water was available to different camps. According to Professor Mark Schuller who had become an advocate for people in the camps:

... the “free services” that ostensibly were the magnet to the camps—notably water and toilet services—were being shut off as NGO contracts ended. As of October 2011, only 6 percent of IDP camps had water services, and in November water trucking services had to stop per government decree.<sup>lviii</sup>

The January 2012 WASH Cluster (UN/OCHA) report found that in only seven percent of camps was solid waste being collected and disposed of. In 72 percent of all



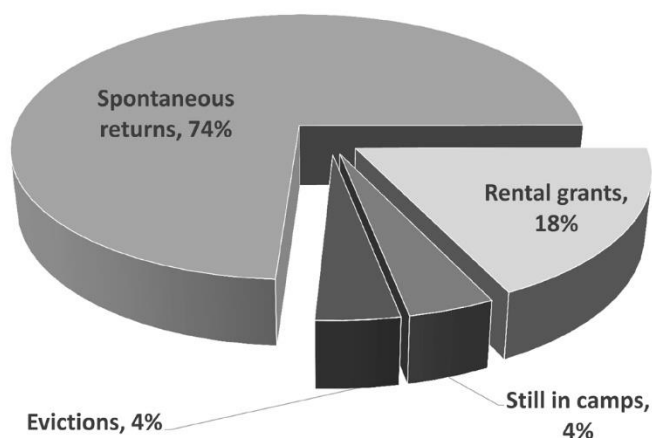
camps those conducting surveys saw solid human waste visible in the camp. Of over 600 camps, there were only 81 where latrines had been emptied in the previous month. At the same time pressure from landlords increased. In some camps thugs invaded, throwing rocks, and setting tents afire.

## SPONTANEOUSLY DISAPPEARING IDPS

By December 2012 there were 347,284 people in the camps, down from the 1.5 million IOM had said were living in camps six months after the earthquake; 74 percent of them had simply left the camps, “spontaneously” according to IOM. It was not clear how many of the remaining thousands were holding out to see if they could keep the land they had their shelter on. Most revealing, over 90 percent of those who were still in the camps had been renters before the earthquake. But victims of the earthquake or not, the humanitarian aid agencies could not leave them as a reminder to the world of the failed post-earthquake relief effort. And so, a new plan was hatched.

**Figure 38. Reasons for Leaving Camps**

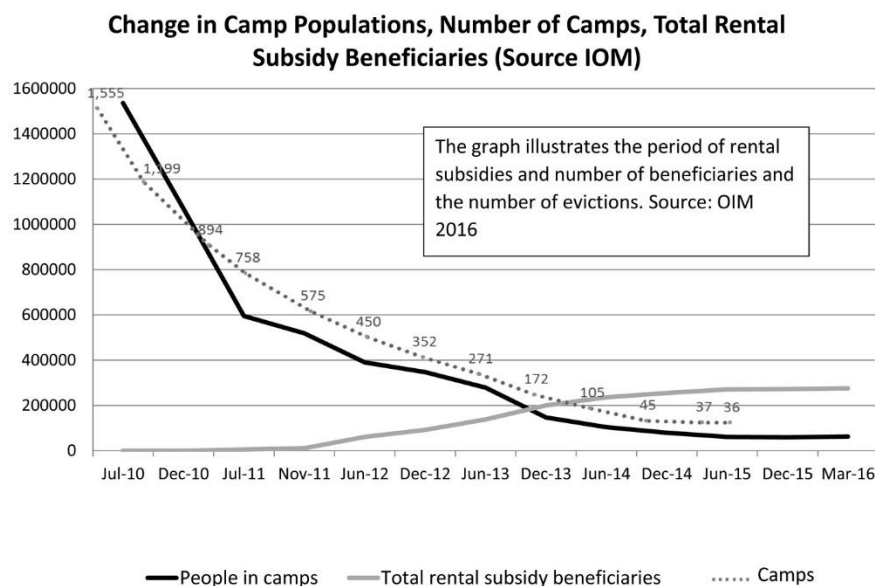
Reasons for Leaving Camps up until 2014  
(units of analysis = people)



In a strategy that critics denounced as “paying off the poor,” 80,000 families (representing 250,000 people) were given \$500 toward a year’s rent. To make sure they

really left the camps, the contract for the money was often given, not to the family, but to the owner of the rental unit where they were supposed to go live. The family had to move; then the tent was torn down; and then the money got transferred. Some 2 to 6 weeks after the move the aid agencies sent people in to verify if the people had really moved into the rental unit, and not simply partnered with a landlord to game the system. And in a move that seemed targeted to assure anyone who was lying to continue to do so—by rewarding them for having lied in the first place--, they gave the recipients another \$125—if they appeared to still be in the house.

How many really did move into the homes isn't clear. The NGOs and UN claimed fantastic success rates. Red Cross evaluators found the results "extremely promising" explaining that "one year on, no grantees have returned to camps and 100 percent have autonomously found an accommodation solution.<sup>lix</sup> Similar results can be found from evaluators for all the aid agencies, "100% satisfaction", "90%" of all recipients really moved to the houses."<sup>lx lxi</sup>



**Figure 39. Trend lines for camps, camp populations, and rental subsidies**

Behind the scenes it wasn't so pretty. In 2016, I was hired to lead a team of researchers for the United Nations Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM Cluster), an agglomeration of 10 of the biggest humanitarian organizations involved in the rental subsidy program. Our task was to review their internal reports and then design and conduct a survey of 1,400 of those who had received rental subsidies. The American Red Cross—under fire at the time for the now famous NPR investigation that revealed they had, despite getting \$500 million in donations for Haiti earthquake victims, built a total of 6 houses—wouldn't even give us the lists to find their beneficiaries. Neither did Sean Penn's organization JP/HRO, which had spent some \$8 million of World Bank funds to provide rental subsidies. When you read between the lines the deception was abundantly in evidence. Alexis Kervins, who managed the data for JP/HRO follow-up verifications, told me that 60 percent of the recipients had never even moved into the homes. In the survey we conducted for the CCCM Cluster, 80 percent of the phone numbers that the NGOs gave us on the contact lists were no good or no longer working.<sup>lxii</sup> The World Bank would note in its 2014, *Rental Support Cash Grant Programs: Operations Manual* that, "one interviewee gave some idea of the scale of the challenge when he noted that of 600 complaints received following registration at one camp, 70 were found to indeed live there." In what was one of the few examples of a verifiable beneficiary list, Concern Worldwide wrote in an internal report that:

Over 3000 persons declared not having any ID during registration; however verification by local organisation ACAT (contracted to provide birth certificates) found that the great majority of those persons do in fact have ID. ACAT's verification brought down the number of paperless beneficiaries to 379 ....<sup>lxiii</sup>



In retrospect, the camps were one more version of the Great Haiti Aid Swindle. And just as with the rapes, orphans, the number dead, and all the other hyped afflictions the humanitarian aid agencies used to collect donations, they justified them with bad data, truth stretching and lies, all needed to fool the overseas public and legitimize the aid that was pouring in. The aid agencies knew what data was in their best interests and what was not. When the numbers didn't add up, they came up with new numbers. Was it impossible that 46 percent of the population were in camps? In one of the first major reports on the camps, U.S. university professor, activist-anthropologist and humanitarian aid researcher Mark Schuller claimed that 70 to 85 percent of the people in Port-au-Prince had been renters before the earthquake. It was a number that got picked up by aid agencies and became part of the narrative. But Schuller had, deliberately or otherwise, mis-cited his colleagues Deepa Panchang and Mark Snyder who in a report had said, not 85 percent, but rather "up to 70%" of people were renters. And they were not referring to the population of Port-au-Prince. They were referring to people living in the camps. Meanwhile, the real figure for proportion of the population that was renters at the time of the earthquake was, as seen, 40-50 percent of Port-au-Prince households, a figure that was available in several major and widely known studies. <sup>lxiv lxx lxxv lxxvi lxxvii lxxviii lxxix lxxx</sup>

Another myth that justified camps was "skyrocketing rental costs." Once again, this untruth came from the prolific Professor Schuller who by this time had dubbed himself the "professor of NGOs" and was traveling to Washington D.C. to brief congressional committees on earthquake expenditures. Schuller cited UN data that rents had increased 300 percent since the earthquake, data that the aid agencies again latched on to. Yet, using real income indicators, rental prices in Port-au-Prince slums were the same in 2010, 2011, and 2012 as they were in 1982 when author Joegodson's father paid the equivalent of \$209 for 1-year rental of a one-room, dirt floor shack with

no latrine in Cite Soleil—one of Port-au-Prince’s poorest slums. As for the 300 percent increase in the cost of housing, Professor Schuller had been citing a UN report. But the UN wasn’t talking about the poor. They were talking about their own personnel who, along with NGO workers and consultants, were getting gouged while the rest of us who lived in Haiti, in popular neighborhoods, continued to pay the same rents.<sup>lxxi lxxii lxxiii</sup>

lxxiv

## CONCLUSION: BEHIND THE GREED AND NEGLIGENCE

The misunderstandings, the failure to reach many of the most vulnerable, the lies about the numbers, the lies about opportunism, and the exploitation of the camps as “aid bait” to draw in donations were major features of the Haitian earthquake relief effort that should not be forgotten. Just as with the rescues, the orphans and the so-called rape epidemic, we shouldn’t allow politics, self-interest and headline hunting journalists to impede our capacity to learn from the failures that came after the earthquake. But it’s important to make clear that the process is *not* some kind of conspiracy to mislead donors and benefit aid workers. Most aid workers who were present—from the lowest field worker to the highest directors—were as dismayed as I am with the waste, with the money that seemed to vanish, and with the failure to reach those who were most in need. And many of the lowest level aid workers did not earn fat salaries. There were thousands of missionaries who earned nothing at all. There were people who paid to come to Haiti, who simply got tired of seeing the thousands of suffering Haitians on television, got off the couch, bought plane tickets, and came to Haiti to try do something about it. And even the high-level directors and administrators of humanitarian aid agencies are mostly good people who believe in what they are doing. I’ve known hundreds of them. The clear majority are compassionate people who set out to help, who wanted to change the world, alleviate poverty and suffering. But as

they advance in the corporate world of charity, they get caught up in the industry of aid, the dreams get swept away and replaced by hope for a salary raise, a pension plan, a promotion, better working conditions, and the very real need to care for their own families. Turning on your employer and revealing that aid is failing is a fast way for an aid executive to lose those perks and get booted out of the business they and their families have come to depend on.

So it's not the aid workers that we should blame for the failures. The issue is ultimately one of accountability. Those mega-aid institutions such as CARE International, Save the Children, and UNICEF depend on donations. The directors' salaries and pension plans depend on those donations. The capacity for the organizations to be present in poor countries—no matter how wasteful and ineffective the organization is—all depends on getting donations. Their dependency on that money means the aid agencies must be pumping the public and the press with information that encourages people to give; their bureaucratic inefficiency means that there is never enough money; and the total absence of any mechanism to make the organizations accountable assures waste and failure to get the money to those for whom the aid was intended. There are no institutional benefits to resolving these problems. There is no mechanism that assures that the organization that most effectively spends the money and helps people out of poverty will get the most money. On the contrary, It's *not* about effectively spending the money; it's about getting the money. The most donations go to those who exaggerate and lie the best. The profit motive is getting donors to give, selling images of extreme need and suffering: vulnerable children, orphans, child slaves, rape victims, homeless people. And they need that money to keep going, to keep the directors paid, keep the organization alive. It's those needs that assure the problems will be exaggerated and the accomplishments, no matter how pathetic, will be hyped. It assures they will always hide the truth. And no matter how ineffective an aid agency is,

those idealists working for the organization can always latch on to the belief that yes, there were mistakes in the past, but it's all about to change, and they're part of that change. But you can't make change happen if the money stops. And in what becomes a fierce competition of making afflictions up, a type of arms race of lies, the money goes to those with the most fantastic tales. And so in the absence of any mechanism to vet those lies and censure those organizations behind the lies, the experts and professionals go right on pumping out untruths and sabotaging their own efforts to help the poor.

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<sup>1</sup> "I don't think they are really hungry." Maria, the woman from Honduras also said, and she was not being insensitive. She understands that they are poor. She has already said, "they are so poor, they are desperate." But she's perplexed, "It's like this is what they do, it's like some kind of opportunity."

<sup>2</sup> For quotes and accounts from Joegodson see, Deralcine, Vilmond Joegodson and Paul Jackson. 2015. *Rocks in the Water, Rocks in the Sun: A Memoir from the Heart of Haiti (Our Lives: Diary, Memoir, and Letters Series)* Paperback – April 23, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> For the building structural evaluations see, Miyamoto, H. Kit Ph.D., S.E (Seismic Engineer)., and Amir Gilani, Ph.D., S.E 2011 *Haiti Earthquake Structural Debris Assessment Based on MTPTC Damage and USAID Repair Assessments*. Miyamoto International

<sup>4</sup> Data from IOM on home returns by month and year for 2010 and 2011:

Month	Sites	Households	Individuals
JUL '10	1,555	361,517	1,536,447
SEP '10	1,356	321,208	1,374,273
NOV '10	1,199	245,586	1,068,882
JAN '11	1,152	195,776	806,377
MAR '11	1,061	171,307	680,494

Source: United Nations. 2011. "HAITI Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster DTM v2.0 – Update – March 2011." 1  
 DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX V2.0 UPDATE, March 16, 2011.  
[www.cliahaiti.org/index.php?page=document&op=pdf](http://www.cliahaiti.org/index.php?page=document&op=pdf).

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<sup>5</sup> Most of the controversy over the BARR Survey centered on the death count. But we also estimated that only 1 of every 20 people in the camps came from earthquake impacted homes. Indeed, that might have been the biggest reason that USAID in Washington had reacted so strongly to the release of the report. As Professor Mark Schuller would unwittingly admit when attacking it, “a red herring.” What was really at issue was the legitimacy of the camps. Schuller would write:

... the attention deflected away from this discussion of the “illegitimate” IDPs, was an insidious outcome. With the public debate focusing on what to most Haitian people I know consider a red herring—with nothing to be done about the dead, no one ultimately responsible for their deaths - the inflammatory and controversial allegations about living IDPs, whose rights were actively being challenged by a range of actors, became tacitly accepted by the lack of scrutiny.

....

To the oft-repeated quote – amplified and justified by the Schwartz report [the BARR]– of people suddenly appearing in unused tents whenever a distribution was made, my eight research teams spent five weeks in the same camp and noticed a constant level of comings and goings, economic activity, and social life. In other words, they were all “real” camps.

(see, Schuller, Mark. 2011. “Smoke and Mirrors: Deflecting Attention Away From Failure in Haiti’s IDP Camps,” *Huffington Post*, December. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/haiti-idp-housing\\_b\\_1155996.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/haiti-idp-housing_b_1155996.html) )

<sup>6</sup> If we had listened to the government death count estimates and the camp estimates, that would have meant this: in July 2010 there would have had 1.5 million people in Camps, 800,000 more in rural areas or homes of others, and another 316,000 dead, for a total of 2.616 million people out of a population of 3.4 million, 76 percent of the population. And yet the survey indicated that as of July, 75 percent were back home. So if 75 percent were back home, and 12 percent were dead, we had an extra 2 million people.

<sup>7</sup> Lest anything be misunderstood in the main text, here is what we found out from the BARR Survey—the one seen in Chapter 5 on the death count—and corroborated from data from Columbia University and Karolinska Institute, was that immediately following the earthquake, 68 percent of residents of greater Port-au-Prince left their homes. Of that we know that in the weeks immediately following the earthquake:

- Nine percent went to the homes of others
- Twenty-one percent moved into the yard or the street in front of their home



- Twenty-six percent (between 465,246 and 584,754) people left Port-au-Prince and went to stay with family in the countryside
- Forty-four percent concentrated in the spontaneous tent cities that appeared throughout the metropolitan areas.

What this means in terms of numbers is that between 866,412 to 894,588 ( $p < .01$ ) people went to camps.

But by July—when OIM and most newspapers and the Haitian government were reporting 1.5 million people in camps—75 percent of those who left Port-au-Prince were back in the city. And from the BARR Survey we knew that 66 percent of all those who had left their homes were back in their residence or in some kind of shelter on the property. That includes people who reported having gone to camps.

Corroborating the BARR findings, Colombia University and Sweden's Karolinska Institute—the same ones who would use cell phone data to estimate earthquake deaths—found almost exactly the same figures for the geographical movement. In their case they used cellular phone data to track the movements of people. They could not tell how many people were in camps or if someone had moved back to their residence prior to the earthquake, but they could tell how many left Port-au-Prince for rural areas and they could tell when they came back to the city. What they concluded was that 570,000 people had fled the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area for the provinces. There was also data from the United Nation's organization OCHA, which was coordinating the aid effort and had sent staff to the provinces to count the migrants. They counted 511,405. So the three major surveys on migration found the same pattern, between 465,246 and 584,754 people left Port-au-Prince in the month after the earthquake. Moreover, studies by the same institutions of estimated return to the city of those IDPs were also very similar.

For the Cell Phone data see:

Bengtsson, Linus, Xin Lu, Richard Garfield, Anna Thorson, Johan von Schreeb. 2010. "Internal Population Displacement in Haiti Preliminary analyses of movement patterns of Digicel mobile phones: 1 January to 11 March 2010," May 14. *Karolinska Institute, Center for Disaster Medicine, and Columbia University, Schools of Nursing and Public Health*.

For the OCHA data on populations movement see: *United Nations/OCHA*. 2010. "Haiti Earthquake - Population Movements out of Port-au-Prince - 8 February 2010."

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/MNIN82GQYS?OpenDocument&query=population percent20movement&emid=EQ-2010-000009-HTI](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/MNIN82GQYS?OpenDocument&query=population%20movement&emid=EQ-2010-000009-HTI). Retrieved 11 May 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Here are the specific numbers from the USAID/BARR Survey of 5,158 residences regarding how many people were in camps. One year after the earthquake, IOM was still claiming 1 million, 88

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percent of Port-au-Prince residents were back home. Based on that figure, the estimated number of legitimate IDPs was no more than 375,031 people.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding the veracity of asking people in the BARR Survey about being in camps: This did not mean, of course, that a respondent didn't have a tent in a camp. The point is that they were unlikely to tell us if they did. But by the same token, there was no apparent reason why they would have reported themselves living in the house or yard when they were really living in a camp. Indeed, the beauty of the BARR Survey was that we had approached the issue from the other direction. Rather than counting people in the camps and asking if they really lived in the tent or if they really didn't have house, we had gone to the source, houses. And that's what made the BARR Survey and estimating the number of real IDPs foolproof. Indeed, it might have been the only way to do it. No one would ever be able to get the information from the camps because those in the camps who had a home, or who were renters who had lost nothing but no longer wanted to pay rent (and who can blame them), or who were capitalizing on an opportunity to migrate from the rural areas to Port-au-Prince, were not about to tell surveyors that they were trying to game the NGOs. It would have defeated the whole purpose of being in the camp. But because we went to houses, people had no reason to say they were in camps. In fact, if they were also in a camp, they were not going to say so at risk of impugning themselves. And so by doing that, by determining who was home and asking about the whereabouts of everyone else who had been in the residence at the time of the earthquake, we were working from the other direction. We asked the residents in the sampled houses where they went after the earthquake and where they were at the time of the BARR. If we couldn't find any residents—as in the house was destroyed—we did the next best thing, we asked the neighbors. That made it a powerful way to go about estimating the camp population. And just like the death toll there was good reason to believe we had over-estimated. We were drawing on people in the hardest hit areas of Port-au-Prince. And just like the death count, the aid executives and activists were incensed. Yet, as I keep trying to emphasize, none of this means that there were not desperate people in Port-au-Prince. There were. They have been for a long time. Long before the earthquake. I'll get back to that.

<sup>10</sup> One more of so many clear declarations from significant sources deeply entrenched in the relief effort and who contradicted the official claims of 2.3 million legitimately displaced persons came from Kit Miyamota, the Japanese seismic engineer who oversaw the USAID/UN/Haitian government house assessment program Miyamota recounted to me that,

When we repair yellow houses [damaged homes], we get to know the owners and renters very well since we stay there for an average of three days. Our Haitian engineers know their living status. After we repair yellow houses, approximately 100% of people return for 24 hours a day. But about 90% of them keep the

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unoccupied tents in the IDP camps since they hope to receive services and money to remove them.

(*Personal Communication by E-mail, 2011, published in USAID/BARR 2011*)

<sup>xi</sup> For Arnaud Dandoy's analysis of "moral panic," see, *Insecurity and humanitarian aid in Haiti: an impossible dialogue? Analysis of humanitarian organisations' security policies in Metropolitan Port-au-Prince*. Groupe URD (Urgence – Réhabilitation – Développement)

<sup>xii</sup> For Nigel Fisher claims see: *UN Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti*. 2010. "Haiti: 6 months after... UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti." Published on July 09, 2010 <http://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/haiti-6-months-after>

<sup>xiii</sup> For population density data, see: CIAT (Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical). 2005. CIAT, United Nations Environment Program, Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Columbia University, and the World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Population Database. Version 3. At:

[www.na.unep.net/datasets/datalist.php3orgisweb.ciat.cgiar.org/population/dataset.htm](http://www.na.unep.net/datasets/datalist.php3orgisweb.ciat.cgiar.org/population/dataset.htm).

Christian Peacemaker Teams. 1998. [www.corrystuart.com/slavehaiti1.html](http://www.corrystuart.com/slavehaiti1.html)

<sup>xiv</sup> For Haiti having long been an ecological disaster, see: Lundahl, Mats. 1983. *The Haitian economy: Man, land, and markets*. New York: St. Martin's.

<sup>xv</sup> For the impact of Haitian runoff and waste, see for example: UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) 2014. "Wastewater, Sewage and Sanitation." Caribbean Environment program. <http://www.cep.unep.org/publications-and-resources/marine-and-coastal-issues-links/wastewater-sewage-and-sanitation>

<sup>xvi</sup> For early 20<sup>th</sup> century US military invasions throughout the Caribbean, see: Grossman, Zoltan. 2001. "A briefing on the history of U.S. military interventions." <http://www.academic.evergreen.edu/g/grossmaz/>

<sup>xvii</sup> For US and European domestic farm subsidies, see:

Reidl, Brian. 2002. "Still at the federal trough: Farm subsidies for the rich and famous shattered records in 2001," *Research Agriculture Backgrounder*, #1452. Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation.

Roberts, Ivan, and Frank Jotzo. 2001. *2002 US Farm Bill: Support and Agricultural Trade*. ABARE. Research Report 01.13. [www.agobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=30357](http://www.agobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=30357)

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<sup>xviii</sup> For evolution of the assembly sector, see: McGowan, Lisa A. 1997. "Democracy undermined, economic justice denied: Structural adjustment and the aid juggernaut in Haiti." Washington, DC: Development Group for Alternative Policies.

<sup>xix</sup> For the quote, "an historic change toward deeper market interdependence with the United States," "latent Haitian agro-industrial potential waiting to explode," and Peter McPherson testifying before the U. S. Congress that the American Plan would ultimately "make the prospects for Haiti as the 'Taiwan of the Caribbean' real indeed," see: DeWind, Josh and David H. Kinley III. 1988. *Aiding migration: The impact of international development assistance in Haiti*. Boulder: Westview. p. 61.

<sup>xx</sup> For rice imports and loss of revenue to local farmers, see: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2006. "Haiti country reports on economic policy and trade practices—1998 key economic indicators." Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Market Access and Compliance, Trade Compliance Center. At [trade.gov/mac](http://trade.gov/mac)

Georges, Josiane. 2004. "Trade and the disappearance of Haitian rice," *Ted Case Studies*, Number 725. [www.american.edu/TED/haitirice.htm](http://www.american.edu/TED/haitirice.htm)

<sup>xxi</sup> For Arkansas rice in Haiti, see : Tayler, Letta. 2006. "U.S. exports killing Haiti's once thriving rice industry," *Newsday*, February 12.

Georges, Josiane. 2004. "Trade and the disappearance of Haitian rice," *Ted Case Studies*, Number 725. [www.american.edu/TED/haitirice.htm](http://www.american.edu/TED/haitirice.htm)

<sup>xxii</sup> For the judgment against Erly, see: "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA before the SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934. Release No. 47286. January 30, 2003. ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING ENFORCEMENT Release No. 1710. January 30, 2003. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDING File No. 3-11024"

Rice Corporation of Haiti (RCH). "Special Issue Report, [1 November 1995]." Copies of the Special Issue Report are available from Washington Office on Haiti, P.O. Box 29218, Washington DC 20017. Phone: 202/ 319-4464.

Bohning, Don. 2000. "Customs dispute over rice halts U.S. aid to Haiti," *The Miami Herald*, March 23.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See Haggerty, R.A. (1989) 'Haiti: A Country Study'. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office for the Library of Congress. <http://countrystudies.us/haiti/>

<sup>xxiv</sup> To elaborate on the history of land invasion in Haiti: The Haitian popular class masses have been on a steady 200-year march, first taking the land from the French colonists, then from mulatto

plantation class that survived the revolution. To this day, elite Haitian land owners often watch helplessly as peasants and urban immigrants move onto the land (elites too sometimes take land from one another in this manner and there are professional land scammers who have become elite by systematically invading land), break it into small parcels and incorporate it into their vigorous informal trade in garden and house plots. And once they got it, it unlikely its ever coming back. When those elites have showed up shaking a title in hand and demanding their property back they have far more often than not found themselves confronted by 100s of rock hurling and machete wielding peasants. And they emphatically lose 90% or more of those battles. Asked if they're worried about losing their land, the BARR found that only 28% of owners felt insecure about their property rights.

With this in mind, it is useful to note that Payne and Associates in a 2000 presentation to the World Bank, described private land tenure as largely a concept that was foisted on developing countries in service of colonial interests. Moreover, Payne and Associates argue that the legal costs associated with registration, taxes, and building codes discriminates against lower income groups forcing them into unauthorized settlements. They conclude that forcing a titular system on the poor only exacerbate evictions of the most vulnerable social groups.

<sup>xxv</sup> The typical pattern is for people to build on the land while paying rent. The rents are small, averaging 500 HTG per year (about \$10). And the right to buy the lands is a given.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Sontag, Deborah. 2010. In Haiti, Rising Call for Displaced to Go Away." *New York Times*. October 4.

<sup>xxvii</sup> The night that Michel Martelly won the presidential election I stood with Sean Penn as he looked out at the tents around us, "It's not a camp anymore," he said with a tone of marvel, "It's a town." Penn, who for a short time befriended me, estimated there were 50,000 people living there. It had been the golf course of the Petion-Ville Golf and Tennis Club. Now it was, courtesy of Sean Penn, one of the most famous refugee camps in the world. Surrounded by mostly impoverished neighborhoods of several 100 thousands of people.

<sup>xxviii</sup> For Abdel Kouddous quote see, Goodman, Amy. 2010. "Land Ownership at the Crux of Haiti's Stalled Reconstruction." *Democracy Now*. July 14.

<sup>xxix</sup> Here is the full quote for the question put to editor of US based newspaper, Haiti Liberte, Kim Ives. The question was asked by *Democracy Now* host Sharif Abdel Kouddous:

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And Kim, this issue of the land that, you write, is at the crux of the matter, when we were in Port-au-Prince, that's what everyone was saying: Where are all these people going to go? These tent cities literally are on every street in Port-au-Prince, just teeming around the city. And from aid activists — from activists to people on the ground, organizers, community organizers are all talking about this issue of land: Where are all these people going to go? And you're writing about how the bourgeoisie own these large tracts of land that are ideal for relocations, but in fact the government and the Haitian interim commission is taking land away from the commons. Can you explain that division?

<sup>xxx</sup> By April, three months before Kouddous had posed the question to Kim Ives seen in the previous endnote, the 26-member Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC) was ceded the lead role in the reconstruction effort. Co-chaired by former President Bill Clinton and Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive," 13 members represented international sector, including the IMF, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank as well as donor governments the U.S., France and Canada. The other thirteen members represented Haiti's political and business elite. It's unlikely that international participant every understood the dimensions of what was happening. Kim Ives, arguably the keenest of all contemporary Haiti observers, did understand, as seen in the main text.

<sup>xxxi</sup> The rest of Kim Ives quote "As a result, only one major displaced person camp, Corail-Cesselesse [Canaan], has been built, about 10 miles north of the capital, on a forbidding strip of sun-baked desert situated between Titayen and Morne Cabrit, two desolate zones where death-squads dumped their victims during the anti-Aristide coups.'

<sup>xxxii</sup> From Other Worlds website: <http://otherworldsarepossible.org/two-years-after-earthquake-haiti-housing-our-battle>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> For the humanitarian agencies and for the US government the camps were costly and they had to end.. As long as they stayed they would be a testimony to the failed recovery effort. But for the time being they were evidence of the terrible disaster and the need for a massive aid package to assist Haiti. The Haitian government may not have gotten money to assist with the camps, but they would be central decision makers regarding what was done with people in the camps, new housing, and the money that was pledged, an amount that was pushed higher by the obvious needs evident in the camps.

For the activists who were accustomed to assailing the aid agencies, it was an equally massive opportunity. Indeed, a chance of a lifetime. The camps were evidence of so much they had complained about: homelessness, sites of extreme insecurity, gender-based violence, poverty and vulnerability, apathy of the elite, the elite monopoly of property and power. And now, here were all these poor people in miserable conditions, concentrated in precise areas, easily accessible, bored,

without work, all ready to be organized and educated into action. At stake was billions of dollars in aid that had been collected in the name of these poor people.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> For the NGOs involved in Corail-Cesselesse (Canaan) see, Alex Wynter and Lynette Nyman 2010. "Red Cross Volunteers Assist with New Settlement." IFRC. April 19.

<sup>xxxv</sup> For Haitian Government advisor, Leslie Voltaire quote see, Associated Press. 2010. "Haiti recovery bogged down 6 months after quake." July 12.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> For Janet Reitman's *Rolling Stone* article see, Reitman, Janet, 2011. "Beyond Relief: How the World Failed Haiti." *Rolling Stone*. August 4.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> For main stream press on the Corail-Cesselesse (Canaan) flop see, Katz, Jonathan and Marko Alvarez 2010. "Haiti: Summer storm floods 'safe' refugee camp." NBC News July 12.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> In the 6 months, from September 2010 until March 2011 I was working, sleeping, and eating meals in the same house with the State Department employees hired to vet the sites, design the housing projects, and hire surveyors the disappointment and frustration was thick. It was a roller coaster. One outrageous surprise after another punctuated their \$500- to \$700-per-consultant days. Based on that experience, here's some of my take and inside view and opinion of Corail/Canaan as it was unfolding. First it was not a bad idea. Water or not. There had been an earthquake. One and one half million people in need of homes. More than \$10 billion in aid pledged to help Haiti 'build back better.' The Haitian parliament had ceded power for reconstruction to a commission Haitian and Humanitarian aid executives with all the power to expropriate lands and approve spending. Why the hell not. They could pipe water in. They could build a desalinization plant. The sea was literally right there, several hundred yards away. A 100 acre fresh water lake was less than 1 mile away in the other direction. And only a few miles further up the valley, dozens of springs surround the largest salt water lake in the Caribbean. As if all that were not enough, in mountains above Corail-Cesselesse a labyrinth of river drains the Haitian-Dominican highlands Central Mountain ranges, a veritable Caribbean Alps with peaks rising over 10,000 feet. A small portion of any or all of that could have been put at the service of Canaan. They could have made the desert bloom. They had it all, money, land, potential water sources that could be piped in, and the will of the international community. Why couldn't it be a hit? To make sure it was a hit the US State Department hired New York City based Dalberg Global Development Advisors. Dalberg approved five sites for development. The show was moving. Then it crashed.

USAID-Haiti had their own consultants check the Dalberg sites. Bill Vastine was one of them. Vastine explained to Reuter's journalist that,

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One of the sites they said was habitable was actually a small mountain. It had an open-mined pit on one side of it, a severe 100-foot vertical cliff, and ravines. It became clear that these people [Dalberg consultants] may not even have gotten out of their SUVs.

Vastine was part of a team of USAID housing consultants. I happened to be living with them at the time—part of USAID contracting stipulations after the earthquake. The process of assessments and reassessments dragged on for months. In the meantime tens of thousands of squatters were pouring onto the property.

They approved of five sites for housing of earthquake survivors outside of Port-au-Prince. The Haitian government then leaked the information that this would soon become homesteading zone. Tens of thousands of squatters arrived. One evening, in October 2010 a senior USAID consultant, Earl Kessler, architect and housing Guru with 40 years of experience, comes into the room he and I shared in a US government consultant housing. Earl is tired. He just spent the entire day re-evaluating the sites that had Dalberg approved.

"You know how many of the five housing sites are habitable?" He asks me.

I'm sitting on my bed. I shake my head. *How would I know?*

He holds up his hand and forms a zero with his thumb and index finger. "Not a single one. The Dalberg guys apparently never got out of the car."

"Why?" I ask.

"Why didn't they get out of the car, you mean?"

"No. Why aren't they habitable?"

"Drainage, flooding. The one where [the aid group] Samaritan's Purse put shelters? The water has to rise 14 inches before it even begins to drain."

The Dalberg revelations can be seen as what officially killed the "Zen City."

<sup>xxxix</sup> USAID housing projects that never materialized ran into what we could call systemic problems, meaning problems with the way Haiti works. They were the same reasons majority of other housing projects also melted down in chaos and disorder. When the US State Department paid for professional services, the Haitian bidders – fully conscious now of the total disregard for normal costs – inflated prices to levels that would be ridiculous even in developed countries. The major US government contractor, Chemonics billed the US government 35 cents a square meter to survey land for housing. That's 3 to 7 times the 5 cents per square meter it would cost in the US. It meant the State Department was paying \$1,400 per acre to survey property that wasn't even worth that much money before the earthquake. Paying didn't help. In almost every case the surveys and property ownership turned out to be bogus or questionable. In the end it was never clear who owned the land to the north of Port-au-Prince, any of it. In one case a US marine reportedly showed up at the Embassy with a title claiming ownership of land.



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<sup>xl</sup> For a summary of all but the Sean Penn quote see: Haiti Grassroots Watch. 2013. "Controversy over the Corail Camp." Vol. 6, No. 48, From 12 to 18 June 2013.

<sup>xli</sup> Priscilla Phelps, at one time the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission Senior Housing Advisor, would comment in the documentary *Fatal Assistance*, by Raoul Peck, "There is not a job or a livelihood creation or an economic development strategy that's been defined in a year and a half. And I just felt like we were being played."

<sup>xlii</sup> For Aby Brun and NABATEC see, Haiti Grassroots Watch. 2013. "HAITI: Profit-Driven "Slum Reconstruction" Will Cost 'Hundreds Of Millions.' " Post on Global Research, June 20.

<sup>xliii</sup> Déralciné, Vilmond Joegodson; Jackson, Paul (2015-03-16). *Rocks in the Water, Rocks in the Sun: A Memoir from the Heart of Haiti (Our Lives: Diary, Memoir, and Letters)* (Kindle Locations 3209-3216). Athabasca University Press. Kindle Edition.

<sup>xliv</sup> Corail-Cesselesse was not the only effort on the north of Port-au-Prince, essentially the only direction to go as the rest of the area surrounding the city was population.

<sup>xlv</sup> For Joegodson's quote on "civil war" if they tried to clear Corail-Cesselesse, see his and Paul Jackson's blog, *Hope in Canaan* May 20, 2010 by Joegodson and Paul.

<sup>xlvi</sup> When I did my doctoral dissertation in 2000, I calculated the cost of building the typical two room rural Haitian house and came up with a price ranging from \$150 to \$700, depending upon how many materials the builder procured on his or her own. Fifteen years earlier, as a bumbling newcomer, I oversaw the building of two of my own houses, Haitian houses at the price of around \$800 each.

See, Schwartz, Timothy 2000 "Children are the Wealth of the Poor:" High Fertility and the Organization of Labor in the Rural Economy of Jean Rabel, Haiti( Ph.D. dissertation). Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida

<sup>xlvii</sup> Why did people refuse to move to the 'luxury' tent city? Because the people they had been built for lived on the far side of the city and refused to relocate.

<sup>xlviii</sup> For the amount of toilets vs. tents in Camp Jean Marie Vincent see, Cullen, Kimberly A. and Louise C. Ivers. 2010. "Human rights assessment in Parc Jean Marie Vincent, Port-au-Prince, Haiti August 26." *Health and Human Rights*, Volume 12 :2. December.

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<sup>xlix</sup> For 'Sustainable Children Friendly Spaces' see, UNICEF. 2011. "For children and families in Haiti, the long road from relief to recovery. Haiti earthquake: one-year report." January 6. [http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/haiti\\_57363.html](http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/haiti_57363.html)

<sup>i</sup> There were, of course, many people whom the earthquake experience had left traumatized. But psychology, trauma and how people deal with it is heavily cultural specific. Indeed, the wrong tactics can be traumatic themselves. And these 'therapists' were overwhelmingly people of whom had never been to Haiti in their lives before the earthquake. As Maile Alphonse, God Daughter of then Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean, told me in Chapter 8, 'they can't speak the language and they don't know the culturally patterns expressions of frustration and stress.' Although not specific to the earthquake, an example of cultural miscommunication that used to strike me is that American Airlines flight, before taking off from Port-au-Prince would play videos of whales swimming in the ocean. The videos were almost certainly concocted by teams of U.S. psychologists with the intention of putting nervous passengers at ease. And it made sense. Many of the passengers flying out of Haiti have low income back grounds, are from the rural areas of urban neighborhoods and not experienced air travelers. The videos were accompanied by easy music and any foreigner would assume they must be as soothing to Haitians as they are to a U.S. or European who wells knows that whales are docile and benevolent creatures. The irony of all this is that most Haitians know whales to be monsters that eat people. The sight of one at my research village left everyone terrified for years. They feel the same way about porpoises. So one could interpret what American Airlines was doing as putting clips of Godzilla to easy music in the hopes of pacifying nervous US airline passengers.

<sup>li</sup> Haitian children have large families who can care for them in the absence of parents. An example is children in the Northwest commune of Jean Rabel where I did several years of research, including a random survey of 1,586 households (out of a total of ~20,020), we found that on average a 10 year old children has 10 full and half brothers and sisters; 20 uncles and aunts (including parent's half siblings); and 35 first cousins. They also have a maximum of 12 living grandparents (4 grandparents and 8 great grandparents); and a possible 40 great uncles and aunts (the siblings and half siblings of his or her grandparents). In addition to these blood relatives, a Jean Rabel child has two fictive mothers and two fictive fathers (godparents and spouses of godparents).. Any one of these relatives may be disposed, even eager, to adopt the child if he has lost his parents. Indeed, about 30% of Jean Rabel children who have living parents are not raised by their parents at all, but by another relative—most often a grandmother.

<sup>lii</sup> For figures on Red Cross therapy vs. Latrines see, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2012. Haiti Recovery Operation, From Camp to Community. Summary Plan of Action-July 2011 – December 2013.

<sup>liii</sup> Mercy Corps would get slightly more specific on January 11, 2013 blog where they claim:

- Created 234,000 temporary jobs through cash for work activities
- Supported 100,000 children with their recovery from trauma
- Helped 429,000 access clean drinking water
- Was the first NGO in Haiti to use a mobile wallet for cash transfers to 8,700 families
- Provided 1 million people in high-risk areas with lifesaving information and water treatment products to reduce the incidence of cholera
- Supported 30,000 families hosting earthquake survivors

Mercy Corps. 2013. "Three Years Later, Investing In The Long-Term Haiti." January 11.

<https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/haiti/three-years-later-investing-long-term>

For information on Mercy Corps see, Mercy Corps. 2010. "Annual Report: A Crisis is Just the Beginning." [http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2010\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2010_annual_report.pdf)

<sup>liv</sup> Regarding the documentary "Where Did all the Money Go" by Michelle Mitchel, my opinion of the film was that it was narrow, demagogic attack on the NGOs from a journalist who depended heavily on activists such as Scott Snyder and Professor Mark Schuller. The film nevertheless stirred up a storm in driving home the undisputable fact that people in the camps in fact got very little of the aid money. The next question was, of course, if the camps didn't get it—and the NGOs were claiming that it was the camps that were getting most—then where did the money go. Indeed, it became almost a cliché: "Where did all money go?"

<sup>lv</sup> Ratnesar, Romesh. 2011. "Who Failed on Haiti's Recovery?" *Time*, January 10.

<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2041450,00.html>

<sup>lvi</sup> Doucet, Isabeau. 2011. "The Nation: NGOs Have Failed Haiti," *NPR*. January 13.

<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/13/132884795/the-nation-how-ngos-have-failed-hait>

<sup>lvii</sup> Salmon, Felix. 2011. "Where Haiti's money has gone," *Reuters*, August 22.

<http://blogs.reuters.com/felix-salmon/2011/08/22/where-haitis-money-has-gone/>

<sup>lviii</sup> Schuller, Marc. 2011. "Smoke and Mirrors: Deflecting Attention Away From Failure in Haiti's IDP Camps." *Huffington Post*. December 22, 2011.

<sup>lix</sup> See, Rana R., Condor J. and Juhn C. 2013. “External Evaluation of the Rental Support Cash Grant Approach Applied to Return and Relocation Programs in Haiti.” RSCG Programs – Operational Manual. *Wolfgroup Performance Consultants*.

<sup>lx</sup> See: *Socio-Dig*. 2016. “Final Report for Comparative Assessment of Livelihood Approaches Across Humanitarian Organizations in Post-Earthquake Haiti Camp Resettlements.” *Concern Worldwide*. September 22.

Time	Families in camps	People in camps	Total rental subsidy beneficiaries/ individual
Jul-10	361517	1536477	0
Dec-10	245586	1068822	0
Jul-11	149317	594811	5530
Nov-11	127658	519164	11061
Jun-12	97913	390276	60834
Dec-12	87750	347284	91804
Jun-13	70910	278945	138260
Dec-13	39464	146573	200200
Jun-14	28134	103565	235594
Dec-14	21218	79397	255227
Jun-15	14970	60801	270436
Dec-15	14679	59720	272371
Mar-16	17119	62590	275689

<sup>lxi</sup> For data on the number of camps and population sizes of the camps see, United Nations. 2011. HAITI Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster DTM v2.0 – Update – March 2011 1 DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX V2.0 UPDATE March 16, 2011. [www.clio-haiti.org/index.php?page=document&op=pdf](http://www.clio-haiti.org/index.php?page=document&op=pdf).

<sup>lxii</sup> A quick summary of findings from the survey we did on behalf of the CCCM cluster: Of the 20 percent of phone numbers that worked, we drew a sample of 1,400 people and we went to their rental home and interviewed each for over an hour. We asked detailed questions about everything from where they lived and what they owned before the earthquake to what they owned in the camp and now. We asked about medical care, people who had been sick and died. And we asked about occupations. What we found was more of the adult women in the sample (household head and/or spouse of male household head) were uneducated, and clearly many of the households were dirt poor. But the findings did not significantly differ from the rest of Port-au-Prince: 89 percent had phones, 53 percent had televisions; 14 percent of the women were traders, and 18 percent of those regularly traveling to the Dominican Republic to buy goods for resale, one unthinkingly reported

that she goes to Miami to buy goods; 32 percent of the men and 13 percent of the women were skilled workers such as masons, electricians, tailors and seamstresses. There were 39 drivers, 18 motorcycle taxis, 23 civil servants, 16 fisherman, 19 school teachers, 1 policeman. None of the people we interviewed had been out of the camps for more than three years, most less than two years, but 8 percent had purchased land in Port-au-Prince; 32 percent already owned land in rural areas. As for the 40 percent who really were not doing well and had moved out of their rental unit, 30 percent moved into to homes with family and friends, 10 percent moved back into tents or camps. 20 percent no longer had a toilet or even an outhouse. And these were the people we could find. I could go on and on with this. But the bottom line was that there was nothing unusual about the population of camp dwellers. Overall they were not the poorest of the urban poor as illustrated by finding such as only 27 percent of the Subsidy Sample vs. a higher 30 percent of the general population was without a television at the time of the earthquake; 5 vs. 15 percent lived in a house with a dirt floor, and 4 vs. 15 percent were without a toilet. Not least of all the average rent that subsidy sample respondents reported paying per year at the time of the earthquake was 13,240 HTG (US\$331), much lower than the 20,817 HTG (US\$520) annual rent annual rent IOM-ACTED reported in their 2011 survey report (see page 28 of the French version of the report).

<sup>lxiii</sup> For the quote regarding only 379 of 3,000 people claiming to have lost their ID cards being legitimate see, Concern Worldwide Report to the European Commission - Directorate General - Humanitarian aid and Civil protection – ECHO eSingle form for humanitarian aid actions App\_version Agreement eSingle form for humanitarian aid actions App\_version Agreement; page 6.

<sup>lxiv</sup> The point is that those working for aid agencies deliberately pick and chose the data they would pass on to the press and in other cases outright twisted their own data to suit their narrative. Put another way, obvious facts, logical deductions, and representative statistical studies did not deter those bent on arguing that the camps were inhabited almost wholly by legitimate earthquake victims and homeless people. Instead of trying to understand the results and acknowledging widespread opportunism—something that would have put the humanitarian agencies on the track to helping those really in desperate need—the reaction to any contradiction was swift and defensive. IOM spokesman Leonard Doyle told The Miami Herald:

It stretches the credibility to suggest that there are less than 100,000 [internally displaced persons] in camps when we physically counted 680,000 in March... A few camps in Port-au-Prince easily exceed their IDP number.

No one had said that there were not real IDPs. No one had ever said that there were not 680,000 people in the camps at the time the BARR was published. Certainly not me. The issue was who were those people and how many of them were from destroyed homes. And more to the point regarding what can only be understood as yet one more twisting of the data to suit their needs, Doyle and everyone else working for IOM knew that what he said was not true. Five months before Doyle

made the statement to the Miami Herald, IOM had done a survey of 1,152, camps and found that at least 25 of all tents in the camps were empty (See following endnote).

<sup>lxv</sup> In January and mid-February 2011, precisely while we were carrying out the BARR, and when IOM was reporting to the press that there were 806,377 IDPs in 1,152, camps, IOM and its partners ACTED had been completing another survey. Their field teams visited 1,152 IDP sites. What they found was that 92 of those sites had only empty tents. That's almost 10 percent of all the sites. All empty tents. Of the 1,061 camps that did have tents with people living in them, 712 were found to contain at least some empty tents. What that meant varied. In one area (Ganthier), 73 percent of the 213 tents were empty. 155 empty tents were empty that hosted a total population of 58 Households. In the commune of Croix-Des-Bouquets, 6,525 tents located on 63 sites were empty; that's 30 percent of all tents in that area. In the southern regions of Grand Goave 736 empty tents located on 34 sites were empty: 49 percent of tents all tents in that area. In Léogâne, 1,770 tents located at 74 IDP sites were empty; 36 percent of all tents in that area. Overall, combining the empty tent cities with the empty tents, we can infer that 25 percent of all tents in the IDP sites that IOM checked were empty. As for how many of the 75 percent of the remainder had people how actually lived in those tents, we don't know. But IOM did report that the average household size was 4.1 and in some areas as low as 3.3, compared to 5.2 to 5.8 for Port-au-Prince homes in general. To their credit, IOM interpreted this as suggesting that, "some IDPs have decided to keep some household members in the IDP sites so as to retain access to services in the sites, while other family members return or resettle elsewhere."

All the proceeding came from an unpublished summary. But those interested in a reference and official summary may go to, United Nations. 2011. HAITI Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster DTM v2.0 – Update – March 2011 1 DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX V2.0 UPDATE March 16, 2011 [www.clio-haiti.org/index.php?page=document&op=pdf](http://www.clio-haiti.org/index.php?page=document&op=pdf).

<sup>lxvi</sup> After the BARR was published, Doyle wrote to me and complained,

I'm trying to square your figures with the DTM which recorded 680,000 camp residents in March and a fraction lower in an upcoming report. This is based on a direct headcount, usually at 6 am, when the researchers go to camps. Heads of family get a registration card. It seems hard to game that system as it's an actual count.

*(Personal communication, e-mail, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011)*

He knew that people in the camps had not been registered during 6 a.m. head counts. IOM had set up tables whereupon people lined up and registered themselves.

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<sup>lxvii</sup> IOM did report that the average household size was 4.1 and in some areas as low as 3.3, compared to 5.2 to 5.8 for Port-au-Prince homes in general. To their credit, IOM interpreted this as suggesting that, “some IDPs have decided to keep some household members in the IDP sites so as to retain access to services in the sites, while other family members return or resettle elsewhere.

<sup>lxviii</sup> The IOM/ACTED survey also found that 17 percent of respondents reported they wished to return to their original homes, 12 percent said they wanted to leave Port-au-Prince and go back to the countryside. Some 11 percent said they needed more information to decide, 10 percent said they wanted to go to a planned site, while 9 percent were prepared to return to their own home, even if it was not repaired. Finally, 19 percent said they had no place to go.

This survey provides factual-based evidence of the need to communicate more and in a better way with the earthquake affected population. All humanitarian partners need to better assess the information needs of these communities to be able to adapt and design relocation and return projects according to the needs and concerns expressed by displaced people.

See, ACTED. 2011. “Enquête IOM – ACTED. Intentions Des Deplaces Haïti.” May 8, -2012

<sup>lxix</sup> As seen elsewhere, activist-anthropologist Marc Schuller became one of the most ardent defenders of the ‘legitimacy’ of the camp residents and in doing so was an important bulwark of mis-information for the aid agencies. In a US National Science Foundation funded surveys that Schuller conducted in IDP camps, 3.5 percent of the respondents reported having immigrated to Port-au-Prince after the earthquake. Extrapolating that to the general population meant, Schuller was saying, meant if there were 100,000 people in camps, 3,500 were from areas outside of Port-au-Prince, i.e. had come from outlying cities and rural areas after the earthquake (most people in Port-au-Prince were in fact born outside the metropolitan area) . It’s a testament to the honesty of some of those people in the camps that they admitted they arrived after the earthquake. It also illustrates the extent to which the camps served—even without the aid—as an advantage to the poor, i.e. they did not have to pay rent. But Schuller used that finding to argue that::

To the concern about the free aid being a magnet pulling tens of thousands of people from the provinces, the survey showed only 3.5 percent came since 2010, with the mean year of migration to Port-au-Prince being 1993, which follows the general pattern of Haiti’s rural exodus. Simply put, all but 3.5 percent are “real” IDPs.

It’s a rather bizarre conclusion. Only people who arrived from the rural areas after the earthquake could be ‘fake’ IDPs? It also suggests a type of condescension on the part of Schuller to assume that the people in the camps were so simple that they would not have had the good sense to appear to surveyors that they had been displaced by the earthquake thereby assuring that they would partake

in any aid and perhaps even be given land, a home, or at the very least one free year rent. Those that did say they arrived after the earthquake assured themselves of getting nothing in the end, except evicted.

<sup>lxx</sup> Regarding home ownership in Port-au-Prince: in fact, surveys before the earthquake estimated that 42 percent of Port-au-Prince residents were homeowners (see page 53 of FAFO 2003 *Enquête Sur Les Conditions De Vie En Haïti ECVH – 2001 Volume I*). In the USAID/BARR (2011) survey we found that 70 percent of Port-au-Prince respondents claimed to own the house they lived in, 60 percent claimed to own the land, 93 percent of these had some kind of paper. Notable as well is that the USAID/BARR census of Ravine Pentad (2010)—one of the Port-au-Prince neighborhoods most impoverished and most severely damaged in the earthquake—found that 60 percent of respondents owned the house; 51 percent owned the house and land. The discrepancy in the differences between the USAID surveys and that of the 2001 ECVH is due to the latter not have differentiated between ownership of the house and ownership of the land. As seen in the USAID surveys, a common practice in popular neighborhoods is to build homes on rented land and subsequently purchase the land. Rents for land are typically 1/10 to 1/20 that of the rent for home. In a 2012 survey I designed and coordinated for CARE International we visited 800 randomly selected homes in Leogane and found that 72 percent of household heads reported they owned the land and the house. In a CARE funded survey of heavily urbanized Carrefour we found that 50 percent of 800 randomly selected household heads claimed to own the house and the land; 60 percent owned the house.

<sup>lxxi</sup> For Schuller's claim that the cost of housing had increased 300 percent, see: "UNSTABLE FOUNDATIONS: Impact of NGOs on Human Rights for Port-au-Prince's Internally Displaced People." October 4, 2010, page 4.

<sup>lxxii</sup> For Schuller's mis-interpreted citation of 70-85 percent of Port-au-Prince population that was renters before the earthquake, see Deepa Panchang and Mark Snyder who had written a report entitled, "We Became Garbage To Them Inaction And Complicity In IDP Expulsions A Call To Action To the U.S. Government" (August 14, 2010). As seen in the text, Panchang and Snyder—both highly productive activists in the months and years following the earthquake—had in fact not said 85 percent, but rather "up to 70%." And they were not referring to the population of Port-au-Prince but rather to the population of the camps. Specifically, they cited IOM camp registrations as their source: Registration Update, February 25-June 25, 2010. "Haiti Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster." International Organization for Migration.

For Schuller's claim that "An estimated 70-85 percent of Port-au-Prince residents did not own their home before the earthquake.", see: "UNSTABLE FOUNDATIONS: Impact of NGOs on Human Rights for Port-au-Prince's Internally Displaced People." October 4, 2010, page 4.



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<sup>lxxiii</sup> In the case of Schuller it was more likely deliberate prevarication for a noble cause, helping the poor, which is respectable but presumptuous of Schuller to second guess the data and assume that he knew what was in the best interest of the poor, something he seems to do a lot of (see Chapter ## to come).

<sup>lxxiv</sup> One World Bank report claimed that before the earthquake Haiti had a deficit of 500,000 residence units, which taken literally would have meant that 1/4 the entire population lacked a home—again, that’s *before the earthquake*. Given that there are 5.2 people per household, that would have amounted to 2.6 million people, about 1 million more than lived in Port-au-Prince before the earthquake and about 75 percent of all the people living in the entire strike region. I suppose it depends what one considers ‘residential unit.’ The report did not say. (see: *World Bank*. 2015. “Home Sweet Home: Housing programs and policies that support durable solutions for urban IDPs.” Page 3).

# 11

## *What Do We Do*

The humanitarian sector that we've seen in Haiti, concomitant with the exaggerations and lies that help convince people to give, is part of a much larger global phenomenon. In the wake of WWII came massive growth of civil organizations endeavoring to alleviate world poverty, unfair government practices, repression of all kinds, and environmental degradation. The scale of the social movement was so great that it has been called the emergence of "the fifth estate" (Eizenstat 2004), "a boom in civil society" (SustainAbility 2003:2), a phenomenon equated with "the rise of the nation State" (Salamon et al. 2003:6-7). And it was a beautiful thing. The sector promised to educate the illiterate, cloth the naked, feed the hungry, cure the ill, make men and women equal. Humanitarian sector workers were going to fix the environment, offset global warming, check big government. Yes, nothing short of beautiful. The sector is supposedly profitless and produces nothing, yet it has grown to massive proportions. It is the eighth largest economy in the world. And it is still growing. Already with 18 million workers and 1.1 trillion dollars spent annually, the humanitarian sector is growing at an annual rate of 6 percent. In the U.S., where more people give to charity than vote, total contributions for charities from individuals, estates, foundations and companies was a record \$359 billion in 2014 and then \$373 billion in 2015; 70 percent of

the money was from individuals; 16 billion (6.8 percent) was destined for international issues. If we consider only the total international humanitarian assistance to disaster stricken countries, such as that given to Haiti in 2010, it has gone from \$19 billion in 2010, the year of the Haiti earthquake, to \$22 billion in 2013, to \$28 billion in 2015.<sup>i ii iii</sup>

But as the New England mobster seen at the beginning of this book observed when I told him about my experiences with aid in Haiti, there is something definitively “sick” about it all. As much or more than 50 percent of all aid to impoverished countries is embezzled before it even gets near the poor; there are those NGOs, many of them, that collude in corporate dumping, market takeovers and tax evasion; and there are those that collaborate in covert military operations and even terrorism. As seen with the food relief in the previous chapter and crashing rural agricultural economies, others have worked deliberately to accomplish political and economic objectives of foreign governments, objectives anathema to the wellbeing of the people the organizations purport to help. And there are many that deceive the people they are supposed to be helping. They take names and pictures, promise aid, collect it, and then use the money to meet “bureaucratic” costs, mostly their own often lavish salaries and personal “expenses.” Until recently no one and nothing seemed disposed to do anything about all this. Indeed, quite to the contrary, when Interpol caught some of the world’s major NGOs red-handed in a calculated double dipping scam the result was government intervention and cover-up.

But perhaps worse than anything else is that those NGOs that are sincere unwittingly protect the corrupt, deceitful, and ulterior-motivated with a cloak of holier-than-thou-ness. Most NGO directors think they have a moral prerogative that exempts them from accountability. In a University of Warwick survey of 600 NGO directors, most respondents gave no thought to their own accountability; the Global Accountability Project (GAP) found that many NGO directors considered NGOs above

accountability. This high and mighty resistance to accountability has meant that humanitarian agencies are uniquely resistant to feedback. And yet, and what this book has been about, most of them are grossly out of touch with the people they seek to help.<sup>iv</sup>

As we've seen with the Haiti earthquake, disaster, exaggeration and lies bring in billions in donor dollars. But lies and exaggerations and misunderstandings and lack of accountability make it exceedingly difficult to address real problems. We can't address real problems if we do not know what they are. In the case of Haiti, organizations often demonize the people they claim to be helping. They have taken institutions such as child domesticity, one of the primary means of social mobility for poor rural Haitian children, and instead of trying to improve on it, they have attempted to outlaw it as slavery. Instead of addressing prostitution and domestic sexual abuse, they have portrayed sexually conservative Haiti as a rape culture and claimed, with zero evidence to back it up, that armed young men roam the camps and cities and rape women with impunity. The list goes on and on. Be it homicide, orphans, camps, zombies, eating dirt, the humanitarian aid agencies and the international press that carries their message has demonized Haiti and the people who live there and turned it into a land of savages, rapists, satanic worshippers, and mud eaters. They've done it with little real evidence. In many cases, they've done it by depending on questionable, and even obviously fraudulent research. They still do it. They collect massive sums of money off it. And even the very little bit of that money that makes it past the administrations of humanitarian organizations and consultants and is supposedly spent on the people for whom it was intended is largely wasted.

And of course it's wasted! If they did not know what the problems are when they collected the money, if in the pursuit of the money they so twisted, garbled and lied about what the ailments are in Haiti that those ailments no longer resemble reality,

there is no way that once they have the money they can effectively accomplish anything. One cannot solve a problem if one doesn't know what it is. One can't solve a problem if it doesn't exist. One cannot solve real problems if one is busy solving phantom problems. One cannot solve problems if con artists have pumped you full of lies and absconded with all the money.<sup>v</sup>

William Easterly (2006) calls it "the other tragedy of the world's poor." The original tragedy is the afflictions of hunger, treatable and preventable diseases, infant mortality, and unnecessarily high illiteracy rates. The 'other tragedy' is the failure to do enough about it. In other words, the failure of the humanitarian sector. And in the end, it's our fault. The well-meaning and honest of the NGO sector have allowed arrogance, lack of solid research, slipshod conclusions, and con artists to check our progress.<sup>vi</sup>

And it's even worse than I've been able to describe in this book. Elsewhere, I and others have written about how humanitarian agencies became the executors of government plans that undermined the Haitian economy. The massive and indiscriminate distribution of U.S. and EU surplus food (food aid) that helped destroy domestic agricultural production in Haiti is only one example. Used clothes helped destroy the domestic textile industry. The massive influx of aid has diverted money that could have reinforced the public sector, indeed, that could have helped build and maintain it. Instead, dependency on aid and institutions that were not part of the Haitian government turned Haitians away from solving their own problems and created a nation of *viktim*.

The consequences scream out from recent Haitian history. For over fifty years now, Haiti has arguably been that country with more NGOs per person than any country on the planet. But things have steadily gotten worse, not better. Long before the earthquake the country was in downward disaster spiral: the economy wrecked, the government inert, production in almost every sector a small fraction of what it had been

when the humanitarian aid agencies first began arriving in the 1950s. Indeed, Haiti is less developed, far less, than it was fifty years ago.<sup>vii</sup>

Journalists, editors and media producers haven't helped. Those professionals we count on for accurate information, have most often demonstrated a distressing indifference to vetting truth from fiction regarding anything Haitian. Indeed, when it comes to Haiti journalists have a peculiar obsession with the morbid, abnormal, and gruesome. But then, plummeting journalist standards is also, at least recently, part of a much larger global phenomenon. In the past year of writing I've been doing so with the backdrop of the U.S. elections, the bias of the mainstream press on both sides—against Donald Trump and against Hillary Clinton—the fake news, and ultimately the near total self-delusion of the press corps and the victory of Donald Trump. These events have launched into center stage of the U.S. collective attention the fact that the press no longer responds to the public. It no longer cares about facts.

But to a large degree we are kidding ourselves to think they ever did. Muckraking and the lurid 'yellow press' have been with us since there were newspapers. Regarding Haiti, as seen in Chapter 3 of this book, U.S. newspapers have always published bias and heavily ethnocentric accounts about anything going on in Haiti. What is new with the press' treatment of Haiti is the dependence and uncritical acceptance of any press release or comment that comes from a humanitarian aid agency. The absurdity of published figures seen in the previous chapters boggle the mind. Or at least they should boggle the mind. From 10 percent of the population killed in the earthquake, to 50 percent of all Haitians in the strike zone being children lost or separated from their parents to 25 percent of Haitian girls being child slaves to murder rates that fluctuate by factors of 30 and 40, journalists working for major media outlets like the Associated Press will seemingly believe anything about Haiti. Even the existence of zombies.

## A STEP FORWARD

So, what to do about it all? Whenever one reads an expose about major social problems and one is convinced that there are indeed problems, the first question put to the author is what should be done to fix those problems. I cannot purport to know the answer to all Haiti's ills. And there isn't much that I can do about the plummeting standards of the international media. But there is something that can be done about the misinformation coming from the humanitarian sector. And if we focus on this one issue of untruths and sensationalism in the pursuit of donations, there may indeed be something simple and cost efficient that would have a tremendous impact.

Checking the lies and vetting data could begin with a single website where reports, and survey databases that humanitarian aid agencies produce are made available to the public, to other professionals and to scholars. When reports are published, professionals who specialize in Haiti and in those specific domains that the report explores should be invited to critique the reports and rate them. Review should also be open to the public. Reviewers could be given access to a system similar to Amazon's 5-star ratings. Databases should be subject to vetting by professional data analysts who know Haiti. The professionals should be real data analysts and real scholars with accomplished records dealing with data and development in Haiti. There should be a specially designed means for the Haitian beneficiaries to post feedback regarding reports and projects. They should have a forum where they can get online and tell people what they think and what is going on with the projects from the perspective of beneficiaries. Their comments should be vetted and translated.

And of course, this site must have the recognition of the major humanitarian donor agencies. The U.S., EU, UN, and Haitian governments must all recognize the website. It must have official standing. For the site to be effective, those are the entities that must support it and make submission of reports and data mandatory. More specifically, they

must insist it is mandatory for their own organization to commit reports and data to the site and those organizations they fund.

But the site must also be turned over to a credible body of professional researchers who are trained specifically in data management and scientific pursuit of information and it must be governed by strict set of criteria for internal management, passing of leadership, and hiring of management, all the details of which can be worked out by people more knowledgeable about these things than myself.

At later stages the site would have financial data, as Charity Navigator currently does. But the site would carry it further, as does the BBB's charity evaluations. It would publish salaries and percentage of money spent on over-head and the organization would be rated on their disposition to provide data. An organization that refused to provide information would be making a powerful statement about their sincerity and disposition to be transparent.

Later developments would include actual corroboration of the accuracy of claims regarding projects, meaning specialists would be sent to verify whether or not the organizations are doing what their staff claims they are doing. Small but representative samples of the opinions of the recipients of the aid could be gathered for each project. There is no standardized system for doing this. Indeed, no one does it. The humanitarian organizations that receive funds from the UN, U.S., UK and EU are supposed to do it. Evaluation is in all the charters and stipulations for aid packages. But what currently happens is that the organization itself pays a consultant or one of their own employees to evaluate their project and write up a report explaining to directors and donors the impact of their money. It's an absurdity that would never be tolerated in a developing country: an agency hires and pays those who evaluate it. As William Easterly has said, "If I allowed my students to assign their own grades most would not study very hard."



All the preceding would go into a rating system, made public on the described website, and updated bi-annually. The organizations whose projects had been evaluated could respond, correct shortcomings and request re-evaluations.

Such a site would serve as an outlet and vetting mechanism that journalists could use to sort fact from fiction. It could also be used as a mechanism for others to vet journalists and their sensational claims. It would be a feedback mechanism for NGOs as well for their donors and as a voice-mechanism for the people they are meant to serve, i.e., the aid beneficiaries. Such a site will give the NGO community in Haiti criteria with which to measure success, to learn from mistakes, to improve service delivery, and to demonstrate to the public and donors the effectiveness and goodwill of the NGO community. And most of all, it would provide a means to stymie the exaggerations and lies and define the real problems so that donor money can be focused on resolving those problems in Haiti rather than chasing the delusions of donation hungry NGOs. It would be a long overdue step toward making the humanitarian sector honest, instilling transparency, and closing the feedback loop between donors and beneficiaries in Haiti.

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<sup>i</sup> Giving USA 2016. Giving USA: 2015 Was America's Most-Generous Year Ever. Giving USA 2016: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2015. June 13.

<sup>ii</sup> For source of donations to the disaster relief: 87% of the money comes from governments. See. Swithern, Sophia. 2014. GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE REPORT 2014. Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) team. Development Initiatives. Bristol: UK.

<sup>iii</sup> For statistics on the value of the Humanitarian economy, see:

Steinhauer, Cory. 2016. "The Humanitarian Sector in 16 Stats." Humanitarian Institute. August 7.

Swithern, Sophia. 2014. GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE REPORT 2014. Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) team. Development Initiatives. Bristol: UK.

GHA 2016. GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE REPORT. Development Initiatives. Washington DC

UN Secretary-General 2016. High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the Secretary-General Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap. REPORT from World Humanitarian Summit January 2016.

<sup>iv</sup> For estimates of aid money lost to corruption in Africa see Bovard 2005. For OLAF's investigation of widespread systematic fraud in the form of double dipping among major NGOs, Monitor Digest

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2005. For summary of major NGO fraud for 1998 to 2000 see Gibelman, et al. 2000. For the Philippine fraud cases that ignited the push to found the PCNC—by many accounts the most successful NGO regulatory agency in the world—see Sangco 2006 (p.4, 20). For a couple examples and discussion of involvement in covert military operations and terrorism see Snow (2009), Shenon, (2008) Agee (2003), for such involvement in Haiti see Hallward (2008). For dumping and commandeering NGOs for political and business agendas Oxfam International (2005); Shah (2005) is a great source for more references. For such involvement in Haiti see Hallward (2008). For the disregard NGOs have for the wishes of recipients, see Burger and Owens (2008) study of 300 Uganda NGOs in which they found that despite claims to the contrary, 69% of the NGOs did not consult the community before or after they initiated an activity and 25% of those who claimed to provide financial information either lied about it or did not, upon request, do so. For secrecy see Abella and Dimalanta (2003) who concluded studies of NGO accountability in the Philippines with the observation that many guard their financial information like they were “state secrets.” See also CODE-NGO (2000) who only got 50% of its members to provide profile information, some explaining that that they did not want their information to get into the “wrong hands.” Examples of waste, corruption, indifference, Maren (1997); Edwards and Hulme (1998:9-19); Adair 1999; Marshall (2002); Munyemesha (2003); Jordan (2003); Dombrowski (2006).

<sup>v</sup> For the Warwick study see, Sholte, Jan Aart 2003. *Civil Society and Democracy in the Global Economy*. University of Warwick, UK

Songco, Danilo A. 2006. *The Evolution of NGO Accountability Practices and their Implications on Philippine NGOs A literature review and options paper for the Philippine Council for NGO Certification*.

<sup>vi</sup> Noteworthy ‘cries for accountability’ include Knight et al. 1996; Sphere Project 2000; SustainAbility 2003a:49; specifically for a summary of the crisis of accountability see Edwards 2000, Slim 2002; Shiras 2003, Bonda 2009; Savedoff and Levine 2005; McGann and Johnstone, 2006: 66; Bonbright with Batliwala 2007; Constantino 1997; Commonwealth Business Council 2003, Dombrowski 2006. For emphasis on and failings of self-regulation see Lloyd and Casas; Leader, 1999.

<sup>vii</sup> Before the quake a change seemed to be taking place. In 2008, Barack Obama became president of the United States. He appointed Hillary Clinton Secretary of State. She directed one her most trusted staff members—Cheryl Mills who some have come to call the Iron Lady—to take on the task of turning Haiti around. In 2009 the United Nations appointed Bill Clinton as Special Envoy to Haiti. In turn, ex-president Clinton appointed as Deputy Special Envoy Paul Farmer, Haiti’s most erudite and busy champion and traditionally among the most vocal critics of US policy in the country. “The stars,” as so many Haiti watchers noted at the time, “were lining up.” These are the architects of a new US and international policy to Haiti. Their ascension to power vis-à-vis Haiti is what brought many us back into believing that maybe, just maybe, the aid system can work. Meanwhile the stars continued to line up. Haitian President Preval with the support of the UN had brought political stability back to the streets of Port-au-Prince. His Prime Minister, Jean-Max Bellerive was also

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Minister of Planning, the very ministry that oversees NGOs, and he was a strong advocate of NGO accountability. Indeed, it seemed before the earthquake that everywhere you turned in Haiti the issue of NGO accountability was a priority. There were conferences and meetings where NGO accountability was a center piece. Massive funds were allocated to develop the country. Change was imminent. Then came the earthquake and while it was a terrible disaster it nevertheless seemed to cement the inevitability of massive change.

Sympathetic individuals, companies, church congregations, schools, and governments around the world pledged over 12 billion dollars to Haiti. Organizations such as the American Red Cross and Oxfam called it 'an opportunity to change Haiti.' Spontaneous Aid Watchdogs appeared. And perhaps more than anything else, the UN vowed to coordinate and follow the aid. Real hope had arrived. Things were going to happen. Special Envoy Bill Clinton became co-chair of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission which was granted temporary control over the Haitian political decision making process with respect to money from donors and projects to be carried out. The US representative was none other than Cheryl Mills, the Iron Lady; Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive was a member; and Phillip Bécoulet, the man who had been at the forefront of the accountability movement in Haiti for 29 years was appointed as the representative for NGOs. They were going to count every NGO in Haiti; they were going to audit every charitable organization that had an annual budget of more than \$500,000; they would approve and follow-up on all the projects. Yes, things were going to change. The UN made a massive administrative move into place, bringing all the necessary resources and expertise from the greatest international organization the planet has ever known. It was finally going to happen. But it didn't. Every promise caved in. Every plan turned to mush. A good example is the UN aid map. It was born of the idea to identify all the projects that humanitarian agencies claimed they had and then verify the existence of the project, provide a rapid evaluation based on spot surveys of beneficiaries and social leaders in the area of the project. The findings were to be publishing and thereby making public the veracity of the claims. But in practice the UN aid map became a venue where staff working for humanitarian agencies were themselves allowed to place their projects on the maps and then to write in claims of activity and, of course, success. And only they could access the information and modify it. No mechanism for commentary and none for feedback. In other words, instead of being a mechanism for transparency and controlling illegitimate claims from the humanitarian agencies, the UN Aid Map became a propaganda service for them.

# 4

## *The Political Expediency of Rescuing Some People and Letting Others Die*

### **SURVIVORS**

When the earthquake struck, Ena was on the first floor of her six-story apartment building. She was making a dinner of rice and beans for her six children.

The next moment she was lying under a pile of debris. “When I came to,” Ena recalled, “I threw pieces of concrete off me. I screamed for the children.” She heard nothing, but could see layers of concrete lying on the spot where two of her children, Kiki and his sister Sabina, had been doing their homework. “I was sure they were all dead,” Ena said.

Two of the children were dead: 18-month-old Didine and 9-year-old Yeye were killed instantly. But, although Ena had no way of knowing at the time, three-year-old Titi, seven-year-old Kiki, and ten-year-old Sabina were still very much alive. They were trapped beneath the rubble.

Kiki remembers pulling Titi under the table as the building fell, entombing them in a cave created by the slabs of concrete that crashed down around them. The three siblings huddled together.

Kiki and Sabina comforted little Titi. "I sang songs when he cried," Kiki recalled. "I wanted him to live. But he wasn't big enough to survive. He was too little."

Before her brother died, Sabina cradled him in her arms. He asked her for water. "We couldn't find any water and so my little brother died right next to me," she said. By the next day, Titi's body began to decay.

While the children were stuck in the rubble, their grieving family moved into a makeshift tent camp. A week went by.

On Wednesday, January 19, long after the last flicker of hope had gone out, an aunt named Denival went back to the destroyed home to salvage some of the family's possessions. "When I pulled at some of the wreckage," Denival recalled, "I heard a voice under the concrete below me, "Mama! Help us, Mama! Water."

Denival ran and found a Haitian policeman, who found a crew of New York City police officers and firefighters. The rescue effort began.

Four hours and five crumbled floors of concrete later, Kiki and Sabina were pulled from a hole in the mound of debris. Kiki came out first. It was late at night. He emerged from the dark rubble and into flood lights. Greeted by the cheers of a multinational ensemble of rescuers and photo-snapping journalists, confused, frightened, and cradled in the arms of a burly New York firefighter he had never seen before, Kiki spotted Aunt Denival. He smiled and spread his arms wide to embrace her. Click! It would soon be called "The Photo Seen Around the World."<sup>i</sup>



Other spectacular and emotional rescues were to come. The same day that Kiki and Sabina were rescued, 25-year-old Nathalie Hotteline was pulled out of a supermarket; a wrecking crew found 23-day-old Elisabeth Joassaint — “the miracle baby” — unscathed and sleeping soundly in her crib; 69-year-old Ena Zizi was pulled from the ruins of the archbishop’s residence.

Every one of these survivors beat long odds. As the Fairfax rescue crew had been telling us the night we were at the College of Nursing, most trapped earthquake victims, deprived of food, medicine, and water, cannot survive longer than 72 hours. The main ingredient to staying alive is having access to some kind of liquids. In Port-au-Prince, Emmanuel Buso endured 10 days by drinking his own urine; 24-year-old Wismond Exantus survived 11 days on whiskey and sodas; 16-year-old Darlene Etienne held on by drinking bath water until a search crew freed her after 15 days, a day longer than any other verified earthquake rescue case in history. And then there was Evans Monsignac, who allegedly survived for a suspicious 27 days by, he said, sipping sewage sludge. The press hailed all their stories as miracles. These images, these moments when dust-covered and blinking Haitians were freed from concrete tombs, were exactly what well-wishers everywhere were hoping to see as they turned on their TVs to get the latest news from Haiti. They were powerful emotional spectacles that the U.S. State Department trumpeted as successes in evening press conferences when they reported the number of “saves” the international U.S. sponsored rescue teams had made that day. It was a near perfect counterbalance to the blame the U.S. government had been getting the week before for stalling the relief effort with its influx of military troops and panic over largely exaggerated levels of violence.

It also touched me in many ways. I too wanted to see people saved. And people back home, aware that I was with rescuers, wrote to me commending me for being part of this great rescue effort. And it is true that had it not been for the rescuers, dozens of

survivors, Kiki and Sabina among them, would have died. But something was wrong. Just as there were deeply moving rescues, there were deeply disturbing shortcomings. Had I not been at the College of Nursing, maybe I wouldn't feel this way. Surely I would just accept the rescue effort as an heroic example of my country coming to the aid of poor Haitians. But I was there. And knowing what I saw, knowing what I wrote in the previous chapter about the exaggerations from the press and the shortcomings of the Haiti earthquake emergency relief effort, I'm convinced that everyone should know what was really happening. Much of it was not something that should make us proud. And much of it fits the same pattern of truth twisting, denigration of Haitians, and making heroes of developed world rescue workers that we see in the history of Haiti's bad press, that we saw with the hero-journalists in the wake of the earthquake, and that we see throughout this book with respect to other humanitarian aid issues. Indeed, it was with the rescuers in Haiti that I first began to realize just how extreme the press distorts what's happening in Haiti.

## **HISTORY OF FAIRFAX URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE UNIT**

A good way to understand how the global rescue industry works and why, as an American, I'm not so proud of our performance in Haiti, is with the history of the Fairfax team, and how it came to be in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue really does have the largest and best-equipped Urban Search and Rescue unit in the world. It was the first of its kind in the U.S., and has been evolving and growing for decades. As with most U.S. fire stations, Fairfax switched from volunteer to full-time professional firefighters after World War II. With urbanization and the housing booms, the rescue industry as a whole—and Fairfax in particular—grew at a phenomenal rate. In 1949 there were 10 career firefighters

working for the county of Fairfax; by 1985 there were more than 1,000. And they saw their share of major disasters.

They responded in 1968 after the assassination of Martin Luther King and subsequent riots and house burnings in D.C., again in 1973 when a D.C. high-rise collapsed, in 1986 when rioting prisoners burned a local penitentiary, in 1999 when a truck carrying 40,000 pounds of explosives flipped over on a highway, and in 2001 when the 9/11 terrorists crashed an airliner into the Pentagon. They were also sent further afield. They were sent to Charleston, S.C., after Hurricane Hugo in 1989, to California following the Northridge earthquake in 1993, and to the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They're also on the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance list of "first responders," meaning they're part of the first American presence on the ground when calamities strike other countries. Fairfax teams have gone just about everywhere, from post-earthquake Soviet Armenia in 1988 to devastating Bolivia floods in 2008, to Haiti in 2008 when a school building collapsed, killing 93 students, injuring 150, and trapping 35 more (they saved none of them).<sup>ii</sup>

Each time, American taxpayers footed the bill. But who could complain? These squads of heroes spread American goodwill, winning hearts and minds by saving lives. Nor would anyone deny the need for an experienced, well-trained rescue force based right next to Washington, D.C. And so today Fairfax County has one of the largest and best-equipped Urban Search and Rescue units in the world. They are the elite of the world's elite.



"We train for this. We live for it," says the rescue worker who was first telling us about Fairfax Urban Search and Rescue teams, while lying in the bed of my pickup truck using his gear as a pillow. He's a little overweight, has a rural Virginia accent and



seems as comfortable in the back of the truck as he might be sitting around a pool table in a sports bar, eating pit barbecue. It's about two hours before the College of Nursing fiasco, 49 hours after the earthquake. We're in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a compound the rescuers find especially accommodating. We pull up, the security guard opens the gate, then shuts it behind us, leaving locals locked out. No crowds. No looters. No young men asking us for jobs. No grief-stricken survivors begging us to help find a family member trapped in the rubble. The other rescuers and the two dogs are going over the Ministry building searching for any signs of life. Ben and I stay by the truck hoping they will make it quick because it's getting dark. The security guard has already told us there are no survivors here, and we believe him. We're hoping to find more promising sites before we have to go back to the Embassy.

And so leaning over the tailgate, we're listening as the relaxing rescuer tells how effective he and the rest of his team are, and what really happened when they got called up to go to Haiti.

"We train for this. We live for it," he says with pride. "We keep all our gear packed in semi-trucks ready to drive onboard a C5 plane."

The sophistication of all that equipment he's referring to is dazzling. To locate trapped survivors, the Fairfax rescuers have acoustic listening devices, microphones, and infrared telescoping probes. To cut into architectural wreckage, they have carbide-tipped cutting tools and jackhammers. To pull the resulting debris out of the way, they have chains, cables, buckets, and rope-hauling pulleys. To reinforce escape passages so they can get themselves in and get survivors out, they have air bags and pumps, anchors, and wall braces. To immobilize the injured, they have neck collars and spinal body suits and stretchers. To move the victims through tight passages, they have special rescue hooks and straps. To keep them alive once they're out, they have automated heart defibrillators and mechanical breathing ventilators. Forty-eight tons of equipment

in all. They also have highly trained dogs—like the one that wouldn't go into the College of Nursing.

“When they call us up,” the rescuer says, “we're ready to go in two hours.”

On the evening of January 12, theirs was indeed the first telephone to ring. And they really were ready to go in two hours. All they had to do was drive their trucks to the waiting C5 jumbo jet at the Dover Air Force Base in nearby Delaware. They would have arrived on the ground, in Haiti, within five hours after the earthquake. There were, however, “a couple problems,” the rescuer says.

First, there was no waiting C5. None were available. “That meant,” he continues “we were not going to be driving our trucks straight onto any super-jumbo jet.” So they had to unload all their gear. All 48 tons of it. They had to find another plane, and because they were going to be paying with federal money, they had to follow federal regulations and go through the bidding process.

“Fortunately,” the rescuer tells us, “by morning a bid had been accepted.” By early afternoon the first 72 Fairfax rescuers were finally on board and off to Haiti. The first team got to Haiti just under 24 hours after the quake.

But then, when they did get there, they didn't have their equipment. Commercial airline baggage regulations meant they couldn't bring their defibrillators, buckets, hooks, air bags and ropes along with them. The gear had to go on a cargo plane. So that meant that even though they were in Haiti, they still had to wait. And they had to wait a long time because all their gear got routed to the Dominican Republic. This doesn't mean they were useless. They had their dogs and one group of three did participate in a rescue at the Hotel Christopher the night before the College of Nursing debacle. But the 69 other team members got left sitting in the Embassy compound.

When the team Ben and I were working with did go out in the streets, the Embassy van broke down. Fortunately, I have a truck—the one this guy is lying in. So they loaded up in that and we rolled out.

All this means is that the very first U.S. rescue team was actually on the ground 40 hours after the earthquake. And they were riding around in my pickup truck because the embassy could not provide them with a working vehicle. But if you read newspaper articles and U.S. State Department or UN reports from post-earthquake Haiti, you would think that most rescue crews got there within 24 hours. That was part of the hero aura that was projected around the rescue phase. And you would think they did a bang up job saving people. Tim Callaghan, head of USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) was in a position to know just how effective was the U.S. response. His agency coordinated it. On Feb. 2, 2010, he spelled out what everyone—the U.S. government, journalists, and the American public—seemed to believe:

The major achievement of the U.S. response was getting on the ground within 24 hours with certified search teams... What they did was heroic. I watched them crawl into buildings that can fall on their heads at any minute with the aftershocks. The United States should be proud of them. I am proud—as a professional and as a taxpayer. People went in and found people whose legs were wrapped around by dead people and it took hours to free them.<sup>iii</sup>

I am proud of them, too. Or rather, I'm proud of the ones who did go into buildings and save people. But I was also on the ground, at the College of Nursing. And I've listened to dozens of stories from other people who were at rescue sites similar to the College of Nursing. I pored over the press accounts and scrutinized the figures. And the feeling I get isn't pride. The feeling I get is mostly disgust, disgust over the bullshit that career bureaucrats like Callaghan tried to get us to believe.

## HISTORY OF EARTHQUAKE RESCUES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVING FAST

It's easy to explain why I feel this way. But first you have to understand why Callaghan would have been so eager to claim that U.S. rescue teams were in Haiti within 24 hours. The reason is because if they had arrived much later they would have been useless.

The key to rescues is timing. We know this. Since 1902, the world has experienced 128 earthquakes that killed more than 1,000 people each. Thirty-three quakes killed 10,000 or more people. That translates to one super-killer quake every three years. Nineteen killed 25,000 or more. That's one mega-killer quake every 5.5 years. With the exception of Japan and Italy, virtually all the hardest hit areas were in developing parts of the world, such as Haiti, where building codes were and are largely non-existent.<sup>iv</sup>

Scientists who have studied these earthquakes have learned a lot about the probability of survival for those who are trapped in rubble. Macintyre, et al., (2006) reviewed medical reports and newspaper accounts for more than 1,000 rescues in 42 earthquakes. They found that within six to eight hours' neighbors and family made 90 percent or more of all the rescues that would be made. For the next 40 hours, people trapped but not seriously injured were likely to still be alive. That's why the arrival of rescue teams is so critical in the "golden 48 hours." Some specialists have recently upped the time period from 48 to 72 hours. But however you look at it, only a few rescues are made after two days. After three, it's extremely rare for someone to be pulled out alive. When someone does get saved after the first three days, it's because they were lucky to have been buried with a supply of water and food and had mild temperatures and humidity, such as those Haiti rescues mentioned above. But even then, getting dug out is no guarantee of survival. After days underground, stuck, and not moving, a person who survives an initial catastrophic tremor has only a slim chance

of surviving the effects of being trapped, especially if injured. After five days, the survival rate for those pulled out of the rubble is seven percent.<sup>v vi</sup>

With all of this in mind, Irwin Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, explained to CNN immediately after the Haiti quake how important it was to get to survivors quickly. “That 72-hour window in which most rescues are attempted is not some casual number...” he said. “It’s a very serious calculation of when most lives can be saved.”<sup>vii</sup>

## **MOVING FAST: NOT**

The only U.S. team—and the only one of all 67 international teams—that really did get to Port-au-Prince within 24 hours was the one Ben and I were with. That’s when they arrived. But they had no equipment. It got diverted to the Dominican Republic. All but three of the 72-member team didn’t leave the embassy compound until the next day, more than 40 hours after the quake, when just eight of the precious 48 golden hours remained. By the time we got to the College of Nursing, that window had shut.

The next U.S. team to arrive was California Task Force 2<sup>1</sup>. They arrived on Thursday, January 14, 40-plus hours after the quake, and didn’t get to work until Friday the 15<sup>th</sup>, about 60 hours after the earthquake and 12 hours after the 48-hour window had shut. Florida Task Force 1 from Miami-Dade, and Florida Task Force 2, also from South Florida, arrived the same day. Their equipment also got diverted through the Dominican Republic and didn’t arrive until 78 hours after the earthquake, 30 hours after the 48-hour window had shut. The second Fairfax crew got to Haiti some 60 hours into the crisis. Virginia Beach’s Virginia Task Force 2 arrived 96 hours after the earthquake. That’s four days after the earthquake. New York Task Force 1 didn’t arrive on the scene

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Search and Rescue California Task Force 2, Los Angeles County Fire Department

until Saturday, more than 100 hours after the earthquake. A week into the crisis, the other four U.S. teams that had been called up were still trying to get onto planes when it was finally decided, to their great disappointment, that they didn't need to bother. The chances of finding any more survivors had become exceedingly slim.<sup>viii</sup>

So when DART Director Tim Callaghan raved about the success of the effort he coordinated, saying, "The major achievement of the U.S. response was getting on the ground within 24 hours with certified search teams," he was fudging. Or, if we want to be bold about it, he was lying. There is no way he could not have known better.

## **REALITY OF THE RESCUE EFFORT**

The most obvious reason why Callaghan was so insistent that the U.S. rescuers had been on the ground within 24 hours is because, if they had not been, they had failed at their job and were wasting taxpayer's money. Which isn't so bad if you're a rescuer. As the Fairfax rescue worker in the back of my truck told Ben and me, "We get time and half, buddy. That's right, 24-seven the whole time we're on a mission." But it's not accurate to portray U.S. rescuers as having arrived within 24 hours. It's also a bit of a stretch to claim that the rescue effort was about reaching out to help the poor of Haiti. President Barack Obama said everybody in Haiti should know that help was on the way, but he also made it clear that Haitians would have to line up behind Americans to get it. He described the mission this way:

We have no higher priority than the safety of American citizens, and we've airlifted injured Americans out of Haiti. We're running additional evacuations, and will continue to do so in the days ahead. I know that many Americans, especially Haitian Americans, are desperate for information about their family and friends...And you should know that we will not rest until we account for our fellow Americans in harm's way.<sup>ix</sup>

What prioritizing American citizens meant was that during the critical first week, when people could have been most readily saved, most rescuers were sent to safe sites where foreigners were trapped. What the Fairfax rescuer reclining in the back of my truck called “priority sites.”

A good part of Ben’s and my own first day with the rescuers was spent at one of them, the Caribbean Market, the place where we had helped clear the building of looters. It was the most popular high-end supermarket for diplomats and aid workers, where, as Associated Press correspondent Jonathan Katz would write, “we” — meaning we foreigners residing in Haiti — “bought our \$10 boxes of cereal.” And in the days after the earthquake, the closed off compound behind it was so crowded with rescue workers and dogs that one could barely move about. When Ben and I were there, there were at least 50 of them. Later that evening, when Ben and I left the College of Nursing with the Fairfax rescuers, we expected to head back to the Embassy. That’s what the chief had said. But instead, Fairfax’s Command Central redirected us to the Hotel Christopher, which housed the UN military headquarters. More than 150 UN officials had been inside when the building collapsed. Among them were members of the UN military high command for Haiti. So, in a walled compound with some 50 heavily armed Chinese soldiers, we spent the better part of three hours in the parking lot, chatting with other rescuers. After that we were directed to the Hotel Montana, the mountainside home-away-from-home for international elite — diplomats, journalists, and aid workers. There, inside another walled compound, we spent *another* three hours mingling with other search and rescue teams; 50 UN Chilean soldiers stood guard.

Meanwhile, that same night, just two blocks from where we sat bored and chatting with dozens of rescuers in the walled off compound of the Hotel Montana, a CNN correspondent was watching Haitian volunteers trying to save an 11-year-old girl. He would report that, “There are just not enough rescuers.” Even the next night, less than a

mile away, at the collapsed Université Caraïbe, locals had spent three days pulling out survivors. Bystanders could still hear cries from one of the students, Christel Legrosviau. But they couldn't reach her. Christel's sister located a UN official and convinced him to come to the university and see for himself that her sister was inside, still alive. He did. And then he told her that nothing could be done, because there were no rescue crews available. And indeed, none came.

And it was not because—our Fairfax rescuers aside—there were no rescuers who wanted to go. Firefighter Pere Perez told the Sunday Times, “We have been kept waiting for two days, they have sent us only to unimportant places while time slips by.”<sup>x</sup>

A big part of the problem harks back to the previous chapter and the panic the international media was fomenting and the reaction from the UN and U.S. military. By that second night the UN had drawn up “insecurity” policies. Rescue crews couldn't go into the poor neighborhoods and search for survivors, even if they wanted to. The UN declared it too dangerous. While we were at the Hotel Christopher, chatting it up in the parking lot, UN forces pulled a search team from Mexico off a rescue. Carlos Morales, chief of the Mexican crew, was elsewhere complaining, “There's an awful lack of organization. We already took out six live persons from the university and now they are ordering us to return to base over a few gun shots.”<sup>xi</sup>

Meanwhile, there were many, many unfolding stories of Haitians performing do-it-yourself rescues. One woman cut off her own thumb to free herself. Another who lost three children spent three hopeless days trying to free her only surviving son, whose leg was pinned under a fallen cement roof. Finally, at wit's end, unable to get help and her child dying before her eyes, she borrowed a portable generator and electric saw and cut off her son's leg.





Overall, if you were still alive when the rescue teams arrived, if you were poor and Haitian with no U.S. citizenship, the chances of a foreign rescuer coming to save you were pretty slim. The rescuers first looked for American citizens, or, in the case of the other teams, European or Chinese ones. And they kept themselves out of harm's way. And perhaps more discouraging, although there were firefighters dismayed by not saving Haitians in popular neighborhoods, the anecdotal evidence suggests that most U.S. firefighters were as likely as not to leave a trapped or injured Haitian right where they found them. The College of Nursing where Ben and I had been was just one example.

Damien Cave, on assignment for *The New York Times*, was with the Miami-Dade team<sup>2</sup> when they walked away from four trapped survivors. Like the Fairfax unit at the College of Nursing, they didn't have their tools with them. They also feared that a nearby crowd was becoming agitated. So they left the trapped Haitians and their crowd to their own means.<sup>xii</sup>

Five hours later, with no more rescues under its belt, the same Miami-Dade team was driving in a caravan of six vans and SUVs when they ran into the same crowd. People came down a hill toward them, "shouting, running with what looked like a body," Cave reported. They had just rescued the second of the four survivors. They were trying to get her to a hospital.

The Haitians in the crowd must have been relieved when they saw the rescuers and their six vehicles. But according to Cave, the Miami-Dade team chief, the same one who had ordered his crew to abandon the people when they were trapped, "told his

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<sup>2</sup> Florida Task Force-1 (FL-TF1)

group to stay in their vehicles.” He then had his translator “calm the agitated crowd and explain that search-and-rescue teams were not equipped to be ambulances.”

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this particular account, is that it was written up in *The New York Times* and the intent seems to be to highlight the efforts of the Miami-Dade firefighters. But Cave also seems to have been trying to tell us something without coming right out and saying it. After recounting Miami rescuers’ refusal to take the woman to a hospital, he finished his article by describing how two Air Force doctors performing surgery at the U.S. Embassy “told them not to bring Haitian patients.”



As upsetting as it was to read about the Miami-Dade rescuers leaving four survivors and then refusing to divert even one of their vehicles to save an injured woman rescued by the crowd, I agree with anyone who thinks we should give them the benefit of the doubt. They’re in a tough business. And they had to deal with urban Port-au-Prince, a metropolitan area of 3 million people, a mess in the best of times, where every problem was compounded by the bureaucratic meltdown that came after the quake. Even when they did finally go out into the neighborhoods, there were only 1,918 rescuers looking for survivors in what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said was enough rubble to fill 10,000 Olympic swimming pools. It was quite literally like looking for needles in haystacks. And these guys do have to be safe. They have to protect their own first. And they have to be selective. As we’ve seen, they are fighting against time. If someone can’t be saved in time, or if a mission puts rescuers in danger, they have to walk away and find someone else they can rescue quickly and safely. So ok, we give them the benefit of the doubt.

But what I'm after here is something else. What I'm trying to get at here is not that rescuers are rotten people. I think we can assume most are good people with good intentions. The point that I'm trying to illustrate is just how rotten the system is; and how many people are standing in the way of fixing it. And some of these people aren't just concealing the flaws. Like DART's director Callaghan, they're outright lying about them.

## **MAKING A MASSIVE SCREW-UP LOOK GOOD**

The rescue crews, their press secretaries back home, and the U.S. politicians heralded the entire Haitian rescue as a tremendous success. They described an immense accomplishment carried out through international cooperation with rescue teams from Canada, Mexico, Spain, France, Russia, Greece, Poland, Iceland, China, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Jamaica, Luxembourg, and Slovakia. In all, there were 67 search and rescue teams from 30 countries for a total of 1,918 rescuers. They had 160 dogs. When it was all over they had freed 137 survivors, a tally they all cited as a record for this kind of emergency. The U.S. Embassy reported it as the "largest number of known rescues in an international response." The UN called it "the highest number of live rescues by international SAR teams ever recorded."

Let's take a closer look.

Almost five days after the quake, Tim Callaghan, the USAID head of the emergency rescue effort seen lying earlier, reported at a Washington D.C. press conference that U.S. rescuers had "extracted" 29 survivors and that the total number of rescues for all international teams was 61. From the hundreds of earthquake and rescue efforts that have occurred all over the world in recent years, and knowing about the golden 48 hours, we wouldn't expect more than a few additional rescues after this point, five days after the earthquake.

The next day, Callaghan put the number at 39 live rescues for U.S. crews and 71 for the international crews. That's reasonable. On day seven, when the chances of survival for those trapped were very slim, Callaghan reported that U.S. rescue crews were the only ones who had extracted anyone else—a single person—and it put the number of rescues at 40 rescues for U.S. crews and 72 for all international rescue teams combined. "An incredibly high number," Callaghan said.

So that's all reasonable and expected. But what happened next is incredible. The following day, Hillary Clinton's Chief of Staff at the State Department, Cheryl Mills, added 50 to that number, reporting 122 live rescues. She called it "quite unprecedented and miraculous."<sup>xiii</sup>

So where did the extra rescues come from? There was never any explanation. No correction of the numbers saying they had miscounted or added unreported rescues. There were no miraculous cases of a whole room of survivors found. In scouring the newspapers, I found reference to only one rescue between Callaghan's January 19 report and Mills' January 20 report. On January 24, after which there would only be two more rescues reported in the press (one of which had nothing to do with rescue teams), the U.S. State Department reported that U.S. teams had 45 live rescues and that the total for all International teams was 132; later they would bump it to 47 for the U.S. and 147 for all International teams.

What's troubling here is not simply the mystical source of the numbers, but the incongruity between the hype and reality. Even if all the numbers were correct, even if there were documentation proving that 137 or 147 people really had been pulled from the rubble, that's not a lot of people. Despite all of the talk of the capabilities of the rescuers, their dogs, and their high-tech equipment, the numbers didn't add up to much. The 160 dogs didn't locate a single person on their own. They were and are used for verification. The rescuers themselves only found one person on their own—a

woman at Caribbean Market, where, with an average of 40 rescuers on site at all times, it still took three days to find her. Twenty-three of the “saves” by foreigners weren’t performed by rescue crews, but by Chilean UN soldiers present at the Hotel Montana immediately after the quake.

And it cost a fortune. The total cost was 243 million U.S. dollars, about 1.84 million dollars for each of the 137 to 147 rescues that were, fairly or unfairly, attributed to international rescue teams. If we consider that 90 percent of the crews arrived after the first 72 hours—after which only 25 of the saves were made—that’s closer to \$10 million per rescue. It should be noted that Haiti is a country where 50,000 die each year from simple infectious diseases that could be cured with 5-cent antibiotics.

But once again, that’s only part of the problem. There was something else much bigger going on.



While the rescuers were unpacking their 2,600 tons of high-tech gear, putting air conditioners in their tents, and tying up the embassy’s vehicles to drive between safe sites to look for trapped U.S., EU and Chinese citizens—and finding very few—Port-au-Prince and the other towns near the epicenter were in the throes of a massive medical emergency.

This was an event of biblical proportions. Crushed limbs, cracked skulls, heads shaved open by falling tin roofs, exposed brains. The rescuers were literally driving past hospitals full of people like this. Tens of thousands of them. When we were driving through Petion-Ville with the Fairfax rescuers, a woman stopped us and told us that a nearby hotel was filled with wounded and dying people. The only doctor had left in despair because he had no antiseptic, antibiotics, or gauze. The Fairfax Chief made a note. Another woman stopped us and said that there were so many wounded and

dying at the morgue that they had to put them in the street. “Can you help us?” The Chief made a note.

There were, as I mentioned earlier, doctors trying to save lives but running out of IVs, reduced to washing their hands and sterilizing their scalpels with vodka, and cutting off mangled arms and legs with hacksaws because they didn’t have enough surgical instruments.

There were heart-wrenching cases, like the 11-year-old girl who was pinned under the rubble of her home. It was two days after the quake, about the same time that Ben and I were at the College of Nursing with the Fairfax rescuers. A CNN news crew spent more than four hours documenting the emotionally gripping rescue. In the final moments, a team of Haitian men cut through the final re-bar that held her trapped. She was freed. But she died several hours later because the hospital did not have the resources to treat her. Her last words were, “Mother, don’t let me die.”<sup>xiv</sup>



Dr. Dario Gonzalez arrived with the 80-member New York City rescue team days after the quake and spent more than a week searching for survivors. They found none and had to settle for helping firefighters from eight other countries free five survivors from the remains of one building. Commenting on the doctors who were performing amputations, Gonzalez told a *Times* reporter,

“I know those docs have had no choice, but amputation is a form of failure. It means you haven’t been able to treat people in time.”<sup>xv</sup>

Dr. Gonzalez, of course, was correct. Untreated traumatic injuries suffered during the earthquake could, and in many cases did become infected. And that’s deadly. Gas gangrene, for example, sets in after six hours to two days. Without surgery and aggressive antibiotics, the person dies within 48 hours. With that little fact in mind, note

that after the earthquake there were as many as 300,000 injured people. Many of them severely injured, with crushed limbs and gashes that were certain to become infected. If, instead of devoting their time to the rescue efforts, looking for vehicles, and packing in 2,600 tons of rescue gear, the 1,918 paramedics and doctors assigned to the rescue squads had been treating just ten people per day per paramedic, they would have treated 134,260 people in the first week. By the time Dr. Gonzalez made his observation, they would have treated almost 210,980 people. The irony of all this is that while Gonzales seemed to be disparaging doctors who were performing amputations, he was spending his time watching dozens of rescuers from eight different countries trying to save five people. In other words, Gonzalez wasn't doing anything at all.

Why where the rescuers, nearly all of whom are paramedics, driving by these wounded people? Who told them that was OK? Why didn't they bring in medical gear instead of all those dogs and electronic listening devices and air conditioning units for their tents? Why didn't priority go to the thousands of injured and dying, who didn't need to be located and pulled from the wreckage? These were people in desperate need of help. They were also the ones whose lives would have been the easiest to save.

We've already seen one answer: like other Haitian citizens, they were not the priority. The second reason was touched on too, and that is that Haiti turned out to be a media bonanza. At the height of the crisis, U.S. television news viewing increased by 300 percent. Six out of ten Americans followed the Haiti post-earthquake drama more closely than any news event since Hurricane Katrina. Seventy percent regarded it as the most talked about news item. It was ten times more talked about than the next issue (health care reform). The rescues were a big part of that. At first poor Haitians were largely ignored. The rescuers had come to save their own. But as the probability of finding a living foreigner disappeared and the value to the international media of rescuing Haitians became increasingly apparent, there was a mad scramble to find one

still alive and film the rescue. Few images are more cathartic to viewing audiences than liberating survivors from concrete tombs. Much better than sterile operating rooms. For the U.S. politicians who held press conferences and ramped up the numbers, the coverage was a useful distraction from the savaging they got in the international media the week before for taking control of the rescue operation and sending in, instead of aid, combat troops. And there is yet another reason: all this media attention made the entire rescue effort highly political.

## THE POLITICS OF RESCUES

“This is how it is,” The man is saying. We are huddled up listening to this serious and distinguished man. He has a stern European accent that I can’t identify, “You can stay here,” he says, “But you have to do what we say, the way we say.”

The Fairfax Chief, myself and two of the crew members are listening intently. The chief has already told me, with great reverence, that this European guy is none other than the United Nations Fire Marshal for Haiti.

“We have been over this building,” the Fire Marshall continues, “We’ve had Iceland dogs. We’ve had your dogs. We’ve had Chinese Dogs. We’ve done digital listening. We’ve done the heat sensors. We have done it all, many times. There is no one alive in there.”

I can’t help it, but I’m thinking, *If you guys have done all this, then just what the hell are we doing here?*

We are all quiet, respectful, listening. The Fire Marshal is clearly in control.

“You can run your dogs,” he goes on, “you can do digital monitoring, we can use your support. But it must be under our direction”

*Why would we want to do that if you know that there is no one alive in there?*



The Fire Marshal stops talking. It seems that he wants to say more but doesn't know how to proceed. He looks around. He looks at each of us. "Come over here," he says, then turns and starts walking toward the far side of the parking lot. We follow. He stops. We stop. We are in close circle formation again. The Fire Marshal is looking at us. He is getting ready to tell us something very important. He looks at me, "Who are you?"

I am not sure what to say. I don't want to miss this important point but I can't lie, "I'm the translator."

"Oh," he says and returns to the topic, continuing (in English), "We had a high-level delegation of Chinese killed in there." We are all listening. "We need to show that we are doing more." He looks directly at the Chief, and I still can't believe he said it, "This is political."

There it is. 'It was political.' They were concerned about their own image, in the eyes of the people back home, in the eyes of the Chinese, the Europeans, the Americans, the Canadians, their constituents, their bosses, whoever. And the politics were not just at the top.

### ***Mexican Mole vs. Dade County's Finest***

It is five days after the earthquake. Night has fallen. The city streets that reeked of raw sewage and engine fumes at the best of times now stink of death and decaying bodies. A Mexican search and rescue team is scouring the holes and crevices in the ruins of a collapsed bank, searching for any sign of survivors. One shouts into a hole and then puts his ear to it and listens. Another is tapping on what remains of the front wall. He taps. He then puts his ear to the wall and listens.

Standing off to the side watching is Kathie Klarreich. She's a U.S. journalist and book author in her mid-forties who speaks Haitian Creole and has worked and lived on

and off in Haiti for more than 20 years. A Haitian woman approaches Kathie and tells her there are survivors in a house nearby. She asks if someone can help. Kathie and a Mexican rescue worker go off with her.<sup>xvi</sup>

They walk down alleys and through narrow passages between the concrete buildings and over piles of rubble. When they get to the house there is a crowd. Two Brazilian news crews are already there. One is holding a long pole with a microphone on the end of it. He has the microphone extended into a hole in the rubble. One of the Brazilian newsmen tells Kathie they've picked up a girl's voice on the microphone. The Mexican rescue worker taps on a concrete wall. Someone on the other side taps back.

The Mexican swings into action.

### ***The Mexican Moles***

His name is Hector "El Chino" Méndez and he's a founding member of the famous Topos, Spanish for "Moles." The Topos got their start in the 1985 Mexico City earthquake where some 10,000 people were crushed to death and thousands were trapped alive. The Mexican authorities couldn't deal with the crisis. Desperate, people in impoverished barrios responded with their own rescue teams. One group was so successful that the government recognized their heroism when the crisis was over. They became the Topos. Since then they've trained with Israeli and French rescue teams and, like Fairfax, they've been dispatched to crises in over 22 countries. They went to the Iran earthquake, the Indonesian tsunami rescue effort, and even Ground Zero in New York City after 9/11.

One difference between the Topos and other international rescue teams is that instead of 40 tons of high tech equipment and dozens of dogs, the Topos typically show up with nothing more than the tools they can carry in their backpacks. Nor do they bother waiting for embassy vehicles. They get off the plane and hit the neighborhoods.

They walk, bum rides and take public transport. Chino says, *Tenemos los huevos de entrar adonde los demás no quieren*. (“We have the balls to go in where no one else wants to go”), by which Chino means they have the nerve to go into rough neighborhoods and into holes in the rubble.

A team of 15 Topos arrived in Haiti on January 15. By the next day, they had rescued nine people. In comparison, 42 Fairfax rescuers who started on January 14 had, by the same time, rescued eight people. With one third the rescuers, no dogs, and in half the time, the Topos had rescued more people.

### ***Rescue Effort Brought to You Live from Heroic Politicians and Journalists***

Chino, the Topo, is removing large chunks of rubble from a hole nearest to where the survivors are trapped. Meanwhile, Kathie sends the woman who had approached her back to fetch the rest of the Topos. But she cannot find them. Then, the Brazilian journalists show up with 12 rescuers from Miami-Dade County. It’s the same team that had left trapped survivors because they feared a crowd and then would not take one of the survivors to the hospital after the crowd rescued her. Now they have their equipment. They also have two dogs with them. The chief of the Miami-Dade team tells Chino to “stand down.” Miami-Dade takes over. They bring up the dogs.

Kathie protests. “We already know there are survivors. They recorded them on a microphone. They tap back on the concrete.”

“Without a bark,” a dog handler explains, “the team won’t go in.” The problem, he tells Kathie, is that “Too many people desperate to find loved ones swear that they hear family members just because they don’t want to give up hope.”

So the dogs go to work. Chino is complaining. Kathie is biting her tongue. The rescuers are running their dogs all over the building. Finally, one of the dogs bark. The Miami-Dade firefighters have their confirmation.

“The guys from Miami swing into action,” Kathie recounts, “Some are up high on another roof, some are down low, some are in the back of the house. They each seem to have a job.” In the end, they go back and do what Chino was doing, pulling rubble out of the one hole that seemed to have the most immediate access to the survivors trapped within.

Meanwhile, one of the Brazilian journalists has learned from a neighbor that there are three children trapped inside: Kevin, Nazer, and Fragina. The journalist questions bystanders and manages to get a phone number for Kevin’s mother. She is in Miami. The journalist calls her. She answers. “We’re rescuing your child.”

It’s perfect: The journalists are going to capture the rescue in Haiti on live television while they capture the joy of the mother over the phone. The journalist hangs up. The mother waits. The rescuers are getting closer. The tools come out. The generator is turned on. They’re drilling.

Six hours after it all began, the crowd erupts in cheers as 7-year-old Nazer is lifted from the hole. “I can see he’s bone thin, skeletal like,” Kathie recounts, “but smiling. He points to his tooth, says he cracked it, as though that was the worst thing that happened.”

Then comes 14-year-old Fragina. But she’s just learned that Kevin, the 5-year-old trapped under the rubble with her, did not survive. Fragina thought she had just been talking to him. Now, instead of being overjoyed at being rescued, Fragina is devastated.

“Her pain pierced me,” Kathie recalls, “She was so distraught that it’s hard to feel complete joy at her release.”

It’s the dead child, Kevin, whose mother waits for the phone call in Miami. The Brazilian journalist refuses to call the mother back. “The memory deeply disturbs me,” Kathie tells me, “The Miami rescuers, the journalists. No one was human that night.

They were fuckin' monsters." She thinks about it for a moment, and then adds, "And I don't care if you quote me on that."<sup>xvii</sup>

Next, Chino, the Mexican rescuer, would report:

I was threatened...the American rescuer told me to get out or they would bring the police after me...The guys told me, 'Get out, get out!!' I told them wait, get out? Why? Get out of what? They told me, 'This is professional work!!' So I told them, 'Look. I worked with you in New York in the Twin Towers during 9/11...' I asked them, 'Why are you discriminating me? Why are you so arrogant?' Then they said, 'You don't know?'

It's not clear what the Miami-Dade rescuer meant. But one thing that Chino really could not have known is that one of the team members was Kendrick Meek, son of retired Congresswoman Carrie P. Meek, whose seat he had filled upon her retirement. At that moment, he was a Democratic candidate for a Senate seat for Florida. Meek told Kathie that he had been "so moved by what the rescue team was doing that he jumped on a plane in order to witness what was going on and bring whatever resources he could." Also present was Rudolph Moise, Haitian-born U.S. attorney, physician, movie star, and reserve U.S. Air Force colonel, who was a candidate for a Meek's U.S. Congressional seat. Leading the team was Miami-Dade Fire Rescue assistant fire chief Karls Paul-Noel, the highest-ranking Haitian-American firefighter in the United States. The rescuers had already captured a rescue of a little girl on video. Something that Meek uploaded to his website with the following commentary:

The girl's rescue reminds my South Florida constituents, including many Haitian-Americans who have been hit hard by the earthquake, that even in the darkest hour, hope still endures. Some have called me in desperation...The earthquake has also propelled my community to act as never before by collecting donations, volunteering time and expertise, and offering support and prayers to neighbors in need. My constituents and the Haitian people are in pain...but I want them to know that there are stories of hope like this across their native land.<sup>xviii</sup>

Meek and the Miami-Dade rescuers took off with the children. Chino said they refused to even give him a ride. According Kathie Klarreich, they dropped 7-year-old Nazer off at a hospital where he spent the night sitting outside, alone. “Can you believe that?” Kathie asks, screwing her face up. “The 7-year-old, alone.” Forgetting about the rescuers and the ugliness of it all for a moment, Kathie stops and says, “he chipped his tooth,” and smiles.

## **THE HEROES NOBODY WROTE ABOUT**

I don’t like coming to this conclusion but it’s difficult to avoid noting that the press and politically ambitious decision-makers from overseas cared very little about poor Haitians. What they were thinking about most was their own constituents: citizens of the U.S. or whatever European or Asian country they belonged to. And it’s not just me who came to this conclusion. It hung like the reek of death over the entire rescue effort.

The Haiti rescue effort—and the global rescue industry in general—was a machine programmed not so much to save lives as to satisfy political agendas and the press. One that was not simply inefficient, but, by redirecting scarce vehicles, air space, and medical professionals, must have cost far, far more lives in Haiti than it saved.

Something in all of this—the numbers, the scenes of foreign rescuers heroically saving Haitians, the extravagant gear, and the bureaucratic failure—strikes at the very heart of the international rescue effort to Haiti. Looking again at the official tally of people rescued brings the point into focus. The BBC compared the numbers of people rescued after the Haiti earthquake with those of recent earthquakes in China and Italy. In the China earthquake of 2009, there were a total of 66,649 officially recognized rescues for 87,476 people killed. That’s about 0.8 people rescued for every person killed. The Italians reported a similar ratio for the 2009 earthquake in that country: 150 people rescued for 295 people killed, about 0.5 people rescued for every one killed. Haiti is

another story entirely. The official statistics are one person rescued for every 1,742 people killed. Or, if we use the government's death count estimate of 316,000 killed, 2,306 people killed for every one rescue. In Haiti, the ratio of those killed to rescued is more than 1,000 times the ratio in Italy and China.<sup>xix</sup>

Why?

Everywhere we went the first day, there were Haitians picking through the ruins. They would tell us how many survivors they had pulled out. At the Ministry of Finance, they had pulled out four; at Caribbean Market, nine. Varnek-Edouard Bazile a teacher at the Haitian American Institute, helped pull out twenty survivors before going home to find his own two children dead and his wife dying.

A Haitian friend recounted to me, "My cousin, he's a presidential guard. He organized a group and they pulled out 150 people in two days. He's so pissed off that the government wasn't helping, he wants to start a coup d'état." Beverly Bell wrote in the *Huffington Post* about Gethro Nelio, a 23-year-old man whose father had died from a broken leg when he could find no medical care. Gethro recounted, "I couldn't forget my father who was dying, but all that was in my head was to save people who might live, who were injured, especially women. In my father's house, 37 died... For those underneath, we didn't have any way to get them out. We took 28 out alive."

A woman I sat next to on the bus one day recounted how they were digging through the rubble looking for her sister, Nichol. Each time they would call out, "Nichol," an answer would come back through the rubble, "Oui." They would spend hours digging, breaking the cement, hauling out the rubble only to find that it was not Nicole. It was someone else who had replied. They did this six times.

Mamoune Chery was working in a pharmacy when the earthquake hit. She was knocked to the ground. A piece of the roof held her there, pinned. Four hours later she

was saved. “Who saved you?” I asked. “A *kokorat*,” she responded, by which she meant a homeless street kid.

The reason that in Haiti only 137 rescues were recorded while there were tens of thousands of people rescued in China is that in Haiti they didn’t count people dug out by their own families, neighbors, or people who simply happened to hear their cries for help. Haitians didn’t count and no one counted what they did. They weren’t considered part of the rescue effort.

The truth is that some 50 percent of the official rescues were not even Haitian. They were foreigners. I can’t give the exact figure because on the list of those rescued that I obtained from USAID, via a Freedom of Information Act request (they otherwise would not give it to me), the nationalities of those rescued was blacked out. Why? I don’t know. Perhaps someone was embarrassed about it. But even more to the point here, with the exception of the Caribbean Market and the Hotel Christopher where the UN had been headquartered, not a single international rescuer, electronic listening device, or dog found anyone. In every case, it was Haitians who found them and called the rescuers, who used the ‘bark rule’ to confirm whether or not there really were survivors. This role of the Haitians seemed to go unnoticed. Something that, at the time, perplexed us. The Fairfax rescuers ditched a translator Ben and I hired for them, leaving themselves unable to communicate with locals. A U.S. Embassy official noted that many foreign teams did the same thing, rejected the help of local guides and went out on their own. “They keep bringing the guides back and dropping them off,” he said. But why? The Haitian translators could talk to locals—the three million locals in Port-au-Prince were the ones who knew where survivors were trapped. When we were with the Fairfax rescuers three different people told us, “People are alive at Saint Trinity’s.” We never got to Saint Trinity’s. I don’t believe the message was ever relayed back to the Fairfax command base.



At the time we couldn't understand why they were ditching the locals. In retrospect, now I know. Because the locals wanted to help them save Haitians. And in reality, they were not there for that. It was not until long after the critical 72 hours, until after they were certain there were no more trapped international aid workers or diplomats, that U.S. politicians and bureaucrats—scrambling to cover their asses for ignoring trapped Haitians, blocking relief supplies at the airport, and having sent a military invasion force to a humanitarian rescue effort—discovered the value of rescuing Haitians on international television.

## **THE END OF THE GREAT HAITI RESCUE EFFORT**

On January 23, eleven days after the earthquake, Haitian President Rene Preval called the rescue phase officially over. On January 28, five days later, the rescuers left. On January 29, *The Washington Post* heralded the Fairfax rescuers return home with this report:

After two weeks of near-sleepless nights and exhausting multi-hour rescue missions in earthquake-stricken Haiti, 114 members of Fairfax County's urban search and rescue team returned home to a loud and celebratory welcome...

Officials said the Haiti deployment was the largest and longest and involved the highest number of assisted rescues in the Fairfax rescue squad's history [5 rescues and 11 assists].

Bill Barker, an emergency room doctor at Fauquier Hospital in Warrenton and a task force member since 1999, attributed the high number of "saves" to the team's quick deployment. In the past, he said, federally funded rescue teams have waited days before getting the go-ahead to depart for a disaster zone. <sup>xx</sup>

There were also hero's welcomes in New York and Miami and award ceremonies in the White House. On April 29, *Time* magazine named Haitian American fireman

Karls Paul-Noel—head of the Miami-Dade Firefighters—one of its 100 Most Influential People of 2010. Former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani lauded Paul-Noel for having a resume “that reads like Superman’s,” and for being in Haiti “less than 24 hours after earthquake.” In reality, Paul-Noel’s team had arrived 42 hours after the earthquake and then spent another entire day waiting for their equipment, which was in the Dominican Republic. It was in fact Paul-Noel’s team that had traveled with U.S. senatorial candidate Kendrick Meek and U.S. congressional candidate Rudolph Moise. It was Paul-Noel’s team that Damien Cave of *The New York Times* recounted having abandoned four survivors because of fear of the crowd and that subsequently refused to give the one survivor a ride to the hospital after the crowd rescued her. And it was Paul-Noel’s team that subsequently claimed to have dug out 11 survivors, including Fragina and Nazer, the boy with the chipped tooth who Chino of the Mexican Topos claims they took away from him.



I am not assailing the people who came to Haiti to help or the hundreds if not thousands of doctors and medical professionals who volunteered. They are heroes. If I or anyone I love is ever in a crisis, I pray they will come. Indeed, that’s the point. The outpouring of sympathy, goodwill in the form of donations, time, and services that came in the wake of the Haitian earthquake is a testimony to what could be. It is a testimony to the numbers of people in the world who care.

The sad truth, though, is that the U.S. response simply was not the “swift, aggressive, and coordinated” miracle U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah said it was after it was all over. And the mainstream press is once again guilty as hell. Sins of omission, selective reporting, exaggeration. The press

sometimes criticized the mistakes that were made, sometimes, but overwhelmingly the stories that got attention were about sensational saves and Western heroism.<sup>xxi</sup>

It might be hard to understand without having actually been there just how twisted, chaotic and misguided it was. But it was and few people on the ground who knew what was going on would say anything different. At least not in private. And the crime in all this is the cover up. If people in positions of responsibility had been acknowledging the failures and trying to rectify them, I wouldn't be writing this part of the book. But nobody stood up and said, "We were late" or "No, we don't deserve to be patting ourselves on the back. We had our priorities wrong. We should have attended to the wounded." No one said, "We can do better." Or rather, if they did say those things, few of us got to hear them.

So the rescue effort was characterized by chaos, incompetence and failure. The cover-ups should, in my opinion, be considered crimes. But the consequences of those crimes, for us all, will come when the next crisis hits. When, thanks to those cover-ups and lies, we make all the same mistakes over again.

We should be damned if we are going to let that happen. We should be damned if we are going to allow the kind of goodwill that came from everywhere in Haiti's hour of need be squandered again by bureaucratic failure or fear, or because a handful of politicians and bureaucrats want to smooth over the failings in the name of self-glorification and votes. And it was not just the rescues. There were a lot more lies to come.

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<sup>i</sup> Articles about Kiki:

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Daily Mail. 2010. "Haiti earthquake miracle boy Kiki: 'I smiled because I was alive... but now I'm sad for my dead brothers and sister'" By Liz Hazelton. January 23.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1245216/Haiti-earthquake-miracle-boy-Kiki-describes-moment-plucked-rubble.html>

New York Post. 2011. "Kid reaching higher." Brave Haiti quake survivor one year later. By Cathy Burke. January 9, 2011.

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/international/kid\\_reaching\\_higher\\_TsrxAX17r85dVnafYcRhBP#ixzz1XcVXVxb0](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/international/kid_reaching_higher_TsrxAX17r85dVnafYcRhBP#ixzz1XcVXVxb0)

New York Post. 2010. "Miracle boy: 'I smiled because I was alive'" Amazing Haitian's quake survival tale, by Lukas I. Alpert. January 22.

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/international/miracle\\_boy\\_smiled\\_because\\_was\\_alive\\_wgOJ8u4X5k7wU23uF6RAOL#ixzz1XcWg6lFG](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/international/miracle_boy_smiled_because_was_alive_wgOJ8u4X5k7wU23uF6RAOL#ixzz1XcWg6lFG)

<sup>ii</sup> For Fairfax summary of operations, see: *Fairfax County Virginia* website. "Fire and Rescue History." <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/deptinfo/history.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> For the quote from Callaghan, see: Ben Barber. 2010. *Frontline: Aid Experts End Haiti Quake Chaos*. U.S. Agency for International Development. March 2010.

[http://www.usaid.gov/press/frontlines/fl\\_mar10/p01\\_haiti100301.html](http://www.usaid.gov/press/frontlines/fl_mar10/p01_haiti100301.html)

For more erroneous claims from Callaghan and the U.S. Department of State, see: *Dipnote, U.S. State Department Official Blog*. 2010. "Haiti Earthquake Recovery: The First 10 Days." January 25. <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2010/01/25/haiti-earthquake-recovery-first-10-days?page=0%2C1>

<sup>iv</sup> A good summary of the situation from Berlinski (2011), "The odds of more Haiti-scale destruction are growing by the day because the world is urbanizing. Two hundred years ago, Peking was the only city in the world with a population of a million people. Today, almost 500 cities are that big, and many are much bigger. That explains why the number of earthquake-caused deaths during the first decade of this century (471,015) was more than four times greater than the number during the previous decade, according to statistics compiled by the U.S. National Earthquake Information Center. If the fatality trend continues upward—and it will, because the urbanization trend is continuing upward, as is the trend of housing migrant populations in death traps—it won't be long before we see a headline announcing 1 million dead in massive earthquake. Indeed, we'll be lucky not to see it in our lifetimes."

Berlinski, Claire 2011. "1 Million Dead in 30 Seconds: In an increasingly urbanized world, earthquakes threaten." *City Journal*, August 24. <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2768168/posts>  
(October 31 2011)

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<sup>v</sup> The one case in Haiti where a man was rescued 28 days after the earthquake—blowing the 15 day record out of the water—and about which much ado was very likely the victim-survivor of an aftershock, something that, when it was discovered, the press only sparsely reported.

Betancur, Kena. 2010. "Haitian man pulled from rubble." *Reuters, CBC News*. February 9.

Jenny Booth (London's timesonline.co.uk). 2010. "Doctors Back Story of Miracle Haiti Earthquake Survivor Evans Monsigrace." *Student News Daily*, February 10.

<https://www.studentnewsdaily.com/daily-news-article/doctors-back-story-of-miracle-haiti-earthquake-survivor-evans-monsigrace/>

Jacqui Goddard. 2010. "Buried for 27 days: Haiti earthquake survivor's amazing story." *Telegraph*, March 28.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7530686/Buried-for-27-days-Haiti-earthquake-survivors-amazing-story.html>

Dodds, Paisley. 2010. "Doctors say Haitian man is improving after reportedly being trapped by earthquake for 27 days." *The Associated Press*, published in *Dallas News*. February 11.

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/news/2010/02/11/Doctors-say-Haitian-man-is-improving-8295>

A summary of the rescues covered by the media:

- Wednesday (day one): No rescuers
- Thursday (day two): Montana, Caribbean Market. Not well covered.
- Friday (day three) Spanish rescuers pulled out two-year-old Redjeson, a boy who had been trapped in his kindergarten.
- Friday (day three) seven hours later British rescuers pulled two old Mia, a girl, from the same kindergarten.
- Saturday (day four) a Russian team removed two Haitian girls still alive—9-year-old Olon Remi and 11-year-old Senviol Ovri—from their demolished home
- Saturday (day four) Saint-Helene Jean-Louis when they arrived at the collapsed University of Port-au-Prince building were the top of her head and her left hand. Fairfax County, Virginia, Urban Search and Rescue team tore away through a few more layers, digging down and sideways to free her upper body. She was able to sip a little water. Nearly 30 hours later, working in two shifts, they pulled Jean-Louis out of the building - still alive. She was able to say her name before being whisked away to an Israeli field hospital.
- Saturday (day four) American and Turkish rescue workers pulled out a seven-year-old girl from the Caribbean Market. She confesses to surviving on the supermarket's dried fruit rolls (no word on whether she was punished for looting). Rescuers said they heard a small voice from deep in a pile of rubble.
- Saturday (day four); neighbors heard Baby Jean-Louis and found him in the rubble of his home.
- Saturday (day four) UN Danish civil affairs officer, Jens Kristensen was pulled from the wreckage of its five-story headquarters in Port-au-Prince. UN firefighter Neville Fouche

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expressed his amazement at the rescue: "Five days after the earthquake! How is it possible? It is simply a miracle."

- Saturday (day four) French and U.S. rescue crews pulled out 22-year-old Marie-France (they had to amputate her leg before they could extract her).
- Saturday (day four) Peruvian rescuers pulled 23 year old Maxine
- Saturday (day four) American rescuers pulled six-year-old Nazer Erne, a boy, from the rubble." gaunt and covered in dust. But he smiled to the paramedics from his stretcher, saying he felt fine. Medics say he had chipped his tooth." (as per Kathy Kleriech account in the main text)
- Saturday (day four) from the same hole the U.S. rescuers pulled 14-year-old Frangina, a girl. Reporters say that as she was being carried away she cried out that a third child buried in the house along with them had died.
- Saturday (day four) an Israeli rescue team pulled 59 year old tax administrative director, Mr. Frances Gilles, from his office. He had called a relative from his mobile phone.
- Ms. Cardoso survived 4 ½ days beneath five floors of rubble with just minor injuries. Ms. Cardoso's son, Sylvain, told rescuers Saturday afternoon he could hear his mother. at 2 am on Sunday morning Rescuers found her thanks to a mobile phone text she sent to her husband.
- Sunday (day five), neighbors pulled 18 month old baby from the wreckage of his home.
- Sunday (day five), Rescuers from the US, Turkey, Iceland and "half a dozen other nations," pulled seven-year old Ariel, thirty-four year old Lamy, fifty-year-old Maria from the Caribbean Market. "All three were surrounded by food, so they could eat," one of the rescue workers explained, "so unlike normal in this type of situation...." One of them had sent a text message to family in Miami saying they were inside the Caribbean Market, near the fruit, meat and frozen food aisles.
- Sunday (day five), Miami Dade and a dozen or more including Florida Senate Candidate Kendrick Meek (who catches the rescue on his iPhone), Congressional candidate Rudolph Moise, and soon to be one of Time's 100 most influential people, Karls Paul-Noel pull a two year old girl from the wreckage of her home.
- Monday (day six), Turkish team, along with French, Haitian and later U.S. help pulled 25 year old Ms. Hotteline out of an apartment over a supermarket.
- Monday (day six), French rescuers pulled 26 years old Natalie from the rubble. She reportedly greeted her rescuers with a smile and a song.
- Monday (day six), French rescuers pulled 23 day old Elisabeth Joassaint from the wreckage of his Jacmel home, dubbed the "miracle baby." Seemingly defying everything that doctors have been telling us all our lives, some of us were amazed to learn that babies handle being trapped and last longer without water than the rest of us. A new born can survive as long as a month without food or water. Haitian workers clearing the rubble from her home heard her cry and notified French rescuers.

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- Monday (day six), Mexican rescuers pull 69 year old Ena Zizi was pulled from the wreckage of the deceased Arch Bishop's home. Dubbed 'the Miracle of the Cathedral.' she said that she survived on God. She was singing as they carried her away. Mexican rescue workers were crying. The famous "Topos" of Mexico city had found her using heat sensing devices. They also report using a German dog for verification.
  - Tuesday (day seven), 11 year old Mendji Bahina Sanon was pulled from her wrecked home by her mother. She asked for was cornflakes and milk, and then fainted. She was found by a neighbor. Her mother, even after finding the child's five-year-old brother dead, had continued searching for her daughter. On Wednesday, she described hearing a neighbor cry out: "I heard your daughter, she called out." On Wednesday, she described hearing a neighbor cry out: "I heard your daughter, she called out." "I didn't believe it, but I rushed, the neighbors dug, she was alive and they dug her out. She talked to me and asked me for milk and cornflakes and then she fainted."
  - Wednesday (day eight) Twenty American rescuers from New York City and Virginia pull 7-year-old Kiki and his 11 year-old sister Sabrina from the ruins of their apartment building. Another dead sibling is in the hole with them. Coming out of the whole, in the arms of an NYC firefighter, Kiki flashes a big stretches his arms out for his aunt, a photographer snaps it, and a couple hours later it is called "the photo seen around the world." Some see this as a symbolic turning point in the aid effort (Allen Mills Time on Sunday). "It was like a birth," one of the rescuers said. "We went into labor for hours, and these two children came out of the earth." Kiki had been found by his aunt who had gone back to the house to scrounge what she could and she heard faint cries.
  - Thursday (day 9), Israeli rescuers pulled 21 year old. Emmannuel Buso out of his house. He had been coming out of the shower when the earthquake hit. He survived drinking his own urine. He was found by his relatives who asked the Israeli team for help.
  - Thursday (day 9), pulled 84 year old Marie Carida. No one knows how the hell she survived. Her son found her. He heard her cries on Thursday morning and with the help of friends dug her out a day later
  - Friday (day 10), French Greek and American rescuers pulled 24 year old Wismond Exantus from the hotel grocery store where he had been working. He survived on whiskey, beer, and sodas (it's not know whether he mixed the sodas with the whiskey or simply drank the whiskey straight). He was found by his brother who assured Greek rescuers, "I am sure he's in there. I tap and he taps back."
  - Sunday (day 12), U.S. troops pulled 30 something Rico Dibrivell from the rubble of shop that he had been looting when an aftershock had trapped him three days after the first earthquake struck He survived on Sodas and bottled water. He was discovered by looters who then asked U.S. troops to help.
  - Tuesday, (day 14), French rescuers pulled 16-year-old Darlene Etienne from her parent's collapsed home. She reportedly said, 'Thank you' when they pulled her out. She had been surviving on bath water. Neighbors heard her calling weakly from the rubble and asked French rescuers to help.

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<sup>vi</sup> For summary of medical reports on rescues and time of survival see: Macintyre, A.G.; Barbera, J.A.; Smith, E.R.: "Surviving Collapsed Structure Entrapment after Earthquakes: A "Time-To-Rescue" Analysis." *Prehospital Disaster Medicine*. 2006:21(1):4–19.

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"A total of 34 different earthquake events met study criteria. Forty-eight medical articles containing time-to-rescue data were identified. Of these, the longest time to rescue was "13–19 days" post-event (secondhand data and the author is not specific). The second longest time to rescue in the medical articles was 8.7 days (209 hours). Twenty-five medical articles report multiple rescues that occurred after two days (48 hours). Media reports describe rescues occurring beyond Day 2 in 18 of 34 earthquakes. Of these, the longest reliably reported survival is 14 days after impact, with the next closest having survived 13 days. The average maximum times reported from these 18 earthquakes was 6.8 days (median = 5.75 days). The event with the most media reports of distinct rescue events was the 1999 Marmara, Turkey earthquake (43 victims)."

<sup>vii</sup> For the quote from Redlener, see: Ahlers, Mike M. 2010. "Rescue teams mobilized, watch Haiti turmoil from U.S.." *CNN*, January 20. <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/01/19/haiti.american.rescue.teams/>

<sup>viii</sup> For the rescue teams and when they really go to Haiti, see:

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<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41023.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/Haiti-earthquake-relief-update#transcript>

<sup>x</sup> For Pere Perez quote, see: *Dominion Post*. 2010. "Angry Mobs Turn on Haiti's Looters" January 19.  
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<sup>xi</sup> *Mex Files*. 2010. "Mole Men forced out by UN!" January 20.  
<https://mexfiles.net/2010/01/20/mole-men-forced-out-by-un/>

<sup>xii</sup> For the Damien Cave account with the Miami-Dade rescuers, see: Cave, Damien, Maggie "For the Trapped, Rescue Is but the First Hurdle." *The New York Times*, January 16.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/world/americas/16rescue.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/world/americas/16rescue.html?_r=0)

<sup>xiii</sup> For the press conferences, Callaghan and Mills extolling and upping the rescues, see: The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2010. "U.S. Government Response to the Haiti Earthquake" Press Statements for January 18, 19, and 20.

<sup>xiv</sup> For the 11-year old girl who died after being rescued, see: Watson, Ivan. 2010. "Rescued girl, 11, dies after bid to save her." *CNN*, January 16.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/15/haiti.earthquake.rescues>

<sup>xv</sup> For the Dario Gonzalez quote, see: Allen-Mills, Tony. 2010. "Haiti earthquake rescue of Kiki brings a vision of hope." *The Sunday Times*, January 24.

<sup>xvi</sup> For the Kathie Klarreich account with the Topos and Miami-Dade rescuers, see: Klarreich, Kathie 2010. "Haiti earthquake diary: Eyewitness to a Miami-Dade team rescue." *Christian Science Monitor*,

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January 24. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Haiti-Earthquake-Diary/2010/0124/Haiti-earthquake-diary-Eyewitness-to-a-Miami-Dade-team-rescue/%28page%29/2>

<sup>xvii</sup> For more information on the Topos and for Chino's account of the conflict with Miami-Dade rescuers, see *The Mex Files*:

<http://www.city-data.com/forum/mexico/870495-haiti-american-rescuers-risk-life-mexican.html>

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<sup>xviii</sup> For Meek's quotes and the video of Miami-Dade rescue, see: Meeks, Kendrick B. 2011. "My Video of a Two-Year-Old Girl Rescued Alive After Five Days Under the Rubble in Haiti." *Huffington Post*, May 25. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-kendrick-b-meek/rep-kendrick-meeks-iphone\\_b\\_428515.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-kendrick-b-meek/rep-kendrick-meeks-iphone_b_428515.html)

<sup>xix</sup> For comparison of saves to deaths in China, Italy and Haiti earthquakes, see: Rodgers, Lucy. 2010. "Why did so many people die in Haiti's quake?" *BBC News*, February 14.

<sup>xx</sup> For the Fairfax homecoming, see: Kravitz, Derek. 2010. "Fairfax team comes home after saving Haiti quake survivors." *Washington Post*, January 29. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/28/AR2010012803978.html>

<sup>xxi</sup> For Raj Shah's quote, see: Conan, Neal. 2011. Interview with Raj Shah. It's the TALK OF THE NATION. *NPR News*, January 12, 2011.

# 8

## *The Rape Epidemic*

### **APOCALYPTIC LEVELS OF RAPE**

It was the end of January 2010. Phantom sex traffickers and slave hunters stalked one million scared and lost children through the rubble-strewn streets of Port-au-Prince. The 10 Baptist missionaries from Idaho had just landed in prison, accused of scooping up earthquake victims and trying to smuggle them out of Haiti, ostensibly to be sold on the international sex-slave market. The world was watching. And then something just as grisly raised its ugly head. In the camps where huddled hungry and vulnerable widows and orphans, armed gangs of men sought them out and raped them. No female was safe. Pregnant mothers, the elderly, even toddlers and babies were targets. And no one was doing anything to protect them. Not the UN, not the Haitian police, not the people themselves. It was what would soon become known as the “rape epidemic,”

another massive delusion on the part of news outlets and humanitarian aid agencies in pursuit of readership and donations, one more phase of the Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle that helped keep the overseas public shoveling out donations.

## QUESTIONABLE FOUNDATIONS

The press awareness of the post-earthquake rape epidemic can be traced to a single official statement, this one from Haiti Police Chief Mario Andresol. On January 28—the very day that the Baptists were being arrested for trying to smuggle children across the border—the Chief told the press:

With the blackout that's befallen the Haitian capital, bandits are taking advantage to harass and rape women and young girls under the tents.

Similar to the comment about orphanages being “fronts for criminal organizations” that Chief of Haiti’s National Judicial Police, Frantz Thermilus, was seen making at a press conference in the last chapter, Chief Andresol did not give specifics. He did not give a number of reported rapes, he did not say they had increased since the earthquake, and he did not provide a single example of a rape incident. In fact, in a press conference seven weeks later, Haiti National Police spokesman Gary Desrosiers would announce that in the two and a half months following the earthquake the police had received a record low of only 24 reports of rapes.<sup>i</sup> But just like the orphan crisis, none of that seemed to matter, not to the journalists whose job it was to gather the data, not to the editors whose job it was to sort through the data to make sure it was responsible and accurate, and certainly not to the NGOs and UN agencies that would use the information to bring in donations. Journalists let it rip. Headlines the next day read:

“Criminals in Haiti Raping Quake Survivors and Trafficking Children.”

*The Times* of London, January 29, 2010

“Police: Criminals in Haiti Raping Quake Survivors”

*Fox News*, January 29, 2010

“Haiti: criminals ‘raping women and girls in camps’ ”

*The Telegraph*, January 29, 2010

“Rape Stalks Haiti Quake Survivors”

*IslamOnline*, January 29, 2010

“Bandits raping Haiti quake survivors”

*The Sydney Morning Herald* January 29, 2010

“Chaos as women raped in Haiti earthquake camps”

*The New York Post*, January 29, 2010

The only anecdote that any of the journalists provided — and all used the same anecdote — was from Rachelle Dolce, one of some 40,000 people living in tents at the Petion-Ville Tennis and Golf Club where Sean Penn had set up his NGO (J/P HRO) and was distributing aid and managing the camp. Rachelle told reporters that, she “thought” a rape had occurred outside her tent the previous night. “I heard a fight outside, and I saw panties on the ground.” Then Rachelle, “started to shout a lot and they left.”<sup>ii</sup>

It’s almost inexplicable how Rachelle’s speculation became the foundation for the rape epidemic: an inferred account of something she didn’t see, both victim and rapist left when Rachelle started shouting, and a pair of panties on the ground — panties she had found the following morning. No victim, no perpetrator, no witness, and scant circumstantial evidence. Not much of a case.<sup>iii</sup>

## CONFIRMATION FROM SERIOUS JOURNALISTS

Finally, on March 16, two months and four days after the earthquake, an Associated Press journalist came up with what she presented as a plethora of rape cases. The journalist was Michelle Faul, seen earlier with the gangs and then on the trail of the death count, there seemingly could be no more credible professional than Faul. She was a senior correspondent, former Caribbean AP Bureau Chief with five years' experience living in and covering Haiti for the world's premier wire service. The AP had sent Faul back to earthquake ravaged Port-au-Prince with a team of some dozen other correspondents specifically to let the world know exactly what was going on. Having already helped ignite the doomsday panic in the weeks after the earthquake with reports of 'mobs of young men, faces covered with bandanas, wielding machetes in the streets' — seen in Chapter 3 — Faul now unleashed a new media frenzy. Faul entitled her article, "Rape in Haiti: Women, Girls Detail Violent Attacks in Aftermath of Haiti Earthquake."<sup>iv v</sup>

After opening her article with the story of a 21-year-old mother of a 3-month-old infant who three men raped at a camp toilet, and the shame and infections and psychological pain she endured as a consequence, Faul dropped a bomb:

Women and children as young as 2, already traumatized by the loss of homes and loved ones in the Jan. 12 catastrophe, are now falling victim to rapists in the sprawling tent cities that have become home to hundreds of thousands of people.

With no lighting and no security, they are menacing places after sunset. Sexual assaults are daily occurrences in the biggest camps...

Not to miss out, the rest of the media followed with special broadcasts and articles such as:

"Haiti quake victims now face rape trauma — Haiti earthquake"

MSNBC, March 16, 2010 (AP)

“Girls as Young as Two Facing Rape in Tent Cities as UN Security Patrols Fail to Protect Women After Haiti Earthquake”

*MailOnline*, David Gardner, March 17, 2010

“Rape Rampant in Haiti’s Earthquake Camps”

*CBS News*, March 17, 2010

Still missing from the press accounts were solid details and numbers. But one week later, on March 24, Beverly Bell seemingly resolved that shortcoming with an article published in the *Huffington Post*. Once again, there could be no more credible expert. Thirty years working in Haiti, Creole speaker, part-time journalist, Bell had even written a book about Haitian women entitled *Walking on Fire* (Cornell University Press, 2001). Using word play regarding the violent shaking that came with the earthquake, Bell entitled her article:

“Our Bodies are Shaking Now: Rapes Follow Earthquake in Haiti”

*Huffington Post*, March 24, 2010

Bell began by admitting that, “there are no statistics on rape during the 10 weeks since the earthquake.” But, she then assured readers, “reports abound” and she went on to give seven stories of rape.

Her first ‘report’ was that of little Timafi, a four-year-old girl who a young man took by the hand, led to a cemetery and then raped. It’s horrific. No question about that. Little Timafi suffered vaginal bleeding and was put on antibiotics. But there was a little problem in using this particular rape as an example of fallout from the earthquake and lack of security in the camps. It did not happen in a refugee camp. It did not happen in Port-au-Prince. It did not even happen in the earthquake strike zone. It happened 150 miles away from Port-au-Prince, in a remote town called Jeremy. What’s more, it was hardly an example of a violent, pistol toting gang member taking advantage of post-earthquake chaos with impunity. Little Timafi was raped by her 17-year-old neighbor.

The person who stopped the rape was an elderly woman who intervened. Instead of accosting the elderly woman, the teenager fled.

The second case Bell presented was the rape of a 12-year-old girl. This one *did* occur in a camp and in Port-au-Prince. And, we are told, the girl had lost both parents in the earthquake. So she really was an earthquake victim. And there is no apparent reason not to believe she got raped. Her neighbors certainly believed it. They stoned the rapist to death. So much for the impunity of rapists in post-earthquake Haiti.

In almost all of Bell's other cases something is amiss, something that should make a discerning reader question whether this was evidence of a rape epidemic. In Bell's third example, a 2-year old girl was raped; neighbors and camp officials apprehended him and turned him over to the authorities. Once again, so much for impunity. In another case an 18-month old toddler was raped. The perpetrator was the boyfriend of the child's mother. Neighbors caught him too. They turned him over to the police.

In one of the remaining two cases where rapists did get away with the crime, another 2-year old was reportedly "gang raped" and then "tossed away by assailants." But Bell didn't get this information from the victim's family. She didn't get it from neighbors. She didn't get it from the police. And she didn't even get it from medical workers. It was, Bell admits, "a second-hand report." From whom? She didn't say.

Of the seven cases, there was one that fits the expected image of roving gangs of armed men raping girls and women with impunity. It is a single case of an 18-year old woman who four men raped "so violently that she could not walk the next day." But all totaled, that's one in seven cases. And in four of the cases the victim was in fact not a woman but a toddler. That in itself should send up a flag. Indeed, in all but two of the most horrific cases of rape that the *Huffington Post* and the *Associated Press* could cite as evidence of a massive post-earthquake rape epidemic—and both newspaper articles cited the exact same cases of rape—the victims were either defenseless toddlers, the



rapist got apprehended or killed, or the rape occurred 150 miles from Port-au-Prince. That's the worst they could come up with in a period of over 10 weeks, among a population of 3.4 million people and in time of total chaos and upheaval, when half the population had supposedly left their homes and was living in camps, and when supposedly more than 10 percent had been killed.

So there are some logical inconsistencies between the examples and the conclusion. But it is the one remaining case that both Bell and Faul recounted that is the most dramatic and the most revealing. Not least of all because it involved the daughters of none other than the directors who founded an organization called KOFAVIV. It was in fact KOFAVIV that had given all the stories of rape to both Faul and Bell.

Re-reading Bell's article I saw that prior to the earthquake KOFAVIV had 3,000 members. Of those, 300 members died in the earthquake. Both the organization and the remaining members had lost everything. The office came down. All their records were destroyed. And all the members lost their homes. Let me say that again so that there is no misunderstanding: all 2,700 surviving members of KOFAVIV lost their homes and sought refuge in camps. Every single one of them. And that's where they found themselves fighting a scourge of rape. The valiance with which the women of KOFAVIV came together to defend themselves and other victims is nothing short of epic. And that brings us to the one remaining case that both Bell and Faul cited as evidence of a rape epidemic.

According to former AP Caribbean Bureau Chief Michelle Faul, the co-director of KOFAVIV, Marie Eramithe Delva, recounted that a rapist "seized her daughter and was dragging her into an alley." But, "The assailant did not see the teen's three sisters, who had been walking behind her, and all four of them managed to beat him and run him off." That was Faul's account.

Beverly Bell's *Huffington Post* version of the same incident was significantly different and worse—or better, depending upon your perspective. According to Bell it was not the daughter of KOFAVIV co-director Delva who was attacked. In this version, three of Delva's daughters caught a man in the act of beating a woman whom they did not know. The girls intervened. The man then pulled a gun on the girls. The girls "fought him off."

If the story stopped there then it might be at least remotely comparable to Faul's version. But it didn't stop there. In Bell's version of the story the man came back for revenge. "Delva's daughter," Bell recounts, "very nearly became part of the group's statistics."

At 8:00 on March 2, a man came under the tarp which is home to Delva, [KOFAVIV] co-coordinator Malya Villard-Appolon, their 13 combined children and grandchildren, and other family members. The man threw Delva's 17-year-old daughter Merline on the ground, dragged her outside, and prepared to rape her. Merline beat him off. An hour or so later, the man returned with three other men and a pistol. They beat four of Delva and Appolon's daughters.

In Bell's account the girls and their mother tried to get help from the police but were insulted. "Go tell it to the President," the police told them.

Forgetting for the moment that major newspapers published two radically different versions of the same incident, and putting aside that the girls beat this rapist off not once but twice—even when he had a gun—there are some problems. Not least of all is the idea of a man trying to beat a woman in a yard where she lived with her mother and 12 other family members, then dragging her out in the pathway of a tent city where lived another 25,000 people, and trying to publicly rape her on the ground—all within a couple hundred yards of the main police station. It's tough to swallow. Forget about the police. Based on 26 years of working and living in Haiti and the

Dominican Republic—and looking at what happened to some of the other rapists mentioned above—I cannot think of a faster way to get yourself stoned to death. vi vii viii

So once again, what the hell was going on?

## SEEING WHAT YOU BELIEVE—AGAIN

“I’ve lived in Brooklyn New York, Norfolk Virginia, and Jacksonville Florida. I always tell people, I don’t see violence in Haiti.” The guy who is saying this is Gilbert, a Haitian-American. The reason he’s saying this is because I just asked him, “Where do you think there is more violence, the U.S. or Haiti?” And the reason I asked him the question is because I am with an international journalist from Germany named Philipp Lichterbeck, who is standing next to us, baseball cap on his head, listening intently.

Philipp is part of the flood of journalists and activists who have come to address the rape epidemic. He’s asked me to accompany him on his investigation and at the moment I’m trying to demonstrate to Philipp that violence in Haiti isn’t as rampant as most outsiders think. It’s violent. Yes. But in my experience Haitians are emphatically far less inclined than my fellow Americans, or Philipp’s fellow Germans, to beat up on strangers or enemies, friends, neighbors or lovers. I have never met, for example, a young Haitian man who would go out on a Saturday night looking for a fight, as some of Philipp and my own young compatriots are prone to do.

This guy Gilbert is a good person to ask the question because Philipp doesn’t understand Creole. He understands and speaks perfect English, so he can hear the response for himself. And what’s more, Gilbert should know the answer. Gilbert’s an ex-street thug who got deported from the U.S. for selling crack. He’s got a couple gold teeth and a mug that makes you believe that he’s probably pretty tough. But now something strange happens: Philipp challenges Gilbert. He says, “What about the

rapes? I was talking to doctors, reputable Haitian doctors and they say there are a lot of rapes.”

Gilbert winces as if to say bullshit and then in a diplomatic tone says, “They do this because they are making their case, they belong to organizations...”

But Philipp doesn’t let Gilbert finish. He cuts him off and repeats, more emphatically now, “I was talking to doctors, reputable doctors!” Philipp has a light skinned, pasty white and freckled complexion and to my surprise he’s turning red.

“Yes, but...” Gilbert tries to cut back in and finish what he was saying.

Philipp is having none of it. He takes off his baseball cap and then facing Gilbert, almost as if he’s going to square off and fight, Philipp raises his voice and says, “No. No. I am telling you.” He’s half shouting and his pale skin has now turned bright blood red. “These are doctors, these are reputable Haitian doctors. They are paid by the State. They are not part of the State. But they get paid by the State. They do not get their money from NGOs!”

I try to cut in and get Philipp to allow Gilbert to finish what he was saying. After all, we’re supposed to be investigators not advocates. Philipp is a journalist. I’m an anthropologist. We are not supposed to be telling Haitians on the street what’s going on. We’re supposed to be asking them. But there’s no interrupting Philipp. He has his story and, to my astonishment, he is not going to let anyone change his mind about it.



“What about rapes?” I ask. I am at the Pétion-Ville Tennis and Golf Course, the same place where the first published rape incident occurred, that of Rachelle Dolce who had heard an argument and later found panties on the ground. Philipp’s insistence on the rape epidemic despite us not finding any evidence of one has prompted me to

investigate for myself. So now I am talking to Marc, another deportee who speaks American slang better than I do. He was born in Haiti, grew up in Miami, got busted selling drugs when he was 27 years old — 10 years before the earthquake — and wound up getting deported to Haiti. Life in Haiti was tough and there is little question that Marc knows a lot about that. When I asked him about crime in Haiti, Marc had said, “you know, when you do something here, the cops don’t come after you like in the States.” The sincerity with which he made the comment left me with little doubt that Marc continued a life of crime after arriving in Haiti. I’m afraid to even imagine what kinds of crime, but with 80 percent formal unemployment and a minimum wage of \$2 per day, I know that I shouldn’t be surprised. But that’s another story. With the earthquake Marc got a big break. He and some 250 other deportees now have jobs working for the J/P HRO, the NGO that Sean Penn founded. Marc is on a first name basis with Sean. He works for him as a security guard at the gate between the camp on the golf course and Penn’s tent headquarters next to the Club House. Who could be better informed? Marc is literally in the middle of everything. And he’s been here at the camp since January 30, three weeks after the earthquake. “We haven’t had any problems lately.” Marc tells me, with a perfect Miami street accent, “But,” he qualifies, “when we first opened up we had about 10 women come in with complaints of rape.”

“Did the same people rape them, like a gang or something?”

“No, they were different people. Like there was one girl, 16, she was raped by her stepfather. And then we had a case, it was right over there.” Marc points to an empty field, “There used to be tents there. The girl was giving us her story when the guy came in and started saying it wasn’t like that. That they had been engaged. So it wasn’t what it seemed at first.”

## CHAMPS-DE-MARS: HOTBED OF RAPE

I'm walking in the rain in camp Champ-de-Mars, the city park turned earthquake survivor camp. Both Faul of the AP and Beverly Bell of the *Huffington Post* had singled Champ-de-Mars out as a hotbed of rape. And so now I am here, wandering around the camp, in the drizzling rain, trying to get a handle on just what the hell is really going on.

Before it became a massive camp of what the humanitarian agencies have labeled IDP (internally displaced persons), Champ-de-Mars was a sprawling city park, the Haitian equivalent of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. I pass the *Neg Mawon* statue, the Haitian statue of liberty, the image of a slave who had run away before the revolution and lived free in remote mountain hideaways. His body is stretched in a long crouch, naked torso gleaming, head thrown back, and a conch shell to his lips as he bellows a call to arms and freedom. In the past this park has often been the site of demonstrations, sit-ins, riots. Now it's a squatter settlement. Dilapidated scraps of huts with narrow passages between them. Rows of lonely portable toilets line the edge of the street. Not a single person entering, coming out, or waiting to use one. I pass a woman scrubbing a pot in a doorway. Two little girls are bathing nearby. They are both naked and covered with soap. "*Blan,*" one of the girls shouts to me as I go by.

Every so often I stop and ask someone about violence and rape.

"You guys have a security problem around here?" I've introduced myself to two older men, Cheri Rafael and Vilboint Doris. Both are early sixties, confident, relaxed, and thoughtful. They are sitting playing dominoes up under the eaves of a tent where they will not get wet from the light, drizzling rain.

"Yeah, that's a big problem," says Vil, "you see right there," he points to an open tent. The sides of the tent are rolled up and we can see inside. It's someone's living

room. There's a sofa, bed, table, two lamps. "They cut the fabric the other night," Vil says, grim-faced and shaking his head, "stole her purse while she was sleeping."

"That's terrible." I agree, "But what about violence?"

Vil shakes his head, "Not easy to find violence around here." and then waving his hand in the direction the downtown Vil says, "If you go down there you can find some. But here, this is a place that's relaxed."

I'm perplexed. "What about rapes? I hear that's a big problem?"

"Yes, we heard that too." Vil says, "Some professionals came and talked to us about it. We formed a committee and we told the girls, 'don't bathe naked.' "



I'm wandering along again, walking through the camp, alone, in the drizzling rain. I pass two dogs scrounging through trash. Another long and lonely line of portable toilettes. No one coming out, no one going in, no one waiting to use one.

I pass a girl sitting beneath a blue tarp. In front of her she has neatly assembled small bags of charcoal for sale. "Bon swa *blan*" she greets me as I walk past.

A battered old truck with a huge water tank groans by. I see few people. I see no other *blans* or aid workers. No NGO base camps.

The rain has stopped when I come across eight tough young men. Several stand in a group talking. Others are lounging. One of them is slumped against a small stone wall. Another is leaning back against a tree. I don't really want to stop. But I do. Suddenly I am encircled by the men. Braided hair, baseball caps on sideways. One of them has two large rhinestone earrings stuck through his earlobes. Standing closest and glaring at me is a man with drooping bloodshot eyes. I'm nervous. These are the bad asses, the ones the press must have in mind when they refer to armed young men

raping women. The one with the rhinestone earrings identifies the group as, "the leaders of the camp." While I am thinking that people in the camp would probably disagree, they show me a little house that was here before the earthquake. It was put there because of Carnival, a type of administrative shed. They are showing it to me, telling me that it now belongs to them. So now I have to ask them the important questions, the reason I'm doing this, "Do you guys think there is a security problem here in the camp?"

"Oh yeah, yeah, yeah," the guy with blood shot eyes is suddenly excited. "that's a big problem," he says, "The police keep coming by and harassing us."

"You can't even sleep around here," another one of the thugs interjects, "why, just a little while ago they came and woke Jonny up." He looks over at Jonny, the one slumped against the wall.

"You know how it is?" The guy with the bloodshot eyes is asking me rhetorically, "some other thief comes in here from somewhere else and slits a tent open with a blade and they blame us." Now everyone but Jonny is on their feet, they are all standing there looking at me in a can-you-believe that manner, as if I'm here to do something about their security problem with the Haitian police. So I get to the big question. "Rape? Is there a rape problem?"

"Yes" the guy with two earrings is sober and serious. "That's a problem too."

Blood-shot-eyes cuts in and sadly says, "You know what it is," his demeanor has changed now. He's not so frightening, "ever since the earthquake" he continues, "a lot of girls have let themselves go." He shakes his head.

The braided hair guy seems to defend the girls saying, "You know things are hard. They need money. They're hungry."





I'm wandering again. I stop at the police station. It's lower Port-au-Prince's main precinct, a sprawling grungy white and blue building located right at the edge of the camp. I visited here in the week after the earthquake when, at the request of a contact at the UN Special Envoy's office in New York, I was looking for aid workers who were already on the ground helping people. I found none. But now, in the walled-off compound behind the precinct are tents full of supplies. Foreign aid workers bustle about. When I ask a police officer if crime is worse before or after the earthquake he laughs and says, "they're a lot easier to control now that they are in tents." But then he tells me that he can't talk to me. To get an interview I have to go through official channels. So I'm wandering again, walking up one wide boulevard that separates this park-turned-IDP camp and then down the next boulevard. I walk past a line of tents. And then I come upon a large rectangular army-green tent. It has an A-frame top across which is printed in big bold black letters, UNICEF.

I stick my head in the flap. There is a table with a computer on it and two chairs on either side of the table. In one of the chairs is an older market woman. She wears a faded skirt and blouse and a handkerchief wrapped around her head. She is slumped in the chair, hand covering her brow. She seems thin and tired. On the other side of the desk is a well-dressed, plump woman. She is clearly a "professional." She wears an ironed skirt, fresh blouse and her hair is styled straight. Her name is Stephanie Beaubrun. She invites me in and explains that I am in the PESDEV tent. UNICEF gave PESDEV the tent and, she tells me, "PESDEV is an organization that works with victims of rape and gender based violence. We have tents in eight of the other big camps." Stephanie begins to name the camps, "Akra, Stad, Jean Marie Vincent..."

I cut her off and skip straight to the point, "Could you tell me how many people who come in here have been raped by people they don't know?"

I've asked this question because I'm sure there are problems. Based on my other interviews at the golf course, in this camp, and my own experiences living in Haiti, I have no doubt there are conflicts among people who know one another, and especially men and women who have children together or who are lovers. Women get abused. Sometimes men get abused. Children get abused. But what I just can't believe is that armed groups of men are roving the camps and raping women with impunity. So that's what I'm after: I want to know the context of the rapes. I want to know if it's true what they've been writing in the international press: "are armed men really raping women and children?"

Stephanie is hesitant and I'm feeling awkward, like perhaps I'm not handling this properly. "I mean," I try to clarify, "are women being violated by men they don't know?"

Stephanie is looking at me as if she doesn't understand.

"Okay, let me put it this way. Out of everyone who comes in here that has been violated, attacked or abused, how many of them report not knowing their assailant?"

Stephanie is not responding.

"Would you say that it's nine out of ten, five out of ten, one out of ten?" I've got my notebook out and pen in my hand, I'm poised to write.

"The latter she says."

"One out of ten?"

Stephanie nods her head.

"Okay," I'm jotting it down. "Can you give me an example of a case like that?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean an example of someone getting raped by people they don't know. Like a gang or some guy who drags a woman into a tent."

Now Stephanie is shaking her head, "I haven't gotten a case like that yet."

"You haven't had a case like that?"

"No."

"Okay, so it's not one out of 10." I'm scratching it out in my notebook.

"How long have you been here?" I ask.

"A little more than two weeks."

"And how many people have come in here with a complaint?" I've got pen to paper, poised to write again.

"One," Stephanie says.

"One per day?"

"No." She says. "One."

"Huh?" I look up. "You've only had one case in two weeks?"

"Oui," she says and nods towards the market woman.

I look at the woman. She's slumped in the chair, one hand across her brow. She does not look like what I would expect of a rape victim. She's mid-fifties, weathered.

"What's her problem?"

"Her son-in-law beat her daughter."

## **ACTIVISTS TO THE RESCUE**

"So you're saying there are no rapes in Haiti?"

I'm looking up at the scowling white faces of more than half a dozen international journalists and several of the most active foreign activists in post-earthquake Haiti. They are literally surrounding me and the hostility is so thick I'm almost frightened. I'm a little pissed off too.

"No," I say, "I very clearly and specifically did not say that. What I said was that I found no indication that what is being reported in the newspapers is an accurate representation of what's really going on regarding rape in the camps."

What happened was that I unwittingly entered a rather famed journalist and activist guesthouse in Port-au-Prince. I didn't know that when I arrived. I had come to visit a young journalist acquaintance of mine, Ansel Herz, mentioned earlier in Chapter 3. But while Ansel was introducing me to his friends they began to bombard me with stories of camp evictions and abuse of the impoverished Haitians. One of them, a guy named Mark Snyder, brought up the rape epidemic, recounting how gang members were getting completely out of hand. "Now," he half shouted with indignation, "they are strapping razor blades to their penises and maiming women." When I asked for an example of a woman who had been maimed in this way he couldn't give me one. So I shared the experiences I just recounted above, about visiting camps and how I couldn't find any anecdotal evidence of a rape epidemic; not, at least, from Haitians in the camps. Before I was finished I found myself surrounded by these scowling faces. To make it worse, I'm sitting and they are all standing, glaring down at me. "Okay," one of them says, "so why are these women's organizations saying this?"

"I don't know." And then I said what I guess I had suspected all along, something that must have sounded insensitive and sexist, "I don't know what's in it for them."

"This is sick," a young woman says with disgust and walks out of the room. Several men follow her. Ansel is trying to defend me, "I'm not sure that Tim meant it

just like he said it.” But it’s clear that he is disappointed. A moment later and he too is gone.

Only three people are left in this large, open, porch-like room. They are all sitting on the other side of a long cafeteria table. I’m feeling rather dejected and mentally preparing to gather my book bag and motorcycle helmet and leave as graciously as possible. One of the three people who remain is a guy about my age, mid-forties, white, with dreadlocks. At some point earlier on, before I found myself feeling like a pariah, he had identified himself as an activist with decades of experience defending the voiceless and vulnerable in countries throughout the world. Now he begins explaining to me that, “People are not going to trust you.” He seems to be half lecturing me for my insensitivity and half consoling me for my apparent idiocy, “They are not going to tell you the truth.” And then he really lays it on, “You go down there with a translator, you don’t know the language, you don’t know the culture, you don’t know anyone. And you think they’re just going to come out and tell you about rape?”

I don’t tell him that I speak Creole, that I’ve been studying Haiti for 23 years, that I spent four years living and studying sexuality in rural areas, that I wrote a doctoral dissertation and published a book on gender in Haiti, that I lived in impoverished Haitian villages and neighborhoods for five years, I lived in a Haitian squatter settlement in the Dominican Republic for one year, I spent four months in general population prison with Haitians and Dominicans, I’ve had more intimate relationships with impoverished Haitian women than I should admit in a debate on gender—or a book—my two now grown adopted daughters are Haitian, I have two small children who are Haitian-Dominican, I have two more that are Haitian and at any given moment I have from five to 30 Haitian male and female surveyors working for me, all of whom live in popular neighborhoods and some of whom I had known for 15 years. And yes, if there was a rape epidemic they would most certainly be talking to me about it. I don’t

even bother to argue. I'm still reeling from the condemnation. He's still lecturing me, giving me some more expert advice and then I hear him say, "You should check with the organizations that specialize in this. You should hear what the women at KOFAVIV say."

## THE FEMINISTS

"I've been wanting to tell you something about KOFAVIV," Nadege says.

Ever since the 'this-is-sick' experience and getting lectured by the globe-trotting activist, I have been trying to lay low on the rape issue, part of which has meant diligently avoiding the feminist activist crowd—Haitian and non-Haitian alike. But now, months later, it's night. I am at what was, at that time, Petion-Ville's only gym. The electricity has gone out. Guided by the dim red glow of an emergency light, I've retreated to an aerobics floor where I can sit alone in the obscurity and stretch my limbs. That is what I was doing when someone says, "Tim." and now I look over and, unseen until to this moment, is Nadege Pierre (not her real name), one of the most prominent Haitian gender-based violence activists in Haiti. *Shit, I'm thinking, I'm trapped.*

Nadege is right next to me. I don't know how I didn't see her. We're both stretching within 10 feet of one another. I'm cringing. But what can I do? We begin to chat and the next thing I know she is telling me about KOFAVIV.

"I never saw those people do any work before the earthquake," she says. "Look here," she continues, "they're saying they got 60 rapes per day in the camps. But they don't have any documentation. When a woman comes to me because she has been raped or assaulted, I document it. I take them to a doctor. KOFAVIV doesn't have documentation."

"They're reporting 60 rapes per day?"

"More! They have contact with MADRE (a prominent U.S. feminist organization), that's who made them. And Amnesty International, they believe everything KOFAVIV says," she sighs. "I'm telling you, KOFAVIV didn't do anything before the earthquake." Nadege is shaking her head with dismay. "Look, you want to know KOFAVIV. Go talk to the feminist organizations SOFA and Kay Fanm, they're the most reputable organizations in Haiti. They'll tell you who KOFAVIV is."

And so I did.



### ***Feminist Organization SOFA and Olga Benoit***

Olga Benoit is the medium-light skinned, middle-class directress of SOFA. With 21 centers in seven of Haiti's 10 departments and a total of 8,000 members, SOFA is the largest and most respected feminist organization in Haiti. "SOFA," Madame Benoit tells me as she leads me through the wooden gingerbread house that is the organization's headquarters, "began as a political action group after the fall of the Duvalier Dictatorship." It was an organization created to make sure that, in the chaos that ensued, women's interests were represented. "We are *not* an organization created to work with women," Madam Benoit explains, "rather, we are an organization of women that has been created to make sure that women's interests are politically represented." We are walking through an office bustling with administrators. We arrive in a small conference room. We sit. I get right to the point. I am concerned about KOFAVIV and the data they are putting out about rapes in the camps. "It doesn't make sense to me."

Olga nods her head affirmatively and I detect a slight expression of recognition, a hint of a smirk, but controlled, not too much emotion. "When the earthquake struck," Olga begins, "we anticipated problems. All those people outside of their homes. And we began to prepare." She says this with a tone of regret, as if they missed an

opportunity. "But then it was like an invasion of NGOs. They went to the camps directly. This camp was for CRS, this camp for World Vision, this camp for Concern....We had a lot less support."

"Wait a minute." I stop writing, "you had less support."

"*Bien sur*, that's right, a lot less." She explains that after the earthquake the NGOs quit giving SOFA support and took the aid straight to the camps. "And not only were the agencies going to the camps, but," Olga explains, "after January the 12th, they heaped all the problems into the camps. It was as if problems in the neighborhoods and the rest of Haiti no longer existed."

"KOFIVIV", I ask, "and the rapes?"

"Yes, KOFIVIV," says Madam Benoit, "and the rapes." She pauses thoughtfully for a moment. "First," she begins, "you can't say that there has been an increase in rapes if you don't know how many rapes there were before the earthquake. KOFIVIV doesn't have that data." Still cautious, she continues, "We did *not* say rapes *did not* increase." She pauses, "But we have reservations. We have many *mannnyyy*" she sings the 'many' in classic creole expression of emphasis, *annnnpiilllll*, "reservations."

"Such as?"

"Look," she retreats again, cautious, "Of course the situation makes people vulnerable. All those people crammed into small areas, no police, no lighting, away from home, you can expect an increase in incidences. You have increased economic desperation. Prostitution. And you have a lot less supervision with families splitting themselves between multiple tents in different camps so they can get more aid." Then the proverbial walls come down, "Look," Olga says, leaning forward, "we went into the camps. We did a study. We spent five months, from February to July after the



earthquake. We went into 89 camps and we only documented 29 rapes. KOFAVIV reported 30 rapes per day, in a single camp!

"Thirty in a single day?" I ask.

"And they never catch any perpetrators," Olga explains, "this isn't possible!"

She pauses again, as if to let the facts sink in. And indeed, even after all my doubts, I'm stunned. The directress of the major feminist organization in Haiti is as appalled as I am. I'm jotting everything down as fast as I can go.

"Then they started with that epidemic stuff," Madam Olga Benoit scoffs. "I'm not sure how they arrive at their figures," she says this as if trying to give KOFAVIV an excuse, an out, "They could be double counting." Then she's saying it again, "We have *mannnyyy* reservations, 30 rapes per day in a single camp and they never catch anyone," she clucks her tongue.

"Why is it," I ask, looking up from my notes, "that journalists don't come to SOFA for data?"

"Hmm." Olga says and I know I hit a nerve, "Despite all the respect that I have for journalists, it's because of sensationalism."

"Did they come to you after the earthquake?"

"After the earthquake we had *mannnyyy* journalists here." She looks around as if visualizing the room full of them, journalists sitting around the table, in the lobby, hanging out in groups outside. "But they are more interested in the data that KOFAVIV gives them. KOFAVIV has a lot of big foreign supporters now." She mentions MADRE, "and the more supporters the more journalists."

“You know Beverly Bell?” I ask, referring to the woman who wrote the March 24 *Huffington Post* article, “‘Our Bodies are Shaking Now’: Rapes Follow Earthquake in Haiti.”

“We know Bev very well,” she says with a tone of appreciation, “from a long time ago. And she showed up after the earthquake. And I told her about our reservations.” Olga sighs. Now in a tone halfway between resignation and exasperation, she says, “And then Bev wrote that article.” She shakes her head. “After that we never heard from her again.” Then the walls are coming down again, “I find it strange,” Olga is saying, “how the same members of KOFAVIV are the ones who keep getting raped.” Referring to the article that Bev Bell wrote and the attempted rape of the co-director’s daughters, she says, “And it was her own daughters...” And then she’s talking about a lawsuit that KOFAVIV has launched against the Haitian government, “And now they are calling the Haitian government in front of the Inter American Commission.” She is shaking her head again, “Thirty rapes per day in a single camp. This doesn’t make Haiti look good.”

So there it was. I hadn’t discovered anything at all. The rapes were not a case of the *Emperor’s New Clothes* after all. It was yet another case of foreign journalists and aid workers blatantly uniting with those organizations most inclined to give wild exaggerations while virtually ignoring what the major, most respected and long established women’s organization in Haiti had to say. But it wasn’t just SOFA.

### ***Feminist Organization Kay Fanm and Marie Yvette Andree Jeanty***

“No!”, Marie Yvette Andree Jeanty is standing straight, looking directly at me. “No!” she repeats herself and it really does look like “no means no.”

Marie Yvette is the directress of Kay Fanm, House of Women, Haiti’s other most respected feminist organization. And Marie Yvette looks her part. She is middle age,

stately, handsome, full bodied. Her dreadlocks suggest that she is progressive; her blue business suit suggests she's serious about it.

"Just two seconds."

"No."

I arrived late, after five o'clock. Women were pouring out the front door. I passed them, and got inside, where I am now. The room is packed with empty chairs. Yolette stands at the far end of a conference table that takes up more than two thirds of all the space in the room. Next to her is Maile Alphonse, goddaughter of then Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean. Maile is a younger version of Yolette, serious, intelligent eyes, dreadlocks and business attire.

"No." Yolette repeats for the fourth time and I'm thinking that I might really get turned away.

"I swear, just two questions, you can answer them standing there. Just let me explain." A moment later I have my two questions. I get right to it. "KOFIV numbers don't add up."

"We know that." Yolette says and the atmosphere lightens a little. Maile, begins to speak. Yolette cuts her off, looks at me, "Get to the second question?"

"I just want a reaction. I want to know if you are in agreement." The women are looking at me. I feel my two seconds fading. "Why does the press listen to them?"

Yolette begins to speak, "They want to turn the gender issue into a type of spice," she says holding her hand up and rubbing her fingers together, "something sexy that sells fast and brings in money." And now, with the same professionalism that Olga Benoit at Sofa displayed, the walls begin to come down and this attractive, strong woman is saying, "It makes me really angry the way they portray Haitian men as if

they're standing on the corner waiting to pounce on me when I come by. I find that very disturbing."

"We went into the camps after the earthquake." Maile gets her chance to interject, "We spent six months in the camps. We could not verify the rapes they were reporting."

"We've been collecting data since 1984." Yolette adds. "Every rape that goes to the authorities comes to us too. We document them. We have data from 1984 to the present." She's coming around the end of the table toward me, "There were more rapes in 2009 than 2010."

She's standing in front of me now "I'm not saying there are no rapes," she says with the same air of defensiveness that I have come to find myself using when trying to explain the rape issue to people, "But you want to know what the big problem is?" Yolette pauses for a moment, "Conjugal problems," she says.

"Conjugal violence." Maile echoes, moving up behind Yolette, "Husband and wife. Jealousy."

"Acid in the face!" Yolette says with force. "Machete cuts!"

"You know what problems we have in the camps," Maile says, "Prostitution. A lot of prostitution."

Yolette settles back a little, pensive, "People are in greater need. The girls want something for themselves. But their families push them into it." I'm taking notes.

"Prostitution," Maile says again as if to punctuate the point.

"You know what other problems we have" Yolette is spelling it out, "Legal problems. No justice. It's not the stranger who rapes the girl. It's the big shot, a judge, or powerful well connected man. He's above the law. They won't prosecute him. He can have his way with a girl and there's nothing she or her family can do about it." I'm

scribbling away. This is the Haiti I know. “If a girl does make an accusation,” Maile says, “nothing happens, he’s still there, and then he persecutes her for it.”

“You know what else. We have women, their husband or a stepson rapes or seduces her daughter. The mother wants to do something about it. She comes to us. Then she realizes that she can’t do anything. She needs his support. She can’t get by without the money he makes. So she has to let it go. Those are the problems we’re having.”

OK. I got what I was after. I’m packing my notebook up. Zipping up the book bag. Yolette is back to the computer, calling on Maile, Maile is almost there, but then she turns, “you know what else is a big issue.” I’m unzipping my book bag, pulling the notebook back out. “These foreigners, they come here and they want to go into the camps and do therapy.” She looks stone-faced at me, “They don’t speak the language, they don’t know anything about the culture. They go in with a translator. You can’t do therapy with a translator. And they have their pet therapies. And they don’t want to work with the organizations and the people who have been doing this work, like us.” She is shaking her head. “They want numbers to justify their aid. And that’s why they go to KOFAVIV.”

And so there it was. The situation was indeed, “sick.” But it wasn’t me. I had the most credible feminist company one could hope for.<sup>ix</sup>

## **HISTORY OF THE RAPE EPIDEMIC**

### ***Politically Motivated Rape: The 1991-1994 Military Junta, FRAPH, and the Right***

As with orphans, in order to understand the post-earthquake “rape epidemic” you have to look back a few years, something that virtually no post-earthquake journalist did.

The world first became aware of *epidemic* levels of rape in Haiti in the early 1990s when UNICEF, Amnesty International and feminist scholars like Beverly Bell began to report alarming levels of violence against Haitian women. And there was indeed a very real escalation of violence in Haiti at the time, but not necessarily against women.

In 1991 the political right in Haiti seized power in a bloody military coup. A democratically elected president and former Catholic priest Jean Bertrand Aristide was overthrown and sent into exile, for the first time. Popular among the poor who comprise 80 percent of the Haitian population, slum dwellers took to the streets. The military reacted. They showered any crowd they saw with bullets. Human rights activists estimate as many as 3,000 people were killed. Three years of military junta and an international embargo followed. During this time, the elite created a paramilitary organization named FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti).

There's no question that FRAPH was part of a genuine attempt to provide a climate of security and peace in which economic development and prosperity could flourish in Haiti. But the beneficiaries of that peace and security were just as surely meant to be the elite, and not the poor and lower middle classes. There is also no question that for the poor and the political opposition FRAPH qualified as a paramilitary death squad. One of its three directors, Mireille Durocher Bertin, was spokeswoman and Chief of Staff for the junta's civilian president. She appears to have been the cleanest of the bunch. She would be murdered two years later, reputedly with strong evidence that behind her assassination were violent elements of the popular Aristide administration. But the two other directors say more about the agenda of FRAPH. They were: 1) Ex-special forces officer and reputed assassin Louis-Jodel Chamblain. Already renown as a death squad leader under the 1971-1986 Jean Claude Duvalier dictatorship, in the subsequent five years Chamblain would be implicated in at least five of Haiti's high-profile assassinations and massacres. And there was 2)

Emmanuel “Toto” Constant, another reputed assassin later to be convicted in absentia of a massacre in Haiti and who, with the protection of the CIA and the intervention of Bill Clinton, would get political asylum in the U.S. and then go on to be convicted by a New York Federal civil court of orchestrating the rape of three Haitian women. Toto is currently serving 12 to 37 years in a New York maximum security prison for masterminding a mortgage fraud scam. His most recent appearance in the media was as a featured profile in Jon Ronson’s 2012 bestseller, *The Psychopath Test*.

The inspiration for FRAPH reportedly came from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). After the international community returned Aristide to power in 1994, both organizations provided encouragement, funding and even protection to FRAPH members. But according to *The New York Times*’ Larry Rohter and leaked embassy cables, even as far back as 1991, when FRAPH was created, the U.S. Intelligence community had lamented their support, saying that FRAPH membership included a gang of “gun-carrying crazies” eager to “use violence against all who oppose it.” The U.S. military attaché in Port-au-Prince warned that:<sup>x</sup>

All over the country, FRAPH is evolving into a sort of Mafia... Its use of force to intimidate and coerce is sanctioned by the local military, which derives both political and especially material benefits from their relationship.<sup>xi</sup>

FRAPH killed people. Its leaders were implicated in the murder of Justice Minister Guy Malary, Activist-Priest Jean Marie Vincent, and pro-Aristide advocate Antoine Izmery. FRAPH also reputedly used rape as mechanism of repression. One self-described FRAPH recruit who sought political asylum in the U.S. told immigration officials that, “When they kill and rape people, we (new members) are forced to sit and watch.... later in the initiation process you are forced to participate.”

And indeed, feminist activist Anne Fuller notes that in the first five months of 1994—while the junta still ruled Haiti—MICIVIH reported 66 instances of rape that were “of a political nature.” At about the same time Inter-American Commission on Human Rights documented 21 cases of rape “first-hand” (sic).<sup>xii</sup> And Human Rights Watch/NCHR published a report called “Rape in Haiti: a Weapon of Terror,” concluding that there existed, “a campaign of systematic violations of human rights that clearly includes rape.” (HRW/NCHR 1994, 4).<sup>xiii</sup>

### ***Politically Motivated "Accusations" of Rape: Clinton, Aristide, and the Left***

In 1994, then U.S. President Bill Clinton gave the accusations of politically motivated rape high priority when, on the eve of the U.S.-led invasion of Haiti, he described the Haitian Military Junta as, “The most violent regime in our hemisphere,” and referred to FRAPH’s, “campaign of rape, torture and mutilation.” He also referred to, “executing children, raping women, killing priests,” and he talked of the, “slaying of Haitian orphans” for no other reason than “harboring sympathy toward President Aristide” and because Aristide “had run an orphanage in his days as a parish priest.” Last, but by no means least, Clinton indicted “soldiers and policemen” for:

...raping the wives and daughters of suspected political dissidents—  
young girls, 13, 16 years old—people slain and mutilated with body parts  
left as warnings to terrify others; children forced to watch as their  
mothers’ faces are slashed with machetes...<sup>xiv</sup>

It was a grim portrait. But it’s not clear how much of it Bill Clinton really believed. In 1993 he froze the assets of elite Haitian business people financing the terror. But 15 years later, in 2009, those same individuals would become his business partners when he launched the Global Initiative in Haiti. Moreover, under his presidency the U.S. intelligence community would subsequently help FRAPH members get out of prisons, they would seize their records but refuse to give them to the Haitian tribunals who



sought to try FRAPH members, and according to some sources, the U.S. intelligence agencies would continue to keep FRAPH members on the payroll.

An idea of how questionable widespread politically motivated violence was, comes from the UN and the OAS themselves, precisely those international institutions lending credibility to the claims. In October 1993, the UN and OAS human rights mission—MICIVIH (International Civil Mission in Haiti-Mission Civil International Haiti)—hired 230 human rights specialists from 45 countries. They worked full time out of 13 offices located in all of Haiti's then nine departments (today there are ten departments) to scour the country for alleged victims and witnesses of politically motivated violence and rape.

Two years later, in August of 1995, one year after the return of Aristide and the re-establishment of his government, the mission still had 193 officers in 11 offices scattered throughout the country documenting abuse and seeking to legally redress political crimes committed during the junta years. Yet in all this time and with all those investigators, they were only able to come up with sufficient evidence to pass 142 of the cases on to court. After reviewing the evidence, the court accepted 73 of those cases. How many involved rape is not clear. But putting it into perspective, if all were rapes, it was less rape than during the three weeks of 2010 Spring Break at Daytona Beach, Florida—when 120 women were reportedly raped. This isn't to say a few atrocities are okay. But on the global scale of epidemic crime waves, it wasn't very alarming.<sup>xv xvi xvii</sup>

As if all this wasn't enough to dim the image of massive systematic rape of the political opposition, within months of Aristide's return his administration created a Nuremberg-type trial called "National Commission for Truth and Justice (CNVJ)." Its goal was to "reveal the truths of what had occurred during the coup period." In other words, to verify if in fact there had been systematic beatings, rape, and killings. To help, they had four Haitian commissioners. And to give them international credibility, they

had three high profile foreign commissioners. They also hired six fulltime and eight part-time data analysts and 44 fulltime investigators, all with international credentials in human rights. They reviewed all the reports from human rights organizations, including the 142 cases from the UN/OAS plus more than 800 from Haitian activist attorney Camille Leblanc. They took cases from anyone else who was interested in filing them. When they got done they had 8,677 “viktim” who suffered 18,629 violations. It was a very serious undertaking.

But the “truth” of many of the claims was thrown into serious doubt three years later when the final report was, according to *Le Monde Diplomatique*, “kept hidden in the files of the minister of justice.” Hidden precisely by the Aristide government officials who were claiming that their supporters had been victimized. The report was never made public. Only the recommendations were released.<sup>xviii</sup>

Why would leaders of a government whose members had been systematically raped and killed and that was now in power, that was under the protection of UN forces, that was hungry to discredit the right-wing *putschists* who had thrown them out of power and assassinated some their most prominent members, why would they refuse to publish the results of an intensive investigation into the atrocities committed against their supporters? The most plausible reason—and none other was ever given—is because too many of the claims were baseless. So the next question is: Why would citizens have bothered making up lies about being tortured and raped? Here’s why:

### ***Rape Visas and Getting Out of Haiti***

In the wake of the 1991 coup, there was widespread despair. The 70 percent of the population that had voted for Aristide and had seen in him hope for real change, had then watched that hope disappear behind a curtain of gunfire. Their savior-priest was sent into exile. And there was no denying that high ranking Aristide supporters were

subsequently targeted and persecuted. Some killed. Some raped. But at the same time the obvious political nature of what had happened presented a quite different and very realistic opportunity for the masses of poor: emigration.

Almost every one of the impoverished 80 percent of the Haitian population wanted then—as they do now—to emigrate to the United States. And for good reason. In Miami, an able-bodied man or woman could make \$50 to \$100 per day. In Haiti, school teachers were lucky to earn \$100 per month. And that's if they could find a job. There were only about three formal sector jobs for every 100 Haitian adults. This is to say nothing of the lack of medical care, welfare services, or quality education for their children. Thus, in a country where surveys prior to the coup revealed that 100 percent of respondents would like to have a visa to go to the U.S.—but most had no hope of getting one—and where in the previous 10 years some 30,000 had risked their lives at sea trying get there but had been arrested, imprisoned for years or sent back home, there was suddenly a massive opportunity to not just get a visa, but to get residency and financial aid along with it. They could seek political asylum. Haitians flocked to the seas.

In the six months following the coup 30,000 Haitians got on boats. That was as many as the prior 10 years combined. The vast majority fully aware that the U.S. Coast Guard would stop them, simply floated out into the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti and waited for the Coast Guard to come take them to the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Cuba, which at that time served as a detainment camp for Haitian refugees. Once there, they were interned until it was determined whether or not they qualified for political asylum. And there is the crux of the issue: 'if they qualified.'

In 1992, as a graduate student, I sat on a beach in Haiti for three weeks interviewing people getting on those boats. I tried to board one myself, but was prevented by a Haitian army sergeant. I then spent four days sitting in the Miami

Refugee Center with a room full of those who had gotten on the boats, made it to Guantanamo and then gotten shipped to Miami for an asylum interview. I sat at a table translating for a Notre Dame law professor and his three students. The Haitian asylum seeker would come over, sit down at the table and begin telling us his or her story. The process wasn't easy. An applicant had to prove that:

He or she fears persecution

He or she would be persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, and/or social group, and

The government is either involved in the persecution, or unable to control the conduct of private actors.

In each case I reviewed, the story was convoluted. I'd translate. The Notre Dame attorney would shake his head. I'd tell the person they'd have to do better than that. The story would change. Those who could come up with a good story got through the asylum process. Those who could not, the majority, they got shipped back to Haiti. <sup>xix</sup> <sup>xx</sup>

Of the some 64,000 Haitians the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted at sea between 1991 and 1994, about 17,000 got political asylum. It's unknown how many Haitians falsely— vs. legitimately—obtained visas with claims of political persecution, but we can't ignore the fact that violence—true or not—was the critical ingredient for success. For women the problem of demonstrating political persecution was especially problematic. Politics in Haiti is overwhelmingly a male endeavor, so a woman falsely seeking political asylum could not easily prove that she was involved in politics. The answer for some was a political activist husband on the run. Rape of his faithful wife was even better. Imagine a U.S. judge denying a Haitian woman who claimed to have been raped as retaliation for the democratic principles of her husband. For some it turned out to be a visa trump card. According to the U.S. Embassy's refugee coordinator at the time, Luis Moreno, 25 percent of asylum seekers were women and 5 percent of those claimed to

have been raped. That's not many. But the claims increased dramatically as the junta endured.<sup>xxi xxii xxiii</sup>

Some readers are surely thinking, 'this is sick.' But bear with me. Politically motivated rapes were not just a trump card for those trying to get a visa. It was also a trump card for those sympathetic to the plight of Aristide and the persecuted political left in Haiti. Activists and journalists in the U.S., France and, not least of all, the Haitian politicians who were fighting their own onslaught of slander and accusations from the right wing *putschists* who had deposed them went on to use the rape of their partisans as ammunition in what became a war of propaganda to win the sympathy of U.S. lawmakers and discredit the opposition. As seen, even Bill Clinton, on the eve of the invasion of Haiti, would raise the specter of the military junta and their systematically "raping the wives and daughters of suspected political dissidents."<sup>xxiv</sup>

And why not? For Clinton, he had to justify mobilizing the U.S. military. For Aristide and his partisans, in addition to having been forcefully thrown out of power, persecuted and a significant number of their ranks assassinated, they had been victims of an onslaught of propaganda from the educated Haitian elite and their allies in the U.S. intelligence community. Under the Bush administration the CIA falsely portrayed Aristide as mentally unbalanced flake who was dependent on psychotherapeutic drugs and had once been committed to a mental hospital, all of which a CIA analysis summed up in a closed door congressional session as the basis for labeling him a "Marxist maniac." And all of which was subsequently proven false.

Moreover, Aristide and the leadership almost certainly believed that there was widespread and systematic rape of their supporters. For them it made perfect sense. They had seen the paramilitary brutality first hand. And there were indeed substantiated rapes and assassinations. It may well be that Aristide and his administration were as surprised as anyone to find out from the Truth Commission that

there were not as many rapes as people were claiming, that many of the accusations lacked evidence of being politically motivated, or that others may not have occurred at all.

Not even U.S. government officials on the ground in Haiti seemed to believe it. In an April 12, 1994, leaked cable sent to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Ellen Cosgrove, human rights official at the U.S. embassy wrote:

The Haitian left, including President Aristide and his supporters in Washington and here, consistently manipulate or even fabricate human rights abuses as a propaganda tool. They see the truth as a flexible means to obtain a worthy political end. A case in point is the sudden epidemic of rapes reported both by pro-Aristide human rights activists and by the ICM [International Civilian Mission-MICIVIH]. For a range of cultural reasons (not pleasant to contemplate) [a reference to vigilante justice as seen in Bell's article], rape has never been considered or reported as a serious crime here. Hard-line, ideological Aristide supporters here regularly compare the human rights situation in Haiti to the carnage in Bosnia. We are, frankly, suspicious of the sudden, high number of reported rapes, particularly in this culture, occurring at the same time that Aristide activists seek to draw a comparison between Haiti and Bosnia.<sup>xxv</sup>

And the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service didn't buy it either. Under the earlier Bush administration, the policy had changed from interning Haitians picked up at sea and giving them asylum interviews to taking them straight back to Haiti. When Bill Clinton was elected president a new surge of hope swept through Haiti. During the presidential campaign Clinton had criticized Bush for his "cruel" and "inhuman" practice of returning Haitian refugees. He made a campaign promise to "stop the forced repatriation of Haitian refugees." That promise had given enormous hope to Haitians who wanted to get into the U.S. But when Clinton came into office it did not take long for him to realize that most of Haiti was eagerly ready to emigrate to the United States. In the first year of Clinton's tenure, 25,302 Haitians were picked up at sea. Clinton had to try something else. Before long it was clear that he had to return

Aristide to Haiti. And so, as seen, to justify that return and the invasion of Haiti he too used the rapes, murders and alleged persecution from FRAPH. <sup>xxvi</sup>

With Aristide's return to power the hope of becoming a political refugee was extinguished. But for lower-income Haitian women a new opportunity soon appeared. Clinton had to atone for not having intervened earlier and stopping the "raping [of] the wives and daughters of suspected political dissidents." And that's when the seeds for the post-earthquake Haiti rape epidemic were first planted.

### ***Rewards for Having Been Raped***

After the Aristide administration was re-established in Haiti, the U.S. government began to give aid to victims of violent repression during the coup years. They gave monthly stipends, free medical care, free education, therapy and travel allowances. "Proof" was based on two witnesses who would attest that the woman had been assaulted. All totaled, 14,000 women would meet the conditions. Highest on the list were those victims of rape. The endeavor culminated in a massive Project: The Human Rights Fund (HRF). And it is here, with the HRF, that we can begin to understand how two semi-literate women from the slums—KOFVIV founders Marie Eramithe Delva and Mayla Villard-Appolon—were a decade later able to orchestrate a massive anti-rape campaign built on what appears to have been mostly lies, and then convince activists, journalists and overseas donors that it was true.



A window into the evolution, inner workings, and corrupt origins of the Haitian Rape Epidemic was provided by Erica James who came to Haiti after the return of Aristide in 1994. Erica came to do research for her Harvard PhD in anthropology. She went to work with HRF, the Human Rights Fund that the Clinton administration

created to oversee aid to Haitian rape victims. She was interested in human rights abuses, rape, beatings, torture and helping victims recover from the trauma. She worked with the HRF for 27 months, between 1995 and 2000. When she arrived she was as credulous as Beverly Bell regarding those that Haitians called “viktim”.<sup>xxvii</sup>

But as Erica began to perfect her Creole and to understand the culture and people she worked with, she uncovered disturbing truths. She documented the mechanics of aid. She deciphered patterns of corruption, manipulation and what she calls “viktim performance.” She took her analysis to penetrating depths, interweaving narrative and analysis and making logically supported conclusions with a degree of skill that makes the reader understand why today she is a professor at MIT. But to keep it simple—and the simplicity with which she described her discoveries is part of the intellectual beauty of her work—what Erica James found was that many of the woman had turned being a ‘viktim’ into a profession.

In an endeavor to maximize benefits, *viktim* in the HRF programs joined multiple victim groups in different neighborhoods. They forged prescriptions. They got meds and sold them. They falsified travel reports. And in one of those too common ironies of aid—like the big bad wolf dressed in Grandma’s clothing—*viktim* often turned out to be predators. Of the two *viktim* Erica was closest to, one turned out to be a violent, mafia type whose sons possessed automatic firearms and collaborated with their mother to collect fees from other *viktim* in exchange for access to child scholarship and feeding programs. The other woman was a reputed prostitute who used drugs with her sons. When James cut the latter from the clinic roles, the woman exploded in a violent outburst followed with calculated threats against Erica’s life, threats that were convincing enough that the project supervisor suspended Erica, forbidding her to come to work until the woman had moved out of the area.



Erica, who despite the revelations, was sympathetic to the women and their plight, confesses “an increasing difficulty to discern the difference between victim and aggressor.” She also began to discover contradictions. Some of the women who had come up with horrific tales of rape and beatings, had not been raped or beaten at all. They had fabricated the stories. In one case James recounted a woman who, faced with the possibility of losing support, fabricated a second story of being attacked. In other cases women who had been beaten by the police or neighbors for criminal acts they committed subsequently used the experience to validate their entry into the ‘viktim’ program.

Desperately poor women lying to get aid does not, in my opinion, make the women evil. This is the reality of poverty. It’s also the reality of holding out a life-preserver to someone drowning and then saying, “you can only have it if you fit our criteria: you must be a victim.” But, having had experiences similar to those of Erica, I can attest to it not being easy to face up to the ugly side of poverty and the twisted impact of many aid programs. It’s not easy to learn that some potential recipients will grovel, contort, lie, fabricate, threaten and even steal to get aid; that the most criminal among them will try to monopolize the aid altogether. And it’s certainly not easy to admit that you’ve been taken for a sucker. But not to admit that this can happen and to not come to terms with being duped and exploited is a form of burying our heads in the sand. That was Erica James’ dilemma.

It’s never clear which path she herself chose: recognize it or bury her head in the sand. For all her obvious brilliance and the honesty with which she documents her experiences and discoveries, one of the most startling aspects of Erica James’ analysis is the fortitude with which she clearly would rather not admit that many of the women were lying, not have had to stare that ugly side of poverty in the face. In her writing, James persistently excuses the women with explanations for what a more pessimistic

person would simply call lies. Despite revelations towards the end of the program of widespread incongruities in rape accounts—with some of the *viktim* outright changing their stories —James remained steadfast in defending the credibility of the women.

For example, as USAID cut back funds to the HRF program and HRF staff began to cut beneficiaries, an elderly woman who had claimed that her daughter had been raped and been collecting stipends on her behalf became desperate. She changed her story and claimed that she, and not her daughter, was the real victim of rape. James and other staff were incredulous at first. But instead of seeing this as a desperate attempt to hold onto travel allowances, free medical care, and food supplements, James attributes it to “shame that disappeared as the woman became more comfortable with the program.”

The exploitation of the humanitarian program was not confined to impoverished women. At a higher level, Haitian directors of the organization and *viktim* employees managed elaborate embezzlement schemes. Some of the Haitian doctors who treated *viktim* for ailments were running scams of their own. One doctor billed for 168 visits from a single patient. Another was caught multi-billing for the same patients and at 10 times the normal clinic rate. The foreigners and bureaucrats who ran the programs were entrenched in their own intrigue, busy politicking and spreading malicious gossip about one another in an effort to win and keep the U.S. government funding that paid their salaries. Politicians on both sides of the political spectrum—right and left—were using accounts from *viktim* and the aggregate numbers of rapes and beatings—many of which were, as seen, dubious—to bolster their own legitimacy and discredit the opposition.<sup>xxviii</sup>

There were, indeed, very real rewards for the bureaucrats. Camille Leblanc, the human rights lawyer who had collected 800 victim cases (5 times what the UN came up with and very few of which made it to court) would become Minister of Justice in the Aristide Government. And once again, it was not just the Haitians. USAID/Haiti—

whose staff had to deal with this mess—was summing the whole program up as disaster, while USAID/Washington—trying to appease politicians in the U.S. who felt they should have acted against the military junta sooner—was presenting the program to congress as an example of success and a redemption of the suffering and repression inflicted during the coup years.

So it was, in sum, a type of massive aid and *viktim* feeding frenzy—another episode in the Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle—where people at every level were benefitting. But it was *viktim* and competition for donor money that catapulted the movement forward. In 1997, with the steam gone from the “Truth Commission,” Oxfam Canada and other Canadian NGOs funded the International Tribunal Against Violence Against Women. Another Nuremberg type trial, this one put on by NGOs, it was modeled on the genocide and ethnic cleansing tribunals in Rwanda and Yugoslavia. The Haitian and U.S. feminists who had the final say in designing and organizing the Tribunal used the motto, “We are taking the muzzle off.”

During the trial women gave their stories from behind black screens. And there was an Evangelical twist to the performances. During the trial the women used the popular church performance that U.S. Pentecostal missionaries introduced to Haiti in which the church sermon is periodically interrupted by “prophets” who stand up and announce they are having “visions” of people engaged in sinful acts. But, instead of prophets, the trial was periodically interrupted with live updates on women who were being raped or taken to the hospital. James, who was sympathetic, nevertheless found the performances disturbing. But she could not articulate exactly why.

### ***“Viktim” vs. Aid Workers: Fighting for the Spoils***

Back at the HRF program headquarters where Erica James worked, the program had been revitalized with a fresh injection of \$4 million in aid funds. An intense

competition between directors and *viktim* broke out. *Viktim* were aware of the corruption at the high levels of the Human Rights Fund administration. They were aware of the big salaries and the significantly greater sums of money embezzled before it got to them. They identified those funds as destined for them. They saw themselves as the rightful recipients. And they entered into a competition to get what was theirs. As the funds dried up, *viktim* united to create a forum and formally accuse the directors of trying to kill them with bad medications. There were death threats. Robberies occurred with inexplicably precise timing. And there were unsolved killings. In the highest profile killing, the Italian USAID consultant who together with a U.S. colleague had put the program into place was murdered.<sup>xxix</sup> Days later, in a culminating episode, an armed mob of *viktim* marched on the program headquarters in search of the two administrators. They carried with them weapons and pairs of handcuffs. Fortunately for the administrators, they had foreseen the possibility of violence and moved out of the office.



Lest what James described with the HRF be understood as an isolated phenomenon, the same process was occurring across a wide spectrum of USAID funded *viktim* programs. *Viktim* had become a veritable social movement. Incensed by the suspension of their subsidies, members from 14 programs created a type of congress. They began picketing government offices and holding political sit-ins where they demanded their rights to aid. In May 1999, more than five years after its members were reportedly raped or tortured, the *viktim* movement culminated with a massive march on the national Palace, a sit-in, and a declaration published in the newspaper and distributed on fliers throughout Port-au-Prince that concluded, “Long live good living conditions for *viktim*! Long live justice and reparations for *viktim*!”



The point is so critically important that I again want to make it clear that while some, if not many, Haitians have disingenuously insinuated themselves into the aid pipeline, and while there is definitively something irksome about a movement veiled in exaggerations, untruths, and outright lies, there is a profound and defensible logic to what was happening. Whether we are talking about individuals who falsely claim to have been tortured or raped to get visas or we are talking about parents who present their own children as orphans or child slaves, there is, then as now, a logic underlying the emerging economies of deceit and falsehoods that exists across the entire spectrum of aid in Haiti. With the U.S. neo-liberal policies—discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10—many traditional economic opportunities for the poor in Haiti, such as most production of agricultural exports, had disappeared. Faced with a dwindling economy, declining living standards, and massive amounts of aid provided from abroad but channeled through NGOs that define specific criteria to qualify as a victim—such as orphan, *restavek*, or rape survivor—those impoverished women who were lying and exaggerating were trying to survive and adapt to the emerging aid economy. And the only way they could do that was meeting the criteria that NGOs set to be an aid recipient. It's not enough to be poor. It's not enough to have had your government undermined and your economic livelihoods destroyed. You want a piece of the new pie? You've gotta be a victim, of some kind.

But some have bigger visions and bigger appetites than others and it is precisely in the *viktim* movement described above that KOFAVIV co-founders Marie Eramithe Delva and Malya Villard-Appolon got their start. Both were from Martissant, where James had worked, the geographic and social fulcrum of the movement. Both claimed to have seen their husbands beaten to death for political activism. Both were raped because of it. Both later joined an organization called *Fanm Vayan de Martissant* where

both became active organizers during the *viktim* campaigns and recipients of aid to *viktim*. And both would soon put their skills to work founding KOFAVIV.

### ***The Founding of KOFAVIV***

By the second coup and ouster of Aristide, in 2004, the war of accusations and lies between the right and the left had taken an ironic twist. It became the right accusing the left of extreme repression.

The quintessential example of the former FRAPH supporters reincarnation into humanitarian activists was G184, a self-defined “union of Haiti’s civil societies” whose leaders were Reginald Boulos, Andy (André) Apaid, Charles Baker, and Olivier Nadal. All four were foreign passport holding factory tycoons who had spent much of their lives overseas. A decade earlier, all had been supporters of the military junta, all had been labeled Morally Repugnant Elite (MRE) by then U.S. president Bill Clinton, all had their overseas assets frozen. Now, ten years later, the G184 leaders managed to convince overseas advocacy groups such as *Alternatives* and *Rights & Democracy* that they were part of “a grassroots coalition and promising civil society movement.”

From their platform as persecuted and repressed lovers of liberty, the richest people in Haiti—indeed, among the richest in the world—complained bitterly about the human rights abuses of the Aristide government. Haiti’s radio stations and few newspapers—most of which were owned by the elite—would publish an article. U.S. newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* would quote the article. Then the same Haitian newspaper that published it in the first place would cite *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* as having denounced Aristide as a “dictator” or of having sponsored some vicious act. They would typically report demonstrations against Aristide as vastly larger than they really were, feeding to the overseas press the image of massive opposition. At times the struggle became absurd.

In one instance a collection of the richest entrepreneurs in the country gathered in Haiti's poorest and most pro-Aristide ghetto to discuss his ouster. It was as if the Rockefellers, Bushes and Kennedy clans descended on Harlem to discuss the impeachment of Barrack Obama. They left under a shower of stones only to then write on a "We the Haitians" pro "civil sector" website, a piece entitled:

"Haiti; uncommonly vicious tyrant Jean-Bertrand Aristide uses his weapons of mass destruction against democracy and human rights advocates"

www.wehaitians.com, July 12, 2003

The Holy Grail in all this was winning the sympathy of the overseas public and governments. And the most effective propaganda turned out to be the same that Aristide leadership had used 10 years earlier: rape. Both the G184 and the Haiti's National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR), the best funded human rights organization in the country, were now "placing the blame for the rapes squarely on Aristide's Lavalas Family party." In a May 16, 2004 article in the *Miami Herald*:

Hundreds of women and girls—some younger than 6—were raped, often by police and pro-Aristide gunmen called *chimeres*, with impunity, according to human rights observers and local women's shelters.

They say the situation for the last two years had already rivaled the terror that the military regimes and death squads of the early 1990s inflicted on women.<sup>xxx</sup>

In other words, instead of Aristide's partisans accusing the military and death squads of being rapists, the ultra-rich conservative right was now accusing Aristide and his impoverished partisans of being rapists.

For the *viktim*, it didn't really matter who was raping them. Or rather, I should say, it didn't matter who they were accusing of raping them. The objective was no longer political. It was economic. "Viktim" wanted reparations. In September of 2006, hundreds of *viktim* took to the streets again in a march called, "Standing up to Defend our Rights."

This time leading them was Marie Eramithe Delva and Malya Villard-Appolon—the latter who now claimed to have been raped a second time in 2003. As the leaders of KOFAVIV they declared: <sup>xxx</sup>

We, women victims, many of us from the poorest groups of the population, have decided today to say no to all forms of violence and discrimination to which we have been subjected during the last 200 years. We are victims of rape. Armed groups have forced their way into our homes, stolen everything we owned, raped us and our daughters, burned our houses, and threatened us. Many of us were forced to leave our homes and have been sleeping on the mountainside. We have lost our commercial goods, and we do not have the means to send our children to school. When we open our mouths to speak, we risk being threatened or killed. <sup>xxx</sup>

### ***Weak Data***

Was it true? Surely some of it was. But how extensive were the exaggerations and propaganda in this second wave of rape?

One of the odd things about the earlier Haiti rape epidemics is that if we rely on the actual numbers being reported then even the figures that advocacy agencies and journalists were citing were not enough to substantiate claims of a rape crisis.

Back in the 1990s, in comparison to other countries, the UN numbers—those including all the accusations of political rape—placed Haiti as having one of the lowest rape rates on earth. Indeed, gender organizations were having a tough time getting numbers to support their outrage. In 1999, two years after the Rape Tribunal, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, came to Haiti to examine the rape issue. She reported back to Geneva that between November 1994 and June 1999, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Women’s Rights registered 1,500 cases of sexual abuse and aggression against girls between six and 15 years of age. Given that Haiti had about 8.5 million people during that period, 650,000 of them girls



in that age range, that translates to one in every 433 of them having been sexually abused, about 0.23 percent. If we can depend on the credibility of these numbers—and that's precisely what journalists writing about the rape in Haiti were doing—that means that compared to their counterparts in the United States, Haitian girls were safer, far safer. In the U.S., one in 14 fifth to eighth grade school girls report having been sexually abused. Doing the appropriate math, that's 17.5 times the Haitian figure. Even U.S. boys were at far greater risk of rape than Haitian girls. One in thirty-three U.S. boys report having been abused: 7.5 times the figure for Haitian girls.

Moving to the years 2004 to 2006, the epoch of the second great Haiti rape epidemic, we see the same things. These years were considered the most violent since the 1991-1994 military junta. Indeed, worse. Formally trained paramilitary troops had overthrown the government. They had decimated and demoralized the police force, some of whom were now kidnapping and robbing. Yet, the rightwing paramilitary troops themselves had never gotten the rewards and recognition they anticipated, leaving them armed, ambitious and just as disgruntled as the former police. Members of paramilitary groups on the other side, those that had worked with the ousted government, were embittered, demanding the return of their democratically elected president and expecting to be attacked at any moment. Both the right-wing government and the left-wing opposition provided firearms and financial support to gangs—or depending on your perception, 'rebels' and 'community defense brigades.' It was a mess. Most people in Port-au-Prince at the time and since consider it as a moment of near total breakdown in the society. Crime and organized violent conflicts were at an all-time high. There were impoverished sectors of the city that even United Nation tanks dared not enter. The number of kidnappings, murder, and rape reportedly soared.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

So how bad was it?

At the end of this era, in 2006, Wayne State University graduate student Athena Kolbe and her professor Royce Hutson conducted what came to be known as the “Lancet Survey”: a 1,260 household survey of violence in Port-au-Prince, the results of which got published in the prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet*. It was the only published attempt of a statistical sampling strategy used to estimate rape and violence in Haiti for the post-coup period. What did they find?

Kolbe and Hutson estimated that in the two years following the coup there had been 35,000 sexual assaults. It was horrific.

Over a two-year period prior to the survey 3.1 percent of all females had been sexually assaulted; one-half of these were girls 18 years old or younger. That’s bad. Horrible. Specifically, 35,000 rapes over a period of 22 months among a Port-au-Prince population of 1.5 million translated to 1,073 rapes per 100,000 people per year.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Putting that in perspective, it’s 80 times the average 12.5 per 100,000 people per year documented by the UN in 2002 for 50 reporting countries; and it was 9 times the highest rate in the world, that of South Africa at 115 per 100,000.<sup>xxxv</sup>

But there were some problems.

First off, Kolbe, it turned out, was an Aristide partisan and activist leftist journalist who the year before publishing the survey had changed her name from Lyn Duff to Athena Kolbe, all the while continuing to publish pro-Aristide news as Duff. And her findings were radically biased in favor of Aristide, suggesting that the new right government was using rape as a political weapon, an argument that flew in the face of what the mainstream press and even KOFAVIV had been saying.

There is no question that Kolbe/Duff was inclined to manipulate, exaggerate and even outright lie about her data. That would become clear in subsequent studies and academic business ventures. I devote considerable attention to the extraordinary and,

what some would call, criminal shenanigans of Kolbe/Duff in the following Chapter. She is a prime example of just how little importance the humanitarian organizations give to sound data and research and how eagerly they will adopt anything that supports their donor drives, no matter who comes up with the data and how they really go about getting it.

Moreover, even if one were to accept Kolbe and Hutson's data, there was a huge question hanging over it, one they and everyone else seemed to ignore. The question was this: if the survey had even been carried out then—after 10 years of *viktim* politics and campaigns; after all the free education, medical care, stipends, and travel allowances for *viktim*; and considering the fact that their survey had been conducted in precisely the same neighborhoods as the *viktim* benefit programs—how many of those interviewed were, with hope of gaining benefits, disposed to lie and say that they or someone in their family was raped? We don't know that answer. It's interesting that in a subsequent survey (The University of Michigan Survey), 20 percent of those respondents reporting they were raped in Kolbe and Hutson's 2010 study reported they were also victims of rape in 2004. And it's interesting that while other studies and anecdotal evidence suggests that the overwhelming number of sexual assaults were perpetrated by people known to the victim, more than 75 percent of Kolbe/Duff's and Hutson's respondents claimed to have been attacked by criminals they did not know. But in the end we do not know the answer to how many of Kolbe/Duff and Hutson's respondents lied in hopes of becoming recipients of aid for *viktim*. We can assume that in the poorest neighborhoods of the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, where USAID had engaged in a multi-million dollar *viktim* compensation program enduring six years, some respondents would be quick-thinking enough to tell a surveyor who arrived out of nowhere at their doorstep that, yes, there were *viktim* in the house.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

But more to the point here, data from elsewhere suggested far less rapes than what Kolbe and Hutson reported. In 2006, SOFA (Haitian Women's Solidarity Movement/*Solidarity Fanm Ayisyen*)—the same organization where Olga Benoit had first explained to me that KOFAVIV data had “mannnyyy” problems—recorded 155 victims of rape seeking help at their 21 centers across Haiti; 77 were girls under 18 years of age. SOFA reported similar figures for 2007 and 2008. If journalists saw this data—and they certainly must have—they should have been commending Haiti for having one of the lowest incidences of rape on earth. We are talking about a population of nine million with half the number of rapes in one year as expected during three weeks of spring break at Daytona Beach, Florida (see page 31).<sup>xxxviii xxxix</sup>

Indeed, one really has to wonder just what the hell was going on. Haiti was being made out to be among the worst places on the planet for women. The only evidence of true rape epidemic was highly questionable, produced by an activist journalist Aristide supporter who changed her name and was ensconced in local politics. Meanwhile, all the data coming from credible Haitian feminist organizations and the Haitian police suggested that the U.S. was, at best, about the same, and possibly far worse than Haiti.

The answer to what the hell was going on was the same as with orphans and child slaves: *viktim* was an aid opportunity, and for far more beneficiaries than only those claiming to have been raped.

### ***KOFAVIV: Viktim Takes Control***

In 2003, in the midst of the resurgence of rape and accusations, KOFAVIV's Villard-Appolon, now 46 years old, was raped again. That is when she and Delva decided to found their own organization. The new organization was designed to eliminate the NGOs, foreigners and other middlemen and middlewomen from the aid chain. They called it by the acronym KOFAVIV, which in English stands for

“Commission of Women Victims for Victims” (*Komisyon Fanm Viktim pou Viktim*), in other words victims helping victims—not doctors or administrators or NGOs. And by corollary, victims controlling the money that donors were sending for victims. They were first and foremost an organization of rape victims. But not taking any chances, they also defined themselves on their website as, “an organization made up of former child slaves.”<sup>xl xli</sup>



From the point in time when Delva and Appolon formed KOFAVIV and into the years leading up to the earthquake, NGOs, international advocacy groups, and UN organizations came up with rape figures more inflated than ever. As with the *restavek*, they found a voice in journalists who were eager for news about Haiti and its poverty, misery, and violence. In December 2007, Alex Renton and Caroline Irby of Britain’s daily newspaper *The Guardian* led the pack saying, “According to the UN, 50 per cent of young women in the violent shantytowns of Haiti have been raped or sexually assaulted.” That at a time when the UN had not even entered Haiti’s largest slum (Cité Soleil) in three years. They followed up with accounts of men with ball bearings embedded in their penis (something common in prisons around the world and probably originating in Australia), gangs dedicated exclusively to rape, even lesbian gangs dedicated exclusively to rape. An interesting aside to all this is that Renton and Irby’s trip to Haiti was “hosted” by the British NGO Oxfam and at the end of the article readers were invited to “go to find out more about the organisation’s work in Haiti and its worldwide programmes tackling violence against women, visit [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk).” where, of course, they could donate money to fight the Haiti rape scourge.

And then came the earthquake.<sup>xlii xliii xliv</sup>

## THE RAPE EPIDEMIC: POST-EARTHQUAKE

The post-earthquake rape epidemic came after the excitement of the rescues passed, right as the radically inflated orphan numbers became unsustainable. It was then that the rape epidemic and the onslaught of articles seen earlier exploded onto the scene. The suggestion being that the crises came in sequence, the press wearing out one horrifically sensationalist theme and then pouncing on another. And for anyone who came to see for themselves if the rape epidemic really existed, KOFAVIV was there to prove it.

In March, San Francisco lawyer Jayne Fleming came to Haiti to interview rape victims. KOFAVIV introduced her to “plenty of them,” Fleming told the press, “I’ve been here five days and have spoken to 30 (rape) survivors including a dozen under 18. Their stories are horrific. I would be catatonic.” And why exactly was Fleming interviewing rape victims? She was with a team of volunteer lawyers from the U.S. who had come to “identify Haitians who may qualify for humanitarian parole to live in the United States.” Once again, the opportunity for visas was being dangled before a desperate population.

I have to interject here. Once again, I’m not against poor people getting visas or even lying to get them. If I were impoverished, stuck in Haiti and facing the high odds that at any moment one of my children might be stricken with typhoid, malaria, or cholera, I would lie myself stupid trying to get them to safer shores. I’m only trying to understand and explain how the rape epidemic was a creation of NGOs and the media and why so many impoverished women were willing to go along with lying. Nor do I think that there was a deliberate conspiracy at the administrative levels of NGOs to create a rape epidemic. I believe it was simply one more case of lies and exaggeration being in the immediate interest of everyone concerned with garnering sympathy and donations. And what’s so fascinating is how these interests can, despite little to no

substantial evidence, unite with almost scientific precision. By the end of 2013, with the help of international lawyers such as Flemming, Haitian grass-roots organizations—mostly KOFAVIV- and NGOs such as CARE and the many others scrambling to associate themselves with KOFAVIV—had prevailed on The Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to get 40 “victim” humanitarian paroles to the U.S. and Canada. It wasn’t an enormous number of people, not when you consider the thousands of victims that Kolbe and Hutson had estimated existed and that KOFAVIV was documenting at that very moment. But when one considers the impact on those people who got the visas and, more importantly, the impact on the hopes of those who had not, it must have had the effect of a mega-million National lottery. Those who got the visas were allowed to take family with them. The 40 who went brought 105 sons, mothers, fathers and siblings with them; full visas for the whole family, a total of 145 of them. And when they got there they got money, housing, and free education stipends.

Once again, I’m not against helping rape victims. And I’m certainly not calling into question the motives or sincerity of lawyers such as Flemming. The objective is to understand what was driving all those *viktim* who were not really victims. And in this case the answer seems fairly clear: News of KOFAVIV collaborators winning visas must have rocketed through the camps, “Free visas for the whole family!” “Free plane fares!” “Free housing when you get there!” “An allowance!” “Free education!” The KOFAVIV ladies must have been heroes alright. And a great many families must have been sitting around the camps wondering, ‘should one of us try our luck as *‘viktim’?*’<sup>xlv</sup>

### ***Validation from the Experts and Scholars***

Just as it was seen in earlier chapters when the threat of child slavery and sex traffickers fueled UNICEF and Save the Children donations, graphic newspaper articles and human rights reports from gullible but articulate journalists and aid workers who

had just stepped off the plane helped keep the aid for rape victims pouring in. The principal source of misinformation: KOFAVIV. Giving them credibility were the prestigious U.S. feminist organization MADRE, the impressive sounding Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti or IJDH), the *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux* (BAI), and law schools at the University of Virginia and the University of Minnesota.

KOFAVIV followed up on Beverly Bell's soon famous March 25 article, "'Our Bodies are Shaking Now': Rape Follow Earthquake in Haiti" with an expanded July 12 encore "Our Bodies are Still Trembling: Haitian Women's Fight Against Rape."



Kolbe/Duff was also back on the scene. With her came Robert Muggah of the Small Arms Survey and six other University professors, none of whom had any prior experience studying or researching Haiti. Indeed, Kolbe herself, after 12 years working in Haiti and living with orphans, did not speak Creole or French. But backed with financing from the United Nations and the University of Michigan, Kolbe/Duff and her followers jumped on the rape band wagon. Significantly outdoing her 2006 study, Kolbe and the professors concluded that in the six weeks following the earthquake women, girls, toddlers and babies living in Port-au-Prince were being raped at an annual rate of seven percent of all females. The Democratic Republic of the Congo—where Muggah also worked and where 12 percent of women have been raped at least once in their lifetimes—pales in comparison. But for anyone who knew Haiti and was paying attention, the findings were exceeded in absurdity only by Kolbe and the professors' claim they had actually conducted the survey. Here's what they say they did.



Two months before the earthquake Kolbe and Muggah had carried out a survey of 1,800 randomly selected Port-au-Prince households. They now claimed to have revisited the exact same households, found the occupants and interviewed them. Let me make this clear: six weeks after the earthquake they sent the same interviewers to visit the same respondents to evaluate post-earthquake conditions and incidence of crime, and they found 93 percent of them, and all in the space of two weeks. This, was a moment in time when 30 percent to 40 percent of the Port-au-Prince population was living in camps, another 25 percent had fled the capital for the countryside, and 10 percent had left for Miami and the Dominican Republic. No one questioned their claim. I'll get back to Kolbe, et al., and their suspicious survey findings in the next chapter. For now, let's finish with the rape epidemic. <sup>xlvi xlvii xlviii xlix l li</sup>

### ***Humanitarian and Journalistic Pay Dirt***

The rape epidemic had been a bonanza on par with the orphan issue. Literally every major NGO and several UN agencies collected money to combat gender-based violence. But by summer and fall of 2010, Haiti was fading in the news. Rape in the camps was only game for journalist stragglers who couldn't afford to get to Iraq. But then, in 2011, with the approaching anniversary of the earthquake and renewed media interest in Haiti, it began all over again. With KOFAVIV directors Delva and Appolon acting as sources of information and guides, Amnesty International investigators duly wrote a shocking report that began with the graphic quote from a rape survivor:

In our camp we cannot live in peace; at night we cannot go out. There is gunfire all the time and things are set alight... Where I live, I am afraid. We are afraid. We can be raped at any moment... We are forced to live in misery.

Amnesty found that most assailants were "armed men and youth gangs roaming the camps after dark." The report described women who had been raped on two and

three different occasions, families where grandmother, daughter and granddaughter had all been raped. It was journalistic pay dirt again.

“Report: Rape Cases in Haiti Quake Camps on the Rise”

*FoxNews.com*, Jan 6, 2011

“Women in Haiti’s squalid refugee camps face rampant rape”

*Yahoo News*, January 6, 2011

“Rape at ‘crisis’ level in Haiti earthquake camps”

*BBC*, January 13, 2011

“Rape runs rampant in wake of Haiti’s 2010 earthquake  
that devastated country, report finds”

*New York Daily News*, January 23, 2011

“Rape flourishes in rubble of Haitian earthquake”

*Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2011

### ***Narrative Shifts and Journalists’ Awards***

By 2012 KOFAVIV directors were no longer lamenting to journalists that co-director Delva’s daughter had “almost been raped” after the earthquake. Instead a new horror had come to light. In the months after the earthquake, the daughter of the other KOFAVIV co-director, Malya Villard-Appolon, *had* been raped. Although she apparently did not learn about it until two years after it happened, for Villard-Appolon it was a devastating blow. Twice raped herself, her husband, the father of her daughter, had died from injuries inflicted defending her from a rapist, which was another story that had changed. Instead of Villard-Appolon having been raped in 1993 because of her husband’s politics, now, with the emphasis on rape for the sake of rape, the story played up in the press was that her husband had been killed *so that she could be raped*. With the belated 2-year revelation that her daughter had been raped after the earthquake, Villard-Appolon lamented to CNN journalists, “I can’t describe to you how I felt when I heard about that, because I was a victim,” she said. “I started asking myself what kind of generation I came from. Am I cursed?” And not unlike the case of co-

director Delva's daughters who when they complained to the police about having been raped after the earthquake were told, "go tell it to the president," when Villard-Appolon took her daughter to the police one of the police in Villard-Appolon's daughter's case said, "girls are so promiscuous." <sup>lii</sup>

Appolon's courage and stamina in the face of all this abuse were the subject of great international fanfare. Already named Hero of 2010 by RH Reality Check—an organization "that exists as a resource for evidence-based news"—CNN now named her one of 2012's top 10 heroes and gave her \$50,000. Throughout the year, CNN continued to laud her and KOFAVIV in articles with titles such as "Portrait of a Hero," while painting Haiti to be what journalists have always painted it to be, hell on earth with titles such as, "Culture of Rape in Haiti."

Other personal stories had changed as well. By year two after the earthquake the story of Timafi, the 4-year old who had been raped, had changed. In her original *Huffington Post* version Bell—who speaks fluent Creole and has been working in Haiti for 30 years—had left no room for ambiguity, saying specifically that, "The following one was relayed by Helia Lajeunesse, a child rights trainer with KOFAVIV," and then going on to recount:

Lajeunesse's granddaughter, four-year-old Timafi Youyoute (not her real name), lives outside the town of Jeremie with her mother, her mother's boyfriend, and her newborn baby sister. On March 14, Timafi's mother sent her to the neighbor's house to buy a jar of rice. As she was leaving the neighbor's yard, 17-year-old Dekatrel Jacqu  offered to take her back home. Instead, he took her to the cemetery. There, he covered the little girl's mouth with his hand and proceeded to rape her.

Bell herself was adamant about the accuracy of this story. She wrote me an e-mail message assuring me that she knows the child and the family "quite well and thus followed her attack and its aftermath closely." So there's no reason to expect Bell got it wrong. But a year and a half later, on November 21, 2011, grandmother Helia

Lajeunesse would revise the story. In an interview with Angela Robson of the U.K.'s *The Guardian*, she recounted:

"The conditions were very bad," says Helia (Lajeunesse). "We were drinking out of puddles and sleeping outdoors. At night, armed gangs came into the courtyard, terrorising everyone."

Helia was so alarmed that she sent her granddaughter to stay with a relative in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp on the edge of Port-au-Prince. The same week, the unthinkable happened. The five-year-old child was raped. "I have come to terms with what happened to me," Helia cries out. "But how can we ever come to terms with this? He tore her little body apart."

A tip that Helia might be prone to wild exaggeration is that no one can drink out of a puddle in Haiti and expect to survive. Nor do sane Haitians ever try. But never mind that. And never mind that Timafi had been retro-transported from Jeremie, 150 miles away, where she was raped in the first account, and into a Port-au-Prince IDP camp, where she was raped in the second account, it was horrible. And it gets worse. In the new version of the story we learn that Timafi herself was conceived through rape. Grandmother Helia Lajeunesse had been raped in 2004; like Villard-Appolon, during the rape her husband had been killed; and her 17-year old daughter had also been raped. It was from that encounter, the rape of the 17-year old daughter, that the child Timafi, was born. The journalist, Angela Robson, would win an award for the new story. As for KOFAVIV, it was one more unimaginably painful story that helped maintain what had become massive donor windfalls.

### ***The Financial Side of Epidemic Rape***

No one will ever know how much money came in because of the rape epidemic—KOFAVIV is not saying (I asked). But we do know that by 2011 KOFAVIV had become a veritable fund raising juggernaut. People like designer Rachel Roy, Macy's CEO Terry

Lundgren, and Martha Stewart visited their office.<sup>liii</sup> Hillary Clinton honored them in a speech.<sup>liv</sup> Organizations that partnered with them, showcased them on their webpages and pled for money on KOFAVIV's behalf included the USA for the UNHCR (United Nations agency that assists refugees in war-torn countries UNHCR),<sup>lv</sup> Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights<sup>lvi</sup>, International Rescue Committee<sup>lvii</sup>, Michael Moore<sup>lviii</sup>, Global Giving<sup>lix</sup>, Global Fund for Women<sup>lx</sup>, Partner's in Health<sup>lxi</sup>, Digital Democracy<sup>lxii</sup>, Frontline<sup>lxiii</sup>, and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.<sup>lxiv</sup>

The income for their U.S. partner MADRE went from \$795,674 in 2009 to \$2.9 million in 2010. In 2011 the Avon Foundation gave KOFAVIV and MADRE \$286,613.<sup>lxv</sup> The World Bank gave them \$500,000 through their "Rapid Social Response" Multi-Donor Trust Fund—money that was never accounted for. United States Institutes for Peace (USIP) would give them \$150,000.<sup>lxvi</sup> USAID gave them an unknown sum of money.<sup>lxvii</sup> As seen, in 2012 Villard-Appolon personally received \$50,000 as her CNN hero award.<sup>lxviii lxix</sup>

And indeed, from the perspective of NGOs and journalists, Marie Eramithe Delva and Malya Villard-Appolon were heroes. KOFAVIV had done as much or more than any other single organization to crank out an avalanche of lies and keep all the aid organizations afloat in a river of donations from good hearted and horrified citizens overseas who wanted to help Haiti's rape victims. KOFAVIV contributions were a golden centerpiece of the Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle.



Am I a dirtball for suggesting that rape victims could be lying to get aid dollars? Perhaps. But I'm not the only one to notice inconsistencies. Indeed, I've been investigating this issue long enough not to *think*, but to *know* they're lying. And as the

years have gone by more and more people have given me more and more reason to believe so.

Once in 2012, I had dinner with a well-known female reporter for a major Canadian paper. I was sharing with her my insights about the rape epidemic, explaining my findings about KOFAVIV, growing more uneasy as I went. When I was finished, she said that she did not agree with me. But she then confessed that she had decided not to use KOFAVIV as a resource because, “The woman who was my informant was clearly lying about what had happened to her.” When I asked her if I could use the story and her name she said no.

Just as with the death count, there has been at least some redemption. Journalist Ansel Herz, who had once been embarrassed for me because of my questioning the rape epidemic in front of his activist-journalist colleagues and for whom I had a lot of respect because of his intrepid coverage of Port-au-Prince in the week after the earthquake, would write me on January 8, 2013, and say:

Had an interesting conversation a few nights ago that’s probably of interest to you. A Haitian friend of mine works with a small, serious NGO on providing safe houses and support to victims of sexual violence in Port-au-Prince. Real victims. He says one of the biggest problems they’re encountering now is that KOFAVIV, and to a lesser extent FAVILEK, keep referring them to people with made-up stories—women and girls who’ve been told to say they were raped, in order to get “ed” [aid]. He’s worked with these groups a long time and was once very supportive, but has become increasingly skeptical, even questioning the KOFAVIV founders’ claims that they were raped. <sup>lxx</sup>

### ***So-What, If It’s True or Not?***

Should we keep silent about such lies?

To challenge a woman who claims that she has been raped is a delicate and difficult task. Researchers in developed countries generally estimate that 2 to 8 percent

of rape accusations are false. But challenging those who lie is fraught with political consequences. To persecute a woman for making a false rape accusation opens the door for abuse in genuine cases. We open the door for the rapist to persecute women who really have been raped. And we frighten those already frightened and traumatized victims who really were raped. But what if 80 to 90 percent or more of rape claims are false?

Although I'm not sure what the difference in traumatic impact between male and female rape is, I can imagine how I would feel if my wife or one of my daughters were raped and I couldn't get the police to listen because there were hundreds of 50-year-olds with 10 children each disingenuously shouting that they and their daughters had been raped too.

And what about women who exploit those women who make the claims?

In March of 2012 I was in Kenya on a UN consultant job. We were visiting Masai bead makers. Sitting in a fake Masai hut, candle lights flickering as we awaited an exquisite not-very-Masai dinner, I found myself deep into an explanation about how corrupt I thought KOFAVIV was. Forgetting who I was talking to—famous designers and a famous feminist, herself a rape victim, and who does not want me to mention her name—I rambled on, even using KOFAVIV's name. At a certain moment I realized that the famous feminist might well work with KOFAVIV. And indeed, when I was done, to my horror, she began to speak. I was sure I was about to get slammed. But instead, she said, "I think you're probably right about them. We gave them bead work for their rape victims. They never paid them." When she asked Delva and Appolon to justify taking the money they said, "it was therapy."

## ***Oh Those Silly Journalists: Getting Raped to Feel Better***

On June 29, 2011, just as with the high death count numbers and the orphan calamity, it seemed the dam was breaking around the rape epidemic. Journalist Mac McClelland, her mind swimming with dramatic interpretations of the sexual violence she thought had been going on around her in Haiti, fell into a panic. And she wrote about it. Her recollections of the rape and lascivious, leering-eyed men everywhere was a nightmare appropriate for a zombie horror movie script. Upon returning home, the memories so haunted McClelland that she eventually had to resolve them through violent sex with a male friend. She had her friend rape her. Then she wrote it up and published it in the online magazine, *The Daily Good*.<sup>lxxi</sup> The reaction was swift and explosive. After 18 months of unbridled tabloid quality journalism run amuck, thirty-six female journalists who had worked in Haiti—with the names of Michelle Faul and Beverly Bell noticeably absent—suddenly seemed to realize that something was amiss. They wrote a letter to the editors of the *Daily Good*:

To the Editors:

As female journalists and researchers who have lived and worked in Haiti, we write to you today to express our concern with Ms. McClelland's portrayal of Haiti... we believe the way she uses Haiti as a backdrop for this narrative is sensationalist and irresponsible.

Between the 36 of us, we have lived or worked in Haiti for many years, reporting on and researching the country both long before and after the earthquake. We each have spent countless hours in the camps and neighborhoods speaking with ordinary Haitians about their experiences coping with the disaster and its aftermath. We feel compelled to intervene collectively in this instance because...In writing about a country filled with guns, "ugly chaos" and "gang-raping monsters who prowl the flimsy encampments," she paints Haiti as a heart-of-darkness dystopia, which serves only to highlight her own personal bravery for having gone there in the first place. She makes use of stereotypes about Haiti that would be better left in an earlier century: the savage men consumed by their own



lust, the omnipresent violence and chaos, the danger encoded in a black republic's DNA.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Sadly, these damaging stereotypes about the country are not uncommon...

Ms. McClelland's Haiti is not the Haiti we know. Indeed, we have all lived in relative peace and safety there...As women who know and love Haiti, we are deeply troubled by Ms. McClelland's approach.

...While we are glad that Ms. McClelland has achieved a sort of peace within, we would encourage her, next time, not to make Haiti a casualty of the process.<sup>lxxiii lxxiv lxxv</sup>

It was a quintessential metaphor for the whole press corps treatment of Haiti, indeed, the humanitarian aid community as well. Every female journalist in Haiti worth her salt got together to complain about misrepresentation of the 'rape epidemic.' Yet, no one pointed out or seemed to pick up on the punch line: that the rape epidemic had been a fabrication of the journalists and aid agencies themselves.

### ***Getting It Straight from the Source: Visiting KOFAVIV***

It's 19 months after the earthquake. I am sitting in the rather comfortable office of KOFAVIV co-director Marie Eramithe Delva. With me is a delegation of union representatives from Canada led by Roger Annis, founder and chairman of CHAN, the Canadian Haiti Action Network. USAID's Office of Food for Peace has kicked me off the rolls of consultants. The death count fiasco has left me too politically hot. I can't find work—at least for the time being. And so once again hungry for a job, I've hired myself out as translator and driver—what some would call a "fixer." Delva, seated behind a large Mahogany desk, is explaining that, "KOFAVIV has been very successful. There are no more rapes."

"So the rapes have diminished?" I ask, forgetting my role.

"No, they've increased."

"They've increased?"

"That's just our figures for where we work. That doesn't include figures from other organizations in other camps."

So her point, I'm inferring, is that KOFIV has eliminated rape where they work, but the epidemic is growing elsewhere. For me that's tough to swallow.

"Do you have those figures?"

"No", she says, "but rapes have definitely increased," and Delva goes on to talk about something else. As she's talking, I'm thinking back to Bell's article. Bell reported that of 3,000 KOFIV members, 300 were killed in the earthquake and virtually all of them lost their homes. I had found that tough to swallow as well: 300 members—10 percent—and virtually every one of the surviving 2,700 members had lost their home. With 0 to 1.5 percent of NGO staff in Haiti at the time killed and 20 percent of homes in Port-au-Prince qualifying as either destroyed or unsafe to enter, these were some suspiciously high figures. Out of curiosity—and now with the death count controversy looming over my recent past—I wonder if they still claim that 300 of their 2,700 members were killed. So, politely interrupting the people I'm translating for, I ask her, "how many people in your organization died in the earthquake?"

"According to a survey of our 3,000 members," says Delva, "1,950 of them were killed." lxxvi lxxvii



When we come out of our meeting with Delva, a woman is standing by the door. She directs the delegation to a woman and a baby who are seated in the lobby. I go out into the hall and begin plotting how I'm going to get a cigarette. While I'm standing there contemplating the street below and trying to spy a cigarette vendor, one of the

women in our 'delegation' comes up to me and sidling up close, she asks me in a low voice, "do you have any money on you?"

"Why?"

"For the mother and baby."

"What's wrong with them?"

"The baby was raped last night."

"How old is the baby?"

"One year?"

"I don't want to sound mean or suspicious, but what's a raped baby doing here at the office? This isn't a clinic."

"It seems strange doesn't it."

"Look, I don't know how you challenge someone when they tell you they're holding a baby who was raped, but if it was my baby I wouldn't be sitting around in the local club house with it. I'd be at a clinic."

"There's something real fishy about this eh. Like it's here for us."

"Yeah."

And then I reached in my pocket, fished out my wallet and gave her a \$100 bill. And she gave the \$100 bill to the woman and the baby. How can you not help a baby who's been raped?

### ***The Unthinkable***

On the evening of August 22, 2013, as the rape epidemic seemed to fade into journalistic and donor memory, the unthinkable happened. At the home of Mayla Villard-Appolon, dogs were poisoned. Gunmen attacked her home. Armed men would

come to the center and brandish their guns. Both she and co-director Delva would receive dozens of threatening phone calls and text messages. Reminiscent of 2010, men stalked their daughters, clearly seeking retribution for their mothers' activism and their own boldness and assertion of *viktim* rights. It was time to go. By mid-2014 both KOFAVIV founders had humanitarian visas to the U.S. for themselves and their families. They went to live in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

I would learn later from an activist who had worked with Villard-Appolon and Delva that the threats, intimidation and violence came not from mysterious men defending their right to rape women, but from associates disgruntled that the women had not shared the spoils. <sup>lxxviii</sup>



### ***Afterword: An Unintrusive Survey***

In November of 2012, almost three years after the earthquake, I finally got a chance to design a survey that would estimate rapes in Haiti. CARE International hired me to do a survey of the impact of their post-earthquake gender programs in Leogane—ground zero for the earthquake—and nearby Carrefour—with a population of 500 thousand, one of metropolitan Port-au-Prince's most heavily urbanized and reputedly violent slums.

In an effort to avoid signaling to respondents they may have a chance to capture aid—and to avoid intruding on their personal lives—we employed a technique different than that used in the University of Michigan and Geneva Small Arms Survey study cited earlier. Instead of asking specifically about the respondent or people in the household, we asked, 'if, since the earthquake, the respondent knew anyone at all who

had been raped.’ We operationalized the definition “know” so that we could use it in a more elaborate statistical inference of “network analysis” (how many people does a person actually know). Specifically, we explained to respondents that, what “to know someone” meant was:

- You recognize the person and the person recognizes you
- You know their name and they know yours
- You have talked to them at least once since the earthquake
- You could contact them now if you needed to.

What we found was that of 1,643 respondents, only six percent even knew anyone who had been raped since the earthquake. That was over a period of three years. In other words, about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the men and women knew a person who had been raped in the three years since the earthquake than Kolbe et al. would have anticipated *had* been raped, i.e. based on the rate they claimed they found six weeks after the earthquake. When we applied network analysis to the responses we estimated that, if accounts from survey respondents reflected the real incidence of rape, then in the three years after the earthquake the rate of rape for Carrefour and Leogane, two of the hardest hit areas of the earthquake and Carrefour one of the most heavily urbanized and crime infested areas of metropolitan Port-au-Prince, was 6.32 rapes per 100,000 people. In comparison, the rape rate for the U.S. in 2010 was 27.3 per 100,000: four times our estimate for Leogane and Carrefour. <sup>lxxix lxxx</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Andresol also had inexplicably upped the number of escaped prisoners from the 4,000—the figure that he had been telling reporters for the 17 days since the earthquake—to 7,000.

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<sup>ii</sup> Journalists had actually coined the term “rape epidemic” two years earlier in referring to rape in Haiti. The term was about to be reborn.

<sup>iii</sup> A couple of other notable headlines that would come out in the ensuing week:

“Rape Blights Lives of Haiti’s Quake Survivors” *Reuters* (April 1, 2010 Katherine Baldwin)

“Rape on the rise in Haiti’s Camps” *The Independent*, February 7, 2010

<sup>iv</sup> But whether there was an inordinate number of rapes or not, the gender experts working for the UN and aid organizations certainly believed there was. And journalists began transmitting their message with frightening eloquence: “referring to sexual violence,” Liesl Gernholtz wrote in *The Daily Beast* on March 9, “you can just feel it when you walk into these camps.”

<sup>v</sup> The story, like all the rest, comes from KOFAVIV. And it has varying versions. Here’s Bell’s version:

“The following one was relayed by Helia Lajeunesse, a child rights trainer with KOFAVIV. Lajeunesse’s granddaughter, four-year-old Timafi Youyoute (not her real name), lives outside the town of Jeremie with her mother, her mother’s boyfriend, and her newborn baby sister. On March 14, Timafi’s mother sent her to the neighbor’s house to buy a jar of rice. As she was leaving the neighbor’s yard, 17-year-old Dekatrel Jacqué offered to take her back home. Instead, he took her to the cemetery. There, he covered the little girl’s mouth with his hand and proceeded to rape her.”

As can be seen, in Bell’s version the child lived and was raped in Jeremie, a town far away from Port-au-Prince. Bell assured me that she knows the child and the family “quite well and thus followed her attack and its aftermath closely.” So there’s no reason to expect Bell got it wrong. On the 21st of November 2011, Angela Robson of the UK’s *The Guardian* would write,

“The conditions were very bad,” says Helia (Lajeunesse). “We were drinking out of puddles and sleeping outdoors. At night, armed gangs came into the courtyard, terrorising everyone.”

Helia was so alarmed that she sent her granddaughter to stay with a relative in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp on the edge of Port-au-Prince. The same week, the unthinkable happened. The five-year-old child was raped. “I have come to terms with what happened to me,” Helia cries out. “But how can we ever come to terms with this? He tore her little body apart.”

I’m not saying that the Grandmother is lying but it is difficult to reconcile when the world’s major newspapers report radically different versions of the same story regarding a topic that is so sensitive

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and important. And it does not help the credibility of the people who are claiming to be victims. Indeed, Helia Lajeunesse was a victim of rape in 2004. During that rape her 17 year-old daughter was also violated and from the encounter the child, Tamafi, was born. So we have three generations of rape victims here. And Lajeunesse is also one of the outspoken directors of KOFVIV. Is there some reason the stories have to change?

<sup>vi</sup> I've lived on and off in Haiti for 20 years and yes, Haitian men can be sexually aggressive; are encouraged to be sexually aggressive. It's like a cultural institution. I've written academic articles about it and have a chapter in a book devoted to these themes. And I have no doubt that women get raped in Haiti. But all these inconsistencies don't jibe. And bringing a Haitian woman down. Beating her. Gang raping her. It surely happens, but that's something neither common nor culturally "Haitian."

<sup>vii</sup> The one similarity in the two stories is that in both Faul and Bell's accounts the KOFVIV directors' daughters had gone to the police. In Bells account they got insulted. The police told them to "go tell it to the President." In the Faul account the police said they had so much work to do with other rapists that they didn't have time for them.

<sup>viii</sup> "Are there rapes in your camp?" I am talking to 22-year-old Johanne Louis. A young woman who spent two weeks working with me trying to help coordinate NGOs in Leogane, a story I'll get to shortly. We became close, have a good rapport, and she is candid in telling me about the gang violence in the area. She once told me about how a gang took over the neighborhood she lived in five years before and evicted her family from their home. She now lives in a camp in Cite Simone, which is part of City Soley, what the UN considered at one time the most dangerous neighborhood in Port-au-Prince. It's rife with gang activity, so dangerous in the wake of the 2004 Aristide coup that for three years neither the Haitian National Police nor the United Nations Peace keepers could enter the area. When they finally did enter, 350 UN soldiers shot 22,000 rounds of ammunition in 7 hours. No one knows how many people they killed. It has also long been considered part of the rape capital of Port-au-Prince.

"No, there are certain places where they wait. Like by the U.S. embassy where you first met me. Everyone knows that's a bad place. They wait at night."

"They have guns?"

"I suppose."

"But you're talking about something that was going on before the earthquake?"

"Yes."

"Is it worse now?"

"People say that it is."

"Have you ever had any problems?"

"No."

"Do you know anyone who has been raped?"

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"No. But I've seen girls crying."

"How do you know they'd been raped?"

"That's what people said."

"But you and none of your friends have been raped?"

"No."

<sup>ix</sup> Before I left Yolette said that, "I don't like that you just showed up. But" she says with a hint of a smile, "you know why I said yes to your 'two seconds'?.... Because, one, you speak creole and that's very rare with all these foreigners coming here: that makes me very happy. And, two I see that you're interested in hearing the truth."

<sup>x</sup> For U.S. Embassy cables calling FRAPH 'gun toting crazies' see, Rohter, Larry. 1996. "Cables Show U.S. Deception on Haitian Violence." *New York Times*. February 06.

[http://www.haitiaction.net/News/nyt2\\_6\\_96.html](http://www.haitiaction.net/News/nyt2_6_96.html)

<sup>xi</sup> For FRAPH and Constant, see:

Nairn, Allan. 1995. "Our Payroll, Haitian Hit." *The Nation* magazine, October 9. Find it on *The Third World Traveler*: [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Foreign\\_Policy/HaitiOct95\\_Nairn.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Foreign_Policy/HaitiOct95_Nairn.html)

In October 2006, a Federal Court in New York ordered Constant to pay three women raped by FRAPH a total of \$19 million in damages, in a case brought by the Center for Justice & Accountability. The court declared that "Constant's conduct was clearly malicious. As commander of FRAPH, Constant founded and oversaw an organization that was dedicated principally towards terrorizing and torturing political opponents of the military regime. His direction – or at a minimum, approval – of FRAPH's state-backed campaign of violence constitutes an inexcusable violation of international law and merits a stiff punishment."

See: The Center for Justice & Accountability, Case Summary, Doe v. Constant.

In 2008, Constant was convicted of mortgage fraud and sentenced to 12–37 years in prison. According to NYC Department of Correctional Services Inmate Information, as of February 3, 2011, Constant was in custody at the Cocksackie Correctional Facility.

For the Psychopath test, see: "The Psychopath Test: A Journey Through the Madness Industry" A 2011 book by Jon Ronson in which he explores the concept of psychopathy, along with the broader mental health "industry" including mental health professionals and the mass media. It spent the whole of 2012 on United Kingdom bestseller lists and ten weeks on the *New York Times* Best Seller list.

<sup>xii</sup> Fuller, Anne. 1999. "Challenging Violence: Haitian Women Unite Women's Rights and Human Rights." *Association of Concerned Africa Scholars*. Special Bulletin on Women and War. Spring/Summer. ACAS website: <http://acas.prairienet.org>



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<sup>xiii</sup> Human Rights Watch, Rape in Haiti: A Weapon of Terror, 1 July 1994, p. 4. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a7e18.html>.

<sup>xiv</sup> For Clinton's speech on the restoration of Aristide, see: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/09/16/text-of-president-clintons-address-on-haiti/1bd152b0-10e9-48aa-a995-c688c19f4583/>

<sup>xv</sup> I want to make it clear that I am not denying there were atrocities. In the interest of those people who really were victims of the aggression and/or whose family members were killed, who had to watch, this is not a repudiation of those incidences. Such incidences certainly occurred. FRAPH did launch a campaign of terror. The issue is the extent of that campaign of terror and the exaggeration from the opposition and uses to which the opposition put the exaggerations. And one point that should be underscored is that for those who care about the real victims, lumping thousands and even tens-of- thousands of charlatans in with them denies those individuals justice. Rather than simply turning the perpetrators into victims, it multiplies, not just the number of victims but, by corollary, the number of plausible perpetrators. Put another way, because they are claiming so many victims, the assumption is that there are a many criminals, far more than exist. The sum impact is that it makes those real victims relatively insignificant, just one more number in a sea of suffering and abuse.

And when one gets to the actual numbers of substantiated cases of government violence, it's astonishingly low compared to the U.S.

For example, in the years, 1993 to 1996, citizens of the Big Apple made 16,767 complaints against police officers. The complaints ranged from illegal search, to home invasion, beating, rape, and killing; 690 came with enough evidence to be substantiated. Discipline was almost non-existent. With 264 substantiated complaints in 1995 alone, none of the police were tried for a crime, only 52 were disciplined, four of these suspended, and a single one, just one, was fired; seventy percent were merely scolded or lost one day of vacation. Two years later, 1997, is when the world was treated to the famous incident of two New York City police sodomizing Haitian immigrant Abner Louis with the handle of a toilet plunger and afterward forcing it down his throat, something that police department spokespeople tried to cover up telling the press that his injuries were the result of, "abnormal homosexual activities." (In the end, that one was difficult to cover up. Abner spent several months in the hospital getting his intestines sewed back together). How often this kind of behavior occurs in the heart of the world's greatest democracy is not clear. In a study that included 12,000 randomly sampled citizens from throughout U.S. cities, victims of police abuse or brutality reported filing complaints in only 30 percent of cases. Dateline News found that half of those in New York City who did complain met systematic resistance, rudeness, and non-compliance from the police officers who were supposed to receive their complaints; a small number of them were subsequently harassed, beaten, and even falsely arrested for invented crimes.

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So getting back to Haiti, several hundred humans rights workers collecting data of abuse and systematic repression over a period of three years and coming up with 73 qualified cases is not very alarming.

Moreover, if one were a defender of the military junta—and make no mistake, I am not—they might point out that in the U.S. the blame for police brutality is usually not place on the mayor, or governor or president. It's usually seen as a fault in the system that permits such behavior. Moreover, in view of U.S. rates of police brutality, one might argument that the 1991-1994 Haitian military Junta deserved lavish praise for having kept abuse to rates far, far below that of developed New York City.

See: Revolutionary Worker #982. 1998. "If You Dare Complain About Police Abuse...: The record of New York's Civilian Complaint Review Board." November 15. <http://revcom.us/a/v20/980-89/982/ccrb.htm>

See also: *Complaint Review Board* (CCRB). 1993. This is the twenty-sixth status report on the general operations of the New York City Civilian as reorganized pursuant to Local Law No. 1 of 1993, effective July 5, 1993. Pages 196 to 205.

<sup>xvi</sup> For Spring Break data, see: Disalvo, David. 2010. "Why the Spring Break Rape Total in Daytona Beach will Keep Rising." March 19. <http://trueslant.com/daviddisalvo/2010/03/19/why-the-spring-break-rape-total-in-daytona-beach-will-keep-rising/>

Daytona Beach Post. 2010. "Daytona Beach: Florida's Rape Capital." March 22. <http://www.daytonapost.com/2010/03/daytona-beach-floridas-rape-capital.html>

<sup>xvii</sup> When Aristide returned to power, his government urged people in the popular neighborhoods to form defense groups, called *brigad vigilan*. They were essentially different political ends of the same phenomenon. And according to U.S. memo entitled *MO Overlapping Membership*, whether right wing like FRAPH of the 1991 to 1994 era, or supposedly left-wing Aristide supporters, they were often the same men. Brigad had become like "development" organizations, similar to CARE, or CRS, or UNICEF. Neighborhood toughs and thugs turned the opportunity into a profession. [for the Memo, see: James, Erica. 2010. "Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti." *California Series in Public Anthropology*, p. 267]

<sup>xviii</sup> The International Civilian Mission reported 66 instances of rape "of a political nature" between January and May 1994. (MICIVIH, June 17, 1994.) The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in a May visit documented 21 cases first-hand. Human Rights Watch/NCHR published "Rape in Haiti: a Weapon of Terror," based on a February 1994 investigation, reporting "a campaign of systematic violations of human rights that clearly includes rape." (HRW/NCHR 1994, 4)

A report published by the MICIVIH after Aristide's return shed light on the identity of the rape victims. Most (52 percent) of the women rape victims received by the MICIVIH's Medical Unit during one sample period were close relatives of activists, while only 18 percent were activists themselves (defined as members of organizations or political parties). In another sample of men and women

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victims of different types of abuse, 64 percent of men were activists and 20 percent sympathizers, while corresponding figures for women were 30 percent and 40 percent. (MICIVIH, 1997, 34-38).

See: Fuller, Anne. 1999. "Challenging Violence: Haitian Women Unite Women's Rights and Human Rights." *Association of Concerned Africa Scholars*. Spring/Summer. Special Bulletin on Women and War. ACAS website: <http://acas.prairienet.org>.

<sup>xix</sup> But try as I might have, none of those hopeful U.S. immigrants got through at the time. I do, however, know two "refugees" who made it through the process. Both were men. One had killed a crazy woman in the streets of Port-de-Paix. She had smashed the windshield of his taxi-pickup truck. He got out and smashed her head in with a crowbar. She died. He was arrested and imprisoned. When he finished paying his way out of prison, he took his documentation papers, got on a refugee boat and then used those papers to support the lie that he was being politically persecuted back in Haiti. The other story was similar. It involved my first friend in Haiti. We met in 1990 in the remote town of Mole St Nicolas where he was a Captain in the Haitian military. During the second year of the junta he had a conflict with another officer. Both were sharing kickbacks from boat loads of immigrants leaving Haiti (i.e. to leave they had to pay the military.) In a fight over the money my friend pulled a pistol on his fellow officer. He soon found himself locked up, once again providing the paper work he would subsequently use to support the story that he was being politically persecuted back in Haiti.

<sup>xx</sup> For those who think it's terrible that people would lie about persecution for a visa, why not lie? What kind of father, brother, son, sister, mother, or daughter would you be if you didn't do everything you could to get through the immigration process and start helping you're impoverished family back in Haiti? And while I did not see the greater implications of what was unfolding in front of me at the time, what kind of person would I have been if I didn't try to help them try to figure out how to do it?

<sup>xxi</sup> Some sources for the asylum issue:

*Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada*. 1992. "Impact of the September 1991 Coup." Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada. June 1.

Gerard, Phillipe. 2004. *Clinton in Haiti. The 1993 US Invasion of Haiti*. Palgrave MacMillan: New York.

*Migration News*. 1994. "Clinton Changes US Policy on Haitian Refugees" June. Volume 1, Number 5

*New York Times*. 1992. "UN Has Asylum Plan For Haiti Boat People." December 3.

Wasem, Ruth Ellen. 2011. "U.S. Immigration Policy on Haitian Migrants Specialist in Immigration Policy." *Congressional Research Service*, May 17.

<sup>xxii</sup> The Bush administration and the U.S. immigration service were not fooled. Most of the refugees were returned. On May 24th 1992, eight months after the coup, on the heels of 3,546 Haitian boat people picked up at sea in the space of two weeks, the Bush administration decided to start taking

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the refugees directly back to Haiti. They simply steamed straight to Port-au-Prince and put them off on the wharf. But with all the political pressure in the U.S., the policy soon changed and many got a chance to prove if they were among those persecuted. They got “screened” to determine if they had been politically persecuted. But with all the political pressure in the U.S., the policy soon changed and many got a chance to prove if they were among those persecuted. Many had no idea what that meant. But some did. Of the 10,490 of those pre-screened got temporarily “paroled” into the U.S.

Even in 1992 and 1993 years of the military junta, the vast bulk of “boat people” were not direct victims of police or military brutality. Nor were most the poorest of the poor. They were working class citizens who could scrape up enough money to pay board on a boat and take their chances at getting granted asylum when the U.S. Coast Guard picked them up.

See: Frelick, Bill. 1992. “Haitians At Sea: Asylum Denied,” <https://nacla.org/article/haitians-sea-asylum-denied>

Frelick, Bill. 1993. “Haitian Boat Interdiction and Return: First Asylum and First Principles of Refugee Protection.” *Cornell International Law Journal*, Volume 26, Issue 3. Symposium. Article 6. <http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1324&context=cilj>

<sup>xxiii</sup> Other than the one brief and not very specific reference in the main text, I could find no numbers on how many female asylum seekers claimed specifically to have been raped.

<sup>xxiv</sup> See: “Congressional Record Selective Leaks Of Classified Information On Haiti (Senate -November 05, 1993),” a series of articles regarding CIA’s propaganda campaign against Aristide. (Accessed 1/17/15)

Smith, Ashley. 2004. “The New Occupation of Haiti Aristide’s Rise and Fall” *International Socialist Review*, Issue 35, May–June 2004. <http://www.isreview.org/issues/35/aristide.shtml> (Accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>xxv</sup> Sciolino, Elaine. 1994. “Embassy in Haiti Doubts Aristide’s Rights Reports.” *New York Times*, May 9.

<sup>xxvi</sup> *Baltimore Sun*. 1994. “The Haiti Zig-Zag,” July 8.

<sup>xxvii</sup> See Chapter 5: “Beurocraft, Accusation and the Social Life of Aid.” in *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*, by Erica James. 2010. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>xxviii</sup> *The Miami Herald Sun*, May. 16, 2004 “In Haiti’s chaos, unpunished rape was norm”

<sup>xxix</sup> For Erica James, the names of many of these people should be kept secret and she used pseudonyms. So I too will avoid names here. But I was good friends for a time with the head of the

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HRF who was best friends with the murdered consultant. The HRF director swears that the death of the consultant had nothing to do with the HRF. Consultant had started a nightclub, what became at the time the most popular night club in Petion Ville (where today is located Barak's). The consultant returned home one Friday night with his wife. His own security guard and local young man killed him and tried to rob what they expected to be a large payroll. The man who actually did the shooting was, according to the HRF director, only 16 years old. The HRF director dismisses him as an Aristide supporter who had been armed by a pro-Aristide neighborhood brigade.

<sup>xxx</sup> For the Miami Herald excerpt about rape in 2004 rivaling that of the early 1990s but being carried out by Aristide sympathizers and militants, see: Mozingo, Joe. 2004. "In Haiti's chaos, unpunished rape was norm." *The Miami Herald*, May. 16. <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/haiti/rape.htm>

For a summary of articles critical of the Haitian media monopoly and techniques used by the so-called "Civil sector" See: <http://www.forumhaiti.com/t6057-the-canadian-media-in-haiti>

Also see, Hallward, Peter (2007). *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment*. London: Verso Books, ISBN 1-84467-106-2

<sup>xxxi</sup> For Villard-Appolon's testimony regarding being raped, see: "Text: Testimony on Gender-Based Violence in Haiti" by Malya Villard-Appolon Before the UN Human Rights Council (English and French)

Oral Intervention of Malya Villard-Appolon June 7, 2010:

<http://www.ijdh.org/2010/06/topics/womens-issues/text-testimony-on-gender-based-violence-in-haiti-by-malya-villard-appolon-before-the-un-human-rights-council-english-and-french/> (Accessed 1/18/2015)

<sup>xxxii</sup> "Standing up to Defend our Rights" In *The Haiti Support Group Briefing*, No. 59, November 2006. [http://www.haitisupportgroup.org/index.php?option=com\\_rsfiles&view=files&layout=view&tmpl=component&path=haiti\\_briefing\\_59.pdf](http://www.haitisupportgroup.org/index.php?option=com_rsfiles&view=files&layout=view&tmpl=component&path=haiti_briefing_59.pdf)  
Accessed 1/18/2015

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Journalists were also often perplexed to find that some gang leaders had 'sweet smiles' and 'look more like a high school students than Al Capone,' that neighbors saw them as defenders of the poor who distributed money to those most in need. They also negotiated with the government for services. In one neighborhood a thirty-foot high monument was built in memory of Dred Wilme, one of the most notorious gang leaders. I'm not saying they were all sweet and innocent men. But the more penetrating journalist accounts depict something different.

For example, see: Tayler, Letta. 2006. "Haiti No Law, No Order." *Newsday.com*, January 1. <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.haiti/2006-01/msg00008.html>

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<sup>xxxiv</sup> Obviously, how many rapes occur in any particular country and over any particular period of time will depend on how rape is defined. The definitions vary widely. In some countries penetration is necessary. In other countries any forcible sex is considered rape. It is not clear how Kolbe and Hutson defined rape. They did not say.

<sup>xxxv</sup> For the U.S. rape statistics: In a 1996-1997 nationwide study, the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice (2000) found that year 3.1 percent of undergraduate women reported surviving rape or attempted rape.

See, Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000). Full report of the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of intimate partner violence against women: "Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey." Report prepared for the *National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

In a 2004 nationwide study of 25,000 college women Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Weschler (2004) found that 4.7 percent experienced rape or attempted rape during a single academic year.

See: Mohler-Kuo, Meichun Sc.D., George W. Dowdall, Ph.D., Mary P. Koss, Ph.D., and Henry Wechsler, Ph.D. 2004. "Correlates of Rape While Intoxicated in a National Sample of College Women." *Journal of Studies On Alcohol*, January

In a 2007 nationwide study of 2,000 college women Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauley found that 5.2 percent experienced rape over the course of a year.

See: Kilpatrick, D.G., Acierno, R., Resnick, H.S., Saunders, B.E. And Best, C.L. 1997. "A 2-year longitudinal analysis of the relationships between violent assault and substance use in women." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65: 834-847.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Perhaps more interesting than anything, and more revealing is the data human rights agencies were citing when calling attention to the new Haitian rape crisis. I am not drawing from only a single report. The same agencies cited similar and more sober findings for subsequent years. As mentioned in the main text, in 2006, SOFA (Haitian Women's Solidarity Movement/ Solidarity Fanm Ayisyen) recorded 155 victims of rape seeking help at one of their 21 centers across Haiti; 77 were girls under the 18 years of age. For 2007 SOFA reported 238 documented rapes; 140 of which were girls under 18; in 2008 they recorded 105 rapes, 58 of which girls under 18 years of age. While any rape is too many, compared to developed countries these are minor percentages. For example, 238 rapes would be 1/20 of 1% of the females in Port-au-Prince at the time. And making the figures more extreme, they were talking about the entire country.

SOFA. 2008. "Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti : a random survey of households."

SOFA. 2007. "Femmes-Filles Victimes De Violence Accueillies Et Accom-pagnées Dans Les Centres Douvanjou De La Sofa De Janvier À Juin." (a summary can be found at: <http://radiokiskeya.com/spip.php?article4095>)

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SOFA. "Cas de violence accueillis et accompagnés dans les centres d'urgence de la SOFA de juillet à décembre 2006, janvier 2007."

See: SOFA. 2006. "Violence envers les femmes et les jeunes filles, Rapport Bilan. Rapport Bilan I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII."

OAS. 2009. "Le Droit Des Femmes De Vivre Libres De Violence Et De Discrimination En Haïti" OEA/Ser.L/V/II. doc. 64 10 mars 2009 Original: anglais.  
<http://www.cidh.oas.org/pdf%20files/HAITI%20WOMEN%20REPORT%20FRE-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> The name of the Kolbe/Hutson post-earthquake report was "Assessing needs after the quake: Sexual violence, property crime and property damage." The full citation is, Kolbe, A.R., Shannon, H., Levitz, N, Muggah, R., Hutson, R.A., James, L., Puccio, M., Trzcinski, E., Noel, J.R., Miles, B. (2010). "Assessing Needs After the Quake: Sexual Violence, Property Crime and Property Damage." *Geneva: Small Arms Survey*.  
[http://new-research.socialwork.wayne.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1712:assessing-needs-after-the-quake-sexual-violence-property-crime-and-property-damage&catid=295:publications&Itemid=58A](http://new-research.socialwork.wayne.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1712:assessing-needs-after-the-quake-sexual-violence-property-crime-and-property-damage&catid=295:publications&Itemid=58A) Study by the University of Michigan and the Small Arms Survey

But elsewhere they published it as:

Kolbe, A.R., Hutson, R. A., Shannon, H.A., Trzcinski, E, Miles, B., Levitz, N., Puccio, M., James, L., Noel, J.R., Muggah, R. (2010). "Mortality, crime and access to basic needs before and after the Haiti earthquake: a random survey of Port-au-Prince households." *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 26 (4): 281-297.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Another source of data comes from a 2006 Haitian Ministry of women study in which 10,757 women aged between 15 and 49 were surveyed. I couldn't get the survey. But Amnesty International reports that 10.8 per cent of girls between 16 to 19 years had been "victims of sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner." That's bad. But it too is no cause for alarm. In the United States 9.5 percent of girls have "survived a completed or attempted rape." Moreover, the study was carried out at the end of what was widely seen as one of the most violent upheavals in recent Haitian history.

See: "Ministère à la Condition Féminine et aux Droits des Femmes, 2007. Étude "Une réponse à la violence faite aux femmes en Haïti. Étude sur la violence domestique et sexuelle en Haïti."

Amnesty International Facts And Figures And Case Studies Based on the November 2008 report, "Don't Turn Your Back on Girls: Sexual violence against girls in Haiti."  
<https://archive.amnesty.ie/sites/default/files/report/2010/04/Combined%20facts%20and%20case%20studies%20for%20report.pdf>

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<sup>xxxix</sup> So the best evidence from the worst era in recent Haitian history suggests that rape of and violent acts against Haitian women and girls living in Port-au-Prince are on par with the U.S. average and, by the way, significantly better off than the impoverished U.S. population among which two-thirds of all reported rapes occur.

<sup>xi</sup> The journalists, many of whom had never visited Haiti and who knew little to nothing about what was really going on here, depended on the advocacy groups like KOFAVIV for information. They thus were using the aid activist “experts” to garner information to write articles that revealed the shocking details of the Haiti rape epidemic, thereby misunderstanding and then misrepresenting what was going on to the world outside of Haiti. The aid organizations were then turning around and citing the journalists articles they had informed as evidence that the problem was epidemic. The extremity of this misrepresentation of pre-quake aid articles and how far into the mainstream press the trend flowed is exemplified by Alex Renton and Caroline Irby, who as seen in the main text were hosted by Oxfam who then led them from one aid-activist expert to another, all of whom were fishing for support and more than happy to get a stamp of international credibility from one of Britain’s main daily newspapers. These two journalists published their first article December 2, 2007 in Britain’s *The Guardian*. The article is pitched as, “Alex Renton reports from a Caribbean hell crippled by poverty and torn by gang violence, and talks to the women who live in daily fear of sexual abuse.” In the article Renton tells us that, “According to the UN, 50 per cent of young women in the violent shantytowns of Haiti have been raped or sexually assaulted. Of the handful of victims who seek justice, a third are under 13.” It’s not clear where he got the data since the UN estimate were not even that high.

See: Renton, Alex and Caroline Irby. 2007. “The rape epidemic.” *The Guardian*. December 2.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2007/dec/02/women.features3>

<sup>xli</sup> KOFAVIV website accessed on September 15 2011.

<sup>xlii</sup> Renton and Irby says that rape has only recently become a crime, which is true, and it’s a point that activists often cite with regard to gender based violence in Haiti. But the most logical reason that rape was historically omitted from legal sanction was not because Haitian men tolerate rape, but because they do not. Indeed, the gist of these types of arguments are so utterly absurd that it’s difficult to understand how they make it into print. Haitian fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, and lovers don’t want men raping the women they love. They don’t want it to happen any more than men in the U.S. want it to happen to the women they love. It’s through attacks on the sanctity of the women that paramilitary organizations sometimes sought to wound and demoralize their spouses and fathers. But in Haiti this is a recent political phenomenon. In cases of criminal rape, as seen in the camps, men are willing if not eager to join in and kill the assailant. In other words, the reason rape was not illegal until recently is arguably because it didn’t need to be. Friends, family, and neighbors killed the rapist. Moreover, most individuals living in Haiti are embedded in strongly linked and large familial networks, the members of which defend one another against criminals or



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would be assailants and censor the behavior of their own members through criticism and in the case of anti-social aggression—as with of rape—withdrawal of protection. Part of the problem of the cross cultural failure in understanding here is that large families and vigilante justice is something alien to most readers of the New York Times. In developed countries the State effectively eliminates it. Indeed, the entire concept of rape with impunity is arguably a projection of western social pathology where rapists are often able to seek protection behind the legal system, burden of proof, and complex legal arguments.

<sup>xliii</sup> And returning to the most recent Renton article, readers get to meet a familiar character, a woman who, although impoverished, has taken on as her self-sacrificial mission helping “vikitm.” Upon encountering Renton, she tells him that she just happens to have a house full of battered and abused women that she would like Renton to help her get money for. Renton takes her on as an expert.

Renton, Alex. 2007. “The rape epidemic.” *The Guardian*. December 2.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2007/dec/02/women.features3>

<sup>xliv</sup> Also struggling to get a piece of the action was FAVILEK (Fanm Viktim Leve Kanpe—another organization with roots going back to 1991).

<sup>xlv</sup> For visas via humanitarian parole to the U.S. and Canada, see: Armstrong, Lisa. 2014. “Haitian rape survivors begin new lives in Canada and the U.S. Resettlement programs offer an escape from violence and time to heal.” *Aljazeera*, July 1,  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/2/haitian-rape-victimsbeginnnewlivesincanadaandtheus.html>

<sup>xlvi</sup> According to Kolbe et al. 2011, .3 per cent of a general population sample reported being a victim of sexual violence in the six weeks after the earthquake. With all but one case involving a female victims, this mean that it could be extrapolated to infer that if it continued it would be an annual rate of 7% of all women. (See: Kolbe, Athena R., Royce A. Hutson , Harry Shannon , Eileen Trzcinski, Bart Miles, Naomi Levitz, Marie Puccio , Leah James , Jean Roger Noel and Robert Muggah. 2010. “Mortality, crime and access to basic needs before and after the Haiti earthquake: a random survey of Port-au-Prince households.” In *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*).

<sup>xlvii</sup> In the original draft of their study Muggah, Kolbe and the other 6 University professors who co-authored the report put the number of people raped at 3 percent of those sampled, 6% of females. The error was corrected in the published version.

Here’s what they did: They sampled 1,800 households. They asked about all the people in the household. They came up with 29 cases of sexual assault. Yes, “29.” That’s 29 cases in 1,800 households. They used that data to conclude that 3 percent of all people in their sample were raped. But it’s not 3 percent of all people. It’s not even 3 percent of all households. It’s 1.6 percent of all

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households (29/1,800). Furthermore, there are 5.2 people per household. With 1,800 households in their sample, that's a total population of 9,360 people (5.2 x 1,800). So what they really found was that in the six weeks between the earthquake and the time they claim to have done a survey 0.3 percent (29/9,360), or 3 in every 1,000 people had been assaulted. Only one of the victims in the sample was male, so if we only consider females then it's 6 in every 1,000, about one tenth 1/5th to 1/10th the number of U.S. college women who report raped or attempted rape in a single academic year and about the rape victimization rate for the U.S. in 1980.

Comparing findings from Kolbe et al. to the U.S. general population: The age 12 and above U.S. 1980 adjusted per-capita victimization rate was 2.4 per 1000 people; considering that 37 in 1,000 U.S. girls under 12 are raped and 30 percent of those in the Kolbe sample were under 12, the makes rates about equal.

Moreover, what no one was talking about or would want to talk about is that Kolbe and Muggah's study still had that same grey question looming over their survey: how many people reported rape in hope of a visa or getting some of the aid that was being dangled in front of them? One clue comes from the past: of the 29 households where people reported some family member had been assaulted, 5 of them reported the same thing in the survey four years earlier.

But then, as discussed at length in Chapter 9, there is good reason to believe the survey never occurred.

See: Kolbe, Athena R., Royce A. Hutson , Harry Shannon , Eileen Trzcinski, Bart Miles, Naomi Levitz, Marie Puccio , Leah James , Jean Roger Noel and Robert Muggah. 2010. "Mortality, crime and access to basic needs before and after the Haiti earthquake: a random survey of Port-au-Prince households." In *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Even with regard to KOFAFIVs "official" reports, they arguably did not, at that point in time, comprise a rape epidemic. During the two months after the January 12 quake KOFAFIV monitored sexual assaults in 15 of Port-au-Princes largest camps, that's a population, according to the official figures, of about 800,000 people. They came up with 230 cases of rape. Or at least that is what they report. Translating that to the standard rape index (rapes per 100,000 people per year), that's about 29 rapes per 100,000 people per year: a rape accusation rate lower than that of the continental United States and considerably less than Canada's at 73 rapes per year

See Bell, Beverly. 2010. "Our Bodies Are Shaking Now: Rapes Follow Earthquake in Haiti" *Huffington Post*, March 24. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beverly-bell/our-bodies-are-shaking-no\\_b\\_511397.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beverly-bell/our-bodies-are-shaking-no_b_511397.html)

<sup>xlix</sup> Here is another example of the bizarre journalism:

"Four men raped her. She is 13 years old," Guerline told Amnesty International researchers, who compiled the report after interviewing more than 50 women and girls in Haiti's post-quake camps.

"They told me that if I talked about it, they would kill me. They said that if I went to the police, they would shoot me dead.

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“I’m scared. There is nowhere safe where I can live, so I had to keep quiet,” said Guerline, who, like all the women interviewed for the report, was given a false name to protect her from reprisals.

Note that Guerline is the mother of the 13-year-old. But in the middle of the article and almost as an aside, we learn that Guerline herself was raped the same night,

Guerline was raped on the same night as her daughter by hooded men in the tent city. She can’t get the events of that terrible night out of her head.

[Guerline’s rape was an afterthought? The Amnesty researchers suddenly remembered it or the respondents suddenly remembered it? Or did they just add it?]

See: Agencies. 2011. “In Haiti Camps, Rape Stalks Women: Amnesty: Human Degenerates Indulge In Mass Rape Even After As Horrific An Incident As An Earthquake.” Published in *Indian Express*, January 6, 2011. <http://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/print/in-haiti-camps-rape-stalks-women-amnesty/>

Also see:

Amnesty International (Press Release). 2011. “HAITI: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INCREASING.” January 6. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2011/01/haiti-sexual-violence-against-women-increasing/>

<sup>i</sup> For the DRC statistics, see: Hirsch, Michele Lent and Lauren Wolfe. 2012. “Women Under Siege.” *American Journal of Public Health*, February 8. <http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org/conflicts/profile/democratic-republic-of-congo>

<sup>ii</sup> Summing up the sensationalism and gullibility of journalists, Amie Newman, January 14, 2011, RH Reality Check blog, an online community and publication serving individuals and organizations committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights.

One year after the devastating earthquake in Haiti that killed close to 250,000 people, women and girls living in the displacement camps remain as vulnerable to sexual violence as they did immediately following the disaster. There are still more than 1,000,000 Haitians living in appalling conditions in the 1,000 tent cities and camps

It means, simply, that the sexual violence is not only continuing for women and girls, it’s worsening.

In a report released last week, by Amnesty International, entitled “Aftershocks: Women Speak Out About Sexual Violence,” (PDF) data shows that incidences of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in the camps are widespread. Armed men “roam the camps after dark” and rape survivors visit the offices of a local women’s support group daily. In other words, nothing has changed.

Newman, Amie. 2011. *RH Reality Check* blog. January 14

<sup>iii</sup> Torgan, Allie, 2012. “Seeking justice for Haiti’s rape victims.” *CNN*, April 26.

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<sup>liii</sup> For Roy, Lundgren and Stewart, see:

<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/gossip/haiti-helping-hands-fashion-designer-rachel-roy-mogul-martha-stewart-reach-protect-women-article-1.949430> (last accessed 1/17/15).

<sup>liv</sup> See: <http://www.digital-democracy.org/blog/2013-year-end-review/> (last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lv</sup> [http://www.unrefugees.org/site/c.lfIQKSOWFqG/b.8073653/k.D495/UNHCR\\_and\\_KOFAVIV\\_Care\\_for\\_Rape\\_Victims\\_in\\_Haiti.htm](http://www.unrefugees.org/site/c.lfIQKSOWFqG/b.8073653/k.D495/UNHCR_and_KOFAVIV_Care_for_Rape_Victims_in_Haiti.htm) (last accessed 3/15/12)

<sup>lvi</sup> <http://rfkcenter.org/foto/le-tre-signore-del-kofaviv-2?lang=en>  
(last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lvii</sup> <http://www.rescue.org/blog/women-helping-women-haiti> (last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lviii</sup> <http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/mike-friends-blog/our-bodies-are-shaking-now-rape-follows-earthquake-haiti?print=1> (last accessed 3/15/12)

<sup>lix</sup> <http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/help-provide-relief-to-earthquake-victims-in-haiti/updates/?subid=10219> (last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lx</sup> <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/articles-on-confronting-militarism/> 1750

<sup>lxi</sup> [http://desliz.tumblr.com/post/10512147302#\\_=\\_](http://desliz.tumblr.com/post/10512147302#_=_) (last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lxii</sup> <http://digital-democracy.org/2011/09/21/announcing-572-the-first-emergency-response-system-for-sexual-violence-in-haiti/>  
(last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lxiii</sup> <http://www.frontlinesms.com/tag/kofaviv/> (last accessed 1/17/15)

<http://www.frontlinesms.com/2012/10/26/frontlinesmsat7-kofaviv-supporting-haitian-women/>  
(last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lxiv</sup> [http://www.uusc.org/blog/entry/3243/help\\_recognize\\_a\\_true\\_hero\\_in\\_haiti](http://www.uusc.org/blog/entry/3243/help_recognize_a_true_hero_in_haiti) (last accessed 1/17/15)

<sup>lxv</sup> The World Bank's "Addressing and Preventing Gender Based Violence" Project, 2011 -2012 (US\$500,000 grant from the Bank's Rapid Social Response Trust Fund)

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Here is the relevant text suggesting that they allowed KOFAVIV directors do whatever they wanted with the money and not account for it.

The World Bank's "Addressing and Preventing Gender Based Violence Project" supports community-based interventions that address Haiti's increase in GBV since the earthquake. Implemented through a partnership between two non-governmental organizations, MADRE (US) and Komisyon Fanm Viktim pou Viktim (KOFAVIV; Haiti), the project targets five of Port-au-Prince's 22 IDP camps. The project is funded through the Bank's "Rapid Social Response" Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which "promot[es] social protection measures such as social safety nets and maintaining access to basic health, education, and other vital services for communities."

According to a December 31, 2011 progress report, which Gender Action obtained from a World Bank employee and is not publicly available, the project's "public education" component supported "capacity building and technical assistance to KOFAVIV in the launch of the violence prevention public education campaign" in late 2011 (World Bank, 2011b). Another component supported an increased number of KOFAVIV visits to GBV survivors as well as the purchase and distribution of "first response kits." The World Bank and MADRE also aim to enhance women's grassroots leadership in combating GBV by organizing capacity building workshops for KOFAVIV staff during 2012. The World Bank is responsible for all project coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

Although the World Bank is obligated as a tax-payer funded institution to disclose all project documents to the public on its website, it has not released any documentation on this project. It is therefore impossible to determine if women and men were equally involved in project consultations and if they will have equal access to project outreach and education activities. In fact, the progress report does not mention the role of men and boys in GBV prevention at all. The report also does not indicate if sex-disaggregated data will be collected in order to determine the project's differential outputs and impacts on women and girls, men and boys.

<sup>lxvi</sup> <http://peacemedia.usip.org/resource/using-technology-report-gender-based-violence-haiti-digital-democracy>

<sup>lxvii</sup> <http://www.usaid.gov/haiti/gender-equity-and-womens-empowerment>

<sup>lxviii</sup> When the money slowed down scholar-activists such as Michelle Chen would publish articles like, Chen, Michelle. 2014, "Haiti's Women Need More Than a Trickle of Aid Money." *The Nation*. January 9.

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<sup>lxix</sup> There must be many, many more. And so I'm not the only one to notice. I am, however, the only one who has felt inclined to speak out. All those mentioned above refused to allow me to name them. Not one of them came out against KOFAVIV.

<sup>lxx</sup> Personal correspondence via e-mail.

<sup>lxxi</sup> See: McClelland, Mac. 2011. "I'm Gonna Need You to Fight Me On This: How Violent Sex Helped Ease My PTSD." *Good*, June 29th 2011. <https://www.good.is/articles/how-violent-sex-helped-ease-my-ptsd>

<sup>lxxii</sup> Despite all this, it never seemed to dawn on the 36 journalists that maybe rape really wasn't that rampant. In the midst of their onslaught of Ms. McClelland—arguably a victim of the journalists who for 18 months had been depicting Haiti as a rape hell—they managed to commend her for calling, "much needed attention to the complexity of rape" and in a comment that should have negated the entire reason for attacking her in the first place—McClelland never claimed that she had been raped or even felt personally threatened—they reiterated that, "For the thousands of displaced women around Port-au-Prince, the threat of rape is tragically high."

<sup>lxxiii</sup> On one level the entire letter seems to be a large contradiction of itself. The journalists are scolding McClelland for making post-earthquake Haiti appear to be a rape nightmare for women and then then they go on to claim that it's true. The reason is precisely because most if not all the female journalists who participated in writing it have—like their male counterparts—accepted the image of the camps as bastions of rape while noting, to their credit, that they do not seem to be targets of the violence. As we can see from the data discussed above, most women are not targets. And it is even bizarre, if they indeed believe this about Haiti, why they would have gone after McClelland with such vehemence. McClelland never claimed to have been raped. She was describing her vicarious suffering with respect to a Haitian woman who had been raped. For those interested, here is the fuller part of commentary that accepts the high incidence of rape is likely:

"We respect the heart of Ms. McClelland's story, which is her experience of trauma and how she found sexuality a profound means of dealing with it. Her article calls much needed attention to the complexity of rape....

But we were disturbed to find them articulated in Ms. McClelland's piece without larger context, especially considering her reputation for socially conscious reporting.

... We can identify with the difficulty of unwanted sexual advances that women of all colors may face in Haiti. And in the United States. And everywhere.

Unfortunately, most Haitian women are not offered escapes from the possibility of violence in the camps in the form of passports and tickets home to another country. For the thousands of displaced women around Port-au-Prince, the threat of rape is tragically high....

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The full letter can be found in the following endnote.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Here is the full letter:

To the Editors:

As female journalists and researchers who have lived and worked in Haiti, we write to you today to express our concern with Mac McClelland's portrayal of Haiti in "I'm Gonna Need You to Fight Me On This: How Violent Sex Helped Ease my PTSD."

We respect the heart of Ms. McClelland's story, which is her experience of trauma and how she found sexuality a profound means of dealing with it. Her article calls much needed attention to the complexity of rape. But we believe the way she uses Haiti as a backdrop for this narrative is sensationalist and irresponsible.

Between the 36 of us, we have lived or worked in Haiti for many years, reporting on and researching the country both long before and after the earthquake. We each have spent countless hours in the camps and neighborhoods speaking with ordinary Haitians about their experiences coping with the disaster and its aftermath. We feel compelled to intervene collectively in this instance because, while speaking of her own personal experience, Ms. McClelland also implies that she is speaking up for female "journalists who put themselves in threatening situations all the time," women who have "chosen to be around trauma for a living," who she says "rarely talk about the impact."

In writing about a country filled with guns, "ugly chaos" and "gang-raping monsters who prowl the flimsy encampments," she paints Haiti as a heart-of-darkness dystopia, which serves only to highlight her own personal bravery for having gone there in the first place. She makes use of stereotypes about Haiti that would be better left in an earlier century: the savage men consumed by their own lust, the omnipresent violence and chaos, the danger encoded in a black republic's DNA.

Sadly, these damaging stereotypes about the country are not uncommon. But we were disturbed to find them articulated in Ms. McClelland's piece without larger context, especially considering her reputation for socially conscious reporting.

Ms. McClelland's Haiti is not the Haiti we know. Indeed, we have all lived in relative peace and safety there. This does not mean that we are strangers to rape and sexual violence. We can identify with the difficulty of unwanted sexual advances that women of all colors may face in Haiti. And in the United States. And everywhere.

Unfortunately, most Haitian women are not offered escapes from the possibility of violence in the camps in the form of passports and tickets home to another country. For the thousands of displaced women around Port-au-Prince, the threat of rape is tragically high. But the image of Haiti that Ms. McClelland paints only contributes to their continued marginalization. While we are glad that Ms. McClelland has

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achieved a sort of peace within, we would encourage her, next time, not to make Haiti a casualty of the process.

In our own writings, we have gone to great lengths to try to understand and address the issue of trauma, as well as sexual violence, with sensitivity. As women who know and love Haiti, we are deeply troubled by Ms. McClelland's approach.

Sincerely,

Lisa Armstrong, freelance reporter, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting grantee

Amelie Baron, freelance reporter, RFI and Radio France

Pooja Bhatia, journalist and lawyer

Edna Bonhomme, Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton University

Carla Bluntschli, Haiti activist

Natalie Carney, multimedia journalist, Feature Story News

Edwidge Danticat, writer

Alexis Erkert Depp, Haiti activist

Natasha Del Toro, video journalist, TIME

Isabeau Doucet, freelance journalist and producer, Al Jazeera, The Guardian,  
CSMonitor

Susana Ferreira, freelance journalist

Allyn Gaestel, freelance reporter, CNN, Los Angeles Times

Leah Gordon, artist and photographer

Michelle Karshan, Haiti activist and researcher

Kathie Klarreich, Knight International Journalism Fellow and author of Madame  
Dread: A Tale of Love, Vodou and Civil Strife in Haiti

Sasha Kramer, SOIL

Nicole Lee, Esq., President, TransAfrica Forum Inc.

Carmen Lopez, filmmaker and journalist

Melinda Miles, Founder and Director, Let Haiti Live

Eleanor Miller, freelance journalist

Arikia Millkan, Community Manager of Haiti Rewired

Carla Murphy, founding editor, Develop Haiti

Maura R. O'Connor, freelance foreign correspondent

Leah Nevada Page, economic development consultant

Claire Payton, Ph.D. Candidate, NYU, Haiti Memory Project

Nathalie Pierre, Ph.D. Candidate, NYU

Andrea Schmidt, Producer, Al Jazeera English



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Jeena Shah, LERN Fellow, Attorney at Bureau Des Avocats Internationaux, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti

Alice Smeets, photojournalist

Alice Speri, freelance journalist

Damien Cave, photographer, educator, curator, author of *Dancing on Fire*

Chelsea Stieber, Ph.D. Candidate, NYU

Ginger Thompson

Emily Troutman, freelance writer and photographer, AOL, AFP

Amy Wilentz

Marjorie Valbrun, contributing writer at the Root.com and blogger at Slate.com

Note: The views expressed in this letter represent those of individual authors and signatories and do not necessarily represent the opinions of their organizations.

The letter can be found here: *Atlantic Monthly*. 2011. "Female Journalists & Researchers Respond To Haiti PTSD Article." Jessica Coen. July 1 Filed to: OPEN LETTER H.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/07/how-to-talk-about-haitis-rape-epidemic/241379/>

and

<http://jezebel.com/5817381/female-journalists—researchers-respond-to-haiti-ptsd-article>

<sup>lxxv</sup> The first—and, putting the 36 women journalists aside, the only—voice of skepticism that came out in print was in a blog by Brendan O'Neill's of the UK's Telegraph entitled, "Packs of rapists haunt Haiti, reports the American press. So where is the evidence?" O'Neill lamented that:

If the earthquake wasn't bad enough, with its destruction of entire cities and towns and its claiming of 250,000 lives, now Haiti reportedly faces another trauma: rampant rape. Reports have appeared everywhere in recent days, from mainstream newspapers to outraged blogs, telling of the "armed men who roam the earthquake-ravaged city of Port-au-Prince" and who have their "pick of victims." In the post-quake tent-towns that Haitians have built, women and girls are "stalked by gang rapists." Across Haiti, "women are being subjected to horrific sexual violence" by "packs of men".

It sounds dreadful, the last thing Haitians need after everything they have suffered. But was it true? Did the earthquake really "generate new shockwaves of sexual violence", as the Los Angeles Times reports, causing "predatory" men (that p-word has appeared everywhere) to go out hunting for victims?

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It seems unlikely. These feverishly imperious reports about groups of local men raping women spring from a new Amnesty International report titled Aftershock: Women Speak Out Against Sexual Violence in Haiti's Camps. However, scour the report for statistical information about the new "shockwaves" of sexual violence and you will find precious little.. Amnesty's report consists largely of the individual testimonies of women who have been raped in Haiti since the earthquake, all of which make for distressing reading but which do not add up to evidence of a post-quake surge in predatory sexual violence. .... In those tent-towns, Haitian people have built homes, schools, community areas and something like a society – yet in the name of boosting its own political fortunes Amnesty has helped to spread an impression of these places as hotbeds of fear and depravity.

Brendan O'Neill, 2011. 'Packs of rapists haunt Haiti, reports the American press. So where is the evidence?' *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 February. [http://powerbase.info/index.php/Brendan\\_O'Neill](http://powerbase.info/index.php/Brendan_O'Neill)

<sup>lxxvi</sup> In a February 2013 interview in which I was the translator for a CHAN delegation from Canada (<http://canadahaitiaction.ca/>), Delva would up the number of members to 3,500 and the number killed in the earthquake to 2,150, something she claimed was determined within weeks of the earthquake despite published accounts to the contrary.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Fiacome. 2013. "Battling sexual violence in post-earthquake Haiti: Interview with Marie Eramithe Delva, co-founder of KOFAVIV (Commission of Women Victims for Victims)." February 5. <http://wozoayitiproject.com/stories/> (accessed March 5 2013)

<sup>lxxviii</sup> In desperation the women would appeal to foreign journalists and the United Nations Human Rights Committee (they wanted visas), see: United Nations Human Rights Committee, 112th Session, Geneva Switzerland. October 2014. "Report On Inadequate Efforts To Investigate And Prevent Threats And Violence Against The Women Human Rights Defenders At KOFAVIV In Response To The Second Periodic Report Of Haiti" Submitted by: International Women's Human Rights Clinic at the City University of New York (CUNY) Law School KOFAVIV MADRE. However, the story from sources close to the women was that it was in fact members of KOFAVIV who were angry that Delva and Appolon had not shared the spoils.

Aug-27-2013 23:42 "Haiti: Malya Villard Appolon's Home Attacked by Group of Armed Men." Letter by William Gomes. *Salem-News.com*

<sup>lxxix</sup> For the CARE International survey where we used Russ Bernard's 'Scaling-up Technique' estimated the incidence of rape see,

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See Schwartz, Timothy. 2013. "Report: Gender Survey CARE HAITI HEALTH SECTOR Life Saving Interventions for Women and Girl in Haiti Conducted in Communes of Leogane and Carrefour, Haiti." August 22.

See also: <http://timotuck.com/wp/index.php/category/haiti-reports/>

<http://timotuck.com/wp/index.php/2015/08/25/gender-in-haiti-review-of-the-literature/>

<sup>lxxx</sup> I want to make it clear that I am not against the aid that came. If we add up that many of the women had children, and if we add hunger, disease, the lack of economic opportunity, something intensified by the U.S. led international embargo; and then on the other side of the issue, if we note that with a visa came job, medical care, getting a visas for all your children and your spouse, how could anyone blame any woman who did lie? I certainly wouldn't. Indeed, when considering the costs—the families future and wellbeing—and not least of all the role the U.S. has played, a compassionate human being may insist she should lie.

And I am certainly not saying that all the NGOs staff and the Haitian government representatives and UN and USAID representatives are liars and cheaters. Although I have often been accused of being against aid, I'm for aid. And most of the UN, USAID, and NGO workers I know are good people. Most are people who really want to help and who are as shocked by the waste and corruption as I am. And that's a big part of the problem here. It's good they want to help. But it's hard to understand how intelligent and educated people become party to outright deception. For me it's a type of dishonesty to the donors when we don't give them solid facts and it's a type of violence they do to Haitian society when they portray Haitian men as rapists, or decent men and women, as keeping child slaves (i.e. *restavek*). It's a type of violence when they create a society of predators and victims. And there are long-term dividends to pay for doing that. Dividends like fear we saw in the earlier chapters that inhibited the aid when it was most needed. That was a direct result of the type of misrepresentation of Haiti, where they take a disaster and so far blow it out of proportion that no can help. Why do they feel they have to add rape to the equation? The first reason that comes to mind is, of course, money. And not necessarily in a bad way. If aid organizations are going to help, they need money. In the wake of the Haiti earthquake money they got, 2.7 billion dollars of it. The problem comes with what happened to most of that money. Most of it got squandered or embezzled.