



HAITI AND THE HEAVY HAND OF HISTORY: CONCERNING NATURAL AND UNNATURAL DISASTERS

Los Angeles Sentinel, 08-19-21, p.C1

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

THE HEAVY HAND OF HISTORY HAS FALLEN hard on Haiti once again. But this continuing series of devastating events are not simply natural disasters of earthquake and storm. Rather, it is the unnatural disasters imposed by the pathology and perversity of racist oppression and that particularly imposed on Haiti by the U.S., France, Canada and other European imperialist powers. And it is done, not only to rob the Haitian people of their material and human resources, but also to penalize, punish and oppress the Haitian people in the extreme for daring to achieve in history what no other enslaved people had done, defeated their enslavers and the enslavers' allies in battle, liberated themselves and built a republic. And it was especially unnerving for Whites since it was Africans who achieved this.

Moreover, they dared to aid others in Latin America in their freedom struggle, offering arms, monies, materials and soldiers. And thus, they in their struggle and assistance to others served and continue to serve as a model and mirror of African and human possibilities and an object of pathological hatred by the enemies of African and human freedom. Indeed, like W.E.B. DuBois' description of the hatred of Jack Johnson by the White supremacists, it was/is a sick and sordid hatred born of focus and fixation on what they see as an "unforgivable Blackness." Here in both cases, we are talking, not only of Blackness as color, but Black as both color and excellence. For Black excellence, whether in the boxing ring or on the battlefield or in the humanities or sciences is for the racists and White supremacists first pathologically unbelievable and then forced to accept it, socially unforgivable.

The devastating 7.2 earthquake which was followed by a tropical storm are clearly natural disasters that would have devastated even the most technologically advanced and independent society. But given Haiti's imposed poverty under the savage occupation and its internal weaknesses cultivated and kept in place by the occupiers, they are ill-equipped for a

quick and speedy recovery. They have been throughout history a resolute, resilient and resourceful people, but they have suffered so much for daring to be free, for having a condition and potential attractive to predators and parasites, and they will need us and all the allies possible in their struggle forward. And we must be the first and in the forefront in the ranks of those in active solidarity with them for a free, self-determining, self-reliant, and self-recovered Haiti.

Now, the world has turned its attention to Afghanistan, clearly another imperialist project of racial fantasy and racist force turned against the Afghan people. While not denying the importance of the events unfolding in Afghanistan, we as Africans and pan-Africanists, cannot turn our attention from Haiti. For we are identified with Haiti in our identity as African people, indebted to Haiti for its contribution to freedom in the world, and inseparably allied with the Haitian people in the African and human struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves and expand the realm of human freedom and flourishing in the world. This concept was embedded in the aims and aspirations of the Haitian Revolution and in every revolt, act of resistance and liberation movement in our history. And our task is to continue and realize this goal of human freedom and flourishing as a shared good, as normal and necessary as breath and blood flow.

There is a dual aspect of our activism in solidarity and support of the Haitian people. It is first to address the pressing need for humanitarian aid to deal with the great natural disaster they have suffered from earthquake and storm. But there is also an urgent need to end the occupation, intervention and ongoing oppression of the Haitian people, an unnatural condition which aggravates and exacerbates the severity of the disaster and their suffering. In terms of humanitarian aid, we must recognize the awesome extent of the devastation, thousands dead and injured, houses and buildings

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destroyed, roads blocked, water contaminated, and the storm hindering and problematizing assessment of damage and the delivery of greatly needed emergency relief. This requires contacting Haitian persons, groups and institutions for ways to contribute, volunteer and support, giving to charities they recommend or you deem worthy from research, and pressing the U.S. government, Canada, France and others occupying Haiti to speed up and expand relief efforts.

But we must also realize that these efforts are only temporary and ultimately inadequate for the Haitian people. Regardless of the aid given, it is still only aid; it does not speak to their need to end the occupation and intervention so that the Haitian people can enjoy the freedom they have fought so hard and valiantly for over the centuries. It means also support for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians in this country to be extended and secure from constant threat and uncertainty. It requires also our support and struggle for a just and inclusive immigration policy for Haitians at the border, in the country and those on their way.

Moreover, we must support reparations for Haiti, returning the \$21 billion it was forced to pay France for the racial offense of defeating it, breaking its enslaving hold on the necks and backs of the Haitian people. It is overdue time to return those monies so that Haiti can use it to build its physical and human infrastructure and develop the basis for a life of dignity, decency and ultimate flourishing for its people. The U.S. also owes reparations to Haiti for its invasions, slaughters, overthrowing its first democratically-elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and fostering criminal gangs and a cabal of corrupt and callous dictators for generations, not to mention seizure of its wealth and continuous resource robbery. It is this im-

position of oppression and the cultivation of chaos and corrupt dictatorial officials that prolongs Haiti's pain, forestalls its progress, and denies it the freedom and independence it won in 1804 and has not secured or truly enjoyed yet.

As we have said before, to build a just, good and democratic society in Haiti, it must be conceived, constructed, nurtured and sustained by the Haitian people, themselves. They must become and be self-conscious agents of their own lives and liberation. The Commission to Find A Haitian Solution has emphasized this in their collective efforts to plan and act together to bring about transformative change and return the country to its people. They realize that it is in division that they are easily defeated and dominated, but that a people, united and conscious of itself and its enemy, and who will not surrender even when considered conquered, cannot be defeated.

THE FANMI LAVALAS PARTY LED BY former Pres. Jean-Bertrand Aristide has also called for a united front of the Haitian people and progressive Haitian organizations to put an end to "repression, corruption, kidnapping and federations of gangs that are spreading terror" in the service of the regime and reign of criminals and crime in and out of government. It puts forth a vision of a united people who "will organize free and fair elections in order for democracy to bloom again in the country, for justice to spread, for people to have employment, housing, food, schools and safety in their communities." And they end with a call for unity in struggle. It is both a reaffirmation of strength in struggle and a promise of a shared victory. And the affirmation and promise of victory is this, "Alone we are weak. Together we are strong. All together we are the Flood."▲

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