

Texas executive fights to run for Haiti presidency

US citizen isn't eligible, panel says

By Ben Fox, Associated Press

Boston Globe

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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A wealthy US businessman whose bid to run for president of Haiti was rejected by electoral authorities pledged yesterday to fight for a spot on the ballot in his native country's first election since the February 2004 ouster of Jean- Bertrand Aristide.

Dumarsais Simeus, owner of one of the largest black-owned businesses in the United States, said he asked the Provisional Electoral Council to reverse its decision to strike his name from the list of presidential candidates in the Nov. 20 election and will do "everything possible," including filing a legal challenge if necessary, to participate in the race.

"This election, without us being allowed to participate as a presidential candidate, will have no legitimacy whatsoever," Simeus, the son of illiterate Haitian rice farmers, said at a news conference in the capital.

The electoral council late Friday issued a list of 32 approved presidential candidates -- a diverse group that includes former government officials from across the political spectrum and a leader of the rebellion that forced President Aristide out of office and into exile in South Africa.

Simeus, the 65-year-old owner of a Texas-based food services company, was rejected because he has US citizenship, said Rosemond Pradel, the council's secretary-general.

The businessman, who has lived outside his native country for more than 40 years, said he has always maintained links to Haiti and his citizenship should not be an issue.

"I was born in Haiti. I have Haitian nationality. This is not negotiable. Period."

Garry Lisade, an attorney for the businessman, said the electoral council misinterpreted Haitian election law, which requires that any objection to a candidacy be lodged within 72 hours of the Sept. 15 filing deadline. Simeus had already received confirmation of the "provisional acceptance" of his candidacy, the campaign said.

If the electoral council does not reverse its decision, Simeus said he would appeal to the Supreme Court.

Simeus, who has said he hopes to use his business skills to help the economy of the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, said he asked the council for an explanation of its decision but has not received a response. In any case, he said, he had no intention of abandoning his bid for the presidency.

Touch of Haiti

Artists plan a museum in Orlando to share their love of their native country.

Joy Wallace Dickinson

Sentinel Staff Writer

Orlando Sentinel

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Warm, colorful paintings lining cool gallery walls drew a crowd to a corner of downtown Orlando recently to help give shape to a dream: the creation of a Central Florida museum to foster Haitian art and culture.

The not-for-profit Haitian Museum of Art and Culture now operates in a downtown office, without continual public gallery space.

But its board and advisers envision "a vibrant and exciting educational attraction for the greater Orlando area," according to its statement of goals.

"It's an opportunity to showcase Haitian culture in the community," said Nadine Helm, a University of Central Florida archivist who is on the museum's advisory board. Orange County Commissioner Homer Hartage also is among the members.

For Frederic Guillaume of Orlando, who leads the organization, the museum represents an idea he has long held dear.

"First, I thought of opening a gallery," he said, but his vision extended further.

He wants to help younger Haitian-Americans understand their own roots and culture as well as counter misconceptions others in the United States have about his beloved country, he said.

Guillaume, 42, has lived elsewhere many years, but his heart remains in Haiti, where "ugly and weak politics" do not represent the "beauty and strength of our people," he said.

"I want to show the wholesome Haiti as she is, as we dream of her, as we hope she will be. And no one is better at portraying this than those talented artists who paint their imaginations, their hopes and dreams."

The event on Sept. 17 displayed about 70 paintings from artists both in Central Florida and in Haiti. Many were for sale at a silent auction to raise money for the museum.

Poet Silianise Moise, who recently moved from Orlando to Gainesville to pursue studies at the University of Florida, also was on hand to sign copies of her work.

Artist Abed Gelin, a board member of the museum, offered a painting demonstration, the band Friendz entertained, and Chef Jean-Louis supplied island-flavored culinary treats.

Minimum bids for most paintings ranged from a low of \$40 to a high of \$50,000 for Patrick Noze's painting "Refugees."

After the event, museum manager Cassandra Pascal said organizers had achieved their main goal of raising awareness about the museum. "The primary thing is for people to know who we are."

For decades, Haitians have come to the United States in waves reflecting the political and social unrest in their country, about 700 miles southeast of Florida.

More than a third, or at least 268,000, of the nation's Haitian immigrants live in Florida, according to the 2000 census. Many thousands are in Central Florida

They come from a country that occupies the western third of the island Hispaniola, where Columbus landed in 1492. It lies between Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. The Dominican Republic occupies the rest of the island.

The name Haiti means mountainous in the language of the native people on the island at the time of European settlement.

A rebellion in 1804 made Haiti the second republic -- after the United States -- in the Americas and the first black republic in the world, but the country has been beset by civil wars and decades of repressive leadership.

Haitian histories point to a resilient people, and their hardships haven't been all political: During last year's hurricane season, more than 3,000 people died in Haiti in floods and mudslides caused by Hurricane Jeanne.

For Guillaume, spreading knowledge of the island's rich culture in the arts is one way that he and others can keep the dream of a better homeland alive.

"Every dawn brings hopes of a new beginning," he says. His hope is that an increased appreciation for what is good and beautiful in Haiti can help bring his homeland back to an old nickname, the Pearl of the Islands.

Painting and sculpture by Haitian artists have long been sought by collectors and museums, especially after the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince began in the 1940s to publicize the work of island artists.

Artistic activity on the island goes back far beyond the 20th century, even to the pre-Columbian era, according to concise history of Haitian art at discoverhaiti.com.

The importance of painting in his life goes far beyond amusement or business, said Gerard Moise of Orlando, who had several works on display at the recent art showcase.

"The more I'm painting," he said, "the more I am spiritual. If I'm not painting, life is not nothing to me. After God, is my painting."

Autumn Cruz of the Sentinel staff contributed to this report. Joy Wallace Dickinson can be reached at jdickinson@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-6082.

American businessman fights to get on ballot
Miami Herald
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Haiti's electoral council winnowed the list of 54 people who had registered to run for president, and approved only 32 candidates.

It excluded Dumarsais Simeus, the owner of a Texas-based food services company, saying he can't run because he has U.S. citizenship.

Those who will be allowed to run include former President René Préval, a one-time close ally of ousted former President Jean Bertrand Aristide; Prime Minister Marc Bazin, who is running as a candidate of a moderate faction of Aristide's Lavalas Family party; and former President Leslie Manigat.

Other major candidates include Guy Philippe, a leader of the rebellion that forced Aristide from power; and Charles Henry Baker, a wealthy businessman and prominent member of Haiti's business establishment.

Simeus said he will do "everything possible," including filing a legal challenge, to overturn the decision to strike his name from the list of presidential candidates in the Nov. 20 election.

The council, which rejected 22 presidential candidates, also excluded Louis Gerald Gilles, a former senator and prominent moderate figure of Aristide's party.

Electoral limbo in Haiti
Rickey Singh
Jamaica Observer
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Last weekend, as representatives of donor countries, international financial institutions and the United Nations were focused at a meeting in New York on Haiti's deep political problems and its challenges for socio-economic development, new fears emerged over likely further continuing delays in holding elections and attempts to undermine the electoral process.

Rickey Singh

With promised local government elections having already been postponed, the latest indication out of Port-au-Prince is that the presidential and legislative elections, rescheduled for November 20, may also be delayed amid growing fears of unpreparedness, political violence and continuing crippled governance.

What's constant is the seeming ineptitude of the United States-created interim administration and a Provisional Electoral Council that mirrors the political infightings and self-serving agendas of those in authority.

This assessment is based on media, human rights and diplomatic sources, in and out of Haiti; reports from non-government organisations and statements of officials associated with the interim regime as well as the United Nations.

In the current scenario, it is interesting to find, for instance, the prime minister of Canada, Paul Martin, waving a rebuking finger during the meeting at UN headquarters to CARICOM for its disengagement from the interim government in Port-au-Prince.

Like the George W Bush administration, Martin's government expediently ingores how the USA, Canada and France became involved in rushing troops to Haiti to coincide with the ousting of Aristide from power, having earlier torpedoed CARICOM's initiative ahead of the fall of the Aristide presidency.

Alexandre does not appear to have been affected by the angry warning that came from justice minister Henri Dorlean, that it was 'unacceptable for judges and prosecutors to use their powers to keep people in jail in violation of the law'

Of course, it may be easy for some to accuse the Bush administration of poor governance in Haiti, once it got rid of the Aristide presidency by the coup of February 29, 2004.

The Bush administration cannot escape blame. But there should be no excusing of the very Haitians whom Washington anointed and helped to put in place with a promise of clean and democratic governance which, reportedly, did not exist under Aristide's second-chance administration.

High among such Haitians would be interim president Boniface Alexandre (remember him?). He was chief justice under the Aristide presidency.

He had shared a press conference, the day after the ousting of Aristide, with then Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, now a prisoner awaiting trial after near death in jail. Neptune is, controversially, charged with murder.

What role is Alexandre really playing to ensure some semblance of fairness and justice and quality under the temporary administration headed by America's choice for prime minister, Gerard Latortue?

Is Alexandre showing any meaningful interest, for instance, in the politics of revenge that have resulted in known armed political gangsters being given preferential treatment by the justice system while leading Aristide loyalists, among them ex-Prime Minister Neptune, imprisoned priest and presidential aspirant, Gerard Jean-Juste, continue to suffer?

Neither Alexandre nor Latortue, who has done much harm to himself by some of his own public utterances, appears to have been affected by the angry warning that came from justice minister Henri Dorlean, as published last month, that it was "unacceptable for judges and prosecutors to use their powers to keep people in jail in violation of the law".

Up to a few weeks ago, according to the justice minister, who is a former human rights advocate, approximately 95 per cent of an estimated 1,300 prisoners at the national penitentiary were languishing in jail for months without being charged or placed before the courts.

Questions are also being asked as to why those who were charged with murder but known for their roles in violent opposition to the Aristide administration, such as Louis-Jodel Chamblain, could be released from prison, pending trial, yet ex-Prime Minister Neptune and leading activists of Aristide's Lavalas party remain incarcerated?

Latortue also needs to explain where he stands on suggestions to build a proposed monument dedicated to "freedom fighters" (who are they?) and the failure to honour assurances, given also to the UN secretary-general, for the release from prison of Neptune.

Further, frustrated Haitians, not known to be supporters of Lavalas, have been asking, amid all the reported incompetence and divisions within the Electoral Council, what initiatives have President Alexandre and Prime Minister Latortue personally advanced to improve the functioning of that body.

For instance, the Electoral Council claims to have registered some 2.2 million potential voters, or about 50 per cent of those eligible to cast their ballots. The reality is, according to reports from Port-au-Prince, that the great majority of them are yet to receive the photo ID that will confirm their registration.

If elections go ahead under existing arrangements then, as noted by human rights representatives monitoring the situation, it is unlikely that there could be more than one million voters at the polls.

That would be just one-fourth of the estimated four million Haitians eligible to vote. Even so, electoral fraud on a massive scale is feared.

The problem gets worse when it is realised that although about 30 candidates would have registered by closing date September 15, as presidential hopefuls, the Electoral Council is yet to rule on the validity of their credentials.

There is no secret about the Council's own bias against Aristide's Lavalas party, including even dissident elements who have now surprisingly identified themselves with the presidential aspirations of a former short-lived prime minister, Marc Bazin.

While hastily registering known hateful anti-Aristide elements, among them a 65-year old Haitian-born American businessman in Texas, Dumarsais Simeus, who has lived outside of Haiti for some 44 years, technicalities have been raised against for example, the Aristide and Lavalas-backed Catholic priest, Jean-Juste.

As Prime Minister Latortue was meeting at United Nations headquarters with secretary-general Kofi Annan, officials of the UN and donor governments were reflecting some of the fears of Haitian electoral and human rights representatives over the conduct of free and fair elections under existing arrangements.

However, do not look out for any statement of significance soon, or until after the on-again, off-again elections take place- on November 20 or whenever -from the Caribbean Community, of which Haiti's membership is now more of academic interest.

As it was for months after gaining provisional membership at CARICOM's Montego Bay summit in July 1997 under then President Rene Preval, Haiti remained, up to the time of the fall of the Aristide administration, largely ill-prepared to access the community's partnership arrangements.

Now is not the time to apportion blame for this state of affairs. It is, nevertheless, a reminder for new initiatives to get Haiti as a functioning member of CARICOM, once the Haitian people are allowed to freely and fairly choose a new parliament and president.

**Justice Skewed in Haiti By JUDITH SCHERR Special to the Planet
Berkeley Daily Planet
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When former Oakland resident, now Haiti-based filmmaker Kevin Pina and Haitian journalist Jean Ristil Jean-Baptiste were arrested Sept. 9 in Port-au-Prince while covering a police search of the home of a political prisoner/possible presidential candidate, the wheels of justice ground forward. That's rare in Haiti these days.

Freeing Pina and Ristil took action from Rep. Barbara Lee, e-mails from across the U.S. to Haiti's justice minister, condemnation from a non-neutral Port-au-Prince press corps and pressure from U.S. Embassy officials.

Victims of Haitian police and U.N. military violence do not have access to such clout; neither do the some 1,000 political prisoners incarcerated mostly without charges and the kids stuffed into the children's jail.

Pina, whose frequent reports on Haiti can be heard on KPFA's Flashpoints, got a tip Sept. 9 that police were searching the home of Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste; Associated Press stringer Ristil also got the tip; both were at the St. Claire Church rectory to report on the search. Pina went inside.

The police search of the priest's living quarters was a particularly newsworthy event. Jean-Juste had been jailed since July 21 without charges, incarcerated after interim government officials accused him of murder. Around the time of the search, Lavalas leaders—Lavalas is the political party of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, forced out of Haiti's presidency by U.S. officials Feb. 29, 2004—were calling on the jailed cleric to accept the party's nomination for president. (As it turned out, the Haitian government squelched the candidacy, saying Jean-Juste had to be present at the election office to submit his name.)

As Pina tells it, the judge overseeing the search told police to confiscate the journalist's camera. Pina held onto the camera and the judge ordered his arrest on suspicion of "disrespecting a magistrate." Ristil alerted Pina's friends of the arrest via cell phone, then was also taken into custody.

Along with other journalists, a Bay Area human rights delegation and Pina's friends, I got to the jail Friday night a couple of hours after the arrest. Pina wore the detention, which he said was unjust, as a badge of honor, even crooning "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See" and vociferously criticizing guards for their lack of nametags.

Ristil was more shaken by the incarceration. "I was doing my job," he said through tears.

The journalists were kept through the weekend, though after a visit from U.S. embassy folks, were moved to a "V.I.P." cell, which had beds, color T.V., and access to a cell phone. They shared the cell with police officers accused of murder.

Monday, the judge, who showed up at 1 p.m. for the 11 a.m. hearing, spent the afternoon arguing against the release, but finally assented. Pina and Ristil were represented by Mario Joseph, attorney for many of the country's high-profile political prisoners; Guy Delva, a Reuters reporter who heads the

Haitian Journalist Association and Alfred de Montesquiou, representing the Associated Press, which employs Ristil, attended the hearing to defend press freedom. Other press and the public were excluded.

The pair walked free around 5:30 p.m. Justice had been slow, unfair jail time had been served, but in the end, justice won the day.

That was the first and last time I saw signs of justice during my two-week stay in Haiti.

Drive around Port-au-Prince and injustice jolts you like a Caribbean lightning storm. Masked police with guns appear from time to time along heavily trafficked corridors, peering into cars—looking for whom? Tanks carrying rifle-ready U.N. soldiers rumble through the narrow streets as if to claim them as their own.

The streets of Bel Air, a shantytown whose avenues once bustled with vendors selling anything they could to eke out their hard-scrabble lives, now echo an eerie quiet, save for the lumbering U.N. tanks. “People are moving out of Bel Air,” one man told me, pointing to a neighbor’s vacant home. “And the market women have gone to Petionville,” a well-heeled suburb above Port-au-Prince.

You can’t blame them—who would want to live and work under foreign occupation? But most people in Bel Air have nowhere to go.

One afternoon I was in Bel Air with radio journalist Hervé Aubin of Radio Indigène and two Bay Area human rights workers, Ben Terrall of San Francisco and Sr. Stella Goodpasture of Oakland. A group of young men, seeing us speak with a neighborhood leader, called us over and asked for help. U.N. troops had opened fire during a demonstration earlier that day. No one was reported killed or wounded, but six of their friends had been arrested.

The demonstration was called to support Fr. Jean-Juste’s candidacy for president. Demonstrators from Bel Air planned to meet up with demonstrators from Cité Soleil, the capital’s largest shantytown. They would march together to the elections office, where the candidature papers would be submitted.

But in a show of force that angered the protesters, the U.N. with its guns and tanks prevented the separate demonstrations from merging. “I have only 150 soldiers with me,” Capt. Leonidas Carneiro, who commands the Brazilian troops in Bel Air, would say later. “One hundred fifty is not enough.”

The young men feared the worst for their arrested friends, as detainees are often beaten and sometimes found in the morgue. Apparently the men thought we, as foreigners and press, might be able to prevent such an eventuality.

Over at the Fort National lock-up, we were not permitted to see the prisoners, but we did have an opportunity to chat with Capt. Carneiro.

We explained the fears of the detainees’ friends. “You know that the police beat and even kill prisoners, don’t you?” I asked. “Yes,” he answered, affirming press reports and interviews. The captain

underscored, however, that police under his command are well-trained and law-abiding. U.N. Security Council's Resolution 1608 of June 22 placed the Haitian National Police under U.N. control.

Carneiro said his officers opened fire only after a demonstrator was sighted with a pistol and his soldiers were pelted with stones. They arrested "the guys with stones in their hands," Carneiro said, and also the young person thought to have had the pistol whom they found hiding under a bed.

The next day Bel Air residents reported seven new arrests there, and said five of the six arrested the day before at the demonstration had been freed. The one who continued to be detained, a 15-year-old, was sent to the children's prison. If his case is treated like that of other children I saw in that jail, he is likely remain there a long time.

The children's jail, which I had visited a few days earlier with Sr. Stella Goodpasture, is located just behind the holding cell where Pina and Ristil were incarcerated. It is probably the saddest place I've ever seen.

Four small cells sit in a row, each about 8 by 10 feet, just big enough to fit three bunk beds in a U-shape. The cells are dark, with light penetrating only through the barred cell door. There are 16 boys crowded in each cell; at least three of the 64 children are as young as 10.

I spoke to each of the boys in the first cell. One 16-year-old had been in jail since July 5, 2004, picked up in a police "operation." This is what they call a police sweep of the poor pro-Aristide areas. Like 80 percent of those I spoke to, he said he had never been brought before a judge to be arraigned, as the Haitian constitution requires.

Another boy, 17, had been incarcerated since July 21, 2004, accused of being a "bandit." He had not seen a judge. Another 17-year-old has been in jail since Sept. 24, 2004. He had been in a fight during which he injured someone with a rock. "The only one to help me to be released is God," he said.

A 15-year-old from Bel Air, was picked up May 29, 2004 for smoking marijuana; A 14-year-old had been incarcerated since May 12, 2004, accused of gang affiliation. Another 14-year-old, incarcerated since Dec. 5, 2004, was picked up in a police sweep.

One guard told me many were incarcerated for "preventive detention." Several of the boys who had hearings said the judge asked for large sums of money for their freedom—as much as \$5,000. None complained of poor treatment—the guards walked out of earshot during the interviews—but several said police had beaten them at the time of arrest. They get no medical attention, although the Red Cross has been there to see them. They get out of their cells for a shower every day and have a couple of hours "recreation" in a small yard—they can use a toilet when they shower or recreate and have a common bucket they use at other times. None have legal representation.

If there's a lesson in all this, it may be that justice in Haiti under this unelected government is distributed in proportion to the pressure of eyes and e-mails. Were it not so, the kids in the children's jail, Jean-Juste and the 1,000 other political prisoners, the Lavalas adherents in hiding within and outside the country, would be as free as Pina and Ristil, who, it should be noted, watch their backs at all times.

Haiti: Women stir up soccer field rehab

Although it is unusual in Haitian culture for women to confront authority, unemployment and underemployment have spurred some to resort to extraordinary measures.

USAID

22 September 2005

In a country where more than two-thirds of the labor force is not formally employed, the response to job opportunities is overwhelming and many workers are turned away. USAID sponsored a project to rehabilitate a soccer field in Petit Goâve to provide a community space and temporary employment for the neighborhood of Ti-Guinen. The field had been a prime gathering place for young people, but it had fallen into disrepair. Local youths had attempted to repair the fencing with palm fronds, but that wasn't enough. A drainage ditch needed to be rehabilitated and the playing surface leveled and covered. Around 50 jobs were available, and rotation would allow 105 people overall to work at the site.

After the work began, 15 women complained to project coordinators that jobs were only being given to men. At a subsequent oversight committee meeting, 70 women made their case and successfully secured six positions to be rotated among eight women. They would be responsible for supplying water to the project site, specifically for the masons to mix concrete for the drainage ditch. This was no small task since the water needed to be carried in buckets to the site from a central water kiosk. The committee agreed with the women that the jobs should go to Ti-Guinen's most impoverished. Of the eight women employed, six were single mothers and the sole wage-earners of their families, and all were in dire need. This USAID project has allowed women a singular opportunity to make their voices heard and increase economic opportunities in their community.

Pitiless world of the slave children
September 25, 2005
The Age, Australia

Haitian children are regularly sold as slaves in the Dominican Republic, where they are used as labourers, domestic servants or prostitutes.

Photo: The New York Times

The Dominican Republic is accused of turning a blind eye to the thriving trade in youngsters, which sees Haitian children sold as cheap labourers and prostitutes for little more than \$120. Gary Younge in Santo Domingo reports.

ON MARKET day in Dajabon, a bustling Dominican town on the Haitian border, you can pick up many bargains if you know where to look. You can haggle the price of a live chicken down to 40 pesos (\$1.70); wrestle 4.5 kilograms of macaroni for 60 to 50 pesos (\$2.12-\$2.55); and, with some discreet inquiries, buy a Haitian child for the equivalent of \$128.

"You just ask around town," says Hilda Pe-a, who monitors border crossings for the Jesuit Refugee Service. "People know who the scouts are. You just tell them what kind of child you are looking for and they can bring across whatever it is that you want."

There is a thriving trade in Haitian children in the Dominican Republic, where they are mostly used for domestic service, agricultural work or prostitution. Eight-year-old Jesus Josef was one of them. Numbed by a mixture of trauma and shyness, this small boy with huge eyes cannot recall how he left his three brothers and mother in Haiti and ended up doing domestic work for a Dominican family in Barahona, 190 kilometres from the capital, Santo Domingo.

Jesus sits quietly as Father Pedro Ruquoy, who runs a refuge near Barahona, tells how the boy escaped from the family and ran away to a local hospice. When he arrived, his neck was twisted from carrying heavy loads and the marks on his torso suggested ill-treatment. The Dominican family found out where he was and came to the hospice demanding either his return or 10,000 pesos (\$427) for the loss. "They used him as a slave," says Ruquoy. "And they tortured him."

Nobody knows quite how many Haitian children like Jesus there are in the Dominican Republic. A UNICEF report in 2002 put the figure at about 2500, although some non-government organisations think it might be twice that. Most boys under 12 end up begging or shoe shining and giving their proceeds to gang leaders; most girls of that age are used as domestic servants. Older boys are taken to work in construction or agriculture; teenage girls often end up in prostitution.

Tensions have long existed between the two countries that share the island of Hispaniola. In May and again last month, the Dominican Republic summarily deported thousands of Haitians, many of whom had the right to stay. A former Haitian consul to the republic, Edwin Paraison, says the situation has not been this bad since former Dominican military leader Rafael Trujillo massacred 20,000 Haitian sugar cane workers in 1937.

"This is the first time regular people are trying to run Haitians out of the country," he says. "There is an organised campaign to reject Haitian presence."

But even as Haitians are reviled, they are also needed for cheap labour. The manner in which the children arrive varies. Some are kidnapped, but most often their parents not only know but actually pay "busones" or scouts to ensure their safe passage in the hope that they will have a better life.

"Half of all Haitians struggle to eat even once a day," says Helen Spraos, Christian Aid's Haiti representative. "It doesn't take much to push people over the brink. If the rains fail or someone falls ill, they have to sell what little they have (perhaps a pig or a goat) to buy medicines. Eventually they have to sell their land. Once they reach rock bottom, the one way they can provide for their children is by sending them to live in the cities or in the Dominican Republic. There, at least, they may be fed and have some prospects for making a living."

Such stories are familiar in the narrow alleyways of Cristo Rey, an area of Santo Domingo. Nine-year-old Louseny's mother died when she was a baby and she was raised by her grandmother in central Haiti. Last month, her grandmother paid her "aunt" to bring her over the border and leave her with people Louseny did not know.

"In most cases, the Haitian family is told that the child will go to someone who will help raise the child," says Father Jose Nu-ez, the director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Santo Domingo. "They are told they will get an education and have a better chance. But this actually happens very, very rarely. In most cases, they are verbally or physically abused and mistreated."

Getting them over the border is the easy part. According to the UN Children's Fund, about a third of trafficked children come through the mountains; the rest go through official border checkpoints. On market day in Dajabon, the only papers you need to get across the bridge that links the two countries are peso notes to bribe the border guards. Those who are turned back simply wade across the Massacre river.

"The scouts are paid around 600 pesos, half of which goes to the scout and half of which is paid to the immigration authorities as a bribe," says Angelica Lopez, the Jesuit Refugee Service director in Dajabon. "The Dominican state and the military are completely complicit in the trafficking." There is a law against trafficking in the Dominican Republic, but it is rarely enforced and the authorities remain in denial. "There is no trafficking," says Juan Casilla, the state prosecutor for Dajabon. "I have never had one case of trafficking lodged with my office."

Ruquoy says the sugar companies are also complicit, paying Haitian traffickers about \$62 for each worker.

Over at the sugar fields near Barahona, the smell of burning cane stems and the sound of slashing machetes suggest a scene from another century. Hundreds of men, their ragged clothes held together by sweat and grime, hack away at smouldering stems, which are easier to cut when burned. From 6am until 6pm they are there, swinging, yanking, slicing and burning for about \$2.35 a day. Ask any of them and they will tell you they are 18. Look and you will see that about one in eight could not possibly be older than 16.

Jesus Nord, 15, used to be one of them. Two years ago, he paid a Haitian scout to smuggle him over the border then went to work in the fields for a year. After being cheated of his earnings and physically abused, he left. "I was never there when they weighed the sugar so they would give me less than they owed," he says.

The trafficking of Haitian children represents the bottom rung of a migratory ladder through the Americas that sees Dominicans striving to get to Puerto Rico, and Puerto Ricans moving to the US. "The market for cheap labour keeps people moving," says Nu-ez. "Since so many other countries have closed their doors to Haitians, the only chance they have is to go to the country that is slightly less poor than Haiti and the easiest to get to. The economy could not function without them. But it takes a terrible toll on the individuals."

OAS Chief Makes First Visit to Canada

By Associated Press

Newsday

September 23, 2005

OTTAWA -- The secretary-general of the Organization of American States made his first official visit to Canada on Friday, meeting with senior officials to discuss ways to strengthen democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

Jose Miguel Insulza, elected in May to lead the 34-nation organization, met with Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew and other Canadian officials. The upcoming elections in Haiti and the peace process in Colombia were on the agenda.

The 62-year-old Insulza, a former Chilean interior minister, also discussed preparations for the next OAS conference on international law, to be held in Ottawa in October to mark the 15th anniversary of Canada's entry into the organization.

Both men said Hurricane Rita was of grave concern to the region, and Insulza said the OAS must find "some collective way" to better prepare for natural disasters, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America.

He noted that last year hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne devastated the city of Gonaives, in Haiti, and the island of Grenada, both OAS members.

Long Road to Recovery for Storm Survivors in Haiti

Sept. 22 2005

Press Release - Care USA

Harold Doan and Assoc.

For many survivors of Tropical Storm Jeanne in the coastal Haitian city of Gonaives, just as for survivors of Hurricane Katrina on the U.S Gulf Coast, there is mixed progress to report. In both cases, the most affected are vulnerable people who had very few resources to begin with.

One year after Jeanne struck Haiti's third largest city, killing more than 2,000 people in floods and mudslides, residents have seen some significant improvements in their daily lives.

Many survivors now have improved shelter and more consistent access to health education programs on vaccination, sanitation and disease prevention. CARE has also provided paid work to nearly 25,000 people, who were employed in removing mud and debris from the city, improving the health and sanitary environment while injecting much-needed cash into the local economy.

CARE has helped to rehabilitate the existing network of water systems, which serves more than 100,000 people, and is providing access to water to an additional 50, 000 residents. Another 50,000 people in rural areas have received corn, bean and sorghum seeds to plant, while thousands of students are back in school thanks to repairs completed by CARE, its partners and Haiti's Ministry of Education.

"We and other humanitarian organizations have been able to help communities in Gonaives in critical ways, but there are still plenty of obstacles to long-term rebuilding and recovery," says Abby Maxman, CARE Country Director for Haiti,

Many storm survivors have yet to secure sustainable means to earn a living, and continue to struggle with the trauma of the storm and loss of family members. Economic opportunities are extremely scarce in Haiti. Soil runoff and pollution have ruined the country's fishing industry and more than half the population lives on under \$1 a day.

It will take significant political will to change the circumstances that led to this disaster in Haiti — primarily severe environmental degradation and an absence of government services including a complete lack of waste management. Haiti has lost over 90 percent of its forest cover since the 1950's. Sources of fuel are so few that seventy percent of Haitian families are forced to cook with charcoal, which is made by burning trees. The lack of vegetation and topsoil make it easy for people and houses to be swept away by floods and landslides. Waste management is especially critical in overcrowded slums and other areas that have little infrastructure in the first place

Maxman says enabling Haiti to fulfill its potential will require a serious and sustained commitment that fosters economic and environmental recovery the rule of law and good governance.

Haitians are hoping local, legislative, and presidential elections scheduled for November and December will help bring about an end to the political instability the country has suffered over the last

15 years. International donors are looking to the elections as a benchmark in Haiti's progress towards democracy and economic development.

"It makes good sense for the U.S. and the international community to invest in Haiti on a large scale over the long term, instead of jumping in and out when there's a disaster," says Maxman. "We need to follow up on pledges for Haiti's development. Everyone would benefit from a more stable, economically viable Haiti."

Haiti must hold legitimate elections to rejoin Caricom

AP

Jamaica Observer

Friday, September 23, 2005

CARRINGTON... without an acceptable election, relations with Caricom would be difficult
GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) - Haiti is not likely to be welcomed back into the 15-nation Caribbean Community unless the country holds free and fair elections later this year, the bloc's secretary general said yesterday.

Edwin Carrington said several Caribbean leaders conveyed that message to Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin during a meeting on the sidelines of last week's UN General Assembly.

MARTIN... says Caricom may have isolated the violence-torn country for too long
Martin, whose government has sent about 100 peacekeepers to help stabilise Haiti, had voiced concern that the regional bloc known as Caricom may have isolated the violence-torn country for too long since a February 2004 revolt toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Carrington said.

But the leaders insisted that restoring ties could happen only if Haiti takes steps to ensure November 20 presidential and legislative elections are legitimate, including improving voter registration and making the Electoral Council more efficient, Carrington said.

"Without an acceptable election, relations with Caricom would be difficult," Carrington said Caribbean leaders told Martin during the meeting, which was also attended by Haiti's Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue. The leaders added that Haiti's Electoral Council "does not seem to be getting its act together," Carrington said, without elaborating.

The Caribbean Community suspended Haiti shortly after the revolt that ousted Aristide, the country's first democratically elected leader. The bloc has refused to recognise Haiti's US-backed interim government, saying it was unconstitutionally installed.

Haiti's elections have been postponed several times because of persistent logistical snags and crippling violence blamed on well-armed street gangs bent on destabilising the country. Voter registration has reached 2.3 million, or about half of those eligible.

Carrington said Martin told the leaders he "felt that Caricom might have stayed out of the Haiti situation... for too long".

"But he did not try to push us too hard to re-engage with Haiti," Carrington said.

The meeting was attended by Interim Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, Guyana President Bharrat Jagdeo Grenada Prime Minister Keith Mitchell, St Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and St Kitts Prime Minister Denzil Douglas, Carrington said.

Haiti joined the Caribbean Community as a full member in 2002, becoming the bloc's most populous member with 8 million people.

Judge rules former Haiti premier should stand trial

AP

Jamaica Observer

Thursday, September 22, 2005

NEPTUNE ... UN officials and US lawmakers have called for his release

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - An investigative judge has decided there is enough evidence to try a jailed former prime minister in the massacre of more than 40 political opponents during the rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

Investigative Judge Cluny P Jules decided that former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and 29 others should stand trial for the February 2004 massacre in the western town of St Marc, said prosecutor Leslie Jules.

The prosecutor said he received the indictments Friday. The Justice Ministry will make the final decision on whether to order the trials, he said.

Neptune is one of dozens of Aristide loyalists who have been held without trial - or in some cases, without charge - for more than a year. The former prime minister has been jailed since July 2004.

Former Interior Minister Jocelerme Privert, who has also been jailed for more than a year, was also indicted, according to the indictment. The judge also decided there was not enough evidence to try 36 others, including Aristide.

UN officials and US lawmakers have called for Neptune's release, criticising his prolonged detention without trial. The former prime minister, who has denied involvement in the massacre, staged a hunger strike for several weeks earlier this year to protest his detention.

The indictment said that Neptune had been in constant contact with the alleged leaders of the massacre. A list of calls from Neptune's cell phone showed that he had spoken for at least 350 minutes with the alleged perpetrators of the killings from February 7 to 13, when the killings were either being organised or taking place at St Marc.

Neptune's defense attorney, Mario Joseph, declined to comment, saying he had not seen the indictment.

Neptune's case became a rallying point for Aristide backers who accused the US-backed interim government of persecuting the ousted president's supporters. Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has insisted judicial authorities are acting independently to bring former Aristide officials to justice for abuses and corruption.

Nurse leads mission to Haiti
By Quad-City Times Newspaper
Sunday, September 25, 2005

For the past 19 years, registered nurse Deb Stockdale has used her nursing skills and compassion to provide quality care to patients at Genesis Medical Center.

Now she is taking her experience on the road to lead a medical mission from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church to the mountaintop village of Bon A Dos, Haiti. The team will conduct a "bush clinic" in the village in November.

"Due to the cost, medical care is usually not sought until the situation is serious, even things we consider to be mild conditions," Stockdale said. "People will walk for two to three days to be seen, so we see as many people as we can from sunup to sundown."

Team members are from Iowa, Illinois and Texas, including a physician, pharmacist, five nurses and three others. The mission is being coordinated through Harvest International.

The group is funding their own trip and taking medications and other supplies. They are asking the public to donate these items:

- n Acetaminophen (Tylenol), adult and children's.
- n Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), adult and children's.
- n Tums (generic).
- n Cimetidine (Tagamet), Ranitidine (Zantac) or Famotidine (Pepcid).
- n Multivitamins, adult and children's.
- n Infant vitamins.
- n Prenatal vitamins.
- n Ferrous sulfate (iron).
- n Powdered soy formula, no iron.
- n Powdered Pedialyte or equivalent.
- n Hydrocortisone cream.
- n Medicine measuring devices for children's liquid medicine.

Anyone interested in making a donation may call Stockdale at (563) 386-0225. Those donating may leave a message or take donations to Genesis Medical Center-West Campus, nursing conference room on the fourth floor, 1401 W. Central Park Ave., Davenport. Look for a box marked "Haiti" for donations. Feel free to buy generic, as it is less expensive.

Haiti town trying to recover after floods

By ALFRED DE MONTESQUIOU

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Monday, September 19, 2005

GONAIVES, Haiti -- A year after catastrophic floods unleashed by a tropical storm swallowed this gritty city in Haiti's barren northwest, residents are still struggling to recover from one of the impoverished country's worst natural disasters.

Tropical Storm Jeanne brushed a corner of Haiti's heavily deforested Artibonite region last Sept. 18, causing floods that killed 1,900 people and left 900 others missing in Gonaives, the third largest city.

About 200,000 of the city's 250,000 residents were left homeless and a large international humanitarian effort to bring food and medical aid to survivors was hampered for days by gangsters and looting.

Life has improved little since.

A huge lake sits where fields of scrubland once lay on the city's outskirts, sewers overflow with putrid, black sludge and thousands of people cram into a makeshift shantytown that sprang up to house survivors.

Jeanne's devastation was reminiscent of the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina along the U.S. Gulf Coast, but Haiti's smothering poverty has prevented many in Gonaives from learning of the disaster.

"I never heard about it," said Rosy-Claire Zepherin, who lost all her meager possessions during the floods. "Jeanne took all I had, my job, my home. Now I beg for food at the market."

Zepherin, 55, stood outside the tiny, wood-and-tin hut she shares with her five children and four grandchildren. Built with the wreckage from her destroyed home, Zepherin's shack is part of a new slum dubbed "Cite Jeanne" by its inhabitants, French for City of Jeanne.

The U.N. World Food Program had been supplying beans, flour, oil, rice and high-protein biscuits to 160,000 Gonaives residents each day but ended distribution in March, deeming the emergency mission completed.

Stagnant pools of water still dot the makeshift community, the remnants of old salt fields that were swept away by the floods, depriving the area of a key source of income.

Now, residents like Zepherin who once earned a living from the salt fields walk an hour to the market along rutted, muddy alleys to beg vendors for their rotten vegetables.

"At the beginning, charities gave us food, but now we're all alone," Zepherin said, a shy smile spread across her deeply lined face.

Anne Poulsen, spokeswoman for the World Food Program in Haiti, said the agency was focusing on long-term aid projects, and noted it was providing one meal a day to some 850,000 Haitians, or about 10 percent of the population, mainly through clinics and schools.

But that food doesn't reach Cite Jeanne, where there are no clinics and parents can't afford to send their children to school.

Many children in the slum spend their days playing amid mounds of trash and puddles of fetid water, their bellies distended and their hair reddish from severe malnutrition.

Other aid sent after the floods was slowed by gangs who blocked relief convoys in demand for payment or unscrupulous customs agents who wanted bribes to let goods through to the city, a five hours' drive north of the capital on a rocky, spine-jarring dirt-and-gravel road.

Some aid simply never arrived.

Dumarsais Simeus, a Haitian-born U.S. businessman who is running for president in the country's November elections, said he shipped a container of shovels and medicine to help victims. Almost a year later, it hasn't left Port-au-Prince's shipping port.

"It's still stuck at customs because of some civil servant who wants a bribe!" said Simeus, who rose from poverty to become a wealthy owner of a Texas food services company. "It's outrageous."

Ex-Haiti cop's corruption trial about to begin

A former top Haitian police official is about to go on trial on drug corruption charges.

BY CURT ANDERSON

Associated Press

Miami Herald

Sept. 20, 2005

A top Haitian police official in the government of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is facing trial in Miami on charges that he accepted thousands of dollars in bribes to help Colombian drug lords move huge loads of cocaine through the impoverished Caribbean country.

Jury selection is scheduled to begin later this week in the case against Evintz Brillant, the only one of four former senior Haitian police officials who has not pleaded guilty in the investigation of drug trafficking inside the Aristide government.

The three who pleaded guilty are expected to cooperate in the U.S. government's case against Brillant, who has pleaded innocent and faces a life sentence if convicted.

DELAYED

The trial's scheduled Monday start before U.S. District Judge Marcia Cooke was delayed a few days by the approach of Tropical Storm Rita.

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Brillant used his post as head of Haiti's top anti-drug police unit from 2001 to 2004 to help drug traffickers ship thousands of pounds of cocaine through Haiti, including the airport in the capital of Port-au-Prince, to the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

Brillant and other top Haitian police officials, DEA Agent Noble Harrison said in a court affidavit, "agreed to look the other way when shipments of cocaine were in transit" in exchange for bribes, some of which he used to pay lower-level police officers to provide security and protection for the drugs.

On occasion, Brillant "stopped and arrested drug traffickers for the purpose of receiving payments and bribes," prosecutors said in court papers.

ARISTIDE ROLE

The investigation has produced no evidence implicating Aristide, even though some convicted drug dealers have insisted that the former president was intimately involved in trafficking through Haiti.

Aristide was ousted in February 2004 and is now living in exile in South Africa.

"There was never any evidence and there remains no evidence of it [Aristide's involvement]," said attorney Ira Kurzban, who represents Aristide in Miami.

"They've been trying for two years. There is no case," he added.

Brillant is specifically accused by U.S. prosecutors of being involved in the drug network controlled by convicted Haitian drug trafficker Sergo Edouard.

Brillant was paid \$10,000 in one instance for agreeing to protect drug shipments and got a share of \$150,000 from another trafficker to provide similar security.

Although the Haitian police arrests were trumpeted as a major success in the war on drugs by the Bush administration, a U.S. State Department report issued earlier this year said that the flow of Colombian cocaine and other drugs through Haiti continues virtually unchallenged.

The report said that with Haiti's 1,125 miles of virtually wide open coastline, clandestine airstrips, uncontrolled seaports and police corruption it is difficult for the Haitian government to stop the drug trade.

'RELATIVE IMPUNITY'

"Haitian drug trafficking organizations continue to operate with relative impunity," said the March report. "Haiti remains an important transit country for Colombian drug traffickers."

Freighters are most often used to transport the drugs directly from Haiti to the United States, concealed in shipments of legitimate items such as cement or in hidden compartments.

Aircraft are also used, and some drugs are driven over the border with the Dominican Republic to be sent to Puerto Rico and elsewhere, the report says.

The other Haitian police officials who have pleaded guilty are Jean Nesly Lucien, the former national police director; Rudy Therassan, a former commander with the police, and Romaine Lestin, former police chief at the Port-au-Prince airport.

Therassan was sentenced in July to 15 years in prison, while Lucien and Lestin are scheduled for sentencing in November.

Haiti's jailed ex-PM formally charged in killings

Source: Reuters

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Sept. 20, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Sept 20 (Reuters) - An investigative judge has formally charged Haiti's jailed former prime minister, Yvon Neptune, with masterminding the killings of political opponents last year, radio reports said on Tuesday.

Neptune, who served under ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has been held for more than a year on suspicion of involvement in the killings of up to 50 people near St. Marc, about 60 miles (96 km) north of Port-au-Prince, on Feb. 11, 2004. He has said his arrest was politically motivated.

Judge Clunie Pierre Jules decided to send the case against Neptune to a criminal court, formalizing the charges against him, according to private Radio Solidarity.

Other radio stations, including Radio Metropole, Radio Kiskeya and Radio Vision 2000, carried similar reports, but they could not be independently confirmed. A court official in St. Marc said the judge had issued the report but would not discuss its contents.

Cases against a total of 30 people were sent before the criminal court, including three other members of Aristide's cabinet -- ex-Interior Minister Jocelerme Privert, former Justice Minister Calixte Delatour and former Secretary of State for Public Safety Jean Gerard Dubreuil, the report said.

The charges came as Haiti prepared for presidential and legislative elections in November, the first since Aristide was ousted on Feb. 29, 2004. He left Haiti during a bloody rebellion by armed gangs and former soldiers, under pressure from Washington and Paris to quit.

Haiti has been run by a U.S.-backed interim government but still plagued by violence since Aristide's departure, despite the presence of U.N. peacekeepers.

Human rights groups have repeatedly criticized the interim government for imprisoning hundreds of Aristide supporters and members of his Lavalas Family party.

The U.N. special envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, called for Neptune's release in August and said his detention was a source of concern for the U.N. Security Council.

Judge Jules indicted Neptune because of evidence linking him to people accused of the killings, the radio reports said.

But she said there was not enough evidence to link Aristide and 32 of his allies to the crimes, recommending they be exempt from prosecution, Radio Solidarity said.

Mario Joseph, a lawyer who once defended Neptune, said the indictment was politically motivated and Neptune and other Aristide allies were being used as scapegoats.

"There was no reason to arrest Neptune and there is no reason today to indict him on charges he had masterminded any crime," Joseph told Reuters.

The report indicated people were massacred by members of Bale Wouze, a political group linked to Aristide's party.

But a U.N. independent expert on human rights, Louis Joinet, rejected the notion of a massacre after he visited St. Marc in April. Joinet said people who died were killed in confrontations between pro- and anti-Aristide groups and there were victims on both sides.

**Tending the Flower or Cutting the Stem?
Canadian-sponsored democracy in Haiti
by Justin Podur
The Dominion, Canada
September 23, 2005**

UN forces patrolling in the Port-au-Prince neighbourhood of Bel Air. photo: Haiti Information Project
The post-coup Haitian presidential election, currently planned for November 20, has a list of 54 candidates. The Canadian Prime Minister's 'special advisor on Haiti', Denis Coderre, suggested yesterday that this sprawling list of candidates was a good thing, a sign that 'democracy is like a flower that needs to be constantly tended'.

But that long list of candidates has a notable absence. His name is Father Gerard Jean Juste and the reason he is absent is that he is in jail (discussion of why he is in jail will have to be deferred, but he is a political prisoner facing accusations that would not hold up to standards of evidence). Because he is in jail, he was unable to present his registration in person, which is what Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council requires of presidential candidates. According to the Haitian Constitution (I was told today) someone can register as a presidential candidate even if they are unable to do so in person so long as their candidacy is presented by two lawyers and a justice of the peace. This, we were told, is what Jean Juste's people tried to do, and in this they were rebuffed.

I didn't meet Father Jean Juste today, but I did see his face on a T-shirt in the huge popular neighbourhood of Bel Air this morning. A Lavalas militant named Samba Boukman met us in a small yard. As he approached pointed to the T-shirt, a picture of Jean Juste, and said: "This is the president of the people."

Just outside the yard where we were talking to Boukman and a few other young people, was the UN headquarters. Brazilian troops were there, in jeeps, armored cars, and on foot. They had fortified control points on the street corners. MINUSTAH, the UN 'Stabilization Mission', was here in force.

MINUSTAH was here doing what is called 'DDR'. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. From what we heard, though, a more appropriate label might be 'DAM': Disarmament, Arrest, and Misery. The idea of the program is that MINUSTAH collects the weapons from these youths and helps them 'reintegrate' into society. But the process seems to break down after the 'disarmament' part. There is no point denying it: there are poor youths here who are in conditions that mean they have to steal to survive and who feel only more helpless and vulnerable to be preyed on if they lack a weapon. What they need - what organizations like Samba Boukman's 'Zakat' youth programs are trying to provide - are basic necessities, as well as political and social infrastructure. 'Zakat', for example, runs a breakfast program for young people, but this morning they were out of rice, so the kids went hungry.

MINUSTAH is not in the business of giving out rice. It is in the business of taking away guns. It is also in the business of arresting kids and handing them over to the Haitian National Police (Police National Haitien, PNH). And the PNH, in turn, is still very much in the business of repression and abuse, we were told today. We had the dynamic explained to us through some anecdotes: 18 young people who handed in their weapons last week and were arrested shortly afterwards. A young man who gave his weapon, was arrested by MINUSTAH, and was later seen in the street with his face badly smashed by the PNH.

"The elections are our last chance to solve the problems of this country," Boukman told us. And unfortunately there are all too many who want that chance to be missed. Bel Air is a huge neighbourhood with dozens (some 34) districts. During the 2000 election, each of the national state schools had a polling station - at least one for each district. Today there is one for all of Bel Air - the St. Martin electoral registry. Was the Lavalas base in Bel Air registering to vote? They had been, until September 13, when Jean Juste was barred from candidacy. Since then, they've stopped.

The scene at St. Martin confirmed Boukman's story. There were one or two people registering and five or six people working. The coordinator of the polling station explained to us that at this same, currently empty station, they had registered 3,000 people in a single week (the last week of August), and that people had been coming in droves until around September 15, but that after that no one came. Her explanation, different from Boukman's: the registration deadline keeps on being delayed, so people stopped feeling the immediate pressure to register.

The registration cards are not designed to please civil libertarians. Haitians registering to vote give fingerprint, signature, and photo information which will eventually be collected in a single database. They will get a single identification card that will be good for 10 years. They may not get breakfast, but they can get some high-tech identification. And they will need it - from social services to the tax office, no Haitian will be able to do without the new identification card. Or so it is planned.

Meanwhile, the Haitian police, when they are doing SWAT operations, wear masks.

Canada and CARICOM Clash Over Haiti

By Tony Best

Carib World Radio

Sep 21, 2005

Canada's Prime Minister, Paul Martin has chided several Caricom leaders for what he saw was their hands-off stance to Haiti during that country's worst periods.

Gerard Latortue

At the same time, though, Caricom Prime Ministers, Presidents and Ministers of Foreign Affairs complained directly to Martin about Canada's seeming declining interest in the Caribbean, its disengagement with the region, the weakening of traditional relationships and Ottawa's problematic communications with various countries.

In addition, they told him that he didn't have the whole story about Caricom's Haitian policy.

The "frank" but "cordial" exchanges took place during a closed-door meeting between the two sides held in New York City to take advantage of the presence of the various Heads of Government at the United Nations global summit.

Antigua's Prime Minister, Baldwin Spencer, and Grenada's Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Mitchell, confirmed the broad elements of the exchange.

"Yes, I would say so," replied Mitchell when asked if it was true that Martin's comments to him and the others were a form of chiding. "I would say that there was concern from him that we had disengaged to some extent from Haiti. He was assured that we in fact had not done so. We pointed out several areas in which we provided support for the process there, while taking a principled position in not sending the wrong message."

Spencer who agreed with Dr. Mitchell saying it was clear that Martin didn't have the full story about the Caribbean's position on Haiti.

"Certainly, the Canadian Prime Minister did make his position clear to us in terms of how he felt," said Spencer. "Of course, we disagreed. We told him that we never really abandoned Haiti but did a number of things within our competence and which we felt we could have done under the circumstances. We are not prepared to accept that a government should be removed from office by unconstitutional means. As a matter of principle, Caricom could not entreat with the Latortue interim administration. We have done a number of things with respect to seeking to restore constitutionality to Haiti. That's the area in which we feel we can be of tremendous help."

Barbados, the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica were represented at the meeting by their foreign ministers while Gerard LaTortue, Haiti's interim Prime Minister, Dr. Mitchell, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent, Dr. Denzil Douglas of St. Kitts-Nevis, President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana, and Edwin Carrington, Caricom's Secretary-General were among those who attended the session.

While Martin didn't call any country by name and framed his complaint in terms of Caricom, it is understood that his blunt remarks were not aimed at Jamaica, the Bahamas, Barbados or Trinidad and Tobago. Instead, it's believed he was specifically referring to St. Vincent, Guyana and St. Lucia, whose leaders reportedly blocked a regional initiative to "engage" with Haiti after the ouster of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

They were labeled the "hardliners." On the other hand, Barbados, the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago which supported the proposal to work with the Haiti's Interim Government in the holding of free and fair elections, a reduction in the violence and a return to democracy were accused of being "compromisers."

Dr. Mitchell, Spencer and others at the session acknowledged that Martin spoke his mind, telling them the region's stance on Haiti was regrettable, unfortunate and outright wrong. As Martin saw it, the region had abandoned Haitians, their brothers and sisters, at a crucial time in their history.

"While he raised his concerns about Caricom's position I think he understood, after some explanation that we had not in fact disengaged from Haiti and that we would continue to provide support for the continued evolving democratic institutions in Haiti," said Dr. Mitchell.

The Grenada leader pointed to Caricom's key concern that any action of engagement with the LaTortue regime shouldn't be seen as embracing the overthrow or ouster of a freely elected leader.

"We wouldn't want to send any message that it's acceptable to remove a legitimately elected government," Mitchell added. "Grenada has a history and example where a government was overthrown and the price we paid. That was the main concern of the region."

Spencer added another dimension when he said that some Caricom Government had in fact "lent material support to the people of Haiti" and had sent foreign ministers to Port au Prince to examine the situation for themselves.

"What we were not prepared to do is to give recognition to the interim regime," he stated. "We are not satisfied that this interim regime got there by virtue of the way we expect Governments to be removed from office."

When the discussion turned to other areas of mutual interest, as it was put, Dr. Mitchell explained that they wanted to get their own message to Martin that the traditional relationship with the Caribbean had suffered "over the last several years" and should be improved.

"We needed to express our concern in that area," was the way he put it.

For instance, some countries told Martin that the deportation of criminal aliens to Caribbean states was causing serious problems. In addition, more emphasis should be placed on "bilateral support" for individual states, instead of Canada's desire to channel assistance through multilateral sources.

"They have been involved in multilateral support in recent times," added Mitchell. "In my case, Grenada had to express the view that we have not seen the level of Canadian support that we normally use to receive at this time.

We expressed that to the Prime Minister.”

Hopes for peace in Haiti rest in ballot box

BY JOE MOZINGO

Miami Herald

Sunday, Sept. 25, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Divided by class, perpetually upended by coups and terrorized by despots and thugs, Haiti is gearing up for presidential elections that many see as the last hope to plant democracy in this troubled country.

An armed rebellion early last year pushed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile for the second time, leaving chaos and a political vacuum so complete that U.S. Marines, and then United Nations peacekeepers, have had to step in to maintain order.

A U.S.-backed interim government, led by Haitian-American businessman Gerard Latortue, has so far failed to gain any real grip on this politically ravaged nation.

But after widespread doubts that Haitian and international officials could organize an election so quickly -- given the insecurity and the destruction of almost every government institution during the rebellion -- the dates are now set.

The election for president and the legislature is scheduled for Nov. 20. A runoff for top candidates who don't get a majority will be held on Jan. 3.

Now the big question is not one of feasibility, but quality: Will the effort produce a legitimate government that serves the majority of deeply impoverished Haitians who have been ruthlessly exploited by their leaders for generations?

"Elections are a dangerous thing. If they are poorly handled they could be a disaster," said Robert Fatton Jr., a professor at the University of Virginia and author of Haiti's Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy.

Historically, Haitian elections have brought great violence as military and political leaders tried to stanch populist movements in the urban slums and farmlands by force. In 1987, thugs massacred at least 34 people on Election Day.

Aristide, a former slum priest, flipped the top-down dynamic, dismantling the brutal army and empowering urban gangs as the armed enforcers of his political agenda.

VIRTUAL SIEGE

But his departure brought a new wave of violence to those areas where he and his Lavalas Family party drew their strongest support. Gangs, police and, recently, police-backed thugs armed with machetes have created a state of siege in vast slums like Cité Soleil and Bel Air.

The insecurity has slowed efforts to register voters in those areas, and could make it difficult to open sufficient polling places there.

A delegation for the Organization of American States wrote in April that Haitian authorities and U.N. peacekeepers must take urgent action to stop the killing before elections. "A secure environment for political debate, campaigning and voting is essential for free and fair elections," the delegation wrote.

Most important, say observers like Fatton, is that Lavalas not be squeezed out of the election -- by violence in its strongholds or by an interim government that has shown little sympathy for Aristide's supporters.

Prime Minister Latortue has blamed the violence squarely on Lavalas militants. And the director general of the electoral council told the Herald in the spring that while insecurity might prevent opening polls in Lavalas redoubts like Cité Soleil, the elections would go forward.

CAMPAIGN UNDER WAY

In the rest of the country, Haitians are gearing up -- however tentatively -- for the polls. Candidates have begun to campaign. The voter registration effort, which faltered for weeks, finally gained steam in July and August.

By early September, 2.1 million eligible voters were registered. While this does not approach the 3.9 million registered for the last national elections in 2000, officials say they are debating ways to allow all eligible voters to cast a ballot.

Gerard Le Chevallier, the U.N. chief of electoral assistance, says there should be between 600 and 800 voting centers open on election day.

Every elected position in the country -- nearly 10,000, from rural mayors to president -- is up for grabs. With no dominant party in power and few reliable polls to gauge political sentiment, few would dare predict who will come out on top.

No matter how this election is seen in Haiti's tumultuous history, Haitians of almost every political bent say the country needs to break the cycle of tearing down governments that began nearly 20 years ago with the end of the Duvalier dictatorship.

"We got rid of Duvalier, we got rid of Aristide," said Jean Pierre Mangones, who runs a program that promotes Haitian crafts. "We got rid, we got rid, we got rid. We need to build."

Star witness names ex-Haitian official in drug case

A former Haitian National Police commander implicated one of his top agents in a drug-conspiracy trial underway in Miami federal court, tarnishing the Aristide government.

BY JAY WEAVER

Miami Herald

September 24, 2005

The U.S. government's star witness said he once taught Haiti's anti-drug chief in high school, served as his boss in the national police, admitted to smuggling cocaine with him and often socialized at his home.

Yet on Friday, when asked if he saw him in the courtroom, Jeannot Francois mistakenly identified a federal prosecutor for the defendant, Evintz Brillant.

"Yes, I see him," Francois testified, staring straight at Justice Department attorney Thomas Pinder in Miami federal court. "He's wearing glasses and a white shirt."

Moments later, Assistant U.S. Attorney David Weinstein asked the witness to stand up and look around the courtroom for Brillant. "I made a mistake," Francois said. "He's sitting right there, wearing a blue shirt."

No doubt, the government's key witness got off to a shaky start on the first day of Brillant's cocaine-smuggling conspiracy trial, but Francois made up for it when he directly fingered the defendant's involvement in drug sales and hefty bribes.

But the irony of Francois, 43, taking the witness stand against Brillant, 33, was apparent: Francois was never charged for his role in the alleged drug conspiracy, while Brillant faces life in prison if convicted.

"I had close contact with him because he was a former student of mine [in high school]," said Francois, who also once worked as a medical doctor in Haiti. "We were friends. I used to go to his home."

The charges against Brillant, Haiti's former anti-drug chief, stemmed from last year's wide-ranging probe into the government of deposed Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Three other Haitian national police officials have pleaded guilty.

Brillant remains the only one to face charges that he shook down Colombian and Haitian drug traffickers for tens of thousands of dollars so they could ship tons of cocaine through the Port-au-Prince airport from February 2001 to July 2003. The trial resumes Tuesday.

Before Friday's testimony, U.S. District Judge Marcia Cooke granted the government's request to disallow a polygraph test taken by Brillant in August 2002. He passed the exam -- required by the Drug Enforcement Administration -- indicating he was not involved in illegal drug activity in his country.

Brillant's lawyer, Howard Schumacher, urged jurors in opening arguments not to convict his client based on the company he kept in that country.

"There is an absolute lack of physical evidence," Schumacher said. "This case is being made on the basis of convicted drug dealers and money launderers."

Afterward, Francois testified that he joined Haiti's national police force in 1998. He rose to a command post overseeing criminal investigations, drugs and other units -- before he slipped out of the country amid death threats in 2003.

Starting in late 1999, Francois said that he, Brillant and other corrupt Haitian officers took a "large quantity" of confiscated cocaine kept in a police vault. Francois said they destroyed half of the cocaine in a "drug burn" -- in the presence of DEA agents -- and secretly kept four to six kilos for themselves.

Francois said he "entrusted" the cocaine to Brillant, who sold it and gave him a \$6,000 cut.

Over the next three years, Francois testified their illicit network expanded dramatically. At one point, Francois promoted Brillant to anti-drug chief at the Port-au-Prince airport -- the hub for cocaine shipments, shakedowns and bribes.

He said Brillant was in the middle of all the deals with Haiti's biggest traffickers, namely Jacques Ketant, Serge Edouard and Ronald Vielot. All three men have since been convicted in the United States.

Francois said that Brillant, other police and Aristide's security chief, Oriel Jean, schemed to confiscate \$450,000 in drug proceeds from a Haitian-based Colombian drug trafficker at the Port-au-Prince airport in the summer of 2002.

Francois said the group gave back \$300,000 of the seized drug proceeds to the trafficker, Carlos Ovalle, and kept the rest as payment for their protection. Francois said he was not compensated.

Haiti elections key to rejoining Caricom

By Bert Wilkinson

The Associated Press

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

September 23 2005

GEORGETOWN, Guyana · Haiti likely won't be welcomed back into the 15-nation Caribbean Community unless the country holds free and fair elections later this year, the bloc's secretary general said Thursday.

Edwin Carrington said several Caribbean leaders conveyed that message to Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin during a meeting on the sidelines of last week's U.N. General Assembly.

Martin, whose government has sent about 100 peacekeepers to help stabilize Haiti, had voiced concern that the regional bloc known as Caricom may have isolated the violence-torn country for too long since a February 2004 revolt toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Carrington said. But the leaders insisted that restoring ties could happen only if Haiti takes steps to ensure Nov. 20 presidential and legislative elections are legitimate, including improving voter registration and making the Electoral Council more efficient, Carrington said.

"Without an acceptable election, relations with Caricom would be difficult," Carrington said Caribbean leaders told Martin during the meeting. The leaders added that Haiti's Electoral Council "does not seem to be getting its act together," Carrington said, without elaborating.

The Caribbean Community suspended Haiti shortly after the revolt that ousted Aristide, the country's first democratically elected leader. The bloc has refused to recognize Haiti's U.S.-backed interim government, saying it was unconstitutionally installed.

Haiti's elections have been postponed several times because of logistical snags and crippling violence blamed on well-armed street gangs bent on destabilizing the country. Voter registration has reached 2.3 million, or about half of those eligible.

Carrington said Martin told the leaders he "felt that Caricom might have stayed out of the Haiti situation ... for too long."

The meeting was attended by Interim Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, Guyana President Bharrat Jagdeo, Grenada Prime Minister Keith Mitchell, St. Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and St. Kitts Prime Minister Denzil Douglas, Carrington said.

Posted on Sun, Sep. 25, 2005

Haitian Election Timeline
Miami Herald
September 25, 2005

1990 -- Jean Bertrand-Aristide wins Haiti's first democratic elections after 30 years of Duvalier family dictatorship.

1991 -- Brig. Gen. Raoul Cedras leads a military coup and forces Aristide into exile in the United States.

1994 -- U.S. troops land in Haiti and restores Aristide to power.

1995 -- Aristide's Lavalas party wins general elections and Rene Preval becomes new president, despite widespread allegations of manipulation of the electoral process.

2000 -- Aristide is re-elected president but the opposition cries fraud. The United States, Organization of American States, European Union and Canada suspend aid.

2001 -- The OAS signs an accord with Haiti for mediation to quell the political turmoil. OAS Resolution 822 calls for new elections in 2003.

2004 -- Rebels seize towns and cities in February, forcing Aristide to resign and go into exile. U.S. Marines and later U.N. peacekeeping troops are deployed to halt the violence. U.S. backed interim government announces new elections soon.

2005 -- The interim government sets first local and then national elections, then postpones the local balloting as too complicated. After several changes, the presidential and legislative elections are set for Nov. 20, with runoffs Jan. 3.

Locals voice objections to war at Mount Vernon rally
By RANDY TRICK Staff Writer
By MELANTHIA MITCHELL Associated Press Writer
Skagit Valley Herald, WA
September 25, 2006

MOUNT VERNON — It was faster and easier for Darlene Ford to drive from Camano Island to Mount Vernon for a peace rally on Saturday than to go to Seattle.

Besides, she said, in Seattle a peace rally is like "preaching to the choir." Places like Seattle's suburbs, Everett and Mount Vernon are where peace activists are needed, she said.

Ford, and her daughter, Dawn Chapel, were two of about 30 members of People for a Peaceable Planet who gathered at Lions Park to protest the war in Iraq and advocate for peace.

In Seattle, throngs of anti-war demonstrators marched along downtown streets demanding the Bush administration bring American troops home from Iraq.

Organizations like People for a Peaceable Planet and A.N.S.W.E.R. (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) chose Sept. 24 as a day for peace rallies and anti-war protests nationwide. A.N.S.W.E.R. organized the march in Seattle.

The protest came just days after anti-war groups on Thursday began a \$1 million ad campaign on television and in newspapers accusing the Bush administration of lying about the need for an extended U.S. military presence in the Middle East.

According to The Associated Press, 1,913 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003.

It was a beautiful day for a peace rally, said Mike Witmer of Mount Vernon. He and his wife, Andrea, waved their hands in peace signs to passing motorists.

"It's a little thing to do to be active in your support of ending the war and advocating peace," Witmer said.

In Lions Park in Mount Vernon, children and adults took swings at an anti-war pinata. The pinata was a cardboard tank about 3 feet long with a Curious George doll wearing cowboy boots, a 10-gallon hat and wielding a pair of pistols straddling the tank's barrel.

Curious George, the popular children's book character, has long been adopted by Bush opponents as a satire of his leadership.

People at the rally said Saturday's event seemed to elicit more honks of support and fewer rude gestures than previous gatherings. The peace movement is growing, attendees said.

"They see more and more people of different ages and backgrounds come out (to peace rallies), and they realize its OK to be against the war," Ford said.

The organizers of Seattle's march anticipated 5,000 participants. By the time the march started, the sidewalks and Westlake Plaza were packed with people — from modern hippies to babies in strollers. At least 50 police officers were clearing the streets of cars and buses to make way for the marchers.

Jane Cutter, a member of A.N.S.W.E.R., said it was important that people demonstrate to show Bush that he has no other option but to withdraw from Iraq. Cutter, like other demonstrators Saturday, said resources are being wasted in Iraq.

“People in the Gulf have been left to die while millions of dollars are being spent on the war in Iraq," she said, referring to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Holding signs and banners that said “Bring the troops home now," “Wage Peace" and “End colonial occupation: Iraq, Palestine, Haiti," protesters marched peacefully down Pine Street to Second Avenue, north to Marion Street and up Fourth Avenue back to Westlake Plaza.

Meanwhile, counter-demonstrations were hard to find Saturday.

Dave Loebe, 53, of Federal Way walked quietly along the sidewalk during the march in Seattle, holding a white flag with a red border and blue star in the center that said, “Honor those who serve."

With many friends in the military, Loebe wanted to show his support for them. “I do this all the time," he said, nodding to the marching crowd. “They have a right to demonstrate."

Other protests were staged in San Francisco, Los Angeles and in Washington, D.C., where tens of thousands of demonstrators marched by the White House calling for Bush's impeachment.

Why Venezuela's Chavez is an imminent danger to the so-called 'civilized' world

Commentary

VHeadline.com, Venezuela's electronic news

Published: Friday, September 23, 2005

Bylined to: Oscar Heck

VHeadline.com commentarist Oscar Heck writes: A few days ago my wife and I had a lengthy discussion with a Haitian taxi driver ... and ... we gave him a poster of Chavez ... and he kissed it ... and he yelled, "Viva Chavez, Viva Chavez, Viva Chavez." He was so exited that we thought he was going to fall out the taxi window.

He spoke of the curse of Gonaive, he spoke of Haiti and he spoke of Aristides, Haiti's democratically-elected president-in-exile who was kidnapped and taken away to South Africa during the Canada-USA-France-backed coup of 2004.

Apart from giving us details as to the present US-style military/police state in which Haitians are living today (under the auspices of a "western"-backed dictator) and apart from the figures he gave us as to the number of assassinations at the hands of the present pseudo-government, he spoke of the reasons why Aristides was kidnapped and forced out of power.

He also spoke of some elements which I will not discuss here ... for such elements will become evident in the near to mid future and need to be kept secret in order for the upcoming rebellion in Haiti to be successful.

According to the taxi driver, the main reason why Aristides was forced out of power was because Aristides had taken the first steps toward what might have eventually led to a mass world uprising against all colonialists: the British, the French, the "Americans," the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the Belgians, etc. What Aristides had apparently begun would have led to a mass uprising against those countries which had invaded foreign lands, assassinated Natives, forced Blacks into slavery and which had stolen land and resources from the Natives.

I will explain.

According to the taxi driver, not long before Aristides' kidnapping, Aristides had begun to put together a lawsuit against France in which Haiti would demand moneys (and lots of it, apparently) as repayment for what France had stolen from Haiti in the past ... with accrued and compounded interest. According to the taxi driver, the basis for the argument was that if the Jews were able to receive compensation from Germany after WWII, then why not Haiti from France.

The logic is impeccable and the legal notions are solid.

If Haiti were to send an invoice to France for all the gold and other resources which they stole from Haiti over the last centuries (accrued and compounded interest included), the due payment might economically bring France to its knees ... or perhaps even bankrupt it (I speculate).

If Aristides were allowed to put forth such a venture (as the Jews apparently did) ... what would stop other countries from doing the same?

Aristides was to set a new world precedent that would lead to an economic world revolt against past injustices. In much the same way as Pinochet or other older criminals are being judged late in life for the crimes they committed long ago, the "western" world would be judged today for the crimes of their past.

Theft (of land) is a crime. Murder (of innocent Natives) is a crime. Slavery (of Black Africans) is a crime. When the colonialists stole the gold, the diamonds and the natural resources, they also enslaved the people and they also indiscriminately assassinated millions of innocent men, women and children ... savages as they were called ... in order to enrich themselves.

The past is the past, but justice has no time frame.

This is why Aristides was kidnapped.

The time for justice is nearing ... and it scares the living daylights out of the materialistic "western" world.

For "westerners" today to say, "That was in the past, it was my ancestors, it's not our fault, we are innocent now" would be the equivalent to Pinochet stating, "The fact that I ordered the execution and torture of thousands of innocent people was a mistake of my youth, I wouldn't do that today. I am innocent."

According to the Haitian taxi driver, this is why the USA wants Chavez dead and buried forever ... which is hardly likely now ... especially because the US government knows that if anything happens to Chavez, the Venezuelan people (the 70% + who support him) will perpetuate Chavismo (Chavez' philosophy) at any cost and for as long as it takes.

This is why Chavez is a "danger," as Condoleezza Rice and company so arrogantly and deceitfully describe Chavez.

What is stopping Chavez from sending a hefty invoice to Spain?

If he does, what will stop the US Native American Indians from sending hefty invoices to the "american" colonialists (the US government) ... for billions, perhaps trillions of dollars rightly owed to them?

All, or most of Africa will do the same, so will portions of Asia ... and India and the middle east ... and so will all of Latin America.

This is what the "western" world is afraid of ... this is why Chavez is wanted dead, buried and forgotten ... but this will not happen.

Payback time is near ... and the US government knows that Chavez knows.

What will stop the Blacks in the USA from sending a massive invoice to the US government for due and just compensation because of slavery, suffering and segregation?

Let us do a small calculation (based on information from the CIA website).

If every Black person in the USA sued the US government for past damages, say \$1,000,000 (which is a conservative amount), the US government would have to pay out roughly about \$38,000,000,000,000. (There are about 38,000,000 Blacks in the USA.) This is \$38 trillion ... which is a huge amount ... and would cost every non-Black USA taxpayer about \$152,000. (There are about 257,000,000 non-Blacks in the USA.) So, for example, it would cost a non-Black family of four about \$600,000 ... a debt which would take years and perhaps generations to pay off.

Now, according to the CIA website, the USA has a land area of 9,161,923 square kilometers and an estimated population of 295,734,134 ... of which an estimated 1.2% are Native US Americans (3,448,810).

Let us suppose that we divide every square kilometer into 1000 lots. Each lot would be about 100 x 100 feet (33.33 x 33.33 meters). If each lot is conservatively priced at \$100,000, then the real estate value of the entire US land territory would be close to about one thousand trillion dollars (\$1,000,000,000,000,000). If the Native Indians of the USA were to send the US government an invoice for \$1000 trillion (for the land which was stolen --- all of the US territory) and if they were to distribute this amount between themselves (about 3.5 million Native Americans), each would receive roughly about \$285,000,000!!!

We are only talking about land here. Still to consider, are: lakes, waterways, natural resources such as gas and oil, gold, diamonds, trees, coal, iron, bauxite, precious metals and more. Add it all together and the non-Native population of the USA would become completely bankrupt and desperate. (Note: In this scenario, by non-Native I would exclude Blacks, Latinos or any other immigrants who do not originally come from colonialist countries.)

Now, suppose we add damages for engagement in slavery. Add onto this the criminal charges of rape, murder and torture of Blacks in the USA ... and related damages ... and the corresponding jail time.

A substantial portion of the white US community would end up in jail for years in order to pay for the crimes of their forefathers and foremothers. The jails would of course be owned and operated by Blacks and Natives since the white population would be broke.

The tables would turn.

Now imagine what would happen in Black Africa and in the rest of world which was subjected to colonialism and slavery.

The countries that lived through colonialism are too many to mention ... it represents much of the world.

This is why Aristides was forced out of Haiti ... this is why Chavez is an imminent "danger" to the so-called "civilized" world.

Oscar Heck
oscar@vheadline.com

Why Chavez is an imminent danger to the so-called 'civilized' world: Part II

Bylined to: Oscar Heck

VHeadline.com

Venezuela's electronic news

Published: Sunday, September 25, 2005

VHeadline.com commentarist Oscar Heck writes: I was inundated with letters since my last article this past Friday. The subject revolved around a discussion I had with a Haitian taxi-driver which led to the issue of suing for past reparations, something that he (the taxi driver) says that Aristides had begun against France prior to his being kidnapped and forced out of power in 2004.

In the article, I extrapolated on what the taxi driver said and speculated about what would happen if European-colonized countries outside Haiti were to begin legal procedures against their past invaders. I also presented scenarios where Native American Indians and Blacks would sue for past crimes such as slavery and theft of land by the whites.

The feedback I received was enormous ... and I would like to make certain clarifications. But first, I would like to sincerely thank all VHeadline.com readers who wrote letters. Most of them contain very interesting thoughts and notions, and eloquent extrapolations of what I had written. Some of the letters contain vile language and verbal violence, but overall, most letters were a pleasure to read.

Our brains are so often caged in by our puny lives that we seldom think outside the box of our own particular realities. Enjoy the letters. They are very much worth reading.

Clarifications

1- The use of the words whites, Blacks and Natives in the article were not meant to be construed as racist. The use of the words are based on the US government CIA website where the US government clearly describes the US citizenry in terms of race: white 81.7%, black 12.9%, Asian 4.2%, Amerindian and Alaska native 1%, native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander 0.2% (2003 est.) note: a separate listing for Hispanic is not included because the US Census Bureau considers Hispanic to mean a person of Latin American descent (including persons of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin) living in the US who may be of any race or ethnic group (white, black, Asian, etc.)

2- I did not mean to imply that Chavez is planning or even thinking of taking any legal action against Spain (for past reparations) as the taxi driver said that Aristides had been in the process of doing against France. What I did want to imply or parallel however is that Chavez is using somewhat equivalent methods to achieve similar results ... and that this is why Chavez is an "imminent danger." For example, the Chavez government has raised the royalties on oil exploration to over 30%, from the miserable 1% which had been arranged by past incompetent and corrupt Venezuelan governments. The tax on profits has already been substantially raised and traditional tax evasion at the hands of some foreign oil companies operating in Venezuela is being addressed with legal actions, fines and collection of moneys owed to the Venezuelan people. This is a form of collecting reparation money ... and it also appears to be a less economically disruptive method. The Chavez government's land reform project is also similar in nature ... repatriating unused land to the people.

3- As many people know, taxi drivers, barbers, hairdressers and bartenders are often reliable sources of information. In my view, they are often more reliable than "analysts" or "experts" or "scholars" who are usually totally disconnected from the day to day realities of the struggles of the 80% poorer majority who have to eke out a living from one day to the next to barely survive.

Here are some of the letters.

Letter No. 1

The underlying reason why Aristides was kidnapped out of Haiti and the country put under a Dubyah selected government was the Aristides was on the verge of passing a law to increase the minimum wage... about triple.... which would have cost the garment sweatshops owned by Dubyah's friends big bucks...

Letter No. 2

Dear Mr Heck: While the idea of suing to gain just reparations isn't new, I would remind you that fully one third of current US territory was stolen from Mexico, and that Spain was the first colonialist; and that the region known as the Louisiana Purchase was first stolen from the natives by France, then Spain, then France again before its final "purchase" by the US. Further, I would move that many natives of the Americas were further colonized by the states that were formed after "liberation" from their colonial masters; for example, who would the Maya in Guatemala sue to gain reparations: Spain, USA, or Guatemala? While I agree that massive reparations are due these peoples, I am pointing out that those culpable are not simply the first colonial country, that the web of those responsible is more complex. As for enforcability of any judgement made against a former colonial country, didn't the USA ignore a World Court judgement that it pay reparations to Nicaragua for its inflicting state terrorism on that country, so who will make certain future legal judgements are consummated? Personally, I would say that the USA alone owes the world hundreds of trillions of dollars for the gross damages it has and continues to inflict on the planet and its peoples. The battle is against Imperialism, yes? I would posit that the only real weapon that can be used is a total embargo with a view to containment until the USA destroys its warfare state and imperial establishment at home and overseas. Lastly, the world must anticipate the use of nuclear weapons by the US in its planned war against Iran, for the use of such weapons is the only way Iran can be defeated. Mere verbal denunciation will not be enough; very clear negative outcomes must be put forward, like total suspension of ALL oil and natural gas exports to the US and its lackeys, the "EU-3," combined with the immediate arrest of ALL US nationals and diplomats worldwide for abetting massive crimes against humanity. The terrorism employed by the US Empire must stop, and only the whole world standing together can halt it. Make no mistake, the fascists will attack Iran, probably early next year after the subterfuge of UN "diplomacy" and IAEA manipulation--as was the case with Iraq--reach their predetermined levels of "crisis."

Letter No. 3

Hey Oscar. I am not too sure about your last article. The blacks in the USA have been trying this for a long time. Reparations have been discussed in the USA for years and nothing has been done. When

slavery was abolished in the USA the slaves were promised an acre of land and a mule, they did not get it.

This is nothing new. I have a hard time believing a taxi driver.... Taxi drivers say a lot of things. They hear a lot of rumors. It could be true, but I don't think that was the only reason. Let's be honest slavery has not stopped, and Haiti is full of potential economic slaves. The western economic elite does not want them lifted out of slavery. Let's say Aristide was preparing this law suite it would have never been won. Aristide was only but one man...

Letter No. 4

You seem to take out of the equation how lucky Americas blacks are that their ancestors were slaves, if they hadn't been they would be living like every other black in a black run society i.e. a fly blown disease ridden craphole, and if they somehow did manage to get control of the USA they would turn it into a disease ridden craphole as well that's what they do!

Letter No. 5

Oscar:What if the Slavic people demanded reparations from the Turks and other Middle East nations that enslaved so many of them that their race became the word slave? How about the Janissaries? Hundreds of thousands of blue eyed blond haired Slavic children forced to fight for Islam? What do their decedents get for that? What of Mongolia? The Huns? What do they owe white Europeans for their murderous rampage? They are racially the same as Amerinds, can the debts be cancelled out? What if Spain demanded reparations from Morocco? Do the Romans owe anything? Should modern day Italy pick up the tab? Where do you draw historic lines? I'm guessing where you see fit to make your point. It is estimated that blacks murdered over 10,000 white Americans in the last century, can a deal be worked out that would lessen the white man's burden? Subtract so much per murder? How about rape? Statistics are difficult to assess on rape, so many go unreported, but would a quarter of million white women raped last century be an exaggeration? I mean there has been some retaliation, that should count in the final tally. The Indians we owe, no argument there, but if the white man is the one that loves money, how would Indians differentiate themselves from us if all they wanted was money? When the liberals voluntarily give up the homes they own on Indian lands, all of North America, then I will.

Letter No. 6

Sir, Concerning your story, "Why Venezuela's Chavez is an imminent danger to the so-called 'civilized' world," are you saying/ writing that a taxi driver is a more legitimate news source than other 'officially' recognized ones such as AP News, Reuters, etc.? I've got a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell you- wait! I'll save you the money... You, sir, are stupid! God! I wonder how idiots like you are granted the privilege of writing anything, and, behold, you end up on the net. Do the world and yourself a favor and SHUT UP! You can not and will not change the world, especially with your lousy news sources. Go back to college, or at least a better one and figure out or be taught how to write a story with bona fide sources. Join the rest of the world and enjoy some sanity. Or better yet, go away!

Letter No. 7

Read your recent column. I love Venezuela and I agree wholeheartedly with your sentiments (evidently favorable) for Mr Chavez. I also agree that those monsters who are at the head of the so called colonial powers should be ground into the dirt-I know you didn't specifically say that but you do want to suck their lifeblood (i.e., money which means power) from them-so- we more or less agree on a similar result. However, I disagree in varying degrees with some of your other sentiments. Like-don't believe Aristides or any of the present day Haitians are "native people." Former slaves, yes. That he and the other inhabitants have major grievances against the US, France, China (yes they are there now as occupiers) is self evident. However I have difficulty with idea that the land's natural resources belong to any one person or set of persons. Saying one bunch can plunder instead of another doesn't really make much sense. Like diamonds are really worth destroying a landscape? If that's what the argument is about I say let them all die. As far as reparations go for Americans whose ancestors may have been slaves a qualified maybe. Remember only about 7000 persons (of whom there were black persons too) ever owned slaves in the US. We have the exact records. Maybe getting the present day descendants to pay the umpteen trillions (maybe billions is closer- in fact probably most former slaves would settle perhaps for \$100,000 each in an individually negotiated settlement.). The Gores, the Bakers, etc. who still economically enslave millions of Americans and are responsible for other crimes against humanity perhaps should pay reparations. Actually maybe it would be better that they be chemically neutered as their evil seems to continue down through generation to generation. But will recent Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, Mexican, etc., immigrants be responsible for paying reparations? Don't be stupid! My maternal forefathers/mothers arrived in the US well after slavery ended and probably until the 1920s never even saw a former slave. So I'm responsible for reparations? NFW-Jose! Your analogy to Pinochet young and old is logically flawed and is rejected. Will recent immigrants from Africa be recipients of reparations? Don't be stupid! Will persons like OJ Simpson, and other millionaires such as those playing in America's sports leagues be given money for their "sad" state of affairs? I don't think so. Do you expect reparations from descendants of non-black non-native Americans whose ancestors came here as indentured servants (for you Mr Heck that means SLAVES) as did my paternal ancestors? I won't. As for the so-called Native Americans (call them Indians for they were as asian as the present Indians) they may have butchered any prior inhabitants and they sure as the deep blue sea were responsible for the annihilation and extinction of untold numbers of species of animals on the North American continent. For instance, those scum thought nothing of driving a whole herd (numbering thousands) of bison over a cliff so they could have meat for a few dozen shitheads!! I demand reparations for their damage to the ecosphere! In fact in balancing their plight and their oh so very pitiful history of losing out to savages even worse than they versus their damage to our planet, our Gaia, IMO they owe all living persons in the US big time! They will never be able to pay off their debt! In fact, they are lucky to be just breathing and have their present paltry remnant of what they tried so hard to destroy. Try to see things from another perspective before you spout such incredibly dumb rhetoric. It hurts the cause of liberating the 99.9% of mankind from the true evil 0.1%

Letter No. 8

Creo que estuviste fumando "de la buena" cuando escribiste este artículo. Déjame un poco! No, en serio, si partimos de la base de que tales demandas serían pagadas, aún quedan los cálculos aberrantes que hiciste. Basta un ejemplo: el tema de la esclavitud negra. Habría que cobrar a las tribus costinas de África la captura en el interior y posterior venta a europeos de los futuros esclavos, les cobrarías al

Congo, a Zimbabwe, esas sumas? los meterías presos? Cobrarías daños y perjuicios a los mercaderes de esclavos judíos? no creo que tu propuesta sea muy bien vista si tomas en cuenta esto último, no? Además yo creo que cobrar 1 millón de verdes por cada negro que vive hoy es un poco deschavetado, más justo sería cobrar los sueldos impagos de cada negro esclavizado, afectos a interés (y no compuesto, no sean sinvergüenzas como los banqueros). El tráfico de esclavos era legal, así que no aplican leyes "ex post facto". En el caso del territorio gringo, me gustaría mucho que algún día los indios fueran compensados, pero tu cálculo del valor de la tierra es bastante frívolo. No toda la tierra de EEUU estuvo ocupada por nativos, ni toda la tierra gringa sirve para algo; hay desiertos, montañas, etc. Si seguimos, Marruecos podría demandar a Italia por la ocupación del Imperio Romano, Iraq a China por las invasiones mongolas, Más justo (y actual) sería que los EEUU e Inglaterra pagaran a Japón, Alemania, Francia, Italia, Austria, Rumania, Hungría compensación por sus crímenes de la 2a. guerra (bombas atómicas, bombardeo de ciudades, matanzas de civiles, etc). Más justo sería que EEUU pagara a Cuba por su interferencia dañina, a Panamá, a Granada, a Filipinas también. Rusia y Cuba deberían pagar a muchas naciones su interferencia de mierda también. De partida, podríamos solucionar injusticias que se están dando hoy día, como la Ocupación de Irak, Palestina, Tibet, etc. Por ningún motivo una demanda frívola que se puede rechazar con un simple "non", va a ser causa de una sublevación armada financiada y motivada por los EEUU, que tienen toda una historia de intervención en Haití, Aristide o no Aristide.

Letter No. 9

Well Oskar my friend, lets not get carried away with the injustices of hundreds of years ago. How about just giving back the german lands like Silesia to their rightful owners the germans that were driven out, 12 million of them in 1945 -46. Where is the clamour for that atrocity??? The stinking Isrealites come back to Palestine 2000 years after the Romans had their fill with them and exciled them in 74 A.D. Just because their G-D told them it's their promised land ????? Is Saint Adolf's clout nothing ???

Letter No. 10

It was plain folk that bought and sold slaves in the world. Americans, French, Blacks(yes Blacks). Yes slavery was legal. It was legal in Africa, also. So what. The folks that committed the so called crimes are long dead. Pinochet is alive. That is a world of difference. I am white. My ancestors didn't own slaves. If a bill were to be served. It would be to the Blacks and Hispanics for the tremendous crime that has been foisted upon the the Whites of America. Nevermind, the cost of the social programs will bankrupt America anyway. The American Indian had treaties many which have not been honored properly. The American Indian are working to get these treaties honored. I hope for their success. The Blacks of Haiti getting paid for diamonds and gold from the French. How ridiculous. The Caribs or Tainos would need to be brought back from the dead to receive the payment.

Letter No. 11

For "westerners" today to say, "That was in the past, it was my ancestors, it's not our fault, we are innocent now" would be the equivalent to Pinochet stating, "The fact that I ordered the execution and torture of thousands of innocent people was a mistake of my youth, I wouldn't do that today. I am

innocent." So... you can't tell the difference between a crime committed by a dictator in an earlier part of his life, and a crime committed by an ANCESTOR, BEFORE his descendants were even BORN? That's a total load of CRAP, and if you don't realize it, then you have some major malfunction. Punishment for the crimes of one's ancestors is not supported by any international law or agreement. So I suppose you supported the Hutu massacre of the Tutsis in revenge? Is it legally or morally defensible to you? A CRIME IS A CRIME IS A CRIME, but suggesting someone is responsible for crimes committed before they existed suggests you might need to seek some sort of counseling...

Letter No. 12

Oscar: To acquit the debt accumulated (with interest) by past depredations would require a hyperinflationary issue of money/monetary instruments. Aside from the monetary havoc this would reck, money itself is not true capital. All economic systems would collapse, leaving all plaintiffs roughly in the same dilemma as old Midas himself. But if the plaintiffs persist, I am sure that there are bankers who will be more than happy to comply with their demands. Even if the complaint were to be resolved by a transfer of assets, the social cataclysms generated by such an asset transfer into inexperienced hands would be on par with that occurring in Zimbabwe.... And the game would begin anew. Be careful what you wish for. Best...

Letter No. 13

See you in prison with the rest of the Europeans!