



Peacebuilding and Gang Violence in Haiti

OUT OF THE CHAOS

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About the Author

Moselyn JEAN is a Human Rights Activist in Haiti starting his career off as a young leader with a passion to make an impact in the society. After his two bachelor degrees (Sociology and Law), he has founded Fair World Builders with a clear vision to tackle the pressing problems of poverty, illiteracy and social discrimination by empowering the youth. He has also worked at several Non-Governmental Organizations in Haiti such as Plan International, World Vision International, Lumos Foundation, Human Rights Office... Currently, Moselyn JEAN lives at Wellington, Florida where he continues to support those in needs, especially Haitian Descent Children and Latinos to understand English and understand teachers.

To young people who still believe a better Haiti is possible...

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Acronyms and abbreviation

OCHA:	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
FWB:	Fair World Builders
RNDDH:	National Network for the Defense of Human Rights
PNH:	Haiti National Police
MSS:	Multinational Security Support
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council
CNDDR:	National Commission for Disarmament, Dismantlement and Reintegration
OIF:	Francophone International Organization
INS:	Immigration and Naturalization Service
VSN:	National Security Volunteers
CSCCA:	Cour Supérieure des Comptes et du Contentieux Administratif
UNDP :	United National Development Program

Acknowledgement

After spending five years working in prisons in Haiti, Fair World Builders had to collaborate with many outstanding people with the passion to create a better Haiti despite working in bad conditions. As President and Author of this document, I want to take this special moment to thank each and every one, near and far, who has contributed in one way or another to make this document possible.

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Secondly, justice authorities who understood and still understand the urgency to bettering lives at all corners from rural communities to the big cities, a special thanks to you. Your dedication and commitment keep this country alive. You are part of those who stay when the shadow of desperation starts blooming above all faces.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank participants for dedicating their time in participating in workshops so that this document could be written. They devoted their time to answer questions related to peacebuilding and violence as they unfold in their communities which allow us to have a deeper vision of what's happening and the path to take. Their remarkable contribution should be acknowledged.

Forewords

Haiti is the first Independent Black Republic in the world. After a bloody battle over a decade from 1791 to 1803, it overturned the French Colonial Empire and instituted a Sovereign Government in January 1804. Right after that, the country will face the worst moment of its existence after the assassination of Jean Jacques Dessalines, the Emperor and father of the Haitian Revolution. From now on, the country goes on and off instability undermining progress and peace for the benefit of its citizens.

From the late twentieth to the threshold of the twenty first centuries, no effort has been made to break this cycle of violence. With the advent of Papa Doc in 1957, Haitians lived under siege fearing the ubiquitous presence of death at every corner of their neighbors through its militia commonly known as National Security Volunteers (VSN). The Duvalier's regime is known as the most brutal, reactionary and unapologetic regime ever reigned upon the country. After his death, his son Jean Claude succeeded him until the insurrection that overturned the regime and instituted a new democratic era. This transition from a despotic government to a democratic government was hard to achieve because the regime continues to reproduce its own model. That's why, after the insurrection, the country went from coup to coup and the political elite never found a common ground to put the country's interest upon their own.

After this staggering period, a new constitution has been written delineating the three branches of Power. The Legislative Power is divided in two chambers with senators constituting the Senate representing each department division and the Chamber of representatives representing each district commonly called Common. They propose law and can set themselves up as the Highest Justice Court in case of treason. The Judicial Power is made of different justices from the highest court called Cassation to the lowest called the Peace Court. They are there to enforce, interpret and apply the law. However, the Executive Power is made of two divisions with the President as the Commander in Chief and the Prime Minister as the chief of the Government.

In 1991, Jean Bertrand Aristide was elected President of the Country. He too fell into the trap of persecuting his opponents despite the fact that he has built some public schools for people

in deprived communities. He was overthrown two times while being in power. Each of these times, many people died and millions were injured. In the third decade of the century, in 2021, the president of Haiti was assassinated in his own residence aggravating the country's security situation. Since then, the country has lost direction and nobody can predict where it will lead. From interim government to interim government, from presidential council to the new president presiding the council, change in government is prolific, but the problem of violence in the country remains sterile.

Many reports have been published about the root causes of gang violence in Haiti. Few provided better views on the way to overcome this problem in a strategic and sustainable way. Considering the sparseness and multifaceted outlook of the gang violence, it is of utmost importance to think deeply about it in order to understand it better and see what we can do about it. This problem should be thought of in all of its complexities.

In this document, our attention will be brought on four steps to overcome the problems of gang violence in Haiti. The four pillars of our arguments revolve around our knowledge of the problem, the lessons learned from the past experiences, the actions undertaken to tackle it, and the path we must take to solve it once and for all. Let's explain a little bit our understanding of each part.

Our first pillar starts by what we know of the problem. By that statement we mean the problem is complex and requires putting it into its context. It compels us to think about difficult questions such as what we know about gang violence, its *modus operandi*, where and through which canal they find ammunition, where they are located and how do we identify their members without pointing out fist to other young innocent people. These questions could help us determine the problem as part of a larger landscape. By answering them, we can partially make up our minds about better ways to tackle the issue which brings us to the second pillar of lessons learned.

This second pillar concerning lessons learned has two parts. The first one stems from actions we undertake nationally. It delineates what the government already did to encounter the

problem and the reasons these actions were revealed to be ineffective. These actions could be formal as in the case of police officers or informal as in the case of the *Peeled Wood movement*. The second one concerns the international community where we analyze their participation in the current gang violence challenge in the country. These two patterns should give us a better vision of what is at stake, what could be proved effective or not in considering lessons in a national and/or international level so that we can reduce the margin of setbacks in our next attempts.

This vision brings us to the third pillar: the actions we take to undermine the widespread feature of gang violence in our community. These actions stem from the National Commission for Disarmament, the National Police to the Multinational Security Support Mission. This pillar highlights the importance of reinforcing the Commissions and emphasizes the deterrent capacity of the police enforcement, the army and the Multinational Security Support mission as peacekeepers without which it could be impossible to deal with the issue. It also puts forth the need to act in a sustainable and profound way where government assesses every action they are taking so that after a week, the situation does not go from bad to worse as so many attempts did.

Our last pillar must be seen as recommendations to avoid a new wave of gang violence or formation of new gangs. Based on what we already know such as the way it has evolved and the internal and external forces that brought us there, we can decide not to fall back on the same trap. Failure to take accountability when in charge could amplify the rapid collapse of our nation, something that none of us would be happy to live. It is not enough to complain and write about gang violence without a sense of responsibility in our actions to prevent its expansion and put an end to their proliferation.

Methodology

In 2022, with the support of Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Fair World Builders (FWB) launched a youth consultation with the main objective to collect data about their vision of the Sustainable Development Goals, justice, peace and security... in the north and northeast departments of Haiti. This consultation was conducted with students, youth civil society organization leaders, local authorities, artists and so forth through workshops, online discussions, presentations and interactions with students. Some information presented in this report was taken from that work.

We have also interviewed police officers and justices in the North department about the main cause of violence in some inner-city neighborhoods. We have interviewed prisoners who were gang leaders in their areas who helped us understand the dynamics of their environment from their own perspectives because nobody else can explain better what is going on in these areas than these young people who live and undergo such treatment and sometimes are part of those fights.

Reports from other Human Rights organizations help us hold a holistic view of the matter. It allows our organization share recommendations and directions for actions. It depends on authorities and decision-makers to harness and assess them to build the country of our dreams.

What we know about the Gang violence in Haiti

To understand the issue, we need to delineate what we mean by gang violence in order to differentiate it from other forms of violence. According to the United Nations Security Council in a report about the widespread gang violence in Haiti in 2023¹, gang violence is seen as a group of organized individuals who make the use of sophisticated weapons in order to control and established their power upon an area and committed crimes such as drugs and arms trafficking, looting, kidnapping, murder, sexual violence and truck hijacking... However, Rosenfeld R. sees gang violence as all violence involving gang members². It includes, in her own conception, violence within and between gangs in addition to violence between gangs and non-gang members. These two definitions partially decipher the operation of gang violence in Haiti. The first one presents gang violence as entities controlling an area arbitrarily whereas the second one presents the situation of violence between rivals and those who have nothing to do with gang activity. The situation as it presents in Haiti shows the way gang members control most of the metropolitan area and sometimes compete between them for more power and space.

Origins of ammunitions

. According to the Expert Group of the United Nations Security Council, gangs get ammunition through the means of international and national gun trafficking. Internationally, The United States of America and the Dominican Republic serve as providers. Most of the guns left the United States, especially the Miami port to Haiti. Sometimes, this process takes another trajectory where people traffic these guns from the US to the Dominican Republic before bringing them to Haiti³. By the same token, Jamaica is also considered as a gun trafficking area because of prior marijuana exchanges that existed between this country and Haiti. Nationally, the report mentions the relations between police officers, private security companies, economic and political elites and the gangs⁴. To sustain their assumptions, they note the way some police officers receive more ammunition than they need. Thus, they sell the available surplus to the gang members. They also point out the problem of private security companies that conceal the

¹ Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies, *Rapport final du groupe d'Experts sur Haïti* présenté en application de la Résolution 2653 (2022), S/2023/674, 2023, p. 14

² Rosenfeld, R., Bray, T. M., & Egle, A. Facilitating violence: A comparison of gang motivated, gang affiliated, and non-gang youth homicides. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15, 1999, 495–516

³ Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies, *Rapport final du groupe d'Experts sur Haïti* présenté en application de la Résolution 2653 (2022), S/2023/674, 2023, p. 24

⁴ Op. Cit. pp. 23-31

amount of guns at their disposal and use their privilege to supply arms to gangs. They also explain how economic and political elites arm young people in ghettos so that they could help them win elections or transport goods and secure their business.

Gang's epicenter

The race to power, control and space of gangs is exacerbated by the government's inability and/or unwillingness to preclude the issue. All these situations undergird the gangs' abilities to take over large parts of the population and use terror and intimidation to kill peaceful people. The two departments of Haiti where gang violence is more acute are the West and the Artibonite⁵. More than 80% of the Capital is under their control and a large part of the Artibonite is also under their arbitration. These departments are the largest populated departments in Haiti and host a large part of the political and economic elites. It is unsurprising that the question of insecurity and gang violence turn around their division rather than the whole country. However, this is not to justify the widespread violent scene in those departments. In our endeavor to understand an issue, it is not only the issue in itself that should be taken into consideration, but also the way that the Government reacts to that issue. According to the UNSC report, the National Police of Haiti on June 30, 2023 had about 14 087 police officers composed of firefighters, coastguard boats and those leaving Haiti or the police for whatsoever reasons. Currently, the number of police officers available around the country is about 4 000 which is a very low proportion taking into account the plague of gang violence and other civil and penal problems to deal with⁶.

Number of gangs in Haiti

The number of gang groups in Haiti is about 300 thousand according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 2023 cited by the Crisis Group⁷ with most of them perpetrating their crime in Port-au-Prince and Artibonite departments. According to the UN Security Council report by December 2023⁸, there were 4 000 killed, 3 000 kidnapped. All these people being killed and kidnapped create not only a panic situation in the society but also a

⁵ United Nations Integrated Office (BINUH), *Report of the Secretary General*, 2024, p.4

⁶ Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies, *Rapport final du groupe d'Experts sur Haïti* présenté en application de la Résolution 2653 (2022), S/2023/674, 2023, p. 9

⁷ International Crisis Group, *Haiti's gangs: can a foreign mission break their stranglehold*, 2024, p. 3

⁸ UN News, Visible signs of Hope for Haiti, Assembly President Insists, November 15, 2024

niche through which gang members find money to support their self-sustainability. They do not rely on political and economic elites anymore to get their ammunitions. Through the use of terror, they receive huge amount of money that help them buy weapons and expose their glamorous style of life through social media.

The lessons learned

This part of the manifesto about lessons learned could be approached in two steps: National and International for two reasons. First of all, Actions to tackle the problems have already been undertaken despite failure. There are lessons we can learn from these experiences. Secondly, Haiti is part of the world community as a UN member. It also shares its neighborhood with the Dominican Republic and is less than two hours flight from the United States of America. Those countries participate in destabilizing this country in serving as either source of ammunition or canal through which illegal weapons get into the country. A better understanding of our past could help us act better in the present in order to prevent a gloomy future.

Nationally

On a national level, the National police undertook many actions against armed groups in inner-city neighborhoods and ghettos. All these actions contribute to deter gangs' proclivity to take over the Capital and Artibonite. Some movements result in the release of hostages, arrests and execution of gang members and some result in the killing of police officers and other collateral damages. According to the news journal *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* cite by the newsletter *Le Monde*⁹, On November 19, 2024, at least 28 gang members have been killed during an offensive deploys all over the capital. The population accompanies the National Police and the Multinational Security Support force in order to restore peace within the country.

Prior to that, the *Peeled Wood movement* or *Movement Bwa Kale*¹⁰ in Haitian Creole in April 2023 created a conducive space for peace all over the country because the population has decided to face the gang members that took control over their lives and relatives. This movement teaches a lesson worth learning because it shows the power of taking actions when life gets darker. It was a form of resistance of the people that also presents the inefficiency of the Central Government in dealing with the problem.

⁹ Le Monde, En Haïti, 28 membres de gangs tués par la police et des habitants après une offensive dans plusieurs quartiers de la capitale, November 07, 2024

¹⁰ United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2023, p. 3

Police officers and the population are also victims of the gangs in their own ways. In March 2021, four police officers were assassinated at Village de Dieu¹¹, an interstitial area in Port-au-Prince, under the Presidency of Jovenel Moïse. After the assassination of the president on the night of July 6 to 7, 2021, the Prime Minister Ariel Henry did nothing to stop the proliferation of violence. According to the National Human Rights Defense Network 78 police officers have been killed until December 2022, and 18 have been killed in the first month of 2023¹². The report mentions the *modus operandi* of each gang assault. Their assault stems from ambush, killing, trapping, kidnapping and disappearance.

Internationally

On an international level, the presence of the MSS in June 2024 after the approval of the United Nations brings a new dimension to the issue. This force is made of police officers who have not scintilla knowledge of the grassroots and need to learn the strategy of the gangs in Port-au-Prince and other departments. Even though Kenyan police officers did not show yet their ability to tackle quickly the issue, we give them time to see what they can bring to the table. As some reporters humorously state it, this mission seems in need of protection from the national police against the gangs rather than help the National police against the gangs after a viral video portraying Kenyan Police Officers in panic after a strike between gang members and the Police.



Figure 1 Haitian Migrant Rapatriated from the Dominican Republic in Ouanaminthe Camp

In contrast with this mission from the African continent is the condescending regards from the neighboring countries and their maneuver to worsen the current chaos in which Haitian people live. So many reports explain the role of the United States of America as the source of gang ammunition. The current US

¹¹ AlterPress, *Trois journées de Deuil national à la mémoire de 6 policiers nationaux assassinés à Village de Dieu*, 03 septembre 2024

¹² Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH), *Position du RNDDH sur les assassinats d'agents-tes de la PNH*, 2023, p.6

ambassador in Haiti does not turn around in affirmative response of whether or not he spoke to gang members. As I already mentioned above, the weapons that use the gangs come, in most cases, from the US. The Dominican Republic, on the other hand, uses this period to repatriate about 10 000 Haitians living in their country¹³. Some of these people do not remember where their families live in Haiti and randomly occupy the city of Ouanaminthe. Those who remember where their families live do not have enough money to go to their area because of the unexpected arrest from the Dominican Republic National Police. They went even further by ignoring the legal status of some or mistakenly deported other black national tourist citizens to Haiti. Aside is their contribution in selling weapons to gangs in Haiti via the border because many arm traffickers have been caught transporting weapons from the Dominican Republic to Haiti¹⁴ in order to continue spreading death and chaos throughout the country.

¹³ Diario Libre, 10 000 deportaciones, Este operativo busca reducir el exceso de población migrante que se percibe en las comunidades dominicanas, October 20, 2024

¹⁴ Le Nouvelliste, Les révélations du groupe d'experts des Nations Unies sur le trafic d'armes vers Haïti, October 25, 2024

Better actions to preclude the spreading of violence

Most of our concerns come from the fact that our young people are armed and threaten the survival of the country. Based on our experience and our knowledge, better actions should be taken in order to tackle the sprawling security issue. In this token, our vision for tackling this problem of gang violence underlies upon four coordinated and interdependent actions. First, we need to reinforce the disarmament commission. Then, decision-makers need to deploy the police in key crime-ridden areas; third, we need to make use of the Security Support Mission; lastly, the upholding of peace in redeemed areas while preventing their expansion.

The reinforcement of the disarmament commission

On August 28, 2006, the National Commission for Disarmament, dismantlement and Reinsertion (CNDDR) was created. On March 18, 2019, by a presidential decree, President Jovenel Moïse reinstituted this commission in order to tackle the pressing problem of gang violence in the country. The commission highlighted the operation of 76 gang groups throughout the country. After intense discussion with gang members, the commission explained their proclivity to cooperate with authorities to create a space conducive for peace in the country. However, they were reluctant given the fact that authorities might fail to respect their engagement¹⁵.

While reluctant, they handed out around 200 guns which represented a scintilla of their arsenal which account to more than 500 000¹⁶. They did so because they wanted to test the true intent of the Commission according to authorities of that commission. Considering their disposition to discuss the issue with the commission, a solution could be found because 70% of gang members are adolescents and very young people. In such a situation, the reinforcement of the Commission might serve as an unsung hero to preserve peace in the country. As one of the commission members points it out, they were doing their duty without any budget. In this condition, it would be impossible for them to take actions that might result in gang disarmament.

¹⁵ Haitilibre, *Haiti - Security : Reactivation of the Disarmament Commission*, November 29, 2024

¹⁶ Rhinews, Haïti, Désarmement: Prolifération des gangs, explosion du trafic d'armes et de munitions : un pari perdu d'avance ? October 15, 2024

The deployment of the National Police in ghettos

The only force that keeps Haiti alive despite working in deplorable condition is the National Police. Without this force, the country would have fallen into anarchy. As we already mentioned above, the National Police force is about 4 000 in the country¹⁷. After reinstating the National Army, President Jovenel Moise via the National Defense Minister recruited young people in order to be part of it. This new army reinforces the ability of the National Police to tackle the problem of gang violence in the ghettos by working together and deploying in some strategic area where they can stranglehold gang members.

As we are already familiar with areas in which gang members operate and how they take full control of areas, with our strategy and available weapons, our national force can act to stop them from killing and kidnapping people. To do that, there must be a certain level of cohesion and discretion within the national force with the support of the international mission in order to deploy in these areas and use their deterrent tools to restore peace.

The Security Support Mission

The issue of gang violence became so rampant in Haiti that the Government, via its council of Ministers, requested an intervention of a Multinational Security Support (MSS) on October 06, 2022 in order to assist Haiti's beleaguered security system. On October 02, 2023, the Security Council, after multiple discussions, adopted the Resolution 2699 to send the mission in Haiti under the leadership of Kenya¹⁸. This mission arrived in Haiti in June 2024 with a clear mission to support the National Police in its fights to stranglehold the plight of gang violence. As the resolution points it out, the Security Council¹⁹:

- Authorizes Member States that have notified the Secretary-General of their participation to form and deploy a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission with a lead country, in close cooperation and coordination with the Government of Haiti, for an initial period of twelve months following the adoption of this resolution, to be reviewed nine months after the adoption of this resolution, on the

¹⁷ Op. Cit,

¹⁸ Security Council, *Resolution 2699 (2023)*, 2 October 2023, S/RES/ 2699 (2023) p. 2

¹⁹ Ibid.

understanding that the cost of implementing this temporary operation will be borne by voluntary contributions and support from individual Member States and regional organizations, and in strict compliance with international law, including, international human rights law, as applicable, to support the efforts of the Haitian National Police to re-establish security in Haiti and build security conditions conducive to holding free and fair elections, by:

(a) providing operational support to the Haitian National Police, including building its capacity through the planning and conduct of joint security support operations, as it works to counter gangs and improve security conditions in Haiti, characterized by kidnappings, sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants and arms, homicides, extrajudicial killings, and recruitment of children by armed groups and criminal networks; and

b) providing support to the Haitian National Police for the provision of security for critical infrastructure sites and transit locations such as the airport, ports, schools, hospitals and key intersections.

In September 2024, the mission had around 410 police officers a number that could shift up to 2500²⁰. However, after three months of their presence, there is no improvement in the decreasing of kidnapping, killing and rape. People continue to flee their home and communities to relocate in areas where they could feel safer for a temporary period before the invasion of their new location.

Secure the peace

As little as our actions, we need to uphold what we have. One of the weaknesses of the police deployment in such areas is the inability to maintain peace after the fight. Once the national force deploys in these ghettos known as non-right-zone, the tendency is to let them alone after the battle as if it was enough to fight the gangs while they were hiding in their cave

²⁰ UN News, Security Council renews Haiti mission mandate, calls for more action against gangs, 10 October 2024

and they would have stayed there once and for all. These sporadic deployments constitute a major deficit for the national and international forces in terms of ammunition, energy, money and damages. As authority, actions must be coordinated and have a certain purpose and goals. That does not mean to impose violence in such areas while killing innocent people who can't leave those places only because they are poor. It only means authority must prepare their actions in order to show results and inspire trust.

Peace as the Cornerstone for progress

Johan Galtung in his book *Peace by Peaceful Means* presents two factors to understand the peace movement²¹. He mentions positive peace and negative peace. The first one takes into account all the underlying factors that contribute to violence and upheaval such as inequality, corruption, gerrymandering and so forth while the second one represents the force where a dominant group imposes their vision and model of life upon another dominated group. Through his conception, we can analyze what is currently happening in Haiti as the results of bad governance, corruption and inequality. This is the best way to tackle this problem.

Tackling Corruption

Thomas Sowell, in his book *Social Justice Fallacies*²² presents corruption as a strand for the development of countries with little resources. His claim cannot be more accurate than when applied to the Haitian economic situation. A country with around 12 million people cannot condone corruption. Money that should be allocated for development, most of the time, is kept in the hands of a few groups or families while lagging the greatest majority in suffering. Corruption is the enemy of social progress and development. That's why we need good governance to bring forth magnificent fruit of progress.

Corruption, as it is manifested in Haiti, is the worst challenge facing the country's future. Government recognizes the ubiquitous presence of it in almost every institution, but they did little to nothing to dispense with it. The assassinated President Jovenel Moise presented it as the five most fundamental issues of the country²³. He himself did nothing to do away with it as his name was cited in an anti-corruption report²⁴. With the arrival of the Presidential Council as the new executive power, the country continues to be managed by a corrupted group since three of the seven members have been accused of bribing the President of the National Credit Bank in exchange for his position.

²¹ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means, Peace and conflict, Development and Civilization*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p.3

²² Thomas Sowell, *Social Justice Fallacies*, Basic Books, New York, 2023, 201 p.

²³ Lenouvelliste, Corruption Puissance 5. 10 September 2024

²⁴ CSCCA, *Audit Spécifique de gestion du Fonds Petrocaribe, Rapport 1*, 2019, 291 p.

This problem is not new in the management of public affairs in Haiti. However, we cannot hold it as a habit to remain blind as it continues to kill more people every day. Corruption might be seen as the root cause of the country's underdevelopment. In order to move forward, a better response to that curse could help us save lives, create a conducive environment for progress and development.

Promoting good governance

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHA), the concept of good governance relates *to the political and institutional processes and outcomes that are necessary to achieve the goals of development. The true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights*²⁵. The UN agency also mentions the key attributes of good governance such as Transparency, Responsibility, Accountability, Participation and Responsiveness to the needs of the People.

This concept of good governance is presented as an antidote to the culture of corruption that undermines every endeavor toward peace and progress. In a nutshell, let's decipher each concept by starting with Transparency. To be transparent in every action, government and civil society leaders could create a space of trust for those working with them or people who are watching or contributing to what they are doing. This pose could help people be aware of what is happening and prevent decision-makers from spending money on things that really do not matter. In the same stroke of attributes, being responsible as an authority or leader could pave the way for progress because a responsible person does what it must do and does what it says it will do. It knows its attributions and no one must make it up for him. In the same line is the word accountability which entails being able to deal with the consequences of one's actions. When leaders make a decision, they have to take full ownership of the consequences so that they can act better in their future endeavors. When no one is holding full accountability, actions become meaningless.

²⁵ OCHA, Good Governance. 10 October 2024

In contrast, the concept of participation requires decision-makers to include every part of the society in what they are doing regardless of race, culture, spacial address, gender, economic status and so forth. Lastly, the concept of responsiveness is the ability for government and other decision-makers to stay connected with the people and their needs and being able to respond to their challenge in a constructive, inclusive and sustainable way.

An Economic model that leaves no one behind

The problem of economic repartition has long been a concern for the country even before its independence from the French. The struggle between peasants with their representative Moïse le Jeune and the Governor Toussaint Louverture for the land separation might be conceived of as an economic struggle. Right after the Independence, the nation's founding father Jean Jacques Dessalines made it clear that land might be separated in an equitable way so that brothers whose fathers are still in Africa, as he stated it, might get something to handle his life. After his assassination, all the following struggles related to power and economy sealed this dilemma where mulatto live as bourgeois buy goods from poor farmers and sell them at their convenient price, and the black men and women, descendant of slaves, continue to live in deprivation because of an economic model commonly called *Comprador*²⁶.

This economic disparity still exists today with an oligopolistic class and a political class where one can find a discrepancy in their way of life. This figure contradicts the fundamental principles of social justice and/or positive peace which require alleviating the burden weighing down the poor and striving to create a more equal society where institutions and government work to provide equal access and opportunity for every citizen regardless of status, class, sexual orientation, gender... The economic model should support young people in ghettos and those in rural communities the same way it supports young people downtown. It should support startups as well as big enterprises.

²⁶ Jean Luc, *Structures économiques et lutte nationale populaire en Haïti*, in Roger Cahn H., Persée, Revue Tiers Monde p. 675

Protecting the environment

In his book *Collapse*²⁷, Jared Diamond presented the problems of the environment as one of the reasons most societies fail. Diamond presents the contrast between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He presented the Island with two features: the Dominican Republic environment is greener and the Haitian environment is browner. This contrast, explained the author, delineated why the Dominican Republic, despite being a poor country, is doing better than Haiti because their respective governments adopted different policies when it comes to the environment.

He presented the policy of Trujillo and Balaguer in the Dominican Republic from those of Duvalier in Haiti. That was fascinating because both countries shared a common colonial history. Both countries also shared a common dictatorial past. Why did they arrive at this contrasting fate? The environment has a lot to do with the problem. In the Dominican Republic, the Government provides subsidies to discourage citizens from using coal whereas Haitians continue to rely on coal to cook and do all hosts of activities. In the Dominican Republic, Government preserved their national parks and prevented people from cutting trees in some specific areas while the Haitian government did little to nothing to preserve its forest. As a result, salinization takes over the Haitian arable soil while the Dominican Republic continues its intense agricultural system.

Jared Diamond spent little time in Haiti and did not mention discussions with the Haitian intellectual in order to understand other causes of Haiti's collapse. However, his observation can help us make better decisions in the future because our environment is not protected. Even in our big cities, our hills and mountains are depleted of trees due to new constructions and the government and municipalities found it more interesting to think about their next election rather than taking drastic actions to hinder their expansion.

²⁷ Jared Diamond, *Collapse, How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, Penguin Books, New York, 2011, pp. 329-357

Recognizing our survival depends on us

Haiti is in the Caribbean. While the inscription on Haitian passports made it clear that we are part of the Caribbean Community, Haitians cannot circulate where they want in the Caribbean. Citizens in any Latin American countries and the Caribbean can visit any other country in this region except Haiti. According to Aviva Chomsky²⁸ even the concept of Latin America was made in order to exclude Haiti because Haitians do not speak Spanish.

Haiti stands by himself since overturning the French Colonial. As Dessalines Jean Jacques, the founding father of the nation stated it *“We have dared to be free, let us be thus by ourselves and for ourselves. Let us imitate the grown child: his own weight breaks the boundary that has become an obstacle to him. What people fought for us? What people wanted to gather the fruits of our labor? And what dishonorable absurdity to conquer in order to be enslaved. Enslaved?”*²⁹, this declaration still resonates today when examining Haiti’s relation with other countries.

So much for Latin America, let’s consider our relation with the United States, which is considered as the Ruthless Empire³⁰. The United States always developed a repulsive relation with Haiti. After the independence in 1803, it saw Haiti as a threat to the colonial system perennation. In 1857, when the Supreme Court via Justice Taney gave his opinion about citizens in accordance with the constitution, he clearly stated citizens mean White men because Black was inferior. That’s why their Government undertook actions to castrate this frail nation who dared to say NO to the colonial system³¹.

In terms of refugees, the treatment of Haitian people in the US was always different from other people of the Caribbean. After the Castrist revolution in Cuba in 1959, in 1966 the US Government passed the Cuban Adjustment Act which granted Legal Permanent Residence to Cubans who fled the Cuban regime with assistance. In 1978, while fleeing the Duvalier’s regime, around 7 000 Haitian asylum cases piled up before the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Miami, and all of them were denied. From President Carter accepting 125 000 migrants

²⁸ Aviva Chomsky, *They take out jobs, and 20 other myths about immigration*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2018, 223 p.

²⁹ Duke University, Haiti: Declaration of Independence. 11 October 2024

³⁰ Daniel Ganser, *USA, The Ruthless Empire*, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2023, 241 p.

³¹ Aviva Chomsky, Op. cit

from Cuba as political refugees while refusing Haitians to President Reagan Ronald presenting Haitian Immigration as a serious national problem detrimental to the US interest to Bill Clinton putting Haitians and Cubans in Guantanamo with different treatment, and receiving Cubans while deporting Haitians in 1994 and children of Haitian descent in 1995 regardless of their parent's presence, the United States was always unfair when it comes to Haiti.

After all that we are going through, the Government and decision-makers cannot continue to rely solely upon foreign government to be fully responsible for towards their citizens so that they could pave a better future for the country. This is not too much. The stewardship of our resources and the ability to control our territory must be our core priority. They might be the way to give our citizens hope in a brighter day ahead out of this turmoil.

Conclusion

This manifesto is a call for young people to keep HOPING in this uncertain time³² of gang violence. It is the youth's ability to stay engaged and courageous in the face of adversity, division and corruption that could bring the country into the promised land of prosperity, justice and opportunity for all regardless of color, gender, space and class. When we speak up for change as young people and embrace our vision of an equal country where we can come and go wherever and whenever we want, it did not only overturn the French Colonial Power, it also overturned dictatorship, democrat demagogues and enlighten the future of generations.

That's why active hope is important. According to Joana Macy and Chris Johnstone³³, active hope is a practice. It is something we do rather than we have. They present three steps that describe it. The first one is the ability to hold a clear view of reality by acknowledging what we see and how we feel. The second one is the way we identify what we hope for in terms of the direction we'd like things to move in. The third one is the steps we take to move ourselves in that direction. Given the fact that peace cannot be achieved without peacebuilders, young people need to be proactively engage in this constant endeavor from generation to generation because as long as humans occupy the earth, sufferings will continue. Each generation must stand up against the dominant strains that exploit and harm the most vulnerable people and hinder the future of generations ahead³⁴. This generation must be aware of what is at stake in its actions because peace cannot be achieved without a clear vision of the communities, which mean a bottom-up strategy to cope with the inextricably complex deprivation of the mass population. It should be a direction and a certain commitment for all parties to get involved and do their part. Conversely, our efforts might not pay off.

This manifesto is a call for actions and reactions. A call for action because it requires implementing a whole program with a new vision and mission of the future. A call for reaction because it requires from each peacebuilder to see themselves in constant motion of updating their

³² UNDP, *Uncertain Times, Unsettled lives: Shaping our future in a transforming world*, Human Development Report, 2021/2022

³³ Joana Macy & Chris Johnstone, *Active hope, how to face the mess we're in with unexpected resilience and creative power*, New world library, California 2022, 274 p.

³⁴ Frederick DeBoer, *How Elites Ate the Social Justice Movement*, Simon &Schuster, New York, 223, 244 p.

next move to face anything detrimental to people. This mindset of acting and reacting could help assessing our movement and push it in a better direction aligning with people we serve. As DeBoer mentioned it, the more educated class tends to make their own ideas about a social issue and when they get into power to tackle it, they become incremental while social injustice continue to hinder people's future. It's the line between social injustice, hopelessness and inaction that often set it up as gang violence in deprived communities where young people live.

Our sense of responsibility today determines the kind of country we would like to leave for our children and the next generation. We can choose to go forward as a nation aware of its problems and take full accountability of them or we can choose to blame others for our own inability to cope with them. Either way, our decision matters. Haiti is going through a darker time in its history, our actions and determination could help pave a better way in years ahead. We hope this document buttresses our genuine intention to act firmly in a way that will alleviate the heavy weight that burdens each soul upon the 27 750 square kilometers. Perhaps, with that we can really achieve the core goals of our nation: Equality, Freedom and Solidarity and Prosperity.

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