

Diagnosis*

U.S. Government Has Chronic Allergy to Haitian Democracy

I guess you think you know this story.
You don't. The real one's much more gory.
The phoney one, the one you know,
Was cooked up years and years ago.

—Roald Dahl, *Revolting Rhymes* ¹

On August 28th, as a long day in clinic was winding down, my friend and colleague Fernet sent me a note. “You should come and meet a new patient.” Since I was sitting only a few feet away from Fernet, I knew I should walk over to his consulting room now. I found him talking to a teenager named Nicole. At first glance, she appeared less ill than most of the patients we’d seen that day. When I walked in, she was engaged in energetic conversation with Fernet. And unlike most of the other patients, she wore nail polish (such details stand out in our clinic, which serves the poor of Haiti’s central plateau). Looking closer, however, I thought I could make out certain stigmata of chronic disease—hair too silky, the whites of her eyes too white—but wouldn’t have been sure she was sick without glancing at her medical chart. And I realized that in the noisy, dim bars of the dirt-poor provincial capital of Hinche, her hometown, Nicole would have appeared as a pretty, lithe young woman, with large expressive eyes and a ready smile.

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This last image is no idle fancy: Nicole, only 17 years old and living with AIDS, was telling us that she was turning tricks for food. Nicole described her *modus operandi*: she would ask someone judged a potential customer for money to buy a beer but would instead save the money and buy *fritay*, the cheap and dusty fried food sold alongside every major road in Haiti. She'd been doing this since she was 15, she said. Interruptions from a nurse (who'd already met Nicole and given her a shot of penicillin for syphilis and was drifting in and out of the exam room, picking up medical records) didn't change Nicole's cadence at all. In fact, she launched into her sad story, which began when her mother died, took a turn for the worse when she was raped by a policeman at 11 or 12, and continued downhill from there. "How long did you go to school?" I asked, at one point. "Never, really. I attended now and then, but could never pay the school fees. I can sign my name, but that's it."

Even after almost 20 years here and hearing a lot of sad stories from young people with HIV, I was shaken. Calm and dispassionate Fernet, with whom I've worked for years, was also dismayed, I could tell. "Do something," I said to him softly, in English, as we walked out of the clinic with Nicole. "Make sure she has enough to live on until we can make some sort of plan." We invited Nicole to come back on Friday, when we and the rest of the clinic staff were to hold our annual conference on health and human rights. We were expecting a big crowd.

On August 30th, with more than 3,000 people packed inside the church and another 1,000 outside, it would have been difficult for Nicole to get in. But Fernet, who was watching for patients near the entrance, escorted her to where I was sitting, up close to the podium. Several times I wondered what Nicole was making of all this. She laughed heartily at the skits and jokes, clapped after all the songs, and seemed absorbed by the speeches and presentations—some of them pretty grim—on health and human rights. After it was over, I asked her what

she thought. “It’s the best party I’ve ever seen,” she said. “And now we’re all going to eat.” She melted into the crowd with a wave that said, “see you soon.”

The past few days say a lot about everyday life in Haiti, a place where most people’s daily routine has been driven into the ground by the processes described in this book. Indeed, not much imagination is required to write another afterword to *The Uses of Haiti* (1994), since Haiti is still being used in most of the ways described in that first edition. Alas, most of the more dire predictions made in the postscript written in December of 1994 (but first published in this edition) have come to pass. We have seen ongoing and readily documented obstructionism on the part of the most powerful governments in the world; we have seen ongoing sabotage of the democratic process by the traditional Haitian elite. But we have also witnessed the poor majority’s insistence that they have a say in the future of their nation. Since the obstructionism and sabotage have been effective at making Haiti even poorer (amazingly), the structural violence documented in *Uses* continues to generate episodic violence. I would be failing my friends and neighbors—and guilty of intellectual dishonesty—if I did not try to make the links between the two explicit.

Since episodic violence is the traditional fare of the print media, it’s easy to offer a sampling of what is going on as this updated edition goes to press. On the very same day that Nicole attended our “party” (and received a meal) for which she had to offer nothing in return, the Organization of American States (OAS) made their own link between health and human rights:

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Aug 30 (Reuters)— The Organization of American States has released a grim assessment of deteriorating human rights in Haiti, saying armed gangs act with impunity while health conditions were worsening.

The organization’s Inter-American Commission on

Human Rights said in a report released on Thursday that it was “deeply preoccupied by the weakness of human rights in Haiti, the lack of an independent judiciary... the climate of insecurity, the existence of armed groups that act with total impunity and threats to which some journalists have been subjected.”

The rights delegation, which met with government, police and judicial officials, also cited higher rates of illiteracy, maternal-infant mortality and undernourishment in the Caribbean nation of 8 million which, it said, “represent by themselves human rights violations.”²

It’s certainly progress when the OAS comes to understand that illiteracy, poverty, and disease constitute human rights violations. More specifically, these are violations of social and economic rights, which the OAS and its powerful patron in Washington seem to oppose at every turn. The Haitian poor, on the other hand, have made social and economic rights their primary struggle, as the next few days’ events suggest. On Sunday, September 1st, there was a report of riots—some said a police station in a coastal town was set on fire—when taxi drivers raised their fares by one gourde. At current

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The tension between the two worlds exploded last month when Amiot Metayer, a political militant and gang leader, was freed by machine-gun-wielding members of his "Cannibal Army," who attacked the Gonaïves jail he was being held in with a bulldozer. Metayer had been arrested on suspicion of ordering buildings torched during an outbreak of violence with a rival gang leader. Upon his release, he denounced Aristide, vowing to "fight to the death" any attempt to put him back in prison.⁵

Attempts to put Metayer back in prison won't be easy, even though most of the Raboteau convicts were recaptured. One of the first things that Aristide did upon returning to Haiti was to dismantle the Haitian army—which in over a century had known no enemy other than the Haitian populace—there were no troops to call in to quell the riot. And could the police, underpaid and poorly trained, go into an area where the escaped prisoners themselves belonged to local gangs, some of them armed with the very same automatic weapons described in the previous edition of *The Uses of Haiti*, weapons the U.S. Special Forces were supposed to recover and remove?

But the press articles did not mention the U.S. troops' failed disarmament program. In fact, most coverage blamed the violence, the lack of police protection, and the poverty on the Aristide government. When Haitian officials averred that they were reluctant to use force to respond to the jailbreak, they were promptly denounced by their detractors as failing to uphold the rule of law. Force or no force, Aristide was sure to be accused—certainly by the Bush administration and by its ever-ready tool, the OAS. But sectors of the international "human rights community"—unaware, it would seem, of U.S. complicity in both the successful armament and unsuccessful disarmament—have also denounced the Haitian government for its failure to act decisively to bring the escaped prisoners to justice. "Impunity is worse than ever," complained representa-

tives of several such organizations. Here in central Haiti, such commentary from remote, misinformed or interested parties caused bitter laughter. As one villager here put it, "Sounds like [the human rights organizations] want a Duvalier-style response to the jail break." A lawyer based in Port-au-Prince, who approved of the government's temperate response to the jailbreak, wondered if the critics "were hoping to see another Waco?"

It's the same story with the investigation of the murder of journalist Jean Dominique, also in the news this week. Dominique and one of his employees were murdered on April 3, 2000, and their killers have yet to be brought to justice.⁶ Although it took five years to prosecute the authors of the very public Raboteau massacre, the slow pace of the Dominique investigation has already cost Aristide many supporters abroad. The judge assigned to the case left the country in "voluntary exile," citing death threats and a lack of cooperation from above—this in spite of the fact that the government acceded to his long list of requested perks: a chauffeur, new lodging, bodyguards. The Aristide government, branded by such organizations for its failure to create—out of whole cloth, since there was certainly no such thing in Haiti prior to 1991⁷—an independent judiciary, tried to coax the judge back from Miami. But the judge, quite popular among the aforementioned human rights organizations, preferred voluntary exile in Miami to the risk of exercising justice in Haiti. Another report last month announced that the self-exiled judge is planning to cash in on his celebrity by starting a radio show there. The hapless Haitian government finally assigned the case to a new judge.

In fact, with the notable exception of the sad story of Nicole and others like her, all of these events have been on the radio; they have also made the rounds of the papers and the Internet. There is now find no place in the hemisphere—not Medellín, not South-Central Los Angeles, not São Paulo—where the poor endure worse

conditions, even though police violence is far worse elsewhere.⁸ And Haiti's gang wars and murders and drug trafficking and general misery are now making the papers, even in the United States. But most commentaries made in English and French are conspicuously uninterested in the origins of this violence, when they don't collude to obscure them. Reporters who work in Haitian Creole find it harder to ignore the root causes, since they are obvious to everyone here: worsening poverty and deepening inequality that grow out of centuries of exploitation. No honest account of such exploitation could ever restrict its frame of view to the immediate scene: the last hold-up, the latest jailbreak, the latest mortality statistics. Yet honest and comprehensive accounts of the context of this violence are hard to find. We can't let the present and local context mesmerize us; the root causes, as I argued about related events in the 1994 edition of this book, are often far away and decades, if not centuries, removed from their brutal upshots. The proximal causes, as I'll try to show here, are the result of ill-conceived or malevolent policies that we must challenge if Haiti is to be allowed to survive.



The Uses of Haiti was written almost a decade ago. It's now 10 years later, 200 years later, 500 years later. Afterwords are supposed to be commentaries tacked onto the end of a book in order to shed light, drive home a point, or bring to a close a narrative that was incomplete. Books on the recent past tend to trail off into hazy generalities (or decontextualized particulars): "only the future will tell," they often say in their last lines. When I wrote this book, I made an effort not to trail off. And here I am, after two prefaces by eminent scholars I respect and after a long, long afterword of my own: how much more Uses can one take?

I'd be happy to think that *Uses* serves a purpose, and since I (like any author) think I had something important say when I wrote it, every copy it sells is good news to me—even though I know it will probably never achieve bestseller status. But writing the history of contemporary Haiti is not my main concern. Taking care of patients like Nicole means more to me and is more likely to bring me satisfaction (I will, as we say in the United States, keep my day job). Noam Chomsky, good enough to write the preface to the first edition, predicted, accurately (as usual), that “this is a book slated for oblivion.” Bad marketing ploy, perhaps, but good judgement: the book has indeed been difficult to obtain for several years.

Would that it were out of date as well. This new afterword is, regrettably, mostly more of the same, with some notable exceptions. On February 7, 1996, exactly ten years after Jean-Claude Duvalier handed over power to another U.S.-supported dictatorship, Jean-Bertrand Aristide became the first president in Haitian history to step down from office after passing power to another democratically elected president. Although most Haitians felt that Aristide had not been permitted to serve out his mandate (having spent most of it in exile), they were eager to re-elect him. From 1996 on, the running joke here in the Central Plateau was that surely Haiti was the only country in which the year 2001 was more significant than the end of the millennium. After Aristide was re-elected, again by a landslide, the next transition was in many ways as significant: on February 7, 2001, President René Préval became the first Haitian president ever to serve his entire original mandate, no more and no less, and relinquish power voluntarily.

The return of Aristide was contemporaneous with the return of another George Bush. Rather than reviewing positive developments, especially in terms of U.S. policies towards Haiti, this afterword reports terrible continuities. If you've read the first edition, you can have a spirited exchange with those journalists who have been discover-

ing Haiti in recent years. If a journalist were to tell you that the INS has recently singled out Haitians for racist and exclusionary treatment, you, a close reader of *Uses*, could laugh and respond, "Looks like you did not read Chapter 8 very closely. The INS has routinely singled out Haitians for racist and exclusionary treatment for a half a century and more." If the same journalist were to note that the U.S. government and its Latin American allies were initiating an embargo against the Republic of Haiti, you, the astute reader, would point out that this was also the case from 1804 to 1862, during which time the United States, itself a major slave economy, refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the first country to ban slavery. To quote a U.S. Senator from South Carolina, speaking on the Senate floor in 1824, "The peace and safety of a large portion of our union forbids us even to discuss [it]."⁹ But the slave-owning republic to the north of Haiti was not content merely to refuse to receive a Haitian ambassador. In a series of actions with loud echoes today, we also pressured other American republics to refuse to recognize Haiti:

The United States blocked Haiti's invitation to the famous Western Hemisphere Panama Conference of 1825 and refused to recognize Haitian independence until 1862. This isolation was imposed on Haiti by a frightened white world, and Haiti became a test case, first, for those arguing about emancipation and then, after the end of slavery, for those arguing about the capacity of blacks for self-government.¹⁰

And if that enterprising journalist were to label recent coup attempts "the new violence" in Haiti while deploring the twin scourges of racism and bad policies, you the reader would probably retort, "See *Uses of Haiti*, *passim*."

But despite the continuities, there have been some fascinating new twists and turns. The nature of the war against the Haitian poor has changed in important ways.

Much of *The Uses of Haiti* described how, during the 20th century, the U.S. government occupied Haiti militarily (1915-1934), created the modern Haitian army through an act of the U.S. Congress, and then continued to support it and the Duvalier dictatorships in the style to which they had become accustomed from the time of the pull-out of troops in 1934 until Haiti's first free and fair elections, held on December 16th, 1990. Uses also tells the tragic story of the military coup of 1991, the bloody years that followed, and the restoration of constitutional rule in 1994. The long afterword, written shortly after UN-led forces entered Haiti in 1994, described how we, the United States, tried to condition the assistance necessary to rebuild ravaged Haiti on U.S. political objectives. The objectives were unattractive to the Haitian poor, who continued to vote for the social-justice platform that emerged in the late eighties.

As for aid to the governments of Haiti, it flowed most freely during the Duvalier dictatorships and the violent military juntas. Now that Haitians possess at long last a democratically elected government, the U.S. government has decided to bypass normal channels and instead distribute its aid (and influence) via non-governmental organizations alone. Worse still, it has again engaged its allies—and who dares oppose us?—to follow suit. For example, the administration of George W. Bush has exercised its authority to veto already-approved aid loans from the Inter-American Development Bank—loans earmarked to improve health, education, and water in Haiti. A few outside of Haiti seem to be paying attention, but human rights organizations have had little to say about the hypocrisy and disregard for other humans and their rights apparent in such decisions—there is widespread awareness within Haiti of what it means to be so generous to dictators and military juntas and to subsequently block a series of loans for clean water, education, and health care. The OAS has been the major cheerleader of the blockade against Haiti

under Aristide's presidency, which brings us back, with something between stupefaction and anger, to its statement of August 30th: of course Haiti's health and sanitary disasters "represent by themselves human rights violations." That's why it's wrong for the hemisphere's most powerful nation to block humanitarian aid to the most impoverished and wronged one. The violations are caused not by Haiti, but by its powerful neighbor to the north.



What is the justification for this latest act of arrogant hostility toward the Haitian poor? Trumped-up charges regarding improper methods of tallying ballots during the May 2000 legislative elections are the avowed reason for this particular embargo. Certainly, Americans are right to be concerned about electoral justice, but let us be clear about the need for an international standard. Ironically, charges of election irregularities were being leveled against the Haitian government at about the same time that more serious allegations concerning the U.S. electoral process, most notably in Florida, were being investigated. In fact, two years later, Florida's inefficient and corrupt electoral machinery continues to make headlines.

Are there solid reasons to believe, for example, that Aristide didn't win the 2000 elections fair and square? No, the complaints this time were about the legislative and local elections that took place in May 2000, months before Titid was reelected by yet another landslide. The May elections fielded some 20,000 candidates. Critics seeking to impugn the elections, which delivered, as predicted by Gallup polls, a massive victory for the party associated with Aristide, argued that the votes for eight Senate seats had not been counted correctly. A run-off was in order, argued the OAS and its liegeland in Washington. So, presto, official foreign aid to Haiti—necessary to rebuild the country's ravaged infrastructure—

was frozen.

Subsequently, the Haitian government followed all of the stipulations set down in a series of accords advanced by the OAS in June, 2002:¹¹ the seven senators involved (one of the seats had already expired, and was re-run) not only agreed to a run-off with their second place challengers, but resigned so that new elections could be held. One would be gratified and amazed to see such behavior among American legislators. But despite concessions here in Haiti, the aid embargo remains, suggesting that perhaps the actual reason for it was not really U.S. concern over local elections. Those who study patterns of U.S. giving to Haiti and to other countries would certainly be a bit suspicious. The U.S. government had, as noted, little trouble running hundreds of millions of dollars through the Duvalier dictatorship; rarely questioned the purposes for which the "aid" was spent, never asked for much in the way of accountability (except, of course, in terms of promises to repay loans). We were unstintingly generous to the post-Duvalier military, whose spectacular exploits, including the torching of Aristide's church during mass, are chronicled in this book. And even during the leaky, half-hearted embargo against the men in uniform who ousted Aristide (a junta eventually found guilty of war crimes), the United States was providing training, on U.S. soil, to the officers of that very regime.¹²

Suspicious about the real reasons behind the U.S. aid embargo against Haiti are only fanned when one looks elsewhere for links between the extent to which adherence to certain electoral procedures determines whether or not U.S. aid flows. To say that "double standards" exist is a considerable understatement. Take Pakistan, which until recently was under a similar embargo but with some justification, since General Pervez Musharraf had come to power in a military coup.¹³ But all of this changed as of mid-September, 2001. "My personal objective when I got here in August," [Ambassador] Ms. Chamberlin said in a November, 2001 interview, "was to work very hard to improve Pakistani-

American relations, with the aim that at the end of my three years here we could lift American sanctions on Pakistan. I could never have dreamed that we'd have accomplished so much in my first three months."¹⁴ What's a coup between good friends? All those unpleasantries were quickly forgotten when new uses for Pakistan were found.¹⁵

The hypocrisy of U.S. justifications for imposing trade and aid sanctions has been noted by almost all neutral observers.¹⁶ But what are the immediate, lived effects of this hypocrisy among the poor? The current U.S.-sponsored embargo against Haiti targets the most vulnerable population in all of the hemisphere, the poorest people with the most fragile economy, ecology, and society. Its impact has been profound, as a report from the Inter-American Development Bank notes. Bank officials themselves concluded that "overall, the major factor behind economic stagnation is the withholding of both foreign grants and loans, associated with the international community's response to the critical political impasse. These funds are estimated at over U.S.\$500 million."¹⁷

If the Bank itself can come to such a conclusion, why is it among the institutions punishing Haiti? U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Lee answered this question earlier this year:

The U.S. has used its veto powers on the IDB's Board of Directors to stop all loans designated to Haiti and has chilled funding opportunities at the other financial institutions, like the World Bank and IMF, pending a resolution of the political situation in Haiti. This situation is unique because the loans in question have been approved by the bank's board of executive directors, and the Haitian Government has ratified the debt and signed contractual documents.

This veto is particularly disturbing since the charter of the IDB specifically states that the Bank shall not intervene in the politics of its member states. The Bush Administration has decided to leverage political

change in a member country by embargoing loans that the Bank has a contractual obligation to disburse.¹⁸

Since I am particularly interested in the welfare of the sick, allow me to chart the history of Inter-American Development Bank Loan No. 1009/SF-HA, "Reorganization of the National Health System." The "national health system" was designed to be the primary provider of basic health care of the poor majority. On July 21, 1998, the Haitian government and the IDB signed a \$22.5 million loan for Phase I of a project to "decentralize and reorganize" the Haitian health care system. The need to improve the health care system then, as now, was urgent: there are 1.2 doctors, 1.3 nurses and .04 dentists per 10,000 Haitians (for comparison, there are 27.9 doctors for every 10,000 U.S. inhabitants and 58.2 doctors for every 10,000 Cuban inhabitants).¹⁹ Forty percent of the Haitian population is without access to any form of primary health care; HIV and tuberculosis rates are by far the highest in the hemisphere, as are infant, juvenile, and maternal mortality. To use its jargon, the IDB project would target eighty percent of the population for access to primary health care through the construction of low-cost clinics and local health dispensaries. The funds would be used to train community health agents and to purchase medical equipment and essential medicines. To be gauged successful by its own criteria, the project must lead to a drop in the infant mortality rate from 74 to 50 deaths per 1,000 live births; a drop in the juvenile mortality rate from 131 to 110 deaths per 1,000 births; a drop in the birth rate from 4.6 to 4; and a drop in the general mortality rate attributable to the lack of proper health care from 10.7 per 1,000 to 9.7 per 1,000. These were not overly ambitious goals. Most who evaluated the project thought it feasible and well designed. And the need speaks for itself.

So what's the hold-up? In order for funds to be dis-

bursed by the IDB, the loan agreement had to be ratified by the Haitian parliament. In October 1998, the Haitian Minister of Health presented the project to Haiti's famously obstructionist 46th Legislature, which included many people who now constitute the Convergence "Démocratique" (the coalition opposed to Aristide) and soon to be voted out of office. For weeks, the Parliament simply failed to meet. When it did meet, it failed to obtain a quorum. The legislators also rejected three prime ministers proposed by then-president René Préval. The goal was clear enough within Haiti: paralyze all social services, including health care, in order to undermine every effort of the Executive branch, which was still associated with the party founded by Aristide, to improve the living conditions of the poor majority that had elected him by a landslide in 1990 and would do so again in November 2000. The Haitian people had had enough of this kind of parliamentary gridlock, which is why they voted a straight ticket that supported the party associated with Aristide in the May 2000 parliamentary elections.

In October 2000, after the installation of the more representative 47th Legislature, the new parliament voted immediately to ratify the health project along with the three other vital IDB loan agreements. No money yet, but it was on the way, the Haitians were told by an official decree published in the Government's newspaper on January 8, 2001. By early March, the IDB had not yet disbursed the loan but announced that it intended to work with the new Aristide government, reelected a few months previously, and to finance projects already in the pipeline. It demanded, however, that a number of conditions be met. The Government must pay \$5 million dollars in arrears to the IDB. On May 15, 2001, notwithstanding the fact that not one penny of this or any other IDB loan had been disbursed, the Bank advised the Haitians that the government would be required to pay what it called a "credit commission" of 0.5% on the entire balance of undisbursed funds effective twelve months

after the date of approval of the loans. As of March 31, 2001, Haiti already owed the IDB a \$185,239.75 “commission fee” on a loan never received. The total amount of fees owed on five development loans from the IDB, all of them taken out in previous decades, was \$2,311,422. The Bank advised the Government that payment must begin on September 15, 2001 with the balance due October 5, 2001. In mid-May, amidst rumors that the IDB was shutting down its offices in Haiti, the Bank announced that the country representatives and top staff were being recalled to Washington “for consultations.”

The “consultations” could not have been too heartening. According to the title of an AP wire story, “Haiti clamors for release of blocked loans that might take years to disburse.” The chief IDB officer in Haiti called for the payment of “\$20 million in loan arrears and reform [of government] economic practices” before Haiti could gain access to the already-approved credit. Many of these loans on which arrears are “owed” were of course made to the dictatorships and military juntas described in the previous chapters. Even supposing the educational loan were to go through, the IDB officer allowed that “If other loans are not added, Haiti will probably be paying out more than it is getting.”²⁰

Alas for the Haitian poor, the lives of hundreds of thousands hang in the balance: the loans are for three things—water, health care, and education—that they need desperately. What would Nicole’s fate have been, one wonders, if she had been able to attend school? What will her future be if she does not drink clean water and receive proper medical care?

And proper medical care is awfully hard to deliver under these conditions. The courtyard around our hospital remains overflowing with patients. Over the past year, our general ambulatory clinic has seen an enormous increase in demand. We are staffed to receive about 35,000 visits annually, but if trends hold will this year see an estimated 180,000 patients. Meanwhile, our visits to most neighbor-

ing facilities show them to have very few patients, since the services they offer are too expensive for the destitute sick. We have registered a rise in trauma cases due in large part to road accidents (which relate to lack of road upkeep and other infrastructural deficits). The sequelae of accidents are more serious, since patients are required to travel farther to receive care and because many require, but do not get, the care of orthopedic and trauma surgeons. Malaria remains, in our facility, the leading single diagnosis during the rainy season. Malaria deaths continue to occur, even though Haiti has not yet registered chloroquine-resistant cases. There's no great mystery as to why: lack of access to care remains the primary problem, as noted in the initial IDB proposal, drafted years ago.

As for the impact of the other embargoed loans on the Haitian poor, what might one expect if the public infrastructure of the country were run into the ground and there were now no money to provide clean water and at least primary education? As the Haitians say, you can't get blood out of a rock. The situation here is as bad as any I've seen, with an international aid embargo leveled against a democratically elected government. Journalists and other diverse analysts expending all of their energies, it would seem, criticizing David, not Goliath. When I pointed these things out at a recent conference sponsored by the Pan American Health Organization, I was rebuked by an irate IDB official for my "rude and inappropriate" comments. But a couple of months later, as the dimensions of the humanitarian crisis became apparent even within the corridors of power, U.S. Senator Christopher Dodd was not very delicate, either. Speaking from the Senate floor on July 31, 2002, Dodd noted the obvious:

Ironically it is the United States that has taken the lead in preventing Haiti from receiving assistance from the [Inter-American] Development Bank—the institution that is supposed to be the premier regional development agency.

Proponents of withholding crucial IDB funding point to Haiti's weak institutions, to the need for drastic and timely economic and administrative reforms, as a prerequisite to restarting assistance. True, Haiti is an impoverished nation with weak institutions. True, there is corruption at high levels. Yes, there is a serious need for reform in these areas. But it is also true that poor countries breed weak institutions, and seek to strengthen themselves and help their people with the assistance of international humanitarian aid.

But that is not the real reason that assistance is being withheld. The real reason funds are being withheld is political—namely as leverage in ongoing OAS negotiations to resolve issues related to the May 2000 Haitian elections.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) has endeavored over the last two years to resolve the political stalemate in Haiti over the disputed 2000 parliamentary elections. He has put on the negotiating table a balanced and credible proposal for resolving the election dispute and is working to ensure that security and other matters of concern to Haitian society are being taken seriously by the Government of Haiti.

That said, has Haiti had flawed elections? Absolutely!

Mr. President, we are talking about a country without a long historical tradition of democracy, and while the squalor worsens, and public faith in government is reduced to zero, what remains of their fragile democracy is eroded further.

Even the United States, with our proud history of peaceful transitions of power, orderly elections, and representative governance, has had significant troubles with our own elections in very recent years. Surely we do not expect Haiti to live up to a standard of electoral perfection that we ourselves have not achieved, much less to use this standard as a benchmark of worthiness to receive desperately needed international aid.

I have always strongly opposed linkage between the ongoing political dialogue and Haitian access to the resources of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). These monies have been held hostage for too long and the damage to the Haitian economy has been devastating. The good faith efforts of the Haitian government in responding to the OAS initiative should be more than enough justification for beginning the process of loan disbursements from the IDB, although the state of despair in Haiti is all the justification that should be needed for an institution whose primary obligation is to promote economic and social development in the hemisphere.

Shame on the Inter-American Development Bank for allowing itself to be used in this manner. It does not speak well of an institution that for the most part has a very good reputation. Shame on the United States for pressuring the IDB to do so.²¹

Until very recently, the OAS has hewn whatever line the Bush administration saw fit to trace. A few days ago, however, there were signs that such repugnant policies were making even the diplomats uneasy. Yesterday, September 4th, the OAS passed Resolution Number 822, which called for an end to the negotiations between the Haitian government and the opposition, the Convergence "Démocratique."²²

Who, exactly, constitutes this all-powerful opposition, capable of blocking the lifelines of development assistance to the very country (their own country) most in need of it? Inside Haiti, the main political opposition is the same motley group described in the first edition of *Uses*. These tiny grouplets have banded together in a still small coalition called, without irony, the "Convergence Démocratique." Although mostly rightwingers, its leadership comes from several quarters of the political map. The Convergence is, however, united in its unswerving opposition to Aristide—and thus, one must conclude, to the poor majority's right to have a say in Haiti's affairs. The

level of support of the groups composing the Convergence, as gauged by polls, has run between 4 and 12 percent.²³ It is the “intelligentsia” of the Convergence who come up with cockamamie stories about how each attack or attempted coup against Aristide is really a sham authored by himself, accusations which echo their comments regarding the attempts on his life in the eighties.²⁴

Although the Convergence has scant popular support within Haiti, it has strong and unambiguous support in Washington. And it is to Washington that its leaders turn. For example, the “Movement for National Salvation” has just set in motion rumors, subsequently denied by an official State Department spokesman, that the United States has endorsed a “plan for political transition” involving Aristide’s forced departure.²⁵ The Convergence is funded, at least in part, by the U.S. International Republican Institute, which is associated, unsurprisingly, with the U.S. Republican Party and obtains funding from Congress through the National Endowment for Democracy.²⁶ In this sense, then, Haitians do feel that they suffer from a system which offers privileged people impunity. But it comes from our government, not theirs.



What about the “Haiti solidarity community” that should have been able to convey a coherent critique of the policies of the powerful to the citizens of the rich countries that now decide the fates of the bottom billion? Alas, this community—to which I belong—has been almost as fractured as the Haitian political class itself. Perhaps this is unsurprising, from a sociological point of view. In an incisive book, Michael Ignatieff makes an important point for those seeking to sift through the incoherent commentaries flying around the Internet:

The phrase “global civil society” implies a cohesive moral movement when the reality is fierce

and disputatious rivalry among the nongovernmental organizations. These groups frequently claim that they represent human interests and human rights more effectively than governments, and while this is sometimes true, NGOs are not necessarily more representative or more accountable than elected governments.²⁷

Within Haiti and without, the “Haiti solidarity community” is divided on just about everything. The “human rights community” is certainly full of strange bedfellows. Two of the human rights groups most vocal in their denunciations of the “Aristide regime” have just won an award presented within the U.S. Embassy.²⁸ In truth, this “community” is riven by deep division, particularly over social and economic rights—the rights of the poor—and their relation to legal rights. The so-called progressive commentary from outside Haiti can also erase history to make a point. One of the biggest anti-Aristide gripes of the sectarian left is that he allegedly “sold out” in order to bring in aid money to rebuild Haiti. Calls to ignore the results of democratic elections are not usually involved in democratic niceties. One self-proclaimed radical, who launches endless e-mails from Canada, recently titled one “Jean-Bertrand Aristide, bay talon-w!” (Jean-Bertrand Aristide, get lost!). Now there’s a true democrat speaking: she wants the people’s choice to disappear from the scene. Most of these complaints come, as noted in the epilogue written at the close of 1994, from the self-appointed leaders of various small movements, each with their sponsors in Europe or North America. But how can you rebuild Haiti without massive resources, perhaps something on the scale of half of what has been drained from Haiti in recent years? It will require, as noted, hundreds of millions of dollars to rebuild ruined health, educational, and sanitary infrastructure here. And until that happens, there will be misery and hunger and inequality, and their consequences, here. Such “structural violence,” which has been perpetrated from above and without, will

be reflected in local violence, just as it is everywhere in the world.

You'd think that progressive observers, at least, would make this connection. But many don't. The "human rights community" rarely dares to criticize the United States government and its obedient appendages (e.g., the OAS). But critical analysis should be following the chain of command and asking why it is, for example, that the "International Republican Institute" and the "National Endowment for Democracy" are so keen on financing the Haitian opposition with their slender democratic qualifications. Much recent commentary sidesteps the David-versus-Goliath story, focusing almost exclusively on the inevitable results (viz., episodic violence) of the awful poverty that Haitian are now forced to endure. It's important to add that missing the David-versus-Goliath story means missing the story, period. The U.S. press is, as usual, self-righteous and short-memored. The Haitian for-profit media, we read today, are claiming that the government's call for them to pay taxes is "yet another attempt to muzzle the press."²⁹

So we hear endless complaints about the corruption of the Haitian government, with no mention of the industrial-strength corruption of the United States and its vassals. (I'm not asking, here, where is that missing \$4.8 billion taken from an IMF loan to Russia.³⁰ Nor am I asking how Enron, WorldCom or Martha Stewart came up with their creative accounting methods. I'm focusing, rather, on U.S. corruption concerning Haiti. Why did the Haitian government have to sue the U.S. government to recover 160,000 pages of documents taken from the headquarters of FRAPH and from other military installations in Haiti?).³¹ The U.S. press describes in great detail the "thugs" and "armed gangs" and "Lavalas goons" and the violence they perpetrate but with little recollection of how it was that Haiti came to be armed. Reports of narco-trafficking appear in the print media with little discussion of the destination to which such cocaine transship-

ments are bound.³² Haiti's "flawed electoral processes" are dissected while more serious allegations of disenfranchisement in Florida are given short shrift—again, a scandal quickly forgotten because, we're told, we're now at war against terrorism.

Then there are the miscarriages of justice for which we are even more directly responsible, because they're occurring on U.S. soil. One update since *Uses*: Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, the founder of FRAPH and found guilty of murder in the Raboteau trial, is still living as a free man in Queens, New York despite a 1995 deportation order. U.S. officials have admitted that Constant was paid by the CIA and discussed his paramilitary activities with them. He now remains under an order of deportation, but this has been delayed under State Department advisement.³³

The Haitian government is concerned about such individuals, and with good reason. In the past year, former Haitian military officers have staged coup attempts from the Dominican Republic and perhaps from other countries. In July, 2001, five police officers were killed in the line of duty in the town closest to our clinic. On 17 December 2001, a more ambitious effort succeeded in penetrating the presidential palace and were headed towards Aristide's residence with heavy artillery mounted in the back of a pick-up. And even when they fell short of their mission, such attempts have not been wholly unsuccessful. Their goal is to create chaos and thus complement "political" efforts to discredit and destabilize the elected government. After the assault, the homes of Convergence members were attacked by angry mobs. The OAS made clear where its concerns lay. Rather than condemn the coup, it issued a call to indemnify members of the Convergence—and the cash-strapped government did so.



The Uses of Haiti described the process by which

Haiti was driven into the ground. Ten years after its publication, I would like to close by underlining the following point. When something is driven into the ground, resources are required to rebuild it. A person who has been kicked to the ground must expend energy to get back up again. This was clear in 1986, more so in 1990 and 1994, and clearest of all right now. “A Marshall Plan for Haiti” some said. “Reparations,” observed the more historically minded (A few truly ahistorical ideologues have argued that “Haiti needs no aid. It can recover on its own.”)

The real reason we have an embargo against Haiti, in my view, is that every time the Haitians are allowed to elect who they want they make the mistake of not electing the kind of people the U.S. government wants. They keep electing, in fact, the same guy, the one who is pushing social and economic rights for the poor. The same one who is vilified by the establishment press (when Aristide was recently given an award by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, the *Wall Street Journal* said, “what next—a UN Medal of Freedom for Fidel Castro?”).³⁴ In almost all of his public utterances, Aristide brings forth the significance of social and economic rights. To cite again the article from *The Village Voice*, which is not flattering to the Aristide government:

In May, three local activists were shot dead by police, who later claimed to have been attacked by gangs. Local residents, for their part, charged the activists were shot while arriving at an arranged meeting with police. The killings triggered two days of shooting between police and gangs, leaving a pervasive suspicion among locals that, having outlived their usefulness, the militants have become targets.

When asked about the situation at a recent press conference, Aristide replied: “The people of Cité Soleil are the sons and daughters of the country. Their rights are violated when they

cannot eat; their rights are violated when they cannot go to school. We must work with all sectors, the opposition and the elite, to improve their lives. We are committed to working with them and we will not rest until we do that.”³⁵

The Wall Street Journal might deny the relevance of Aristide’s comments to the situation, but any inhabitant of Haiti would see the connection: without social and economic rights, political rights have no soil to grow in. The brutality in Haiti’s streets will not be tamed by legal reforms or by extralegal police action, but by confronting poverty and disease.

As of today, all significant aid to the public sector remains blocked, although smaller amounts are being routed through non-governmental organizations (some of them doing excellent work, but on a local scale), through right-wing political parties, and through churches, some of them also quite conservative. Haitians abroad continue to send home remittances, but remittances, though vital to the survival of many families here, cannot substitute for the aid necessary to rebuild the country. Conditions here on the ground are akin to the battlefield of an undeclared war on the poor. Now that the OAS seems to be calling for an end to the embargo, it’s tempting to predict that the current U.S. administration will find other ways to make sure the money doesn’t get through, masking political goals under “technical considerations.”

War, \$500 million in aid, connections between rich nations and poor ones, irresponsible analyses—why does this all sound so familiar? Well, it could be that it’s the same story told in the first edition of *Uses*. Or perhaps it’s the figure itself, linked to the inaccuracy—if blindness to the big picture amounts to inaccuracy—of the press? That constellation should be reminding us of El Salvador two decades ago, which was the absolute opposite, in my view, of the current Haitian situation. There, the murderous Salvadoran government was under no embargo, although it should have been isolated in the

manner that Haiti is now. In that instance, \$500 million—that nice round, recurring number—went to the Salvadoran army, which had as its sole enemy the Salvadoran people (and a few dozen nuns and priests who were accompanying them). The first edition of *Uses* recounted in some detail the massacre of hundreds of men, women and children cowering in the hamlet of El Mozote. As in Haiti, official press coverage averted its gaze from the complicity of the powerful:

From January 1983 through December 1989, “El Mozote” was cited in a mere fifteen articles published in major U.S. and Canadian newspapers. (During this same period the U.S. government provided the Salvadoran military with more than \$500 million in direct military assistance)... The coverage of El Mozote shows us that for the journalists, no less than for most people of the West, the daily lives of billions of people in the rest of the world do not exist outside the parameters of crisis or scandal: hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, crop failures, and civil wars.³⁶

Our understanding of the dramas of Haiti and El Salvador are dim, at best. And yet understanding the causes and consequences of such tragedies is perhaps the most important challenge now facing all of us. Allow me to close with a final reconsideration of the human rights situation here in Haiti. I heard on the radio, just today, that although the IDB was considering releasing the blocked funds, the World Bank had no plans for extending credit to Haiti. In fact, the World Bank complained that Haiti owed it \$18 million in arrears. Because I’d gone to the World Bank to ask, as a concerned citizen, why there was an international embargo against the government of Haiti, I was able to meet with a high-ranking official there. It was my first visit to the Bank; I was received with courtesy. The senior official with whom I met congratulated me for my interest in Haiti and told

me that he too had experience there. He had negotiated a loan with “the Haitian government in the past.” Anxiously, I asked him “when was that?” “In 1987,” he replied. In 1987, Haiti was ruled by the murderous military junta, the authors of the attack on Saint-Jean Bosco at the very time Father Aristide himself was saying mass. What happened that day is described in detail in these pages. The World Bank is in essence asking the Aristide government to repay the loan it made to those who tried to kill him.

On the day Nicole attended our conference on health and human rights, Aristide was off to Johannesburg, where the world’s leaders were addressing, they said, the problems of the planet. It’s worth citing Aristide’s remarks, which were brief:

...Whereas every day 24,000 people die of hunger (that makes 4 deaths every second), 1.1 billion poor people live without access to clean drinking water. And yet 70% of the surface of the earth is covered with water. Diseases associated with this precious liquid are the cause of one third of the deaths recorded in developing countries....As for tropical forests, they are disappearing at a rate of 11.3 million hectares per year [27.9 million acres]. Between 1940 and 2002, Haiti’s forest cover shrank from 40% to 1%. Our compatriots, fleeing the disastrous consequences of economic sanctions unjustly applied to Haiti, rush, like the soil, towards the sea....

Soon, in 2004, we will celebrate the bicentenary of our independence, not on our knees but standing on our feet. Standing in the shadow of Toussaint Louverture, Dessalines, Martin Luther King and alongside you, dear and true friends of Haiti. From this day forward, let us all stand up with dignity and courage, together with the 800 million hungry people and the 854 million illiterate people on our planet to revive its social, economic, and ecological fabric.³⁷

“Dignity” is no abstract moral label in this vision; it grows out of tolerable economic and ecological conditions. Those who make common cause with the poor, in Haiti and elsewhere, have every reason to hope that Aristide’s vision comes to pass. In the interim, however, the bottom billion will continue to go without clean water, adequate nutrition, and even a modicum of basic medical care. Many will die—erased by the mean-spirited policies of those who abuse their power. I will close this Afterword, and return to our clinic, where Nicole and many others await us.

Cange, Haiti
September 5, 2002