

The Pastor's Page

“Haiti...An Unbroken Agony”

Because of the catastrophic devastation from the 7.0 earthquake we have heard a lot about Haiti being the poorest nation in this hemisphere. We even heard from Pat Robertson that Haiti “made a deal with the devil,” to get free. Well, allow me to give some background information as to why Haiti, in the words of Randall Robinson, has had an “Unbroken Agony.”

Most Americans do not know that after fighting for their freedom against the cruel, barbarous enslavement by the French, the citizens of Haiti were then required to pay reparations to those same French for “denying the French the further benefit of owning them...” The compensation demanded by the French was “roughly \$21 billion (2004 dollars) and was backed by a global economic embargo by America and other European nations.”

“In 1825, twenty-two years after L’Ouverture’s death, the Haitian army was no longer the feared fighting force it had once been. France, threatening to re-enslave Haitians, imposed an ordinance requiring from Haiti a payment of 150 million francs and a 50 percent tariff reduction for all French ships docking in Haiti. To meet the first payment of 30 million francs under the terms of the ordinance, the government of Haiti was forced to borrow the full amount from a private French bank, MM Ch Ternaux Grandolphe et Cie.” “After extended negotiations, in 1838, under the Traite’ d’Amitie’ (Treaty of Friendship), the original obligation of 150 million francs was reduced to 90 million francs, and government of Haiti was required to make thirty annual payments of 2 million francs in order to pay off the 60 million franc balance. Haiti had to make these payments in addition to payments it had been making to a succession of private banks from which it had to borrow at onerous interest rates in order to meet the terms of its original obligation to France.”

“In 1922, seven years into a nineteen-year American military occupation of Haiti that resulted in 15,000 Haitian deaths, the United States imposed a \$16 million loan on the Haitian government to pay off its “debt” to France.”

“The American loan was finally paid off in 1947. Haiti was left virtually bankrupt, its workforce in desperate straits.”

“The Haitian economy has never recovered from the financial havoc France (and America) wreaked upon it, during and after slavery.”

I have quoted extensively from Randall Robinson’s book on Haiti, “An Unbroken Agony: Haiti from Revolution to the kidnapping of a President.” It is important that we understand that contrary to Pat Robertson’s comments, Haitians have long been proud, loving and spiritual people whose only fault (if you can call it that) was to be the first Black nation in this hemisphere to throw off the yoke of slavery.

I felt compelled to tell this part of the story as we continuously hear Haiti referred to as “the poorest country in the hemisphere”... we need to understand the reason behind that poverty.

Please let me also add (and I want to thank my friend Camille Arnold for this info) that Haiti is an Agrarian economy; Agriculture being the means of production. Yet the IMF and The World bank have instituted policies that undermine that very Agrarian economy. Policies that require the people to stop producing crops (the recent IMF loan that required Haitians to stop producing rice is an example). This means that the people flood the cities thus Port O Prince has over 2 million people living in it on top of one another. It has also been revealed on CNN that it was known that Haiti sat on a fault line and a major earthquake was expected (hmm just like it was known that the Levees in New Orleans were not strong enough to withstand a category 4 or 5 Hurricane).

Finally beloved Haiti’s democratically elected President Jean Bertrand-Aristide in 2004 was kidnapped by the U.S. military and claimed that he was fleeing the country. All this is documented in Randall’s book. The same book I did a bible class on two years ago. Beloved I believe God is demanding that we pay attention to the least of these. There is no reason why Haiti should have ever been the poorest nation in this hemisphere while we have enjoyed such great excess. There is no reason that American school children are not taught about the heroic honor of the people of Haiti to throw off the chains of oppression yet be punished for it. There is no reason why America should throw a few million dollars at the situation and then abandon them again, NO not while we spend billions to rebuild Iraq. Please tell the story and educate your co-workers, family and friends about the Noble country and the Ignoble circumstances that were cast upon them.

Be informed and Be encouraged

Pastor John E. Jackson, Sr.