

The Real Looters

We've all seen the images so many times: a Black youth, or maybe it's a Black mother, or a Black elder taking food, clothing, items to be sold "illegally" from a store.

This person is possibly hungry, undoubtedly poor and in some level of distress — whether it be from the ravages of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; the combined devastation and racist neglect in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005; or even the righteous anger, in response to police brutality, that leads to rebellions. The person has few, if any, options and, in all probability, hasn't had any for a long time.

And yet when times get desperate, and this person is captured on camera securing necessities for his or her family, this person is demonized as a "looter." When natural disasters occur in areas with a high concentration of people of color, the highest concern echoed on the TV networks and in the printed press is that of "security."

It is the height of racism that allows government figures and their talking heads in the corporate media to even mention looting during such tumultuous events. It's based on the old colonialist mentality that people of color are "savages" who need to be kept in line by the white man. And it's reinforced by the one-dimensional images of people of color that are shown all the time — images that, fundamentally, refuse to take into account the legacy of pain and suffering, the will to survive or the right to resist.

What's the theft of basic items of

survival compared to the theft of whole lands and peoples? The very imperialists who raise charges of looting, if they had their way, would loot and exploit all the peoples of the world and the very environment we live in, until there's nothing left. These imperialists employ every manner of violence — from starvation to guns and bombs — to get what they want.

While the threat of "looting" by the oppressed is in reality very minimal to the imperialists, they do face a real security issue. It's the threat that those who have been oppressed for centuries will rise up, perhaps employing the same violence that they have always been subjected to. That is why the U.S. sends troops rather than aid to Haiti in its time of need.

The imperialists face a second threat, one that significantly augments the first. It's that the oppressed have allies who will rise up with them, who realize they face the same oppressor, who are aware that their strength lies in unity. In an attempt to avoid this, they ply us with images of the dreaded "looters," who are really our sisters and brothers in struggle.

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Haitian Diaspora Grieves

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community in the United States indicates that for them, the most important long-term need is improving the nation's health and education systems," Bendixen said.

"Thirty-seven percent of those polled said the health and education systems needed to be addressed; 24 percent said strengthening the security and safety of the people should be the top priority, while a majority also agreed that Haiti would benefit from the opening of American markets to Haitian agricultural produce and manufactured goods."

Haitians in the United State are not concerned about the large U.S. military presence in their homeland.

The Haitian Diaspora in the United States also gave high marks to President Obama and his government (96 percent) and to the United Nations (88 percent) for their response to the earthquake. But three-fifth of the respondents also said the Haitian government has become unresponsive, and 63 percent disapproved of the way president Rene Preval and the Haitian government conducted themselves in the aftermath of the earthquake. Moreover, more than three-quarter of Haitian Americans believe that the \$100 million pledged by the United States to help the country recover was not enough. They would like to see more than \$1 billion given.

The diaspora in the United States is split on whether the Haitian government is still a viable entity. Forty-six percent agree that Haiti will never be able to govern itself, while 41 percent disagree that Haiti is a failed state.

The NAM poll also found that more than 90 percent of Haitians in the United States follow the events in Haiti "closely," mostly through English language television. The large majority — 87 percent — characterized coverage of the earthquake by CNN, Fox News, ABC, CBS and NBC as fair and comprehensive, and less than 10 percent felt it has been "unbalanced and sensationalistic."

According to Risk Management Solutions, a catastrophe modeling firm, the Haitian earthquake caused an estimated 250,000 fatalities. Disease, starvation and lack of medical care could push the death toll higher. "We're too close to events, but the impact [the earthquake] has among Haitians, as well as among the rest of the world, may be among the worst catastrophes in the last century," Bendixen said.

"This poll should help the American public, as well as our policymakers, understand the strain and emotional connection between Haitian Americans and their native country," said Sandy Close, executive director of NAM. "Some of the responses regarding the respondents' concerns for the recovery effort may also be useful in helping shape U.S. and international policies aimed at rebuilding the nation."

The NAM poll interviewed 400 respondents between January 22-24, 2010, in English or in Creole, depending on their language of preference. According to the U.S. Census, there are approximately 800,000 Haitians living in the United States.

Emergency Aid to Haiti

by Kathy Durkin

The Haiti Emergency Relief Fund is raising money to aid the Haitian people. All contributions collected are going directly to grass-roots organizations in Haiti for earthquake relief. This all-volunteer organization has a history of giving concrete aid to the Haitian grass-roots democratic movement.

Tax-deductible donations can be sent to East Bay Sanctuary Covenant/Haiti Emergency Relief Fund, 2362 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94704. Donate online at www.haitiaction.net

Text donations can be sent to the Yele Haiti Foundation, which was established by the award-winning Haitian musician Wyclef Jean. Contribute to its Earthquake Fund online at www.yele.org

A delegation from Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees is taking first-aid supplies and personal hygiene goods to Haiti the week of Jan. 25. Call 718-735-4660 about dropping off goods in New York City. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to IFCO/Haiti Relief, 418 W. 145th St., New York, NY 10031.

Donate online at www.ifconews.org or call 212-925-5757.

To support travel of Cuban-trained U.S. doctors to Haiti with medicine and supplies, donations can be made to IFCO Haiti Medical Service Project using contact information above.

Tax-deductible donations for medical teams and equipment can be sent to Partners in Health, which has field hospitals in Haiti, at P.O. Box 845578, Boston, MA 02284-5578. Call 617-432-5256 or visit www.pih.org to make credit card donations.

Information will be forthcoming on how to donate to Haitian political party Fanmi Lavalas as soon as it's available.

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Haitian Relief Effort

Conrad W. Worrill, Ph.D.,
Director CCICS

Many people have been asking, "What can we do to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti?" As you know, the Black population of Chicago has a special historical relationship to Haiti in as much as the real founder of Chicago, Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable was of Haitian ancestry. He was among the first settlers of this region and was a leader of great economic enterprises.

Secondly, the successful Haitian Revolution that culminated in Haiti becoming an independent nation in 1804. The reason that Napoleon and the French agreed to sell their Louisiana territory in what is historically known as the Louisiana Purchase of 800 million acres of land to the United States because of the impact of the Haitian Revolution.

Thirdly, our esteemed elder ancestor, Dr. Jacob H. Carruthers, wrote a profound book on the Haitian Revolution entitled *The Irritated Genie* that I encourage everyone in the CCICS community to read or re-read as the case may be.

It is in this spirit that my organization, the National Black United Front, has learned that our sister in Haiti, Valerie Mawiyah Duperval, is safe. She contacted us early in the morning letting us know that she was safe and has been sleeping on the ground

in Tabarre. For the past twenty years, Sister Mawiyah has dedicated her life to the cause of Haiti. At this moment, we are requesting that donations be sent to the following two organizations:

Haitian American Ministries, (Mawiyah's organization), 14619 Zenith Street, Houston, TX, 77045-6549. 713.433.9518.

Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti, Memo Line — Haitian Crisis Relief Fund, 1227 Dodge Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202, Attorney Lionel Jean Baptiste. 847.424.0400. <http://www.haitiancongress.org>

In the coming weeks we will be prepared to instruct our community on donating non-perishable foods, clothing, and medical supplies. At this moment it would be premature to do this until the Disaster Relief Operation can get a handle on the devastation and set-up a system so that the materials sent can be properly received and dispensed.

Finally, we must give special thanks to the 344 Cuban doctors and the expert disaster relief teams from Cuba and Venezuela governments that have already hit the ground running in Haiti and are not receiving any media coverage for their efforts. Many of whom are of African descent.

Please allow the spirit of the crisis in Haiti to enter your soul as we give them all of the support we can possibly render at this hour of severe crisis.

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