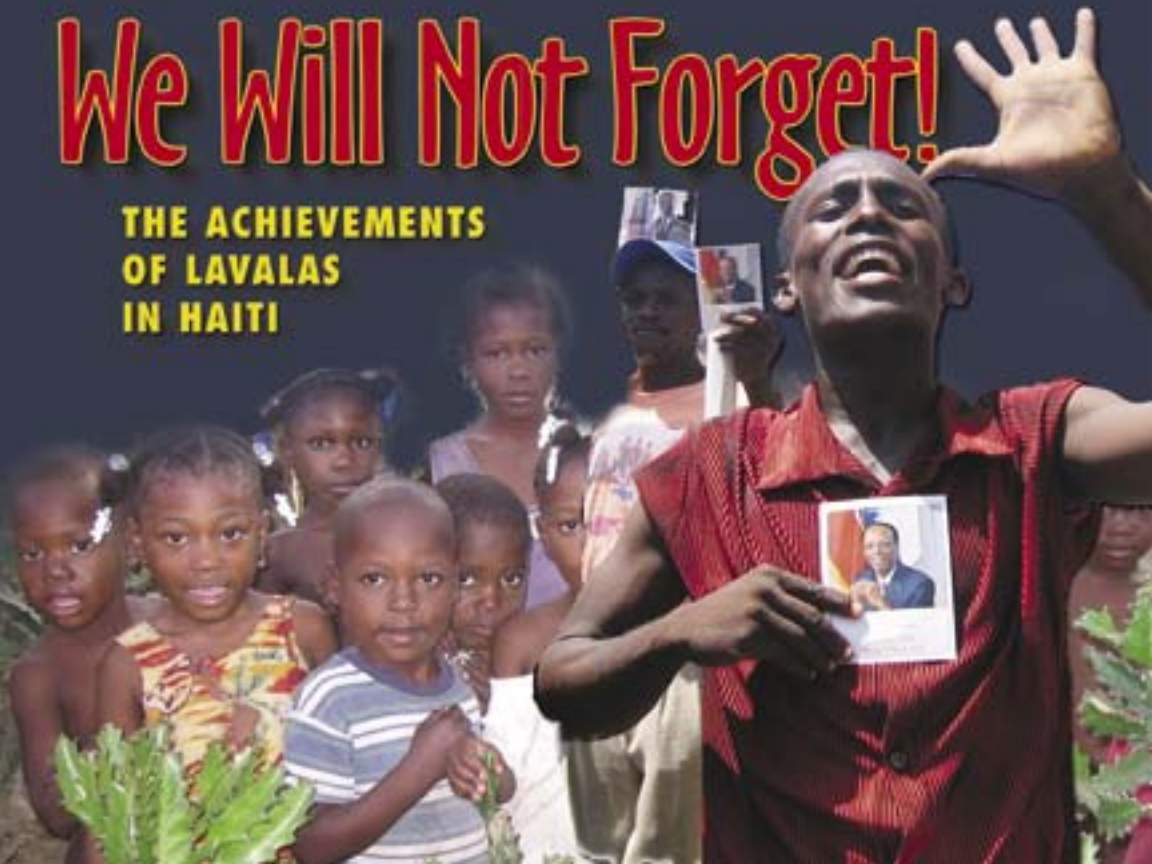




We Will Not Forget!

**THE ACHIEVEMENTS
OF LAVALAS
IN HAITI**



Rezistans

Lyrics by Serge Madhere, Recorded by Sò Anne with Koral La

They have made us know the way to jail
Shut us in their concentration camps
But we have not lost sight of our goal
We are a people of resistance
Slavery, occupation, nothing has broken us
We have slipped through every trap
We are a people of resistance



Translated from kreyol

© 2003 Annette Auguste (Sò Anne)

Sò Anne is a Lavalas organizer imprisoned by the occupation government since May 17, 2004. She is one of more than 1,000 political prisoners who have been arrested since the coup. The vast majority have not been charged or tried.

For more information about the campaign to free Sò Anne and all Haitian political prisoners, visit www.haitiaction.net.

We Will Not Forget

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LAVALAS IN HAITI

On February 29, 2004, the constitutional government of Haiti was overthrown, bringing Haiti's ten-year experience with democracy to a brutal end. Orchestrated by the United States, France and Canada, the coup forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile and removed thousands of elected officials from office.

A year after the coup, the Haitian people continue to demand the restoration of democracy. On September 30, 2004, tens of thousands of Haitians took to the streets of Port-au-Prince. Braving police gunfire, threats of arrests and beatings, they marched while holding up their five fingers, signifying their determination that Aristide complete his five-year term.

On December 1, 2004, while then-Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Haiti to express support for the coup regime, Haitian police massacred dozens of prisoners in the National Penitentiary who had staged a protest over prison conditions. Despite this repression, more than 10,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of Cap-Haitien on December 16, 2004, calling for the release of all political prisoners and the return of their elected president. On February 7, 2005, thousands more once again demonstrated in Port-au-Prince and other cities, raising the same demands.

Why are Haitians so insistent on Aristide's return? Why have they been so resolute in their opposition to the coup and the subsequent U.S./U.N. occupation? Answering these questions requires a close look at what actually occurred during the years of democratic rule in Haiti.

One of the first casualties of the coup has been the truth about President Aristide and the Fanmi Lavalas party. (Lavalas means "flash flood" in Creole. It is the name of the massive popular movement that swept Aristide into the presidency in 1991.) Media sources worldwide have spread disinformation promoted by the U.S. State Department, claiming that the Aristide administration violated human rights, was rife with corruption and participated in drug trafficking. None of these assertions are based on fact. In addition, the media claim that the international community poured large amounts of aid into Haiti over the past ten years. Even with this aid, it is



Demonstrators hold up five fingers, signifying their determination that Aristide complete his five-year term of office.

alleged, Haiti remained poor due to bad government, corruption, or just an innate inability of Haitians to govern themselves.

Yet the truth is quite different. Pledges of massive international aid notwithstanding, Haiti received very little support over the past ten years. In 1994, the international community appeared poised to assist Haiti's democratically elected government. Less than a

year later, when Aristide refused to move forward with a plan to privatize state-owned enterprises, the United States blocked its aid package. Then in May 2000, after Lavalas won a sweeping majority in Parliament, US and European aid and loans to Haiti were again cut off. And at the end of 2000, when Aristide was overwhelmingly reelected, the US government engineered an unprecedented international aid embargo against the poorest country in the hemisphere.

In 2001, the Inter-American Development Bank acknowledged that the

major factor behind the economic stagnation in Haiti was not inflation, nor government spending; rather it was the withholding of foreign grants and assistance.

Despite this embargo and a U.S.-led campaign of harassment, paramilitary terror and orchestrated political opposition, President Aristide and the Lavalas movement established a foundation for progressive change in Haiti. Substantial gains made in health care, education, economic justice and human rights during Aristide's administration were, however, rarely reported outside of Haiti.

Although the accomplishments of the Lavalas governments were not acknowledged in the foreign press, they were visible in the most populous neighborhoods of Haiti and in the most far-flung rural areas. People saw a high school constructed in their neighborhood, and a bus that took their children to school for the first time. They felt the presence of a Cuban doctor in a community where there had been no medical care, and they witnessed a literacy center filled with new readers each afternoon. They felt their own strength and their own power.

A few days before the February 2004 coup, a foreign journalist asked a market woman in Cité Soleil (the largest and poorest neighborhood in Port-au-Prince) what she thought of the political situation in Haiti. She responded: "If it wasn't for Aristide you wouldn't be asking me for my opinion."

What follows is a brief summary highlighting some of the most important Lavalas achievements. Each was a step towards breaking down the rigid caste structure that has marginalized Haiti's poor, keeping them unseen and unheard. Each accomplishment moved Haiti towards the full participation of its poor majority in the life of the nation. The February 29 coup was aimed at reversing this process. Aristide was overthrown not because he failed to change Haiti, but precisely because profound transformation was at hand.



Massive pro-Aristide demonstration in January 2004.

Lavalas Achievements

EDUCATION/LITERACY

- Under the Aristide government, Haiti—for the first time in its history—began implementing a Universal Schooling Program aimed at giving every child an education. In 2001, Aristide mandated that 20% of the national budget be dedicated to education. From 2001–2004, school enrollment rates rose from 67.8% to 72%.



Logo of the National Literacy Campaign

- Under Lavalas administrations, more schools were built in Haiti between 1994–2000 than between 1804–1994. Lavalas built 195 new primary schools and 104 new public high schools, including a brand-new high school in Cité Soleil. Many of these schools were built in rural areas where no schools existed previously.
- Despite this construction effort, there are still not nearly enough public schools for all of Haiti’s children. The Lavalas government provided hundreds of thousands of scholarships for children to attend private schools.
- The Lavalas government granted a 70% government subsidy for schoolbooks and uniforms. School lunch programs expanded to serve 700,000 hot meals a day and Haiti’s first school bus program began.
- In the summer of 2001, the Haitian government launched a national literacy campaign. The Secretary of State for Literacy printed two million literacy manuals, and trained thousands of college and high school students as literacy workers. Working with church



and Voudou groups, popular organizations and thousands of women's groups across the country, the government opened 20,000 adult literacy centers. Many of these centers were *resto-alphas*, combining a literacy center and a community kitchen to provide low-cost meals to communities in need. Between 2001–2003, this program taught 100,000 people to read. The majority of these were women who had no previous access to education. Over the last seven years, these literacy campaigns reduced the illiteracy rate from 85% to 55%.

HEALTH CARE

- The Aristide government devoted a greater percentage of the national budget (13.7% for 2001–2006) to health care than had any previous government in Haitian history.

- The Aristide administration inaugurated a cutting-edge AIDS treatment and prevention program, which was lauded by international experts. The program was spearheaded by First Lady Mildred Aristide and included twenty new testing centers, an AIDS vaccine trial, and anti-retroviral treatment for some patients. Haiti's government worked in col-

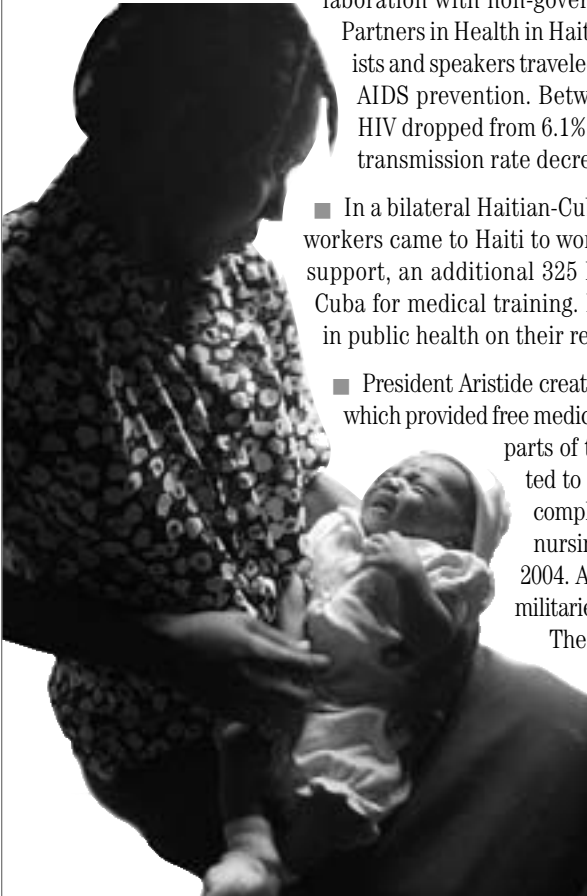
laboration with non-governmental organizations, including Partners in Health in Haiti's central plateau. A caravan of artists and speakers traveled throughout the country promoting AIDS prevention. Between 2000–2003, the prevalence of HIV dropped from 6.1% to 5% and the mother-to-child HIV transmission rate decreased from 30% to 9%.

- In a bilateral Haitian-Cuban project, 800 Cuban health care workers came to Haiti to work in rural areas. With government support, an additional 325 Haitian medical students went to Cuba for medical training. In return, they committed to work in public health on their return to Haiti.

- President Aristide created a new medical school in Tabarre, which provided free medical education to 247 students from all

parts of the country, each of whom committed to serve in their own community upon completion of their education. A school for nursing had been slated to open in fall of 2004. After the coup the U.S. and Brazilian militaries appropriated the land and building. The school remains closed.

- Lavalas governments renovated and constructed 40 health clinics, hospitals and dispensaries. In 2002, the School of Midwifery was renovated, as were the maternity wards of eight public hospitals. A second state hospital



in Port-au-Prince was inaugurated on February 6, 2004. On February 7, the first babies were already being delivered there.

- In a country with fewer than 2000 doctors for a population of 8.5 million, the striking increase in health workers and improvements in facilities led to significant improvement in health care. Under the Lavalas administrations, infant mortality declined from 125 deaths per 1000 to 110. The percentage of underweight newborns dropped from 28% to 19%.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- Upon Aristide's return to Haiti in 1994, the U.S. called for him to privatize the telephone company, electrical company, airport, port, three banks, a cement factory and a flourmill. Despite this pressure, Lavalas governments sold only the flourmill and the cement plant.

- President Aristide was preparing to raise the minimum wage in September of 1991 at the time of the first coup. Upon his return to Haiti he raised the minimum wage in 1995. On February 7, 2003, he doubled the minimum wage from 36 to 70 gourdes a day. This wage hike affected more than 20,000 people who work in Port-au-Prince assembly factories, most of which are owned and operated by the Haitian elite.



Peligre Lake was restocked with fish.

- An extensive land reform program distributed 2.47 acres of land to each of 1,500 peasant families in the fertile Artibonite River Valley. After the 2004 coup, absentee landlords, backed by the coup government, returned to reclaim their control over this land.
- The government provided tools, credit, technical assistance, fertilizers and heavy equipment to farmers. Repairs to irrigation systems brought water to the lands of 7,000 farmers in the Artibonite Valley. Rice yields rose from 2.7 tons per hectare to between 3–5.5 tons.
- The government reintroduced the Creole pig to Haiti, distributing tens of thousands of pigs to Haitian farmers. (In the 1980s, USAID exterminated Haiti's Creole pig population on the pretext that the pigs were sick and would spread African Swine fever to North America. The monetary loss to Haitian farmers, the vast majority of whom were never compensated, was placed at \$600 million.)
- The Aristide administration launched an aggressive campaign to collect unpaid tax and utility bills owed to the government by the wealthy elite. It publicized the names of rich business owners who had failed to pay their taxes. This generated new revenues, which were applied towards health care and education. The campaign earned Aristide the enmity of the elite, who had gone for years without paying taxes.

- The government repaired and reopened the state-owned sugar mill in Dabonne, which had been closed under the Duvalier regime. This enabled Haiti to process its own sugar.
- 30,000 fishermen received technical assistance and training to build boats. Haiti's lakes were planted with fish stocks and fifty new lakes were constructed.
- Lavalas governments created hundreds of community stores and restaurants, which sold food to the population at reduced prices, challenged the import monopolies of the wealthy elite and forced overall food prices to drop. Immediately following the coup, the price of rice (Haiti's main staple) doubled.
- From 1993–2003, malnutrition dropped from 63% to 51%.
- During 2002 and 2003, more than 1000 low-cost housing units were built. Low-interest loans enabled working-class Haitians to purchase homes.
- Following Aristide's return to Haiti in 1994, the Haitian government initiated a program to receive Haitian refugees who had fled the country following the 1991 coup and help them return to their rural towns. Programs included carpentry and sewing workshops, and assistance in setting up agricultural cooperatives. This program ultimately enabled 100,000 refugees to return to their homes.
- The government set up an Office for Civil Protection to support the Haitian Red Cross with early warning, victim assistance and evacuation during natural disasters. This office was effectively dismantled by the coup. The coup regime then proved unable and unwilling to help the victims of Hurricane Ivan and Tropical Storm Jeanne.



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

- The Aristide government launched a major campaign in defense of “*restaveks*” (an estimated 400,000 children, mostly girls, in unpaid domestic service). First Lady Mildred Aristide authored a book on the subject pointing out that the *restavek* system was rooted in the historical underdevelopment, poverty and lack of schools in rural areas—which in turn pressured rural parents to send their children to the cities.
- The government offered scholarships to children in domestic service and President Aristide appealed to families to send all children living in their homes to school.
- For the first time in Haitian history, juvenile courts were set up. A special child protection unit was created within the National Police force.
- In October 2001, Haiti passed legislation banning all forms of corporal punishment against children.
- In May 2003, Haiti repealed a provision of the labor code that sanctioned child domestic service and passed legislation prohibiting all trafficking in persons.
- Despite these significant advances, in its “2003 Trafficking in Persons Report,” the U.S. State Department threatened Haiti with further economic sanctions for not making significant efforts in this area. This report ignored the educational and legislative initiatives enacted by Haiti against child domestic service while it credited other countries for identical initiatives. When Haiti protested, its status was up-graded and the threat of further sanctions withdrawn.

STATUS OF WOMEN

- A record number of women won elected office, including one third of the seats in the Haitian Senate. For the first time in history, women held the posts of Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance and Chief of Police.
- In 1995, President Aristide created a Ministry of Women's Affairs—a cabinet level position dedicated to women's welfare.
- When Aristide was reelected president in 2000, his government gave material assistance to women's groups such as Coordination des Femmes Victimes d'Haiti (COFEVIH) for organizing and commercial projects. Victims of rape during the 1991–1994 coup were able, for the first time, to speak out without shame about their experiences.



- Lavalas programs gave primacy to women's concerns. Women were the central organizers and beneficiaries of the literacy campaign. Programs for *restaveks* (outlined above) served young girls. Women heads of household largely patronized the new community stores and restaurants. Health care programs focused on maternal and pre-natal health care. The government's HIV/AIDS testing and prevention program envisioned women as the primary agents of change and education. The vast majority of workers in the assembly sector are women; the minimum wage hike directly impacted them.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- During the Preval and Aristide administrations, Lavalas made major investments in agriculture, public transportation and infrastructure. The government undertook smaller road projects linking the countryside to the city with 400 kilometers of new roads, enabling farmers to get their food to market.
- Haiti's open-air markets are a vibrant part of every town. Lavalas renovated and constructed dozens of markets including in Les Cayes, Gonaïves and Tabarre. Croix Bossals, Port-au-Prince's main downtown market, was renovated with a \$5 million sanitation program.
- Thousands of miles of drainage canals were constructed, repaired or dredged.

- The international airport in Port-au-Prince and the provincial airport of Les Cayes were renovated.

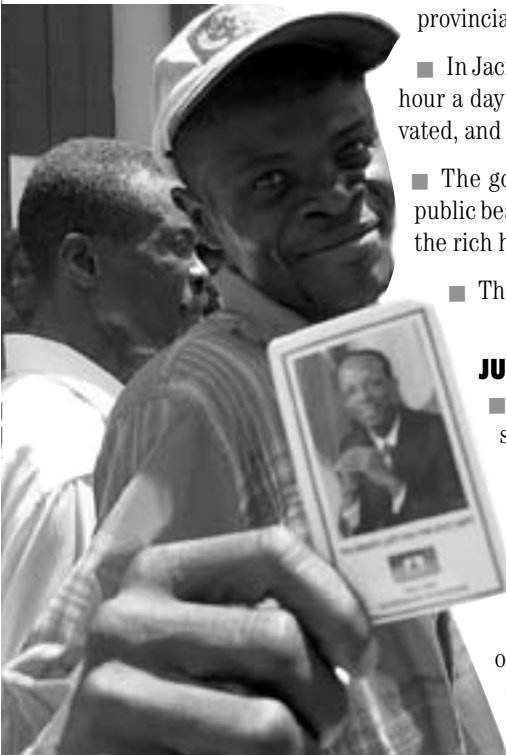
- In Jacmel a new power plant provided twenty-four hour a day electricity. The port and wharf were renovated, and the road to the beach was paved.

- The government inaugurated the nation's first public beach with full amenities. Until this time, only the rich had access to such a beach.

- The National Stadium was renovated.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- In 1995, President Aristide—with strong support from the Haitian people—dismantled the Haitian military. The military had been responsible for 32 coups d'état, and more than 5,000 deaths during the 1991–1994 coup period. Eliminating the prime historic instrument of state repression allowed the Haitian people to enjoy a level of freedom of speech and assembly unprecedented in Haitian history. These freedoms have now been all but eliminated.



- In 1995, Aristide created the National Commission for Truth and Justice, which investigated the crimes of the 1991–1994 coup period. Testimony was taken from 10,000 Haitians. The commission released its report and recommendations in 1996.
- In 2000, the Haitian justice system convicted 16 former soldiers and paramilitaries for the 1994 massacre of residents in the Raboteau neighborhood of Gonaïves. This trial was the most significant prosecution of human rights violators from the 1991–1994 coup period, and a blow against the traditional impunity for violators of human rights throughout the hemisphere.
- At the time of the 2004 coup, government lawyers were working on a case against the former military for the use of rape as a political weapon during 1991–1994.
- In 1995, the Haitian government opened a school for magistrates, which graduated 100 new judges and prosecutors between 1996–2003. Courthouses and police stations were constructed and refurbished throughout the country.
- In December 2003, a few short months before the coup, a magistrate issued an Ordinance (which in Haitian law constitutes the final pretrial document, stating the charges against the accused) in relation to the 1990 Piatre massacre. On March 12, 1990, agents of local landlords and Haitian soldiers had attacked the village of Piatre, killing eleven people, razing 375 houses, destroying cultivated fields and killing farm animals. The attack aimed to thwart the Piatre farmers' attempts to reclaim, through the courts, land that had been expropriated by wealthy landlords. The Piatre ordinance's publication was a historic achievement for the Haitian justice system, which had struggled with the case for over thirteen years. Suspects in custody included General Prosper Avril, the former dictator accused of masterminding the massacre. He was released from prison as a result of the February 2004 coup d'état—along with 3,000 other criminals who were in prison at the time of the coup.
- For the first time in Haiti's history, the rights of the accused were respected. Warrants were issued in French and Creole, and those arrested were generally brought before a judge for a formal hearing within 48 hours. Court proceedings were conducted in Creole, the language understood by all Haitians. Contrast this with the situation since the coup: hundreds of Haitians have been locked up in prison for months without being charged with any crime or being brought to trial.
- By almost any measure, the period 1994–2004 was a marked advance for human rights and peaceful resolution of conflict in Haiti. Pre-coup international media reports referred vaguely to human rights violations by the Aristide government. These reports were based on an extremely small number of human rights cases. There was no evidence of systematic state-sponsored support for political violence. Contrast this with the estimated 50,000 people killed by Duvalier, 5,000 deaths at the hands of the military during the 1991–1994 coup period, and the thousands of Lavalas supporters who have been killed or disappeared since February 2004. The same media which so eagerly condemned the Aristide government last year remains largely silent in the face of spiraling violence and human rights violations committed by the coup regime.

POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

- In 1996, President Aristide, the first democratically elected head of state, peacefully transferred power to the next democratically elected head of state. René Preval then became the first democratically elected president to serve his full term in office.
- In November of 2000, Aristide was overwhelmingly re-elected. Local and international observers put voter turnout at 65%. Gallup polls conducted in Haiti before and after the elections confirmed both the voter turnout and the numbers who voted for Aristide. Power was once again peacefully transferred.
- The country's independent electoral commission oversaw these two presidential elections as well as three sets of parliamentary and local elections. In May 2000, a total of 29,500 candidates ran for 7,500 posts. Four million Haitians registered for this election and more than 60% of them voted. Traditionally excluded groups gained political office and occupied important posts. In addition to the record number of women who won elected office, several peasant leaders were elected to the House of Deputies and formed a caucus, which pushed from within Parliament for improvements in the lives of rural farmers.



- Aristide's administration did away with the discriminatory practice of identifying people born in rural areas as "peasants" on their birth certificate.
- The Haitian people enjoyed unprecedented freedom to organize, debate, associate, and express themselves. The number of radio and TV stations expanded to 44 radio stations in Port-au-Prince, and another 100 outside the capital. Sixteen TV stations were registered in the capital, with 35 more nationwide.
- The Haitian Constitution of 1987 was printed in Creole, and was widely distributed, making Haitians aware of their rights.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

- In May of 2003, President Aristide issued a decree fully recognizing Voudou as a religion. Voudou, a religious tradition with roots in Africa, is widely practiced in Haiti but has been attacked as the religion of the poor and uneducated. With Aristide's decree, Haiti recognized baptisms, marriages and funerals performed by Voudou officials. This was a significant step in guaranteeing religious freedom and a step towards breaking down Haiti's social caste system.

COMBATING DRUG TRAFFICKING AND CORRUPTION

- Despite U.S. claims to the contrary, Lavalas authorities took strong action against drug trafficking. Under both Preval and Aristide, Haiti cooperated with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, participated in regional operations to interdict drugs, and deported drug dealers wanted by U.S. authorities for prosecution.

- The National Committee Against Money Laundering was created, as was the National Commission to Combat Drug Trafficking and Substance Abuse. In addition, a Financial Intelligence Unit was created within the Ministry of Justice to combat money laundering.
- On February 15, 2001, the Comprehensive Anti-Money Laundering Law was passed. It specifically provided that Haiti cooperate with other nations in fighting money laundering and facilitate extraditions and asset seizures of drug traffickers.
- During the year 2001, Haiti's Anti-Narcotics Unit (BLTS) seized 420.97 kilos of cocaine, 1,852 kilos of marijuana, and destroyed two marijuana fields.
- Haiti's Inspector General arrested police accused of involvement in drug trafficking, including the police chief of the Southeastern Department, for failure to properly cooperate with an investigation into the disappearance of a large quantity of cocaine.
- On June 19, 2001, Parliament passed legislation that established a comprehensive framework for the prosecution and punishment of drug related crimes.
- The legislature also ratified the 1997 Maritime Counter Narcotics Agreement with the U.S., thereby allowing U.S. access to Haitian waters for anti-drug operations.
- In May 2002, President Aristide appealed to the citizens of Haiti to report wrongdoing, and called on government administrators to take action against corrupt practices. He attributed the corruption in the public administration to a system left over from years of dictatorships that created, "a mentality of charging money for services."
- The government intensified its campaign against corruption in public administration. President Aristide made spot visits to various government offices. The government produced anti-corruption public service announcements. Public offices instituted new procedures to prevent and address corruption. Tax and customs officials initiated proceedings against those who failed to comply with required licensing and fees. The former director of Haiti's electricity company was arrested and an investigation ordered for possible wrongdoing. Several government employees were fired and elected officials unseated as a result of investigations into improprieties.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Haiti became the first non-English speaking country admitted to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).
- President Aristide re-established relations with Cuba—relations severed by Duvalier in the 1960s.
- Haiti doubled the number of countries with which it had diplomatic relations.
- Haiti signed on to the treaty creating the International Criminal Court—something the United States still refuses to do.

COMMEMORATING THE BICENTENNIAL

The year 2004 marked 200 years of Haitian independence. In 1791, 400,000 Africans enslaved in Haiti rose up against French colonial rule and won independence for the first black republic of modern times. General Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti a free nation in 1804, culminating the world's only successful revolution of enslaved people. The Aristide administration commemorated this historic achievement while building a campaign to redress inequities suffered by Haiti over the past two hundred years.

- Lavalas built 54 public parks and playgrounds, many in the poorest areas of Port-au-Prince, where people live in one-room shacks and have no public recreational spaces. These parks were packed every day and evening with children and families. Students who had no electricity at home gathered to study under the streetlights. Three weeks before the coup, Aristide inaugurated the first public space in Cité Soleil. One million people gathered to celebrate and stand in defense of their embattled government.



Jean-Jacques Dessalines, one of the heroic founders of independent Haiti and its first head of state.

- The historic town of Archaie was renovated. Its streets were paved, and electricity provided to the town's entire population.
- The Jean-Jacques Dessalines High School was opened in Croix des Bouquets.
- Churches in Leogane and Marchand Dessalines were renovated and repaired in recognition of the important community services they offer.
- In Marchand Dessalines, the birthplace of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the downtown area was paved for the first time and electricity and telephone lines expanded.
- Historians and professors organized seminars and conferences (some in the new open air public spaces) to educate youth on Haiti's history. These events were televised.
- Art competitions on historical themes were organized. Entries were to be placed in the Museum of Restitution. The February coup leaders vandalized this museum.
- In 2003, on behalf of the Haitian people, President Aristide requested that France restitute to Haiti \$21.7 billion—the amount, in today's currency, which France extorted from Haiti as “compensation” to French plantation owners after Haiti's independence. It took Haiti more than 100 years to pay off this debt. Haiti was unable to fund schools, health care, or infrastructure and the logging of its tropical forests was accelerated, setting the stage for the current deforestation crisis. As Haiti prepared for its bicentennial celebration in 2004, this demand symbolized the willingness of the Aristide government to challenge the global

elite. Many commentators cite the call for restitution as a major factor in French support for the coup. In the summer of 2003, French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac threatened, "I cannot stress enough to the authorities of Haiti the need to be vigilant about—how shall I put it—the nature of their actions and their regime." On February 25, 2004—four days before the coup—the French foreign minister issued a formal call for Aristide's resignation. Within a month of Aristide's overthrow, the coup regime announced publicly that it was dropping the restitution claim against France.



President Aristide addressing a jubilant crowd on Haiti's Bicentennial, January 1, 2004—the *New York Times* called this a "small crowd."

Conclusion

The people of Haiti have not forgotten these achievements. While the U.S. and U.N. occupation forces intensify their campaign to demonize and dismiss Lavalas, Haitians continue to hold on to the Lavalas vision of democracy and social justice, and to demand the return of President Aristide. February 2005 marks the first anniversary of the U.S.-orchestrated coup. The purpose of the coup was to destroy Lavalas, entrench the rule of the rich in Haiti, and dismantle the progressive programs of Lavalas governments. Consider just some of what has happened since the coup:

- Independent human rights observers now estimate that thousands of people—the great majority of whom were supporters of Lavalas—have been killed or disappeared in politically motivated attacks since the coup. The morgue in Port-au-Prince disposed of 1,000 bodies in March 2004 alone, many of them victims of political violence.
- Prisons throughout Haiti are filled with Lavalas leaders, Lavalas supporters, suspected Lavalas members and community/labor activists. The vast majority of these prisoners have never been charged with any crime.
- There has been a systematic crackdown on labor unions and peasant associations. Peasant organizers report cooperatives being ransacked, with tools and equipment stolen. Labor union organizers report a steadily mounting anti-union campaign directed at the assembly sector. Labor activists have been arrested, disappeared, killed or forced into exile. Many factory owners do not respect the minimum wage, which was raised last year by the Aristide government.

- Haiti's despised former military is regrouping. Bands of former soldiers now control whole areas of the country. The Latortue regime has integrated hundreds of ex-soldiers into the police force. This new police force has led a renewed wave of terror in poor neighborhoods. And in December 2004, Latortue agreed to pay former soldiers ten years of "back wages."



U.S. Marines aim weapons at pro-democracy demonstrators in Port-au-Prince. March 8, 2004.

had been distributed to 6000 families). These actions came immediately after U.S.-appointed Prime Minister Gerard Latortue criticized the Lavalas land reform program.

- The coup regime dropped subsidies on fertilizer, critical to the rice industry in the Artibonite. Peasant farmers report price gouging by wealthy importers. Since the coup, the price of a bag of fertilizer has gone from 290 gourdes to 650 gourdes. The price of rice has also risen dramatically.
- Educators in Port-au-Prince report that the coup regime cancelled subsidies for school children and schoolbooks and ended funding for literacy programs. Many families were unable to send their students to school in September 2004.
- On July 13, 2004, the Latortue regime announced that it would offer a tax holiday of three years to large businesses which suffered losses between December 2003 and March 2004. No state support has been offered to the thousands of poor people and small business owners who have lost their livelihoods or had their homes and businesses burned since the coup.

On January 18, 2005, the Center for the Study of Human Rights at the University of Miami Law School issued a comprehensive human rights report. This report is based on interviews with businessmen, grassroots leaders, victims of human rights violations, lawyers, human rights groups, police, officials from the UN, from the Latortue administration, and from the U.S. government, as well as observations in poor neighborhoods, police stations, prisons, hospitals and the state morgue. The report states:

- UN troops have led brutal sweeps through poor communities in Port-au-Prince, beating and arresting Lavalas supporters and turning them over to the Haitian police. In some cases, these arrestees have disappeared or been found murdered.

- Peasant farmers in the Artibonite Valley reported that large absentee landlords accompanied by armed paramilitaries have seized land that was given to peasant families as part of the Land Reform projects carried out by the Preval and Aristide administrations (300 hectares

After ten months under an interim government backed by the United States, Canada, and France and buttressed by a United Nations peacekeeping force, Haiti's people churn inside a hurricane of violence. Gunfire crackles, once bustling streets are abandoned to cadavers, and whole neighborhoods are cut off from the outside world. Nightmarish fear now accompanies Haiti's poorest in their struggle to survive in destitution . . . Haiti's security and justice institutions fuel the cycle of violence. Summary executions are a police tactic, and even well meaning officers treat poor neighborhoods seeking a democratic voice as enemy territory where they must kill or be killed. Haiti's brutal and disbanded army has returned to join the fray. Suspected dissidents fill the prisons, their Constitutional rights ignored.



The Lavalas government created school buses and public transportation lines, bearing the "Dignity" logo. Many were attacked and burned by paramilitary forces during the coup.

This is the reality of Haiti today. Yet the lies continue. With hardly a whimper from the mainstream media, the State Department vilifies Lavalas and claims the coup government is "moving towards democracy." But resistance in Haiti is growing, and even the media can no longer keep this hidden. As the people of Haiti continue to write their own history, they deserve and require our solidarity and support. It is time—once again—to tell the truth, and to stand with the people of Haiti.



CREDITS

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The Haiti Action Committee is a Bay Area based network of activists who have supported the Haitian struggle for democracy since 1991. For further information, resources and links visit our web site at www.haitiaction.net.

PHOTOS

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SOURCES

Agence Haitienne de Presse (Independent Haitian News Service)

Hidden From the Headlines: The U.S. War Against Haiti, by Laura Flynn, Robert Roth and Pierre Labossiere, published by the Haiti Action Committee, September 2003, available at www.haitiaction.net.

Interviews and site visits conducted by the authors in Port-au-Prince in January and July 2004.

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The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti has issued four reports documenting systematic, widespread attacks against Lavalas officials, grassroots activists and the press, and abuse of the judicial system for political reprisals. These reports are available www.ijdh.org.

Haiti Accompaniment Project Reports, July 29, 2004, November, 2004, document human rights abuses and the reversal of Lavalas social and economic programs. (available at www.haitiaction.net)

Porto Alegre Declaration on Haiti

**LAUNCHED AT THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM
JANUARY 26–31, 2005**

The fifth World Social Forum took place in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. Over 150,000 participants attended five days of workshops and conferences on issues ranging from environmental conservation to reparations for victims of Latin America's right-wing dictatorships to the war in Iraq. The Haiti workshop—attended by hundreds of representatives from progressive organizations in Brazil and around the world—adopted the following demands:

1. Return President Aristide and the democratic process to Haiti. President Aristide must be allowed to complete his term after which free and fair elections would be held according to Haiti's Constitution.
2. End the occupation of Haiti. Use the money and other resources now used in the war against Haiti's poor for the fight against poverty in Haiti.
3. U.N. "stabilization forces" must cease all illegal arrests, indiscriminate raids on poor neighborhoods and support for illegal activities by the puppet regime's police force and members of the former army.
4. Political prisoners must be freed, politically-motivated persecution must end.
5. Governments and intergovernmental organizations must refuse to recognize Haiti's illegitimate puppet regime, and must demand an investigation into the circumstances of President Aristide's removal from office.
6. Refugees fleeing political persecution in Haiti must be given asylum, internally displaced refugees in Haiti must be given protection and financial assistance.
7. U.S. hands off Latin America and the Caribbean. We stand in solidarity with the government and people of Venezuela and Cuba, countries struggling against a process of destabilization not unlike the one that resulted in the overthrow of President Aristide.

Please sign on to this resolution.
For the full text, go to www.haitiaction.net

