



# Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

The Only Multi-Racial Worldwide Indigenous Confederacy In Existence

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## THE UNTOLD TRUTH ABOUT HAITI THAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW

*Friday, February 19, 2010*

I just read an incredibly eye-opening book entitled '**Eyes of the Heart**' by former President Jean-Bertrande Aristide of Haiti Common Courage Press, 2000 - [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Aristide/Eyes\\_Heart\\_Aristide.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Aristide/Eyes_Heart_Aristide.html)

I would like to share some important highlights with my Caribbean brothers & sisters:

Page 5

Our planet is entering the new century with fully 1.3 billion people living on less than one dollar a day. Three billion people, or half the population of the world, live on less than two dollars a day. Yet this same planet is experiencing unprecedented economic growth. The statistics that describe the accumulation of wealth in the world are mind-boggling. >From where we sit, the most staggering statistics of all are those that reflect the polarization of this wealth. In 1960 the richest 20% of the world's population had 70% of the world's wealth, today they have 86% of the wealth. In 1960 the poorest 20% of the world's population had just 2.3% of the wealth of the world. Today this has shrunk to just barely 1%.

Page 11

What happens to poor countries when they embrace free trade? In Haiti in 1986 we imported just 7000 tons of rice, the main staple food of the country. The vast majority was grown in Haiti. In the late 1980s Haiti complied with free trade policies advocated by the international lending agencies and lifted tariffs on rice imports. Cheaper rice immediately flooded in from the United States where the rice industry is subsidized. In fact the liberalization of Haiti's market coincided with the 1985 Farm Bill in the United States which increased subsidies to the rice industry so that 40% of U.S. rice growers' profits came from the government by 1987. Haiti's peasant farmers could not possibly compete. By 1996 Haiti was importing 196,000 tons of foreign rice at the cost of \$100 million a year. Haitian rice production became negligible. Once the dependence on foreign rice was complete, import prices began to rise, leaving Haiti's population, particularly the urban poor, completely at the whim of rising world grain prices. And the prices continue to rise.

Page 13

... in 1995, severely indebted low-income countries paid one billion dollars more in debt and interest to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) than they received from it. For the 46 countries of Subsaharan Africa, foreign debt service was four times their combined governmental health and education budgets in 1996. So, we find that aid does not aid.

In 1982 international agencies assured Haiti's peasants their pigs were sick and had to be killed (so that the illness would not spread to countries to the North). Promises were made that better pigs would replace the sick pigs. With an efficiency not since seen among development projects, all of the Creole pigs were killed over period of a thirteen months.

Two years later the new, better pigs came from Iowa. They were so much better that they required clean drinking water (unavailable to 80% of the Haitian population), imported feed (costing \$90 a year when the per capita income was about \$130), and special roofed pigpens. Haitian peasants quickly dubbed them "prince a quatre pieds," (four-footed princes). Adding insult to injury, the meat did not taste as good. Needless to say, the repopulation program was a complete failure. One observer of the process estimated that in monetary terms Haitian peasants lost \$600 million dollars. There was a 30% drop in enrollment in rural schools, there was a dramatic decline in the protein consumption in rural Haiti, a devastating decapitalization of the peasant economy and an incalculable negative impact on Haiti's soil and agricultural productivity. The Haitian peasantry has not recovered to this day.

Most of rural Haiti is still isolated from global markets, so for many peasants the extermination of the Creole pigs was their first experience of globalization. The experience looms large in the collective memory. Today, when the peasants are told that "economic reform" and privatization will benefit them they are understandably wary. The state-owned enterprises are sick, we are told, and they must be privatized. The peasants shake their heads and remember the Creole pigs.

The 1997 sale of the state-owned flour mill confirmed their skepticism. The mill sold for a mere \$9 million, while estimates place potential yearly profits at \$20-30 million a year. The mill was bought by a group of investors linked to one of Haiti's largest banks. One outcome seems certain; this sale will further concentrate wealth-in a country where 1% of the population already holds 45% of the wealth of the country.

If we have lingering doubts about where poor countries fall in this "new" economic order, listen to the World Bank. In September 1996, the London Guardian cited a draft World Bank strategy paper that predicted that the majority of Haitian peasants-who make up 70% of Haiti's population-are unlikely to survive bank-advocated free market measures. The Bank concluded: "The small volume of production and the environmental resource constraints will leave the rural population with only two possibilities: to work in the industrial or service sector, or to emigrate." At present the industrial sector employs only about 20,000 Haitians.

There are already approximately 2.5 million people living in Port-au-Prince, 70% of them are officially unemployed and living in perhaps the most desperate conditions in the Western Hemisphere. Given the tragic history of Haiti's boat people, emigration, the second possibility, can hardly be considered a real option.

The choices that globalization offers the poor remind me of a story. Anatole, one of the boys who had lived with us at Lafanmi Selavi, was working at the national port. One day a very powerful businessman offered him money to sabotage the main unloading forklift at the port. Anatole said to the man, "Well, then I am already dead." The man, surprised by the response, asked, "Why?" Anatole answered, "because if I sneak in here at night and do what you ask they will shoot me, and if I don't, you will kill me." The dilemma is, I believe, the classic dilemma of the poor; a choice between death and death. Either we enter a global economic system, in which we know we cannot survive, or, we refuse, and face death by slow starvation. With choices like these the urgency of finding a third way is clear. We must find some room to maneuver, some open space simply to survive. We must lift ourselves up off the morgue table and tell the experts we are not yet dead.

The average Haitian survives on less than 250 U.S. dollars a year. This requires imagination every day. One percent of the population controls 45% of the national wealth.

Page 35

In nations around the world, even those experiencing rapid economic growth, there are millions of children living on the streets, refugees of a system that puts the market before the person. If we listen closely, these children have a message for the new century. Thirteen years ago we opened a center for street children in Port-au-Prince. In 1996, we opened a radio station with our 400 kids. Radyo Timoun (Little People's Radio) broadcasts their music, their news, and their commentaries 14 hours a day. In a world in which a child under the age of 5 dies every 3 seconds, children must speak. In a commentary on democracy prepared by three eleven-year-old girls, democracy was defined as food, school, and health care for everyone. Simplistic or visionary? For them democracy in Haiti doesn't mean a thing unless the people can eat.

Democracy asks us to put the needs and rights of people at the center of our endeavors. This means investing in people. Investing in people means first of all food, clean water, education and healthcare. These are basic human rights. It is the challenge of (any real democracy to guarantee them.

Ironically, in many countries of the South the transition to democracy comes at a time when states are being forced to rapidly divest of resources, saddled with debt, abandoning the economic field to market forces, and playing a smaller and smaller role in the provision of basic human services. They have neither the money nor the will to invest in their people. Today democracy risks being rapidly outpaced by the galloping global economy. If democracy in rich countries and poor ones alike is to be more than a facade, nice in theory, but irrelevant in the face of global economic relationships, our concept and practice of democracy must make a giant leap forward. We must democratize democracy.

Do not confuse democracy with the holding of elections every four or five years. Elections are the exam, testing the health of our system. Voter participation is the grade. But school is in session every day. Only the day-to-day participation of the people at all levels of governance can breathe life into democracy and create the possibility for people to play a significant role in shaping the state and the society that they want.

I recently heard a beautiful story about holding representatives accountable in democracy. In Columbia a member of an indigenous community was elected to parliament to represent his people. On one particularly important vote, the community elders had decided how they wished their representative to vote. The parliamentarian, now far away from his community in the halls of power in the capital, voted differently. Again the elders met and agreed that for defying the wishes of the community he was elected to represent, the parliamentarian should walk many miles through the mountains and then bathe in the freezing water of a sacred mountain lake in order to purge himself. This he did, and balance within the community was restored. Perhaps this technique would not be appropriate elsewhere, but the point is that it is up to each country and indeed each community to search for ways to both keep the peace and protect against the potential betrayal of elected leaders.

Page 43

In a country where only 20% of the population have access to clean drinking water, swimming pools are exclusively for the rich. There is not a single public swimming pool in Haiti. The pool itself is a symbol of the elite.

Page 49

The neo-liberal strategy is to weaken the state in order to have the private sector replace the state.

Page 57

Today we face complex networks of communications and disinformation, corporations with budgets hundreds of times the size of our national budget, and an army of international financial, trade, and development institutions. The panorama of threats is so daunting that sometimes I say perhaps our only strength is that the majority of the people did not go to school. They are not yet assimilated into this

machine. Their minds remain their own and they are experts at unearthing the truth in a morass of disinformation.

Page 76

It would take six billion dollars a year, for three years, in addition to what is already spent, to put every child in the world in school. Does this seem like a lot? It represents less than 1% of world military spending.

Page 79

I see [for the children of Haiti a future] country with 85% literacy, rather than 85% illiteracy. Cooperatives flourish in villages and in the informal sectors of the cities. Water is flowing through the fields of the countryside-where food enough for all of Haiti's people is growing. Creole pigs are seen more and more in the countryside, the descendants of those few that the peasants hid away and saved from extermination. Seedlings are beginning to take root on the mountainsides. The seedlings have a chance at survival because the people are no longer in misery, but are already on the road to poverty with dignity. There are primary schools and health clinics in every municipality of Haiti. The schoolbooks are not just half-price-they are free, in accordance with Article 32.1 of our constitution which promises a free education to every Haitian child.