



**Haiti Support Project  
African American Fact Finding  
And Assessment Delegation to Haiti  
February 9-12, 2010**

**Observations • Recommendations • Follow-Up Initiatives**

**Dr. Ron Daniels, President, Institute of the Black World 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Founder, Haiti Support Project**

## **Haiti Support Project Fact Finding and Assessment Delegation**

- **Convener, Dr. Ron Daniels**, President, Institute of the Black World 21st Century, Founder, Haiti Support Project, Distinguished Lecturer, York College, City University of New York.
- **Hazel Trice Edney**, Editor-in-Chief, National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA). Also known as the Black Press of America, NNPA is a 69-year-old federation of more than 200 Black community newspapers from across the United States.
- **Richard Muhammad**, Editor-in-Chief, Final Call Newspaper. The Final Call is the only major national weekly newspaper in Black America.
- **Joe Madison**, Black Eagle, Host, Madison and Company, XM/SIRIUS/WOL. The Black Eagle was recently voted the top Radio Talk Show Host by Black Talkers.com.
- **Sharon Madison**, Madison and Company, Executive Producer, XM/SIRIUS/WOL.
- **Daniel Berdiel**, Technician for XM/SIRIUS Satellite Radio.
- **Herb Boyd**, Internationally acclaimed author, journalist, staff writer for New York Amsterdam News and Reporter for Free Speech Television.
- **Eddie Harris**, award winning filmmaker and Cameraman for Free Speech Television.
- **Omarosa Stallworth**, Original Apprentice, Gardner C. Taylor Fellow, United Theological Seminary and Haiti Support Project Goodwill Ambassador. Omarosa was a Special Guest for HSP's first Pilgrimage to the Citadel in 2006 and has been a tireless advocate for Haiti ever since.

## **Introduction**

February 9-12, the Haiti Support Project led a Fact Finding and Assessment Delegation to Haiti. The goal of the Delegation was “to observe conditions in Haiti first hand and share information about the state of the relief/recovery and reconstruction effort with millions of people of African descent upon our return.” Primarily composed of African American journalists, HSP embarked on this mission with the understanding that long after the major news outlets in the U.S. have ceased to shine a spotlight on Haiti, the Black press will continue to carry the story. In that regard, we believe African Americans and other people of African descent have a special affinity for Haiti which can be an incredible resource to aid in building the “new Haiti.”

In addition to viewing the devastation in Port Au Prince, the delegation had an intense schedule of meetings which included: Consultations with a team of U.S. Embassy officials assembled by David Lindwall, Deputy Chief of Mission and Ms. Carline Dei, Coordinator of Disaster Relief; Patrick Delatour, Minister for Tourism and the Haitian Government’s designated Director of Reconstruction; Ambassador Leslie Voltaire, the Government of Haiti’s Liaison to the U.N. Special Envoy; Dr. Alix Lesseque, Executive Director of University Hospital; Danel Georges, President of the grassroots organization MUCI; and, Lionel Pressoir and Alex George, Destination Haiti Foundation. Most importantly, the delegation visited and conducted interviews with leaders of a tent community. In addition, members of the delegation talked with residents and displaced persons in Port Au Prince and surrounding areas eager to express opinions about the state of the relief effort. It was an extremely informative and thought provoking experience.

HSP views this Report as an opportunity to share observations, offer recommendations and outline the initiatives and projects that will be part of the follow-up moving forward. These views and perspectives do not necessarily represent those of the other participants in the Delegation who will offer their own assessments as they deem appropriate. Moreover, HSP’s perspectives and recommendations are derived not just from the experiences of this Delegation, but fifteen years of work focused on “Building a Constituency for Haiti in the U.S.” Over this period, we have sponsored major symposia on the future of democracy and development in Haiti, attended and conducted numerous briefings and consistently formulated policy recommendations around key issues. It is in this vein that we utilize the occasion of the Fact Finding Delegation to offer perspectives and recommendations on a range of important issues.

Some of the recommendations offered call for major initiatives like the adoption of Professor Robert Maguire’s proposal for a New Deal, WPA type National Civic Service Corp to provide jobs for upwards of 700,000 unemployed Haitians, particularly young people. Other ideas may already be in some stage of implementation in some form, e.g., HSP’s concept of Sovereignty with Shared Responsibility. And, some may be controversial, e.g., the concept of an Interim Government of National Reconstruction in light of the massive difficulties of conducting elections under current circumstances and the call for a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission to address and heal the

wounds from the events of February 2004. However, these recommendations are offered for debate and discussion in the hope of identifying solutions around crucial issues facing Haiti at this critical hour in its history. Finally, we hope that the Initiatives for follow-up will make a modest contribution to mobilizing African Americans and people of African descent to significantly engage the process of building the new Haiti.

## **General Observations**

- The destruction/devastation is widespread with homes, government buildings, business offices, schools, colleges/universities and medical facilities severely damaged or destroyed. It is reported that 8,000 schools in the Port Au Prince area have been destroyed. Though many streets are open to traffic, there is rubble everywhere. Individuals are still searching the rubble for loved ones, personal effects or seeking to salvage materials to build or re-enforce temporary shelters.
- Tent communities with makeshift shelters have sprung up throughout the Capital and surrounding areas, housing hundreds of thousands of residents in conditions where there is a lack of adequate sanitation and drainage systems. These adverse conditions notwithstanding, the people have taken charge of their lives, sectioning off communities into neighborhoods, electing committees to coordinate the affairs of these neighborhoods and the community as a whole and devising their own security systems. In the tent community we visited the people were very courteous, orderly, in high spirits and eager to tell their stories.
- Conditions at the University Hospital in downtown Port Au Prince, the nation's major public medical facility, have improved dramatically. The chaotic conditions prevalent during the early days of the disaster, when staff and volunteers were overwhelmed, have yielded to a much more orderly delivery of services. Scores of tents have been erected to care for patients previously treated on the open grounds surrounding the hospital.
- Food distribution seems to be working reasonably well. We were advised by USAID that there are 16 food distribution sites in the greater Port Au Prince area designed to serve 1,700 families. To avoid a kind of "survival of the toughest" scenario, a system has been instituted where vouchers are given to women who pick up food and return to their neighborhoods to distribute to family and others in need. Though some on our delegation wondered how this system affected men in the population, we were told that this method was consistent with Haiti's culture and that the system is working much better than before. However, there was apparently confusion in the tent community we visited about the food distribution sites and system as members of the coordinating committee were waiting for food to be delivered to them as had been the case early on.
- The streets of Port Au Prince and surrounding communities were alive with vendors and merchants who have set-up in familiar places as well as any other they can find to sell a variety of fresh vegetables, meat and cooked meals. Other wares and services were also for sale, e.g., haircuts, shoe shines, bicycles, motorcycles, cell phone repair, auto parts,

paintings, and artifacts. The brisk business may be a sign that remittances from abroad are flowing again. Traffic was heavy, another sign that a semblance of normalcy is returning in the midst of trauma and adversity.

- In some areas there appear to have been teams of people cleaning up trash/garbage from the streets. USAID informed us that there is a Cash-for-Work Program. It is not clear whether the teams we saw were part of this Program. Several people we met complained that they need jobs so that they can feed their families without depending on aid.
- The Haitian National Police were visible in some areas and seemed to be functioning effectively. We observed occasional units of the UN MUNISTAH force on patrol, but they were not a constant presence. There are large U.S. military compounds/camps around the Capital and soldiers were on duty at the airport and the University Hospital. The heavy U.S. military presence is a source of concern to many observers. We were assured by U.S. Embassy staff and by the General in charge of operations that a withdrawal of U.S. military personnel is scheduled to begin in the near future.

## Conclusion

As an overall observation, the Haitian people in the tent communities are self-organizing, self-regulating themselves under extremely adverse conditions. And, a brisk and vibrant commerce has returned to the streets of Port Au Prince and surrounding areas. Ordinary Haitians seem determined to take charge of their lives and move forward despite the trauma and devastation of the earthquake. This resilience, energy and will to survive and develop, bodes well for the ultimate success of the process of recovery and reconstruction.

## Recommendations

- Despite assurances that tarps are the best interim mode for providing shelter for displaced families, HSP joins with those who have a grave concern that this approach will prove woefully inadequate as the rainy season sets in. Haiti may be headed for a disaster on top of a disaster if the inadequate sanitation and drainage systems lead to an outbreak of infectious diseases. Moreover, failure to provide more stable shelter could lead to political instability as displaced residents vent their anger against the government for not protecting them. Therefore, we recommend that **an urgent, immediate, massive, coordinated effort be undertaken by the U.S. government and the international community to settle displaced persons in more stable and sanitary shelters.**
- It is critically important that large numbers of Haitians be employed immediately, doing useful work cleaning up the rubble, repairing infrastructure and restoring Haiti's depleted environment. Though the Cash-for-Work Program of USAID is a step in the right direction, HSP has long advocated a massive New Deal type Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or Works Progress Administration (WPA) type program to employ large numbers of Haitians. In the aftermath of the earthquake, such a program is even more urgent. Therefore, we fully embrace Professor Robert Maguire's concept of a **National Civic**

**Service Corp** to employ some 700,000 Haitians, especially unemployed youth, in the urban and rural areas to engage in useful work projects.

- HSP, along with numerous Haiti advocates and analysts, continues to promote the concept of a **Global Marshall Plan** to provide the massive resources required not only to rebuild Haiti, but to rebuild it better. To enhance prospects for economic revitalization, the Marshall Plan should be preceded by the cancellation of 100% of Haiti's foreign debt. Moreover, as a matter of national pride, justice and reconciliation, France should repay the reparations it extracted from Haiti for the "loss of property" during the Revolution. The burden of reparations paid to France was a major factor in the underdevelopment and impoverishment of Haiti.

- There has been an internal migration of up to 750,000 people away from Port Au Prince, many of whom have returned to their "home" villages and towns. This de facto decentralization of the population holds potential for the creation of vibrant, sustainable communities that will halt the flow of people to Port Au Prince in the future. As one resident of the tent community we visited put it, "I would gladly return to my home town if I could find work there." Minister Patrick Delatour informed us that decentralization will be a major hallmark of the Government's Reconstruction Plan and that developing the agricultural sector will be key to the success in this area. HSP believes that to successfully develop decentralized sustainable communities, **Haiti's agricultural sector and agro-businesses will need a period of incubation.** Having passed HOPE I and II legislation to provide incentives for growth in the manufacturing sector, Congress should devise "HOPE III" to provide incentives for growth in the agricultural sector.

- The Small Business Administration should provide incentives for minority firms in the U.S. to enter into joint ventures in Haiti to energize the private sector. Given the historical affinity for Haiti among African Americans and people of African descent, it is very important to provide incentives for this enormous potential base of investment in the reconstruction effort.

- We advance the concept of **Sovereignty with Shared Responsibility/Accountability** as a method of approach to strengthen the Haitian State/Government, maximize coordination of effort within the international community and among NGO's, and to ensure transparency in the allocation of resources for reconstruction. We reject the notion that Haiti is a failed state that should temporarily be taken over as a UN/US Protectorate. On the contrary, Haiti's sovereignty must be respected at all costs. In this regard, the reconstruction effort should be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the Government of Haiti and enhance its capacity to deliver vital social and economic services to the people. Among other things this means the following:

1. The Reconstruction Plan should be developed by the Haitian people through a process devised by the Government of Haiti. The vast majority of aid/assistance should flow through the Government which should make the final decision on the selection and implementation of projects and initiatives within the framework of the Reconstruction Plan.

2. The Government should establish a Joint Reconstruction Accountability Commission comprised of a majority of members from the private sector, civil society, governmental officials and representatives from selected international agencies to share in the monitoring of the allocation of resources dedicated to national reconstruction. Such a Commission would ensure transparency and inspire confidence that resources are being expended as intended.
3. Withdrawal of U.S. military forces as soon as possible with the Haitian Government taking full charge of the recovery/reconstruction effort, including providing security with the support of MUNISTAH as appropriate. It must be absolutely clear that the U.S. has no intention of establishing bases or has plans for a permanent military presence in Haiti.

- As a practical matter, the destruction of government ministries and the loss of voter registration records for millions of Haitians will make it virtually impossible to hold inclusive, free and fair elections for the National Assembly, Senate and President as scheduled. Moreover, there is an argument to be made for galvanizing all of the nation's resources to focus on the arduous tasks of recovery and reconstruction in the months ahead. Elections, competitive "politics as usual," could be a major distraction from the major, immediate mission of getting the reconstruction effort off the ground. Accordingly, in the face of what is certainly a state of national emergency, the Government might be prudent to propose a formula for the creation of an **Interim Government of National Reconstruction**. In essence the Interim governing authority would be an inclusive body comprised of capable Ministers from various major political parties, civil society and the private sector. The formula for the Government of National Reconstruction, including the duration of the mandate, would be approved by the National Assembly.

- Finally, as Haiti seeks to heal the land and its people from the horrendous destruction of the earthquake, perhaps it is time to consider a **National Truth and Reconciliation Commission** to heal the wounds and lingering/festered effects of the traumatic events of February, 2004. No matter what side one may have been affiliated, errors, mistakes and even crimes were committed that need to be addressed and resolved in a manner that will permit the new Haiti to move forward as a viable and vibrant democracy free of the ghosts from tragic events of the past. Perhaps Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu or President Paul Kagame from Rwanda could be persuaded to facilitate this process.

### **HSP Commitments and Follow-Up Initiatives**

- Based on our preliminary assessment, **HSP will be making capacity-building contributions from the Haiti Relief Fund** to organizations committed to engaging women in the planning and implementation of the recovery and reconstruction process; a Haitian journalist association whose capacity to engage the recovery and reconstruction process has been hampered by the destruction of their offices; and, funding a pilot Jobs Corp type project to provide stipends to youth/young people to undertake useful work

like trash/rubble removal, infrastructure repair, reforestation and services to residents of tent communities.

- Working with Destination Haiti Foundation, under the leadership of Lionel Pressoir, and the Local Development Committee in Milot, **HSP is committed to mobilizing resources to provide relief for more than 800 new residents**, some of whom have migrated to the town to be near family members flown in from Port Au Prince for treatment at Sacred Heart Hospital, for injuries suffered during the earthquake. The Hospital has expanded the number of beds from 64 to 400 to accommodate victims of the earthquake. Through the efforts of Joseph Beasley, a member of HSP's National Advisory and Implementation Committee, we are working to secure regular donations of containers of medical supplies for the Hospital.

- Partnering with Destination Haiti Foundation, **HSP will be mobilize support for the Oasis Institute**, an innovative model which is designed to provide a safe/secure, nurturing and culturally sensitive environment for children who have become orphans as a result of the earthquake. The goal of the Oasis Institute is to keep as many of Haiti's orphans in Haiti as possible so that they can be educated and groomed to be productive citizens and contributors to the new Haiti. To achieve this goal, families, individuals, institutions and agencies in the U.S. are encouraged to become surrogate guardians for Haitian orphans, providing financial/material support, visiting the children in Haiti and affording opportunities for children to visit their guardians in the U.S. during holidays or summer vacation. The goals of the Oasis Institute are consistent with the stated mission of the Institute of the Black World 21<sup>st</sup> Century's Black Family Summit Task Force on Strengthening Children and Families in Haiti.

- **The IBW/BFS Task Force will continue to work with Black adoption agencies to explore avenues to facilitate adoption of Haitian children** by Haitian Americans, African Americans and people of African descent in the U.S. as an option of last resort. The primary goal is to strengthen children and families in Haiti and to facilitate adoption only where absolutely necessary.

- **HSP will continue to explore opportunities for Haitian college/university students**, whose colleges/universities have been severely damaged or destroyed, to be accepted at colleges/universities in the U.S. on an interim basis. Facilitated by Omarosa Stallworth, HSP's Goodwill Ambassador and Destination Haiti Foundation, Carver Theological Seminary in Atlanta has already agreed to accept fifteen (15) students.

- On the advice of our Goodwill Ambassador, HSP is launching the **Nehemiah Initiative** to enable African American faith leaders and churches to play a significant role in the reconstruction and resurrection of Haiti by targeting resources to major projects like the rebuilding of churches, schools, colleges/universities and hospitals/medical centers. The Nehemiah Initiative may also elect to build model schools, colleges, hospitals/medical centers and other vital institutions as well as create and invest in micro-credit lending institutions and business/economic development projects. The Nehemiah Initiative will

pursue its mission within the framework of the Government's Reconstruction Plan and in collaboration with the appropriate Ministries.

- **HSP will partner with Rise Again Haiti (RAH)**, an ambitious Initiative under the leadership of Adal Regis, a Haitian American student leader at State University of New York at Stony Brook. The goal of RAH is to mobilize hundreds of young volunteers to spend time in Haiti supporting various aspects of the reconstruction of Haiti.

- **HSP supports the National Newspaper Publisher Association's Initiative to identify Haitian journalists to be regular contributors to Black newspapers in the U.S.** Under the leadership of Hazel Trice-Edney, Editor-in-Chief of NNPA, this initiative will afford an opportunity for a variety of Haitian voices to provide perspectives on the reconstruction process in Haiti and related issues.

- **In collaboration with Destination Haiti Foundation, IBW/HSP is developing the Haiti Investment Group** to facilitate the procurement of contracts for people of African descent, as Haiti rebuilds, and foster socially responsible entrepreneurship and investment in Haiti. The reconstruction process will afford huge opportunities for people of African descent from the U.S. to partner with Haitian Americans and our sisters and brothers in Haiti to develop lucrative enterprises while meeting crucial social and economic needs of the nation. The Haiti Investment Group is designed to be a vehicle to achieve this important objective.

- Last but not least, **HSP is vigorously exploring *A Pilgrimage of Hope: a Cruise for Conscious People Committed to Rebuild Haiti*** in the fall of this year. The goal of this extraordinary voyage is to deliver material support, e.g., school supplies, medical supplies for projects in Haiti; engage in community service projects like planting trees for reforestation; and, visit the Citadel and other important cultural/historical sites. The Pilgrimage would also feature on-ship cultural/educational seminars and films on the history and culture of Haiti, cultural performances and seminars on business and investment opportunities. A number of high profile leaders, artists, entertainers and celebrities are expected to sign on for this incredible journey. The Pilgrimage would also result in a significant and much needed injection of cash into the economy. To achieve these lofty goals will require the chartering of an entire cruise ship for a 4 or 7 day Pilgrimage to Haiti with 2,000 – 3,000 people! It is an electric idea. However, it will only be feasible if there are a sufficient number of people who are willing to put up deposits to confirm interest/commitment in a timely manner. We have until May 1<sup>st</sup> to make a final decision on this option. As an alternative, HSP would take a smaller group of 300 on a regularly scheduled cruise with a one day stopover in Haiti to visit the Citadel. Either option would serve to boost cultural/historical tourism as a key component of Haiti's plan for the future development of the country.

To galvanize support for the rebuilding/reconstruction effort in Haiti among African Americans and people of African descent, IBW/HSP is planning a **national conference: *Envisioning the New Haiti: Engaging African Americans and People of African Descent***. Tentatively scheduled for May 14 -15, on the eve of Haitian Flag Day (May

18<sup>th</sup>) and the birthday of Malcolm X (May 19<sup>th</sup>), the primary goal of the conference is to provide a comprehensive overview of the Reconstruction Plan for Haiti and explore avenues for maximizing humanitarian and developmental assistance and business development and investment in Haiti by African Americans and people of African descent. IBW/HSP anticipates securing the support of the Black Leadership Forum, Chaired by Marc Morial, President/CEO, National Urban League and Congress Members Charles Rangel, Gregory Meeks and Yvette Clarke. York College, City University of New York, where Dr. Ron Daniels serves as a Distinguished Lecturer, is the proposed venue for this crucial conference.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

It is our fervent hope that the observations, recommendations and initiatives sited in this Report will make a modest contribution to the recovery and reconstruction of Haiti. “Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” Working collaboratively with our Haitian sisters and brothers we believe that a new Haiti will emerge from the ashes of the catastrophe of January 12, 2010 -- a stronger and better nation that will become a beacon of freedom and hope for all of humankind!

***For the Love of Haiti!***

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