

# A Lootin' an' a Burnin'? Media Disinformation on Haiti

By [William Bowles](#)

Global Research, January 18, 2010

[Creative-i](#) 18 January 2010

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

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It was obvious from the getgo that media 'coverage' of the earthquake in Haiti was heading in the same, predictable direction, namely down the same racist path that Western media coverage of things 'darker than blue' always travels.

"Relief efforts have also been hampered by supply bottlenecks, leading to security concerns over looting and violence amid increasing desperation.

"There are concerns about the safety of aid workers, with reports of gunfire and youths carrying machetes. Some charities have taken security guards, while others are supported by UN security forces." — '[UK government Haiti earthquake aid to treble to £20m](#)', BBC News 18 January, 2010

And yet again in another BBC 'news' item:

"Many are trying to leave the city, and there are security concerns amid reports of looting and violence." — '[UN chief Ban Ki-Moon calls for Haiti aid patience](#)', BBC News, 18 January, 2010

Meanwhile, the US has de facto occupied Haiti, no doubt to preserve its sweatshop investments, amongst which are Walt Disney and Walmart[1]. And no wonder aid can't get through, the US seemed to have moved Southern Command ([SOUTHCOM](#)) to Haiti, even blocking the organization of Caribbean states, [Caricom](#), from landing badly needed assistance.

The attitude of the West towards people of colour is best illustrated by the following, also from the preceding BBC story:

"The US and Dutch authorities have said they are speeding up the process of flying orphaned children away from Haiti to adoptive parents abroad.

"Six Haitian children adopted by Dutch families arrived in the Netherlands on Sunday and the justice ministry said it was expediting the adoption process and paperwork for about 100 others."

So whilst people are dying because the US military is blocking aid flights coming in, it seems it has no problem stealing babies and flying them out!

The Times of London continues in the same, racist vein (with the predictable image of a 'looter' holding a knife that I will not reproduce here):

"Six days after the Port-au-Prince earthquake large areas of the city remain untouched by the global aid effort as bottlenecks continue to clog the airport and looting threatens to descend into wholesale violence." — ['Lynch mobs turn on looters amid Haiti aid crisis'](#), The Times, 18 January, 2010

Hoisted by their own, racist pétard

By contrast, a report from [Canada Haiti Action Network](#) reveals where the 'aid' went first:

'Thus far...the rescue teams cluster at the high profile and safer walled sites and were literally afraid to enter the barrios. They gravitated to the sites where they had secure compounds and big buildings.

'Meanwhile, the neighbourhoods where the damage appears to be much wider, and anywhere there were loose crowds, they avoided. In the large sites, and in the nice neighbourhoods, and where the press can be found, there would be teams from every country imaginable. Dogs and extraction units with more arriving, yet with 90% or more of them just sitting around.'

'Meanwhile, in the poor neighbourhoods, awash in rubble, there was not a foreigner in sight.'

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"News crews are looking for the story of desperate Haitians that are in hysterics. When in reality it is more often the Haitians that are acting calmly while the international community, the elite and politicians have melted down over the issue, and none seem to have the remotest idea what is going on." — ['Where is the aid in Haiti'](#) — by Roger Annis, 16 January, 2010

Note

1. See ['HAITI — REGIME CHANGE: CAUGHT BETWEEN A ROCK & A BUSH'](#) By William Bowles, 1 June, 2003 from which I've taken this extract:

Haiti — Island of Sun, Sand Sweatshops

And predicably, I came across a site <http://www.bharattextile.com/newsitems/1982823> which is applauding the passing of a new US bill that permits the importing of textiles from Haiti to the US, duty-free. The site informs the reader that the average wage in Haiti is "\$1 a day" which even with all the other costs thrown in still totals only \$2 per day. And by the strategic location of textile plants in the Dominican Republic, the two countries will be forced to compete with each other in keeping wages as low as possible.

Does your kid wear Walt Disney pajamas?

Because if he/she does, the chances are they're made in Haiti at the US-owned plant of L.V. Miles which manufactures them under license for the Walt Disney corporation:

"In one day [in 1996]...20 workers earn \$66.60, and together they produce

1,000 pairs of pajamas. That is \$11,970 worth of pajamas for \$66.60. Less than seven cents per pair goes to pay the workers who produced it.”

This is from a report written by the National Labour Commission, a US NGO funded by trade unions investigating the conditions of workers in countries like Haiti. The report goes on to say that,

“In 1994, Wal-Mart made a profit of \$2.681 billion, Disney made \$1.1 billion. The workers who sew the clothes for these companies are, in many cases, making less than \$312 a year working full time. Basic respect for the law is not too much to ask.

“Today’s minimum wage has less buying power than before Aristide’s election in December 1990. Since 1980, its real value has declined some 50 percent. It is the lowest in the entire Caribbean area and provides less than 60 percent of the barest needs for a family of five. A more usual wage of \$1 a day, or \$6 for a standard workweek, provides about one- quarter of these minimum needs.

“For U.S. multinational corporations, Aristide’s support for an increase in the minimum wage was a good enough reason for overthrowing him. Andrew Postal, president of Judy Bond, a U.S. women’s apparel maker with plants in Haiti, said of Aristide, “It was not a business-friendly government.””

The report says that after Aristide’s ouster “and while the Haitian military was murdering 3,000 to 5,000 people, Postal went right on producing in Haiti and exporting to the U.S. despite the OAS embargo.” — <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/295.html>

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Articles by: [William Bowles](#)

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