

Haiti: Washington's Front-Man, Michel Martelly and Its Police Force, MINUSTAH, Have to Go

25 years after April 20, 1990: As the empire adapts, so must we

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This week marked the 25th anniversary of the historic Apr. 20, 1990 march by over 150,000 Haitians across the Brooklyn Bridge (literally shaking it) into downtown Manhattan (image, left). The demonstration, which surrounded the Federal Building on lower Broadway, completely overwhelmed the New York City police, shutting down Wall Street and most other businesses in lower Manhattan. The size, militancy, and unexpectedness of the massive outpouring sent shockwaves through the U.S. political establishment.

The march was a protest against the Federal Drug Administration's February 1990 recommendation that Haitians be restricted from donating blood because they were supposedly a high-risk group for AIDS. In 1983, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) unscientifically grouped Haitians with homosexuals, hemophiliacs, and hypodermic-needle users to create the infamous "4H" risk group. Backed by many doctors and scientists, the Haitian community, already politically active from anti-Duvalierist mobilizations, rose up to demand that the CDC rescind the designation. Thousands marched throughout 1983 and 1984, and in April 1985, the CDC removed Haitians from the AIDS high-risk list.

The massive, unified response of Haitians to the FDA's resurrection of the CDC's defunct policy was yet another illustration of a specific feature of Haitian political culture: once a victory is won, the Haitian people will rise up to defend against it being taken away.

Napoleon was the first to discover this truth in 1803, after he sent his brother-in-law General Leclerc at the head of 25,000 troops the year before in an effort to reestablish slavery in the French colony of St. Domingue. Declaring that "union makes strength," our ancestors joined together in a mighty force, the indigenous army, to chase the French from the island and form Haiti, the first truly free nation in world history, a slaveless society.

After throwing off the yoke of the 30 year Duvalier dictatorship on Feb. 7, 1986, Haitians created another historic mobilization when the U.S. and Haitian ruling class tried to reestablish a neo-Duvalierist dictatorship by overthrowing President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Sep. 30, 1991. On Oct. 12, 1991, a year and a half after the April 1990 march, some 100,000 Haitians again crossed the Brooklyn Bridge and tied up traffic in Manhattan for hours to protest the coup. That was the beginning of a three year mobilization, in Haiti and its diaspora, which forced the U.S. to return Aristide to Haiti (although in a cage) in October 1994.

But the empire, with its "laboratory," has studied these Haitian uprisings and learned to

disguise their tactics with more sophistication. Rather than an overt rollback, like that done by Napoleon in 1802, the FDA in 1990, or Cédras in 1991, they learned to disguise their counter-revolution in Haiti behind “the electoral process” and “international community assistance.” This was how they carried out the “electoral coup d’état” (as former Organization of American States Ambassador Ricardo Seitenfus calls it) of November 2010 and March 2011, which resulted in President Michel Martelly illegally taking power (the Haitian Provisional Electoral Council – CEP – never approved the election). Martelly then took his time in neutralizing Parliament, aware that he didn’t really need to do it (in fact, it was better to wait to do it) until near the end of his term, so he could kill two birds with one stone: have right-wing, pro-imperialist candidates win both the legislature and the executive with one mixed, rigged electoral process, one controlled CEP.

That is how we have arrived at the current imbroglio where the one-time leaders of the resistance to Martelly are now being docilely led to the democratic slaughterhouse due to either their illusions, delusions, or ambition.

Many know the example, based on a 19th century experiment, of a frog placed in boiling water immediately leaping out. However if it is placed in cold water which is then very gradually heated, it is possible to cook him alive. Pleased by the slowly warming water, the frog realizes only too late that he is being boiled to death.

We must ask if this is not what is occurring to the Haitian people today. Are they being lulled into yet another “electoral coup”? Will they accept that the “election/selections” have as funders, organizers, and umpires the very nations responsible for past coups (the U.S., France, Canada) and the military force which acts as their enforcer, the UN Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH)?

The “laboratory” has learned to bring about change very, very slowly and slyly in Haiti lest they stir the sleeping tiger which is the Haitian masses’ outrage at any liberty being repealed. We must become more sophisticated in understanding their new and improved tactics and tricks. The “black man” Obama in the White House? It makes no difference! A Haitian, Joel Denis, in the U.S. State Department? It makes no difference! Former Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe replaced by Evans Paul? It makes no difference!

The only way to make a real change in Haiti is to carry out Haitian elections in complete sovereignty and independence. That means Washington’s front-man, Michel Martelly, has to go, and Washington’s police force, MINUSTAH, has to go.

To make this happen, we are going to need to mobilize Haitians in the same numbers as moved on Apr. 20, 1990, a mere 25 years ago.

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