

Haitians Mark Centennial of First U.S. Military Occupation of Haiti

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[Haïti Liberté](#)

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On the morning of Wed., Jul. 28, 1915, U.S. Marines landed near Port-au-Prince, beginning a brutal 19-year military occupation of Latin America's first independent nation that left deep scars on the Haitian population and psyche.

In the weeks and months leading up to the 100th anniversary of that fateful day, activists in Haiti and its diaspora held demonstrations and conferences. In New York, Haitian groups and individuals formed the "Patriotic Initiative to Mark the Centennial of the American Occupation of Haiti on Jul. 28, 1915."

In the final week before the anniversary, the group organized an all-day conference on Sat., Jul. 25 at a school in the heart of Brooklyn's "Little Haiti," featuring speakers like Professors Franklin Midy and Jean-Claude Icart of the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM), Frantz Leconte from City University of New York (CUNY), an Alex Dupuy from Wesleyan. *Haïti Liberté's* director Berthony Dupont also spoke.

At the same school the next night, there a rousing cultural program with heart-felt presentations by poets Michèle V. Marcelin, Tony Leroy, and Paul Tulcé, as well as singers Wooly Saint-Louis Jean, Azaka, and Rosna Marcelin. Also performing were the Granchimen Cultural Group, saxophonist Buyu Ambroise with Alex (Tit) Pascal, joined later by Eric Faustin, the former lead singer of the "engaged music" group Atis Endepandan (Independent Artists).

On Tue., Jul. 28, a final conference was held at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan, with presentations by former radio host Daniel Huttinot, activist/scholar Father Luis Barrios, and Haitian-Dominican rights activist Altagracia Jean Joseph, among others.

Filmmakers Alain Martin and Hans Augustave also presented a trailer for "The Forgotten Occupation," a soon-to-be-completed documentary, over five years in the making, about the first U.S. invasion of Haiti.

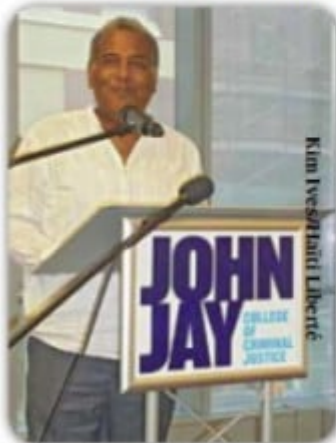
We present the statement issued by the Patriotic Initiative on Jul. 28 and the English portion of Michèle V. Marcelin's poetic composition, drawn from several Haitian poets including herself, about the occupation, presented at both the Jul. 26 and the Jul. 28 events.

[Haiti 1915- Haiti 2015 \(a compilation of poems presented by Michèle V. Marcelin\)](#)

Patriotic Initiative to Mark the Centennial of the American Occupation of Haiti on July 28, 1915



During the occupation, Haitian peasants were often forced by U.S. Marines to do forced labor, building roads and bridges



Father Luis Barrios, a prominent progressive activist in New York, speaking at John Jay College in



Poet Michèle V. Marcelin performing at John Jay College in New York on Jul. 28, 2015

A group of Haitian patriots in New York thought it important for Haitians abroad as well as those in Haiti to mark the 100th Year Anniversary of the American Occupation of Haiti (1915-2015). They formed the “HAITIAN PATRIOTIC INITIATIVE” to raise awareness and to galvanize the community into remembering this “sad event” in their history.

On Dec. 17, 1914, as a prelude to the coming and full military force of the occupation of the country on Jul. 28, 1915, U.S. marines aboard the *USS Machias* landed in Port-au-Prince with the sole purpose of seizing the country’s gold reserve, an estimated \$500,000 worth, from the Haitian National Bank. They hauled it away to the First National City Bank in New York City.

On Jul. 28, 1915, U.S. Marines landed again, this time in Bizoton in the outskirts of the capital, to fully invade and occupy the country. The occupation would last 19 years (1915-1934). In that span of time, the U.S. Marines brutalized, tortured, and killed many nationalist forces who put up a fierce resistance against them, nationalists such as Haitian soldier Pierre Sully, as well as the peasants that composed the Caco’s military combative forces under the leadership of Charlemagne Peralte and Benoit Batraville. We salute the courage and the resistance that other patriots like Rosalvo Bobo and members of the group “Union Patriotique”, headed by Georges Sylvain, Élie Guérin, Perceval Thoby, Pauléus Sannon, and Joseph Jolibois Fils, who demonstrated against the invaders. We can never forget the defiant stand of the students at the Agriculture School in Damien who organized the first general strike in 1929 against the occupiers, nor can we forget in the least the practical action of revolutionary intellectual Jacques Roumain, who in 1934 set up the first

Haitian Communist Party!

The contributions of Haitian women resisters were, given the times, readily forgotten, but we remember them here! In 1926, a delegation of American women, members of the "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom," an organization linked to the American Communists, came to Haiti to conduct an investigation on the occupation. They were met by Georges Sylvain's wife, Eugénie Mallebranche and by Pierre Hudicourt's wife, who were themselves members of the "Women's International League." Georges Sylvain's three daughters – Suzanne, Madeleine and Yvonne – were involved in the fight against the occupiers together with Alice Garoute, Cléante Valcin, Fernande Bellegarde, Esther Dartigue, Georgette Justin, Léonie Madiou, Maude Turian, and Marie Hakime. In 1934, they created the "Ligue Féminine d'Action Sociale" (The Women's League for Social Action). In effect, both men and women patriots stood firmly side by side in the struggle against the American military occupation of 1915-1934.

Other organizations from the U.S. such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the magazine *The Nation* also supported the struggle of the Haitian people at that time.

During the occupation, American imperialism had set up economic structures within their established political and military infrastructure, in order to guarantee that their interests would be served, even in their "absence". Whether it be the reactionary ruling class, or the post-occupation governments that were to hold office after the purported end of the occupation in 1934, they all accepted dictates of the American government, with very little to no resistance of any sort. They handled the legacy of the occupation, guarantors they were of US interests, and they looked upon the Haitian state as their private and personal "*fiefdom*" (*their ATM machine, so to speak*), to do with it as they pleased. The Haitian population were continually victimized and greatly suffered because of this situation. We honor all of those patriots and revolutionaries that resisted this brutal occupation.

Needless to say, Haiti was not the only country that had to face U.S. aggression. Far from it! The 20th century ushered in a new era for American imperialism which they themselves called "gunboat diplomacy." The U.S. invaded several countries in the Caribbean, Central America, and Latin America. It invaded Cuba 6 times, the Dominican Republic 4 times, El Salvador twice, Guatemala 3 times, Honduras 7 times, Mexico 3 times, Nicaragua 6 times, Panama 8 times, Puerto Rico twice, and the small island of Grenada once, leaving in its trail plains of dead bodies from the indiscriminate killing of men, women and children. The American aggression reflects the violent nature of imperialism during that period and today with the UN Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) occupation. The violent nature of U.S. imperialism is manifest considering that it has more than 865 military bases installed around the world in more than 63 countries. The U.S. elites have made the whole world's interests their national interests, justifying the rights and arrogance of the U.S. Defense Department to intervene wherever and whenever they deem desirable. The United States is the most violent country on this planet!

The 1915 occupation had some very grave consequences on the country. The objective of the occupation was to place Haiti in the U.S. political and economic orbit. U.S. imperialism stopped the economic development of the country when it destroyed our sugarcane, syrup, and alcoholic beverage processing plants in favor of American multinational companies. The occupier reinforced racism and color prejudice in the country. They built an economic

structure that benefitted the bourgeois and the landowners and pushed the masses down deeper. They concentrated most institutions and power in Port-au-Prince to the detriment of the provinces. They instituted the “*corvée*,” which is a form of forced labor (slavery) on the peasants. They also created a situation of social and economic deprivation and exclusion in the country, provoking great waves of emigration of Haitian workers who fled to other countries. The imperialist project was to bring the Haitian people to their knees. It is in this sense, they used all past and present governments with the complicity of the reactionary ruling classes since 1915 until now with the MINUSTAH as an occupation force in Haiti.

When in 1934 they left Haiti, they left behind the National Guard of Haiti, a force that continued violence against the Haitian population and patriots in the country; the National Guard was no less than an internal domination force. Even in the absence of the American boots, the domination remained after 1934. When the U.S. boots left the country, the Haitian National Guard, which was becoming the Haitian Armed Forces, played a central role in imposing the American domination of Haiti. The United States invaded Haiti again on Sep. 19, 1994 to re-occupy Haiti with 25,000 soldiers to bring back Jean Bertrand Aristide as president of Haiti. However, today, the boots are here again for the past 11 years (2004-2015) with the MINUSTAH troops. This time, their project is to reinforce the domination and extreme exploitation of the workers based on cheap labor in a form of slavery – or disguised unemployment – in agro-business, Free Trade Zones/sub-contracting factories, and luxurious hotels for tourists, and also exploiting our natural resources, such as gold and other minerals in Haiti.

American imperialism found the Haitian ruling classes, the bourgeoisie, landowners, and subservient politicians ready to collaborate. And they are collaborating today with the occupiers. They continue to help and allow foreign intervention to destroy our economy, instigate coups d’états, massacre the masses, spread cholera in the country, and maintain the misery and extreme poverty of the Haitian people with a disguised occupation to keep Haiti as a dependent country in the imperialist orbit. They all represent the descendants of Conzé, the Haitian traitor who betrayed Charlemagne Peralte, our anti-imperialist Caco leader. Therefore, the occupier had divided the classes into two well-defined camps in the country, the reactionary ruling classes and their allies under the jurisdiction of the Americans on one side, and on the other side the workers’ camp.

Recent events show clearly how the country is totally under American stewardship. While the masses are on the streets protesting to demand that Martelly step down, the American ambassador, Pamela White, came to the Haitian Parliament, in slippers, to dictate orders to the parliamentarians on how to vote on the electoral law. She declared that the American government supported Martelly so as to intimidate or slow down the people’s movement. The subservient parliamentarians did not call out Pamela White to respect the sovereignty of the Haitian Parliament as the representative power of the Haitian people and kick her out as she did not belong there.

Jul. 28, 2015, the 100th Anniversary of the 1915 U.S. occupation, finds our country, 211 years after its independence, again under occupation. In 2015, we demand the liberation of Haiti from occupation, from domination, and from all forms of intervention and intrusions in the affairs of the country and the Haitian people.

We’ve learned! Of the MOTHER LAND, WE ARE THE ONLY OWNERS! Let’s make this a reality! WARRIORS, FORWARD! In this vein and in this context, we firmly support the resistance of the workers and toiling masses, genuine patriots and progressives, the

combative women and men, against all current traitors (Conzés) who have economic, political, and social power in Haiti today. Only a powerful anti-opportunist resistance of the Haitian workers against all reactionary forces, including the MINUSTAH occupation under American leadership, will be able to overthrow them in Haiti, which is the only guarantee of a life of dignity for the Haitian people.

Our collective consciousness will help us find the solution. We hope all vigilant and genuine compatriots who agree with the Patriotic Initiative will come forward to support and contribute according to their means and abilities.

Down with occupation in all its forms!

Down with the MINUSTAH!

Down with imperialist domination!

Victory is for people who resist!

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