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FOR HAITI

By Mario J. Paredes

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The statistics and socio-political assessments that describe Haiti are widely known. They describe an "unviable" Nation with high rates of poverty and misery, corruption and political instability, inadequate public services, daily violence in many forms, illiteracy, child labor abuse, inequality, natural disasters, deforestation, hunger, food insecurity, and shortages and instability in the areas of housing, health, education, and employment, etc.

These factors, and many more, are all very complex and are products of the most varied causes. They have been transforming Haiti into one of the poorest countries on earth.

Recently, for example, The New York Times joined this profusion of socio-political analysis on Haiti, with a series of three articles entitled: "*The Root of Haiti's Misery*" trying—like so many other publications—to unravel the reasons that this country is experiencing this social catastrophe.

This article explores the main and historical reason—but not the only reason—explaining the current adversity experienced by the Haitian people—that the country is still rooted in debt that, in order to obtain its "independence," the country had to pay and still pays, as a type of "ransom," even after two hundred years, to France.

Today, many question Haiti's Declaration of "Independence" because it contemplates piecemeal—almost exclusively—the "freedom" of slaves and forgets an integral and totalizing vision of other social aspects that constitute a Nation and that, until today, remain without solutions or a conclusion.

This partial and incomplete vision of independence, freedom, and Nation that unfortunately occurred during the beginnings of this country turned out to be, then and until today, the transfer of power, preserving and suffocating—now for two centuries—the same irresolute evils of those first days.

But there are already enough analyses and publications on the precarious and fragile situation of the Haitian people. We urgently need something else. We need to take an interest in our Haitian brothers. Beyond historical, political, and sociological diagnoses, Haitians, inside and outside the borders of their Nation, must want—at last—better, peaceful lives.

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The community of nations must direct its gaze to Haiti and prioritize the nation on the international agenda for a comprehensive and global development program. The aid—internal or external—must also arrive, be well received, correctly valued, and honestly administered by its direct recipients and, especially, by those who hold leadership positions in public administration and the government of Haiti.

Solutions must be timely and appropriate. Historically, there have been, and are, attempts at support and solutions, but they have failed because they have been uninformed, inconvenient, inappropriate, and even unworthy, such as military assistance initiatives that, instead of appeasing, stoke the bonfire of internal violence or so many other plans—punctual and sporadic—that are imposed from abroad and that do not comprehend, completely, the cultural “ethos” and the foundational feeling of the Haitian people.

To contribute to the solution of these many and complex social problems in Haiti, with so many sides and interpretations, he who writes these lines has participated in, for three decades, assistance and social promotion programs in Haiti that have been initiatives of the Catholic Church from the Vatican or the Archdiocese of New York, in addition to those of the SOMOS Organization. Other churches and religious and civil institutions have also made and are making a presence with various agencies and social programs in Haiti.

But I would like to examine, especially, the initiative that a group of Haitian professionals, from abroad, lead, an institution called CHRAD S.A. (Haitian Research Planning and Development) (<https://chradsa.org/>). CHRAD S.A. brings together some of the country’s leading professionals, men, and women who have graduated with honors from the best and most prestigious universities in the world and with many years of proven professional experience in each of their fields.

This think tank of Haitian experts works toward approaching and achieving—through accurate and appropriate research and assessments—adequate, effective, and fair solutions for the progress of their Nation.

Last March, Pope Francis acknowledged these initiatives and their importance and benefit for Haiti in a private audience that he granted to leaders of the New York City health care organization “SOMOS COMMUNITY CARE” and CHRAD S.A.

In this meeting, Pope Francis expressed his solidarity and showed interest in knowing the work we do to achieve a comprehensive and holistic development plan for Haiti, in the areas of education, health, trade, industry, forestry, agriculture, etc.

At the same time, he encouraged and urged us on, so that similar initiatives, from the Catholic Church and civil society, join forces to bring Haiti out of its situation of devastation and abandonment in which millions of our brothers and sisters live and suffer. They cry out for lives worthy of human beings and children of God.



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With these lines, I invite anyone who feels interested in the improvement, development, and advancement of the Haitian people to contribute their best expression of commitment and support to this task and to join Haitian initiatives as meritorious as CHRAD S.A.

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