

December 30, 2005

We cannot give up on Haiti. Giving up on Haiti means giving up on the people of Haiti. Although it seems that insecurity is ubiquitous in Haiti and paranoia about “people” being out to get you is common, I do not believe that sentiment reflects a whole nation—a prideful nation where its citizens toil every day to survive and take care of their children.

In Haiti, people are living in conditions that the outside world cannot imagine. Joblessness is perpetual. Good health care is unimaginable. Education is unattainable for the masses. Is it surprising that the frustration levels of the poorest of the poor have reached a zenith and a few people choose to terrorize a country? If these people believe that there is hope after tomorrow—that their children will go to school, their families will not go hungry every day, and their health will improve—they will stop the violence and the terror. If this happens, then Haiti can become the Haiti of old: where children can play on the streets without worrying about being kidnapped, street vendors can sit at their stations to sell their goods, and young men and women can congregate and discuss different bands and the best “chansonnettes francaises” (French songs). Will Haiti experience that lifestyle again? Or have we given up on Haiti?

Will Haiti again be a place where we want to spend Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve on the streets with our friends without worrying about violence and robbery? Haiti can be a place that is once again cherished by its people, wherever they are. It can be a place where one can feel welcome and loved; it can be a place where security reigns. Haiti’s leaders will eventually rise to the challenge of a situation that is deteriorating everyday and decide to do something positive for the country. When they do, they will embrace the challenges and they will give the people a reason to hope. They will put forth plans for both short and long term, and they will collaborate with other neighboring countries and seek advice on how to get out of the mire of 200 years of troubles. The international community will not wait for something terrible to happen, give quick help, and get out as soon as possible, as has occurred in the past. Not this time. The international community will be engaged, and Haiti’s leaders will seek advice and assistance and still keep their dignity. Haiti will change, but patience is of utmost importance.

The Haitian diaspora must believe that a successful Haiti is in their best interest. They must not sit and criticize, but they must take necessary action to help however they can. Every Haitian must be part of the solution. Together we will take Haiti from where it is today—a place of fear and desperation that gives visitors chills down their spines to a place where tourism will once again be a part of the tradition and culture. Haiti was the pearl of the islands, and it can be again, but work must be done. Yesterday.

I will never give up on my brothers, sisters, uncles, cousins, and friends—the people that I long to be around, joke with, play with, and share everyday with.

In the Haiti of my dreams, smiles will be on people’s faces and joy will reign in their hearts. Children will be able to go to school, and parents will not have to sacrifice their

lives to make that happen. Education will not be a privilege but a right for every child. Health will be improved for everyone because, through partnerships and good planning and management, people will be able to obtain good health care. Haiti's reputation will not be that of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, but one that is visited often and is a model of what good government, good planning, good management, and the good hearts of determined people represent.

I often dream of that Haiti, and I plan for that Haiti. We are not there yet, but we will get there. That is my prayer, and that is my hope for Haiti.

Jean Elade Eloi