

**Refugees and Resistance:
International Activism for Grassroots Democracy and Human Rights in New York, Miami,
and Haiti, 1957 to 1994**

by

Carl Lindskoog

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Joshua B. Freeman

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Helena Rosenblatt

Date

Executive Officer

Thomas Kessner

Nancy Foner

Millery Polyné

Amy Chazkel

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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Advisor: Professor Joshua B. Freeman

This dissertation explores the evolution of political activism among Haitians in the United States from the formation of Haitian New York in the late 1950s to the return of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti in 1994. It traces the efforts of Haitian activists to build bridges connecting New York and Miami to the grassroots organizations in Haiti, finding a considerable degree of success in their efforts to construct a transnational movement that had a substantial impact both in Haiti and in the United States. Shedding additional light on the interconnected history of Haiti and the United States, this dissertation also adds to the growing historiography on immigrant activism and international campaigns for democracy and human rights.

At the outset, politics in Haitian New York was splintered among competing factions, though by the early 1970s there began to form a somewhat unified anti-Duvalier opposition movement. The arrival of the Haitian “boat people” in South Florida in the early 1970s continued the evolution of Haitian politics in the United States, triggering a refugee crisis that drew the attention of the activists in New York and forcing a reconsideration of political vision and strategy that had previously been solely concerned with the overthrow of the Duvalier dictatorship. The grassroots resistance in Haiti and in the United States saw a slight opening

with the arrival of President Jimmy Carter, but with Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, came a wave of repression in Haiti and stringent new policies toward Haitian refugees. The uprisings of 1985 and 1986 that toppled the Duvalier dictatorship transformed Haitian politics at home and abroad, enabling an expanded and tightened network of activism connecting New York, Miami, and Haiti, which grew from 1987 to 1989. The years 1990 and 1991 were the pinnacle moment for the linked popular movements in New York, Miami, and Haiti, though Haitian activists were soon forced to pour their energy into the overlapping campaigns aimed at reversing the coup against Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and defending the new wave of refugees that the coup produced.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to so many, without whom I never would have completed this project. My advisor, Joshua B. Freeman, offered critical feedback at every stage and sage advice and reliable encouragement when I needed it most. I learned to ask and answer historical questions and began to develop this project in the research seminars overseen by Thomas Kessner and James Oakes. Professor Kessner in particular continued to offer enormously helpful guidance and encouragement all the way through the final draft of this dissertation. The late Alfonso Quiroz oversaw my study of Latin American history and consistently supported my efforts to develop a project that examined the relationship between Haiti and the United States. Nancy Foner offered much encouragement and guidance as I explored issues related to immigration. Millery Polyné encouraged me to pursue my research on Haiti and the Haitian diaspora and challenged me to deepen my analysis of the big questions at the heart of this project. With short notice, Amy Chazkel graciously agreed to read this dissertation and to serve on the dissertation committee and brought a valuable perspective and a wealth of insight to the discussion.

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with me his love for Haiti and gave me an inspiring model for combining scholarship and activism.

I was also fortunate to develop close friendships with fellow graduate students that helped me through the research and writing process. I am particularly grateful to Paul Naish and Thomas Harbison with whom I constituted an informal dissertation writing group and to Geoff Johnson, David Parsons, Antonia Levy, James Hoff, Renee McGarry, and Nathan Leslie for their help in exploring ideas and research problems and for their friendship and encouragement. I'm also grateful to Sandor John and Nicole Burrowes, who offered not only friendship but also an ongoing dialogue that complicated and enriched my understanding of the relationship between Latin America and the United States.

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Introduction

This dissertation examines the origins and the evolution of political activism among Haitians in the United States. It traces the efforts of Haitian exiles, refugees, and community organizers to build bridges connecting activists in the Haitian communities of New York and Miami and linking the US-based activists to the grassroots activists and organizations in Haiti. It also charts the evolution of this trans-regional and transnational activism from its origins in the anti-Duvalier exile community of New York in the late 1950s to the defeat of the coup that returned Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti in 1994. A core set of questions has guided this research: How did leaving Haiti and living abroad shape the political activity and vision of Haitians in the United States? How did those who emerged as political activists negotiate the relationship among their often multiple, overlapping objectives, which included achieving political change and grassroots democracy in Haiti and ensuring the defense and fair treatment of Haitian refugees in the United States? How successful were these activists in mobilizing their communities, in enlisting American allies in their campaigns, and in building border-crossing political movements? And finally, how can the success or failure of the actors in this story be accounted for and what can their experience teach about activism, political networks, and social movements that connect distant regions and that cross international borders?

A handful of excellent works address some of these questions about the Haitian immigrant experience. Despite these valuable contributions, however, there remains a dearth of historical scholarship on Haitians in the United States and Haitian politics at the grassroots level. This dissertation seeks to help fill that gap. And, since this study focuses on the history of political activism connecting Haitian New York and Miami with Haiti, it maintains a somewhat different focus from that of the existing scholarship on Haitians in the United States. While

virtually all of the scholarship does acknowledge the ongoing connection Haitians had to their homeland, the literature's treatment of Haitians is one in which developments in Haiti fade from the picture, bursting back onto the scene occasionally, to be sure, but not as an ongoing and indispensable part of Haitians' post-migration story. Perhaps this episodic engagement with Haiti accurately reflects the experience of some Haitians in the United States, but for the principle actors in my story – US-based political activists who endeavored to support the grassroots movement in Haiti while also fighting for fair treatment for Haitians in the United States, the history of Haiti must be continuously interwoven into their own history in the United States. And once the necessity of a serious engagement with Haitian history throughout the whole period becomes clear, another important conclusion emerges: the history of Haiti does not become fully clear unless one incorporates the role of the United States and US-based activists. Therefore, in this history of Haitian political activists based in New York and Miami, while local conditions continue to be an important factor in shaping experience and ideas, events in Haiti too remain a vital part of the story. In his pioneering work on Haitians in the United States, Michel S. Laguerre observes Haitian immigrants' intense engagement with what he terms "border crossing political practices."¹ This dissertation, which might best be called a border crossing political history of Haitians in Haiti and in the United States, builds upon the work of Laguerre and other scholars who have begun to explain this crucial dynamic.

This dissertation draws upon a range of primary and secondary sources. Research for the project began with the cultivation of the limited number, but invaluable, works in the related social sciences that document aspects of the early history of Haitians in the United States. The dissertations of Susan Buchanan, Carolle Charles, Georges Fournon, Karen Richman, and Nina

¹Michel S. Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship: Haitian Americans in Transnational America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 157-75.

Glick Schiller, and the articles and book chapters that grew out of these projects, along with the scholarship of Michel S. Laguerre and Alex Stepick in particular, provide the foundation on which this dissertation is constructed. Even with these essential works, however, the early history of Haitians in New York was a particularly difficult thing to piece together.

Indispensable to understanding this early history were the archival sources contained in the Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, located in the New York Public Library. In addition, State Department papers published in the series *Foreign Relations of the United States* provided additional insight into the political activity of the first Haitian exiles as well as the motives behind US policy toward Haiti and the Haitian exiles. The few newspaper articles that consider the Haitian experience in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (including the first Haitian weekly published in the United States, which was established in 1971) as well as pamphlets, papers, and newsletters of the Haitian political organizations of the period, and oral history interviews all added to the picture of this history of Haitian politics and political activism.

From the early 1980s onward (examined in chapters three through six), more published sources are available. Haitian newspapers and newsletters published in the United States provided an important window into the history of the community and, because they were such political organs, a window into the political debates of each period as well. Archival materials featured in the Haiti *Dechoukaj* collection and the Amy Wilentz collection, also housed at the Schomburg Center, provided much needed information on developments in Haiti just before and after the pivotal departure of Duvalier in 1986. Non-Haitian newspaper articles and wire service reports (domestic and international) were essential in constructing the historical narrative and understanding key developments in Haiti and throughout the United States. Finally, the public

papers of Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton along with records of congressional hearings and a handful of other congressional records contributed to a better understanding of US policy toward Haiti and Haitian refugees.

Although this dissertation contributes to the relatively limited scholarship addressing the history of Haitians in the United States, it does much more. By focusing on activists who sought to build international networks that would allow them to support political change in their country of origin, this dissertation is in dialogue with the historiography of immigrant political activism that drew on international networks to promote political change in their home countries. One example of such study is of emigré activism that was an important part of the Polish experience in the United States, going back to the mid-nineteenth century, a time during which Polish immigrants in the United States worked closely with political allies throughout Europe in support of independence for Poland. Such activism continued to hold a prominent place in the community throughout the twentieth century.² Another example of such study is of Italians, a group of European immigrants that have often maintained a particularly international orientation, continuing to preserve connections to Italy and drawing upon the political networks and ideas of the home country to stimulate and inform their political action abroad.³ Scholarship on Latin American migration and immigrant activism in the Americas adds further to this body of

²Florian Stasik and James S. Pula, *Polish Political Emigrés in the United States of America, 1831-1864* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2002), distributed by Columbia University Press; Anna D. Jaroszynska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

³Michael Miller Topp describes a dynamic among Italians that seems especially relevant to the Haitian experience, particularly Italian immigrants' close connection to activists in Italy, their awareness of political developments in their country of origin, and the way their migration back and forth sustained these connections. Michael Miller Topp, "The Transnationalism of the Italian-American Left: The Lawrence Strike of 1912 and the Italian Chamber of Labor of New York City," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 1 (Fall 1997): 39-63. See also Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser M. Ottanelli, *Italian Workers of the World: Labor, Migration, and the Formation of Multiethnic States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) and Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

scholarship and highlights some interesting parallels between the Haitian experience and that of other Latin American immigrants. For example, at the same time and in the same city in which Haitian exiles were growing their Haiti-focused international campaigns, Puerto Rican activists were forging links between radical political movements in the United States and in Puerto Rico and combining support for US-based social movements with the cause of national independence for Puerto Rico.⁴ In addition, recent scholarship focusing on Mexicans and Mexican Americans shows how this pattern occurs in immigrant communities in ways that are closely related to those that appear among Haitians. The development of transnational political campaigns connecting Mexico to the Mexican communities of the United States, the role of US-based Mexicans in pushing for democratic reforms in their home country, and cross-border activist connections like the network of “transnational resistance” that Anna Sampaio found connecting Chiapas, Mexico, to Denver, Colorado, all echo themes that this dissertation finds among Haitian activists in the mid to late twentieth century.⁵ More than a contribution to the history of Haitians in the United States, this dissertation is intended to add to the body of work that explores the ways immigrant activists have used international networks to promote political change in their country of origin while also attempting to advance their status in the United States.

This dissertation also speaks to the history of African Americans and the African diaspora in the Americas. As Kevin Gaines notes, there is considerable evidence of black Americans’ global consciousness stretching back to the era of slavery and the international

⁴Andrés Torres and José E Velázquez, eds., *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Jose E. Cruz, *Identity and Power: Puerto Rican Politics and the Challenge of Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁵Michael P. Smith and Matt Bakker, *Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of el Migrante* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Carlos G. Vélez-Ibañez, Anna Sampaio, and Manolo González-Estay, *Transnational Latina/o Communities: Politics, Processes, and Cultures* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

abolitionist movements. Framing the African American experience within the context of the African diaspora is an attempt to recognize the ideas, movements, and networks connecting African Americans to people of African descent in other parts of the world. And as many exciting recent works document, this global consciousness and international focus entered a new phase after World War II with black Americans' identification with and support of global anti-colonial movements. These works also highlight the interplay between the black freedom struggle and the world created by the Cold War.⁶ The history of Haitians in this dissertation adds a piece to the growing understanding of African Americans' place in the African diaspora, providing further evidence of black Americans' global consciousness and practice. For African Americans (though sometimes in conflict with Haitians) US policy toward Haiti, and local and national authorities' policies regarding Haitian refugees were crucial to their sense of place and status in America and to their demands for racial justice. From 1991 to 1994, in particular, African Americans' already growing identification with Haitians exploded into a nationwide movement, reinforcing their connection to the global African diaspora, which was itself caught up in the movement for democracy in Haiti and justice for the Haitian refugees.

Chapter one of this dissertation examines the origins of the Haitian community of New York and explores its development from 1957 to 1973. The rise of the Duvalier regime and the seemingly limitless state violence Papa Doc unleashed on the Haitian people frames the founding of Haitian New York. The principal task of this first chapter is to untangle the politics of the Haitian community in these early years and to learn how the competing and often contradictory forces among Haitian political activists were able to come together by the early 1970s to begin the formation of a somewhat unified anti-Duvalier opposition movement.

⁶Kevin Gaines, "African American History," in *American History Now*, edited by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 400-20.

Chapter two introduces the Haitian community of Miami, the conditions which shaped its early history, and the developments in Haiti in the 1970s that displaced the “boat people” and propelled them on the perilous journey to Florida where they became the primary constituents of the South Florida community. The ensuing refugee crisis quickly drew the attention and energy of the Haitian activists in New York, and this chapter analyzes how the advent of the refugee issue reshaped the vision and action of political activists who had previously been solely concerned with the overthrow of the Duvalier dictatorship. Chapter two also examines how the tenure of Jimmy Carter as president influenced the anti-Duvalier resistance in Haiti and encouraged Haitian activists in the United States to rethink their strategy regarding political change in Haiti.

In chapter three the immense impact that the Reagan presidency had both on Haiti and on Haitians seeking refuge in the United States is studied. It considers how the repression in Haiti, which corresponded to Reagan’s coming to office, shaped the resistance movement in Haiti and the ideas and activity of activists in the United States. It also examines the ways activists responded to Reagan’s stringent new policies toward Haitian refugees. Finally, chapter three examines the uprisings of 1985 and 1986 that toppled the Duvalier dictatorship and analyzes how this watershed moment transformed Haitian politics at home and abroad.

Chapter four focuses on the tightening relationship among the Haitian activists in New York, Miami, and Haiti from 1987 to 1989. In the years after Duvalier’s departure, members of the grassroots movement in Haiti came under intense attack by those trying to destroy the budding popular movement. This chapter examines how activists in New York and Miami attempted to defend their allies in Haiti even while they continued to expand their campaigns in defense of Haitians in the United States.

Chapter five focuses on the years 1990 and 1991, the pinnacle moment for the linked popular movements in New York, Miami, and Haiti. This chapter analyzes why and how Haitian activists in each location achieved an unprecedented level of mobilization. It also examines the relationship between the victories of this two-year period and the trans-regional and transnational movement that had its roots in the struggle against the Duvalier dictatorship and that blossomed after Duvalier's departure in February 1986.

The sixth and final chapter examines the coup years from 1991 to 1994. It seeks to explain how the international network of activists and organizations functioned during the coup when the grassroots movement was once again under assault. It also analyzes the way Haitian activists' history in the anti-Duvalier resistance and the support for Haitian refugees informed their campaign against the coup. Finally, the chapter assesses the impact of the coup years on the political activists and the networks they had built and nurtured in the preceding years.

Chapter 1

Haitian Exiles in New York: the Early Years, 1957-1973

On September 22, 1957, Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier was elected president of the Republic of Haiti. Papa Doc’s electoral victory emerged from a period of bitter conflict and intense political violence in Haiti. For the previous year Duvalier had been locked in political struggle with the other contenders for the position of head of state. Cultivating a public image as a champion of *indigenisme* and *noirisme*, movements that articulated black nationalism and race pride as the true form of Haitian nationalism, Duvalier established his base among the black middle class and segments of the black military leadership. His principal challengers for the presidency were Louis Dejoie, the candidate of the *milat* or mulatto bourgeoisie, Clement Jumelle, the candidate who enjoyed the backing of the previous Haitian president, General Paul Magloire, and Daniel Fignole, defender of the urban working class and head of the Movement of Workers and Peasants (MOP).⁷ Analyzing the reasons for Duvalier’s victory, Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes, “Violence saturated the Haitian political climate during 1956-57;” Duvalier’s election was a victory for “those best prepared and most willing to use violence.” Fraud, too, helped Duvalier capture the presidency; votes for Duvalier exceeded by 50 percent the number of voters in some provinces.⁸

After his election, Duvalier began a campaign to reorganize Haitian society so that all institutions would be under his personal control. What followed was a systematic attack on any

⁷Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 3rd ed. (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2006), 91; Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment since 1700* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 143, 155-56; Matthew J. Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 106-7, 170-74.

⁸Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Haiti: State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 152-53; Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 185. For an extensive discussion of the role of violence in the campaign of 1956-1957, see Chapter 5 of Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 168-85.

institution, organization, or individual that posed a threat. Duvalier closed schools and seminaries, centralized the university system, attacked teachers, students, and clergy, and shut down the independent press. He also closed the Military Academy and replaced it with a system by which he personally promoted soldiers from the ranks, and created his own paramilitary, the *Volontaires de la Securite Nationale* (VSN), later to become known as the *Tonton Macoutes*. As in Duvalier's earlier political victory, violence proved instrumental in this process.⁹

While political violence was not a new phenomenon in Haiti at this time, Duvalier ushered in an era in which state violence seemed absolutely limitless and total. For example, women were no longer protected from the direct exercise of state violence nor were other traditionally protected groups, such as children, the elderly, teachers, and the clergy. As Carolle Charles observes, despite Haiti's history of authoritarianism, "cultural codes" had previously established boundaries for state violence by which women, children, and the elderly were protected as "political innocents." After Duvalier came to power, however, "women began to be detained, tortured, exiled, raped, and executed." In July 1958 Duvalier sent a clear signal that he did not intend to respect the traditional limits of state violence when his forces kidnapped, beat, and raped the feminist and anti-Duvalier editor Yvonne Hakime Rimpel, actions that sent "a chill through both the political and the journalistic communities."¹⁰

As Duvalier undercut or eliminated all independent institutions and tightened the circle around his executive position, many Haitians realized the economic benefits of allegiance to Duvalier. The Haitian government under Duvalier greatly expanded its role in the economy by

⁹Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 159-61.

¹⁰Carolle Charles, "Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti: The Duvalierist State, Transnationalism and the Emergence of a New Feminism (1980-1990)," *Feminist Studies* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 139-40; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 166-70.

increasing the number of government employees, including military and paramilitary forces, who drew a government paycheck. Duvalier built an extensive network of supporters in both urban and rural areas that depended on their relationship to the executive for their income and status. Instead of maintaining a relatively small number of individuals growing rich through the state, Duvalier created an expansive system of low- and middle-level loyalists spread throughout the country, and in so doing, he not only bought the allegiance of a large number of people, but he also intensified competition among those at the bottom of society. Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls this system, which resembled “a basket of crabs,” “auto-neutralization,” since once it was established, it utilized patronage and the competition that resulted to automatically neutralize mass revolt.¹¹

Duvalier’s rise to power drove his chief political opponents to flee the country. In 1957 Haitian political leaders, escaping from Duvalier’s Haiti, began arriving in New York. In this period Louis Dejoie, defeated presidential hopeful and leader of the mulatto bourgeoisie, Paul-Eugene Magloire, Haitian president for six years before Duvalier’s rise, and Daniel Fignole, leader of the Movement of Workers and Peasants (MOP), all fled Haiti for New York.¹²

“Duvalier’s repression of dissident elements was so effective that there were no organized opposition groups inside Haiti. Oppositionists were all exiles,” noted one US State Department official.¹³ Forming the foundation of the contemporary Haitian diaspora in the United States, this wealthy and politically connected class of Haitians was the first to flee Duvalier’s Haiti.

¹¹Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 162; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 155.

¹²Carolle Charles, “Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left,” in *The Immigrant Left in the United States*, edited by Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 293.

¹³Document 371, Memorandum from the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Brubeck) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), June 1, 1962, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII, American Republics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996).

Paradoxically, the establishment of this early exile community both widened Papa Doc's range of power and, at the same time, planted the seeds of his greatest political challenge. With many of his main political opponents in exile, Francois Duvalier had more space to exercise complete power. Indeed, he filled the void these individuals left in the Haitian political class by elevating others who would be loyal supporters.¹⁴ On the other hand, operating from New York gave opponents of Duvalier the space they needed to build an opposition movement in exile.

Following Haiti's leading political figures, other members of the Haitian elite soon made their way to New York as well. Because they had political and economic resources in Haiti independent of Duvalier's state, these wealthy Haitians threatened Duvalier's quest for total power, making them vulnerable in the whirlwind of violence descending upon Haiti. Many who fled in the late 1950s also belonged to the light-skinned class of Haitians that felt itself under attack by Duvalier and his supporters, who rallied around black nationalism. A US national intelligence estimate from June 7, 1961, observed that Duvalier's efforts to extend his power "has almost certainly increased the resentment of churchmen, students, military men, and others of the old mulatto elite, which has lost its power and influence since Duvalier came to power," resentment that drove the creation of "small exile groups" in New York as well as in Caracas and Havana.¹⁵ And in response to the escalating violence and the increasingly limited opportunity for anyone without ties to Duvalier, the black middle class too soon followed the Haitian elite's flight to New York.¹⁶ It was this group of exiled politicians and other wealthy and

¹⁴Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 155.

¹⁵Document 369, Special National Intelligence Estimate, June 7, 1961, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

¹⁶Alex Stepick, *Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement: Different Interpretations*, Occasional Papers Series, Dialogues 4 (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Aug. 1981), 6-7; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 94.

middle-class Haitians forced to flee Haiti that, from the very beginning, oriented the political vision and activity of Haitian New York toward Haiti and regime change back home.

To travel from Haiti to the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a difficult and expensive process. Those leaving the country needed to obtain a Haitian passport and an exit visa, which involved much paperwork and numerous official and unofficial “fees.” In addition, in order to enter the United States, an individual had to obtain another visa, one of three types: a permanent resident visa, a student visa, or a tourist visa, each with its own requirements for eligibility. To obtain permanent residence in the United States in this period, one needed to be able to show that he or she had a job waiting in the United States. A student visa required both a letter of acceptance from an American college or university and proof of an ability to support oneself. Both the permanent resident and the student visas presented conditions that were extremely difficult for most Haitians to meet, especially in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the Haitian community in the United States was not yet well established. The tourist visa, on the other hand, required an individual to present a round-trip ticket (demonstrating intent to return) and evidence of an ability to support oneself during the duration of a stay in the United States (a sum that could reach \$1,500 or more).¹⁷

Despite the considerable obstacles to emigration from Haiti, more than one hundred thousand Haitians entered the United States legally between 1957 and 1970, and most did so as tourists, further evidence that this early wave of Haitian migration brought mostly upper- and middle-class Haitians. From 1957 to 1970, 98,420 entered the United States from Haiti as tourists as compared to 33,870 as permanent residents and only 2,500 as students.¹⁸ A team of

¹⁷Michel S. Laguerre, *American Odyssey: Haitians in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 39-40.

¹⁸Nina Barnett Glick, “The Formation of a Haitian Ethnic Group” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1975), 59-60.

researchers studying undocumented Haitians and Dominicans in New York City in the mid-1970s found that only 2 percent of the Haitians in their sample “entered without inspection” (without a visa and authorization by immigration officials). Unlike the Haitian community that would later form in South Florida and that would be largely made up of people who had arrived by boat and never had been detected by immigration authorities, New York’s early Haitian community consisted largely of people who had entered the country legally but overstayed their tourist visas.¹⁹

The first members of the Haitian community in New York saw their presence in the North American city as only a temporary sojourn abroad. In fact, as one group of scholars observes, “They were so sure that they were political exiles who would be returning to Haiti in a matter of months that for years they didn’t unpack their bags.”²⁰ What’s more, these upper- and middle-class exiles experienced a considerable loss of wealth and status in their move to the United States, intensifying their yearning to return to Haiti. Even for those who were prepared to stay in the United States, the difficulty of life in America made them dream of home. Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc describe the Haitian migrants’ predicament:

Unable to transfer their landholdings and commercial position into ready cash, and without knowledge of English, diplomats became orderlies, and teachers became factory workers. People who had staffs of live-in servants all their lives became maids and waiters . . . Whether they worked three jobs to pay for the rundown house they had purchased in Queens, or lived in a single room occupancy hotel in Manhattan with the strong smell of urine in every corridor, they dreamt of returning to their lives of luxury and privilege in Haiti.²¹

¹⁹Patricia J. Elwell et al., “Haitian and Dominican Undocumented Aliens in New York City: A Preliminary Report,” *Migration Today* 5, no. 5 (Dec. 1977): 7.

²⁰Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, “The Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields,” in *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 157.

²¹Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, “Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields,” 158.

Whether they hoped to resume a political career upon return to Haiti or simply to return to the relative luxury of life before migration, for many the difficulty of life in the United States provided an added incentive to go home.

Politics in the Haitian Exile Community, 1957-1965

Hoping to hasten Duvalier's departure and their own return to Haiti, many in the first wave of exiles from Haiti almost immediately began plotting Papa Doc's overthrow. They dreamt of toppling Duvalier through a dramatic invasion planned and launched from New York, their home in exile. This vision became the basis and the driving force for the first political activists in the exile community of New York. On July 29, 1958, a group of officers loyal to former Haitian President General Paul Magloire, and a handful of American mercenaries attempted to invade Haiti and overthrow the Duvalier regime. This unsuccessful invasion was the first of many supported and planned by Haitian exiles in the United States. In the years after the failed 1958 invasion, Haitian exiles staged other invasions from South Florida as well as from the Dominican Republic and Cuba, all of which also failed. Many factors, including insufficient training, resources, and preparation, mismanagement, failure to gain substantial support from the countries that served as launching points of the invasions, and especially the exiles' disconnection from the Haitian people themselves, which kept the invasions from generating the kind of general uprising necessary to overthrow Duvalier, all contributed to their repeated failures.²²

The early exile groups were composed primarily of upper- and middle-class Haitians and were grouped around former presidential candidates and other political leaders whose aim was to

²²Susan Buchanan, "Scattered Seeds: The Meaning of Migration for Haitians in New York City" (PhD diss., New York University, 1980), 241-42, 244.

return to Haiti to regain the power they had lost when forced into exile. Revolving around these traditional political figures, the dominant political culture in the early years of Haitian New York was strongly anti-Duvalier, but at the same time conservative in its vision for the country. A Central Intelligence Agency report drew the following conclusions:

There appear[s] a large number of refugee or exile groups intent on disposing of Duvalier and taking over the government. Many are former Haitian political figures, who seek restoration of their power or financial positions. Some may be motivated by high principle, others by personal ambition, and there is evidence that some of them are both motivated by and supported by private capital . . . [which seeks] special consideration such as hotels, casinos, etc., in Haiti.²³

A meeting of one such exile group, the *Ralliement des Forces de L'Opposition*, an organization grouped around the figure of former Haitian President Paul Magloire, featured speeches and songs that evoked a strong emotional appeal to Haitian patriotism and expressed a clear message that Duvalierism was the enemy of Haiti and Haitians. While the event was not focused on any individual, it was clear that the function of the event was to prepare Haitians to retake the country in order to facilitate the return of Magloire. The same theme resonated from organizations grouped around other Haitian politicians and traditional leaders.²⁴

Not surprisingly, this political culture that brought together many former political rivals and their supporters, all vying for leadership on their return to Haiti, produced no small amount of infighting and division. An October 27, 1966, US national intelligence estimate concluded that “Duvalier's overthrow would probably have to be largely an inside job” since “none of the many small groupings among the divided, bickering Haitian exiles could succeed in

²³Document 381, Paper Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, undated, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

²⁴Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 297-304.

overthrowing Duvalier without decisive help from the US or some other foreign government.”²⁵ Nonetheless, there were occasional attempts to bring together the different groups, though the multiple political coalitions that emerged in the period remained troubled. In January 1961, for example, Daniel Fignole, former Haitian Senator Luc Stephen, and Dr. Camille Lherisson, a former secretary of state in Haiti, initiated an effort to create a united assembly of exiled Haitians.²⁶ The United Opposition, which included supporters of Dejoie, Fignole, and Jumelle, sponsored a Creole language radio show, broadcast by Radio Progreso out of Havana, Cuba, which aimed to stimulate the Haitian people to revolt.²⁷ Another attempt to create a unified organization came in May 1963. At the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Hermann Desir, former Haitian consul, announced the creation of the League of Haitian Patriots, a group he claimed would unite the opposition in exile and facilitate their resistance activities. In a statement that seems intended to give the impression that anti-Duvalier resistance was springing up all over, Dr. Albert Chassagne claimed “two to three thousand [revolutionary troops] presently under league command” and bases in the United States, Jamaica, Venezuela, and especially in Haiti’s neighbor, the Dominican Republic.²⁸

In the early 1960s, these efforts by Haitian exiles in the United States were bolstered by a gulf that had opened up between Duvalier and the US government, now headed by President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy and other administration officials were critical of Duvalier, whom

²⁵Document 358, National Intelligence Estimate, October 27, 1966, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005). Political divisions among the opposition in exile are also discussed in Nina Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat? Unity and Diversity in Haitian Organizing in New York,” in *Caribbean Life in New York City: Sociocultural Dimensions*, edited by Constance R. Sutton and Elsa M. Chaney (New York: Center for Migration Studies of New York, 1987), 186.

²⁶“Haitian Exiles Seek Unity,” *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1961, 12.

²⁷Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 243.

²⁸“Haitian Exiles Form Coordination Group,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1963, 30.

they regarded as a tyrant and, in the words of one official, “an irrational man who has almost totalitarian power over the island.”²⁹ When Duvalier began a second term after a fraudulent election in 1961, the State Department declined to send the US ambassador to Haiti for the inauguration, a move Duvalier correctly interpreted as a snub by the disapproving Kennedy administration.³⁰ And in 1963 the Kennedy administration took greater steps to distance itself from Duvalier when it cut off military aid to Haiti.³¹

As part of its program of opposition to Duvalier, the US State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency worked to identify, maintain contact with, and support leaders of the anti-Duvalier opposition in exile. After the November 1960 election, President-elect Kennedy formed the Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems. Regarding Haiti, the body recommended that the State Department “draw together the forces for a healthy alternative [to Duvalier] (including, perhaps, some of the exiles) to the Duvalier government.” The result would be the State Department’s “left hand’ in the United States (unofficial relations which do not compromise) and this should be extended to the more responsible Haitian exiles. It should set about and draw together the elements of an eventually effective government. Two possible leaders: [former presidential candidates Daniel] Fignole and [Clement] Jumelle.”³² By June 1, 1962, the CIA, the FBI, and the INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) had compiled a list of

²⁹Document 366, Memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Coerr) to Secretary of State Rusk, May 23, 1961, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

³⁰Document 366, Memorandum, May 23, 1961, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume XII, American Republics*.

³¹Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 185-86.

³²Document 364, Editorial Note, Report submitted Jan. 4, 1961, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

nearly two hundred “promising Haitian exiles and visible resistance figures” from which it was “trying to select those most likely to be capable of heading a successor government.”³³ The State Department also asked the Immigration and Naturalization service to “issue re-entry (I-512) permits to exile leaders residing in the United States who are attempting to organize a unified movement of all Haitian exiles, both here and in other countries, and need to travel outside the United States to do so;” the CIA even trained exiles and supported a number of guerilla expeditions between 1962 and 1968 aimed at deposing Duvalier.³⁴

However, despite the Kennedy administration’s apparent opposition to the Duvalier regime, it refused to completely sever ties with Haiti. Seeing the country as too important strategically and fearing a scenario in Haiti that could be even worse than that under Duvalier, American officials sought to maintain diplomatic ties with Duvalier. An examination of several documents from the Kennedy administration’s first year reveals its motives behind this policy toward Haiti. In a May 26, 1961, memo circulated among top Kennedy administration officials, US Ambassador to Haiti Robert Newbegin explained that “the U.S. interest in that country was chiefly because of its strategic geographic location . . . It was desirable from the U.S. standpoint that affairs in Haiti remain quiet at this time so as not to make our general Caribbean situation more difficult than it is now . . . The Duvalier government is stable by Haitian standards and . . . appears to be in complete control, though it remains so by brutal methods.”³⁵ In another memo, US Ambassador Newbegin laid out the “two sorry alternatives” facing the United States in Haiti.

³³Document 371, Memorandum from the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Brubeck) to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), June 1, 1962, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

³⁴Document 375, Paper Prepared in the Department of State, February 20, 1963, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII, American Republics*; Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 186-87.

³⁵Document 367, Memorandum for the Record, May 26, 1961, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

On the one hand, it could continue to support Duvalier, whose “heavy-handed suppression of a student strike, expulsion of a number of Roman Catholic church officials, and arrest and maltreatment of anyone thought to be opposed to his regime have increased his unpopularity and resulted in an increasing tendency on the part of the general public to blame the Embassy and the United States Government for ‘support’ of a despised tyrant.” On the other hand,

Should Duvalier fall, there is a decided danger of chaos and a struggle for power among individuals in whom we would have little ground for confidence. Such a situation might well tempt [Cuban President Fidel] Castro or [Dominican President Rafael] Trujillo to intervene in such a way as to jeopardize our national interests, possibly even forcing military intervention. Therefore, unless we are willing to take radical steps (including military intervention, if necessary, after Duvalier's removal), we have little choice but to follow our present course of maintaining friendly and helpful relations with the Duvalier government.³⁶

In addition, Haiti proved useful in the United State’s effort to isolate Communist Cuba. In return for US assistance, Duvalier supported the US embargo on Cuba, pledged to provide military assistance and its territory for military action, and cast a key vote in the Organizations of American States (OAS) in favor of the US-led effort to impose sanctions on Cuba and to expel it from the regional body.³⁷ Despite the Kennedy administration’s decision to maintain diplomatic relations with Duvalier, it did suspend military aid to Haiti in 1963 (as has been already noted), evidence of its deep ambivalence about backing the Duvalier regime.

The administration of Lyndon Johnson was not as reluctant as the Kennedy administration in its support for Duvalier, and US-Haitian relations warmed significantly after President Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963. Under Johnson, the United States continued to value Haiti for its strategic location in the Caribbean and for its anti-Cuban vote in

³⁶Document 365, Memorandum on United States-Haitian Relations, Washington, Mar. 23, 1961, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII, American Republics*.

³⁷Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 184-85.

the OAS. Brenda Gayle Plummer notes that “friends of the Johnson administration found investment in Haiti attractive,” another possible factor in the warming of relations between Washington and Port-au-Prince.³⁸ To demonstrate the warmer relations between the United States and Haiti, Johnson restored military aid (though direct aid to the country remained suspended) and, after yet another fraudulent election in April 1964, an election that elevated Duvalier to the status of President for Life, Johnson received the Haitian ambassador in Washington.³⁹ “The United States is now faced with the prospect that the Duvalier regime will continue to rule Haiti for the foreseeable future,” calculated State Department officials. “In these circumstances it is in the United States interest to seek to bring about at least a minimum level of mutual accommodation” in line with “United States interests [that] range from the need to protect American citizens and property interests to ensuring that Haiti votes on the merit of questions of importance to the United States and the free world in international organizations and forums.”⁴⁰

Washington’s new stance toward Duvalier’s dictatorship also occasioned a shift in its official relationship with Duvalier’s opponents in exile. After deciding on the need to “bring about at least a minimum level of mutual accommodation,” State Department officials recommended that the US government “disassociate itself from any exile attempt to invade Haiti, or any plot against Duvalier, except in the circumstances (1) that the prospects for success appear

³⁸Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 189, 193.

³⁹Georges E. Fouron, “‘I, Too, Want to be a Big Man’: The Making of a Haitian ‘Boat People,’” in *The New African Diaspora*, edited by Isidore Okpewho and Nkiru Nzegwu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 78-79.

⁴⁰Document 329, Policy Paper Prepared in the Embassy in Haiti and the Office of Caribbean Affairs, Department of State, Apr. 23, 1964, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana*.

favorable, (2) that public knowledge of United States Government involvement could be successfully avoided, and (3) that the installation of an acceptable successor group is virtually assured.” At the same time, the government should “continue discreet contacts with Haitians outside the Government (and with those in exile) in order to attempt to build up assets for the future.”⁴¹ Improved relations with Duvalier determined that the United States could not so openly support those attempting to topple the regime. Still, American officials wanted to maintain some influence over a post-Duvalier Haiti, and they continued to see their contacts among leaders of the exile groups as a key way to do so. Indeed, Duvalier himself seems to have been well aware of the US government’s support for his opponents in exile. A telegram from the US ambassador to Haiti described the Haitian leader as “pathologically suspicious that USG [the U.S. government] playing with Haitian exiles against him,” and US support for exile activity continued to be a sensitive area in US-Haitian relations.⁴²

Soon after he declared himself president for life, another invasion attempt gave Duvalier the opportunity to demonstrate his determination to defeat his opponents, particularly those from among the exile community. In the summer of 1964, a group calling itself *Jeune Haiti* (Young Haiti) launched an attempt to invade the country and topple Duvalier. Although the guerilla force consisted of only thirteen fighters, they had some military success and seem to have represented a real threat to the Haitian government in the three months it took for Duvalier’s

⁴¹Document 329, Policy Paper, Apr. 23, 1964, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana*.

⁴²Document 333, Telegram from the Embassy in Haiti to the Department of State, July 27, 1964, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana*. See also Document 369, Memorandum of Meeting, May 27, 1968, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana*.

forces to repress the campaign.⁴³ After the insurrection began, Duvalier reportedly “has told his household staff, if he goes, he will go like Hitler and level Port-au-Prince,” a comment that suggests that the leader considered the invasion a real threat.⁴⁴ Papa Doc’s forces were ultimately able to kill eleven of the thirteen fighters and capture the remaining two, who were then taken to the Haitian capital so that the president could use them to send a message to other would-be rebels.⁴⁵

The story of these two young men can help to understand the experience of Haitians in exile that chose to return to their country to fight against the Duvalier dictatorship. Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin had grown up together in the southern Haitian city of Jeremie and had fled Duvalier’s Haiti for New York, where their friendship continued. Drouin first served in the United States Army and later was employed in the financial industry of New York City. Numa worked for a shipping company and was an engineering student at the Bronx Merchant Academy. Both joined *Jeune Haiti* while they lived in New York and, after Duvalier’s assumption of the title of President for Life, committed to joining the guerrilla campaign they hoped would liberate Haiti.⁴⁶

Numa and Drouin, who had left Haiti in the same period, who maintained their friendship while in exile, and who returned to Haiti under the same circumstances, also died together. As

⁴³Brenda Gayle Plummer notes that *Jeune Haiti* fighters “fought ten engagements [and] downed a Haitian military plane” and argues that “the *Jeune Haiti* invasion of 1964 marked the last time that filibusters truly threatened the regime, although coup attempts continued.” Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 190.

⁴⁴Document 331, Memorandum from Robert M. Sayre of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), July 9, 1964, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana*.

⁴⁵Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 242–43.

⁴⁶Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1–2.

Edwidge Danticat notes in the compelling portrait she paints of the two men, on the day of Numa and Drouin's execution, Duvalier "decreed that government offices be closed so that hundreds of state employees could be in the crowd. Schools were shut down and principals ordered to bring their students. Hundreds of people from outside the capital were bused in to watch." After Numa and Drouin were shot to death by a firing squad, Duvalier supporters distributed pamphlets telling Haitians how they should understand the series of events: "Dr. Francois Duvalier will fulfill his sacrosanct mission. He has crushed and will always crush the attempts of the opposition. Think well, renegades. Here is the fate awaiting you and your kind."⁴⁷ Whether the pamphlets made it all the way to New York or not, the message of the defeat of the *Jeune Haiti* invasion was clear: Duvalier did not intend to let those outside the country threaten his power. Duvalier's assumption of the position of president for life and his defeat of the *Jeune Haiti* insurrection were the capstones of a brutal and systematic campaign of repression he had carried out over the previous three years.⁴⁸

In response to Duvalier's tightening control in Haiti and his declaration of his presidency for life, the opposition in New York initiated a new effort to create unity within the fractured exile community. In 1964 supporters of Paul Magloire began coming together with *Jeune Haiti*, *Le Mouvement Revolutionnaire du 12 Novembre* (MR 12N), and *Les Forces Revolutionnaires Haitiennes* (FRH), a process that produced *Le Coalition Haitienne* (the Haitian Coalition). Under the leadership of Magloire, the Haitian Coalition produced a weekly newspaper called *le Combattant Haitien*. It also collaborated with the US State Department to create *Radio Vonvon* (in Creole meaning "bug" or "beetle"), a shortwave radio program through which it broadcast its

⁴⁷Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 5.

⁴⁸Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 158-61.

anti-Duvalier message from New York to Haiti.⁴⁹ The Haitian Coalition and its anti-Duvalier radio program were funded by the CIA, which channeled \$135,000 annually to the group.⁵⁰ A memo produced for the 303 Committee, an interdepartmental body which authorized the covert operation, reveals that officials with the State Department and the CIA utilized *Radio Vonvon* as a way of “countering the inflammatory Creole broadcasts over Radio Habana and preventing this communist power from being the only anti-Duvalier force in the eyes of Creole-speaking Haitians.”⁵¹ Although it is impossible to know how many people *Radio Vonvon* reached in Haiti, it appears to have been a real threat to the dictatorship. In 1965 Duvalier sent a formal complaint to the US government, asking Washington to silence the program on the grounds that it “constitutes aggression against [Haiti’s] government” and gives Haitians the impression that Washington supports the anti-Duvalier exiles.⁵²

One of the individuals to take a leading role in the Haitian Coalition was Raymond Alcide Joseph, the future founder and publisher of *Haiti Observateur*. Joseph, the son of a Protestant minister, grew up in the southern Haitian town of Les Cayes. In 1954, Joseph served as a translator for a visiting Baptist minister from Asheville, North Carolina. This experience led him to the United States to attend the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago; after attending the Moody Bible Institute, he completed his bachelor’s degree at Wheaton College in Illinois. He returned to Haiti in 1957, just after Duvalier’s rise to power, but in 1961 he left the country again

⁴⁹Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 145-46; Charles, “Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left,” 294.

⁵⁰Document 381, Memorandum from the Deputy Director of Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Trueheart) to the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs (Meyer), Washington, Apr. 29, 1969, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–10, Documents on American Republics, 1969–1972* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009).

⁵¹Document 383, Memorandum for the 303 Committee, Washington, May 27, 1969, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–10, Documents on American Republics, 1969–1972*.

⁵²Jervis Anderson, “The Haitians of New York,” *New Yorker*, Mar. 31, 1975, 65.

to study for a master's degree in social anthropology and linguistics at the University of Chicago.⁵³ Joseph intended to continue for a doctorate when the failed *Jeune Haiti* revolt and the public executions of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin caused him to change course. As he told a reporter in a 1975 interview,

I was working on my dissertation in November, 1964, when I read that Papa Doc took two young men and shot them publicly. They were rebels who had come from New York. Of course that's the fate of rebels when they are caught. But when Papa Doc declared a national holiday, closed the schools, and brought the children out to watch the execution, I didn't see any further need for me to work for a Ph.D. and go back home. I decided right then and there to put my knowledge to work fighting the regime, and I came to New York in 1965 to help organize the Haitians.⁵⁴

According to Susan Buchanan, when he began work with the Haitian Coalition, Joseph was “a relative unknown within Haitian political circles,” but he was able to rise to secretary-general of the Coalition through his connections with Washington and his ability to channel financing and support from the CIA to projects like *Radio Vonvon*.⁵⁵ A memo produced for the 303 Committee listed Joseph as one of nine Haitian exiles identified by the CIA as “best suited, in terms of U.S. interests, for inclusion in a post-Duvalier provisional government.”⁵⁶ From the time of his arrival in New York in the mid-1960s and his early engagement with the anti-Duvalier exiles, Raymond Joseph remained a major figure in the political life of Haitian New York.

The political activity of Joseph and the Haitian Coalition (as well as other organizations like Daniel Fignole's Brooklyn-based Movement of Peasants and Workers [MOP]) determined

⁵³Stephyen Kurczy, “Wyclef Jean's Uncle to Run for President of Haiti,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 27, 2010.

⁵⁴Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 65-66.

⁵⁵Untitled document detailing biographical information for Raymond Joseph, Antoine Adrien, Yves Volel, and Father Francis Gagnon, n.d., box 32, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 243; Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 65.

⁵⁶Document 343, Memorandum Prepared for the 303 Committee, June 2, 1965, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana*.

the character of the early politics in Haitian New York. These political leaders and activists were focused on Haiti, and their overriding goal was to topple the Duvalier regime. Despite divisions due to political rivalry and competing visions for a post-Duvalier Haiti, these exiles made some tentative steps toward a united anti-Duvalier opposition in exile and managed to garner some support from the US government, though the diplomatic challenges facing the State Department always limited the level of official backing American officials offered to the exiles. Although the political character of the Haitian community of New York would undergo many significant changes in subsequent years, one thing that would not change was the steady focus on Haiti of New York-based activists and their desire to work for political change in their country of origin.

A Community Taking Root: Life and Labor

By the mid-1960s the increasingly bleak situation in Haiti led new categories of the Haitian population to seek refuge in New York. Duvalier had successfully consolidated his hold on the country and had declared himself President for Life. Witnessing the government's violent clampdown and with few economic prospects, middle-class Haitians decided to join their upper-class compatriots in New York. In turn, the Haitian economy was devastated by the departure of Haiti's professionals and technicians, contributing to an economic crisis that was compounded by "years of government neglect and corruption" in the countryside.⁵⁷ And by the late 1960s and the early 1970s, driven by the ever-present threat of political violence as well as by the general misery of life in Haiti after a decade under Duvalier, lower-middle-class and working-class Haitians began coming to New York as well. Still far from the poorest of the poor back home, these Haitians also differed substantially from the elite that had earlier come to the city. As a

⁵⁷Gilbert Loescher and John Scanlan, "Human Rights, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Haitian Refugees," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 26, no. 3 (Aug. 1984): 326-27.

portrait of the New York Haitian community in 1971 noted, these newest Haitians were not the “oldest, wealthiest, most influential . . . French-speaking and Europe-oriented” Haitians that had been the earlier arrivals, nor were they the “bourgeoisie” that had followed the elite. Instead, they were the “petit bourgeois and workers,” they “spoke Creole, bad French, and almost no English,” and “many were only a few years removed from peasant life.”⁵⁸ Facing political and economic oppression, the upper strata of the Haitian working class, those with the economic means to escape the country, joined the Haitian settlement in New York.⁵⁹

After arriving in New York, the immediate concern of Haitian immigrants was to find a place to live and a place to work. Families played a key role in both of these processes, just as they had in the migration process. Not all new arrivals were fortunate enough to have family and friends already in the city, but those who did benefited by corresponding with family before their leaving Haiti, receiving information and sometimes financial support that would help them complete the trip.⁶⁰ After their arrival, these new immigrants were “quickly caught up in a dense social network of family, friends and compatriots already living in the city . . . [F]or the recent arrivals these ‘kin’ cushioned the shocks of American culture, eliminated any need to communicate in English and often provided temporary financial support.”⁶¹

From the late 1950s on, there developed three distinct Haitian neighborhoods in New York: one in Manhattan, another in Brooklyn, and a third in Queens. In Manhattan the Haitian

⁵⁸Martha Weinman Lear, “New York’s Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc,” *New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1971, SM22.

⁵⁹Franck Laraque, “Haitian Emigration to New York,” *Migration Today* 7, no. 4 (Sept. 1979): 29-30; Stepick, “Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement,” 6-7; Guillermo J. Grenier and Alex Stepick III, *Miami Now!: Immigration, Ethnicity and Social Change* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 58.

⁶⁰Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 68.

⁶¹North American Congress on Latin America, “Undocumented Immigrant Workers in New York City,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* XIII, no. 6 (Nov./Dec. 1979): 14-15.

community lived on the Upper West Side and stretched from West 69th Street north to 112th Street and from 125th Street to 168th Street between Columbus and Broadway.⁶² This was an extremely diverse neighborhood with the mostly middle- and working-class Haitians living alongside Dominicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, black Americans, and other groups in brownstones, high-rise apartment buildings, “welfare hotels,” and sometimes in abandoned tenements like the “two squalid tenement buildings” that housed 350 squatters, including many Haitian families, opposite St. John the Divine Cathedral Church in Morningside Heights.⁶³

The Haitian community in Brooklyn was the largest in New York with roughly half of the Haitians in the city, giving the borough a Haitian population of approximately seventy-five to one hundred thousand in the early 1970s.⁶⁴ Concentrated in the areas of Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, East Flatbush, and East New York, the Haitians lived among “lower- and middle-class black Americans, West Indians, Hasidic Jews, Italians, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish speaking residents.”⁶⁵ As with the Haitian community in Manhattan, the Brooklyn Haitians were represented across the socio-economic spectrum and lived in similar structures, such as brick tenements, high-rise apartments and two-family houses.⁶⁶

⁶²Laguette, *American Odyssey*, 52-55; Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 52-53; Lear, “New York’s Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc.”

⁶³Laguette, *American Odyssey*, 52-55; Edward C. Burks, “105 Police Arrive for a Quiet Eviction,” *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1971, 7.

⁶⁴This figure is based on an informal count of the total Haitian population (documented and undocumented) living in the New York Metropolitan area conducted in 1971 by the Haitian Community Center in Brooklyn and the Haitian Neighborhood Center in Manhattan. The two organizations estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 Haitians resided in the overall New York Metropolitan area; David Vidal, “7 Priests from Haiti Bridge a Cultural Gap in Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1975, 75; Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 50.

⁶⁵“Refugees from Haiti Struggle to Open Up a New Life Here,” *New York Times*, Apr. 25, 1971, BQ84; Laguette, *American Odyssey*, 52; Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 52-53.

⁶⁶ Laguette, *American Odyssey*, 55.

The third and smallest of the Haitian communities of New York centered in the Queens neighborhoods of Corona, Cambria Heights, and Queens Village with some Haitians also in the areas of South Jamaica, East Elmhurst and Jackson Heights. Queens was known in the Haitian community as the borough of upper-class Haitians. There the wealthier Haitians were more likely to own their own single-family homes and were more often naturalized citizens.⁶⁷ Haitian exile Firmin Joseph described the allure that Queens held for Haitians in New York:

Queens is the symbol of success. Usually the Haitians who live there are teaching or working in a bank. There are some doctors and lawyers too. The Haitians in Queens have their own clubs . . . You'll find there mostly cream-colored Haitians. They are the fair-haired boys and girls of Haitian society.⁶⁸

For Haitians in New York, living in Queens was a symbol of status in a country where immigration had erased many of the old world divisions and privileges enjoyed by upper-class Haitians. It may have been going too far for Joseph to contend that “the poor Haitians in Manhattan and Brooklyn are all yearning to go to Queens,” but there is no doubt that the Haitian community in Queens was recognized as the domain of the more privileged among New York Haitians.⁶⁹

Just as new immigrants followed family and friends to certain neighborhoods of New York, so did they follow family and friends to work. In a pattern that has been playing out for generations in the city, employers often hired family members and friends of Haitians already employed in the workplace. This was especially true for Haitians at work in the city's factories and for those working in home healthcare. A 1979 study of the undocumented revealed the

⁶⁷Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 52-53.

⁶⁸Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 52-53.

⁶⁹Laguerre dismisses Joseph's statement as an exaggeration but does acknowledge the class significance of the Queens community. Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 55.

remarkable efficiency with which “chain employment” of this sort takes place: “even with overall New York City unemployment now at 8.5%, by going through this kin network many immigrants landed their first U.S. job in less than a week. Some found work the first day out looking.”⁷⁰

Once it is clear what an indispensable role family and social networks played for the newly arrived Haitians, it becomes more understandable how difficult it was for those who arrived in New York before the community was well established. In 1963 members of the Haitian community reported that finding work was their greatest problem after not being able to speak English. Before the Haitian community was highly integrated into the workplaces of New York, Haitians found that they did “not know where or how to seek employment in New York;” in a “close-knit” community in which “few have American contacts,” they were not yet able to rely on the chain employment that would later be so effective for new arrivals to draw upon.⁷¹

In addition to family and social networks, obtaining legal status offered significant advantages for newly arrived immigrants. Without resident status, Haitians were not legally allowed to work, and even with work permits, one reporter noted in 1963, more than 25 percent were unemployed or working part-time or in menial jobs, such as seasonal factory work.⁷² In 1970, among documented Haitians legally in the workforce, 27.3 percent were professional and technical workers, managers, or clerical workers. An additional 33.4 percent were skilled craft workers. Only 38.1 percent were operatives, service workers, or domestics.⁷³

⁷⁰“Undocumented Immigrant Workers in New York City,” 14-15; Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 90.

⁷¹Margaret Weil, “Troubles Beset Haitian Refugees: 5,000 Exiles Here Find Jobs and Help Hard to Get,” *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1963, 35.

⁷²Weil, “Troubles Beset Haitian Refugees.”

⁷³Statistics were taken from the *Immigration and Naturalization Service Annual Reports, 1966-1977*, quoted in Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 171, table 6.

Undocumented Haitians, on the other hand, grouped overwhelmingly in low-status jobs, such as unskilled and semi-skilled positions in light manufacturing and service positions, particularly as domestics. The undocumented Haitians in one 1977 study received average wages of \$150 a week or \$6500 a year for a 50-week year (approximately \$24,100 in 2011), and one-half reported receiving less than \$5000 a year (approximately \$18,600 in 2011).⁷⁴ A comparison with Laguerre's estimate that in 1978 the median annual income for legal residents was \$10,000 (approximately \$34,500 in 2011)⁷⁵ helps to understand the earning power of undocumented Haitians. To supplement the low wages that accompanied such low-status jobs and to address the economic crises created by regular but unpredictable layoffs, undocumented Haitians also regularly worked "underground" jobs, providing services like child care or food preparation, driving a gypsy cab, working as barbers or hairdressers, or engaging in skilled work such as tailoring, carpentry, or masonry. By combining manufacturing or service work with underground jobs in New York's informal economy, undocumented Haitians could survive, but it was not an easy existence.⁷⁶

This experience of scraping by on low-paying, insecure factory and service jobs was not confined exclusively to the lower-middle-class and working-class Haitians that started coming to New York in the middle to late 1960s. Upper class Haitians, especially the undocumented, also confronted this employment picture. Many of those who had been the elite in Haiti experienced significant downward mobility once in the United States. Inability to speak English, lack of

⁷⁴Elwell et al., "Haitian and Dominican Undocumented Aliens in New York City: a Preliminary Report," 7-8. These figures were obtained by multiplying the 1977 amounts by the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index from 1977 to 2011. See <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/>.

⁷⁵Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 106.

⁷⁶Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 94.

occupational skills, illegal status, and employer racism all contributed to the extremely limited job opportunities that were open to Haitians, regardless of social or economic background. For example, an economist in Haiti with an advanced degree from Laval University in Quebec found himself working in a box and carton factory, an engineer toiling on a factory loading dock, a former senator in the Haitian parliament employed as a security guard.⁷⁷ For some educated professionals, particularly doctors and nurses, there was a chance that they could find their way back into a professional career, but for the unskilled elite who in Haiti had relied solely on their wealth, social status, and family name, the good life was over. As one observer of the Haitian community put it,

Distinctions are giving way, slowly and most painfully, to a new set of realities. Men learn that their fine old family names mean nothing here . . . Men who had culture and wealth but no special skills find themselves employed in modest office jobs, even menial labor . . . As for professionals, there are countless stories of doctors manning gas pumps, lawyers on the assembly line, whereas a highly skilled laborer who was considered “*la classe moyenne*” in Haiti may find security and new dignity here.⁷⁸

Immigration to the United States partially leveled the social and economic distinctions that had been treated, at least by the elite, as sacrosanct in Haiti.

The immigration process initiated an equally large transformation in gender roles and the functioning of the Haitian family. In Haiti, women were assigned to a subordinate position both in the home and in larger society. Politics and the public sphere were considered by many to be the exclusive domain of men while women were to occupy the domestic sphere. This was particularly true for middle-class women, many of whom did not work due to the gendered boundaries around public space. Working class and peasant women, however, often functioned as the primary breadwinner and head of household in Haiti and were thus not as constrained as

⁷⁷Weil, “Troubles Beset Haitian Refugees.”

⁷⁸Lear, “New York’s Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc.”

their middle-class counterparts. Still, as Carolle Charles observes, the senior male figure in the household or community maintained authority even while women carried the “bulk of responsibility for creating and reproducing wealth.”⁷⁹

Coming to New York disrupted these traditional gender roles for Haitian women and men and redefined the position of wife and husband within the family. Women, who represented more than half of the overall Haitian immigrant population, often found work in New York more easily than men and as a result established themselves as the financial anchor for the family unit. This gave Haitian women a new status in the family and in the community, particularly for middle-class women who in Haiti had to rely on the patriarch for financial support.⁸⁰ As one woman explained, in Haiti a woman “is forced to live with a man because it is he who gives her food, money, clothes and shoes. Here things have changed. We have the means to help financially with the expenses incurred in the household and with the education of our children. Slavery is over.”⁸¹

Distressed by their loss of status in the family and the community, some Haitian men complained that the move to New York had ruined Haitian women, making them act like “*gran moun*” (grownups or adults). But despite men’s resistance and the conflict that the new gender roles provoked, the demands of everyday life in New York transformed the Haitian family. For those that chose to stay together, the husband-wife relationship became more equal. Haitian men

⁷⁹Charles, “Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti,” 142-45; Carolle Charles, “A Transnational Dialectic of Race, Class and Ethnicity: Patterns of Identity and Forms of Consciousness among Haitian Migrants in New York City” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 1990), 224.

⁸⁰Charles, “A Transnational Dialectic of Race, Class and Ethnicity,” 225-26, 228.

⁸¹Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 76.

took on a greater role in household tasks, and couples began pooling their resources, extending control of household finances to women as well as men.⁸²

Another major challenge facing Haitians in New York was the intensity with which they experienced American racism in the United States. Based on his fieldwork in the Haitian community of New York in the 1970s, Georges Fouron concludes that “racial discrimination was one of the most painful and traumatic experiences of the Haitian immigrants.” Among those Fouron surveyed, 76.7 percent reported experiencing racism in New York at work, school, or on public transportation while only 5 percent claimed not to have noticed racism in the city.⁸³ For undocumented domestic workers like Paula, an employee in the home of an elderly French woman, racist treatment added to the indignity of low wages and poor working conditions.

I was supposed to take care of [the woman] during the day – give her medicine, make her meals, and just make certain she was all right. I worked eight hours a day for \$60 per week and paid for my own transportation. She treated me like a slave and expected me to clean the house and run errands in addition to my assigned duties. She mocked my accent, called me a “Negress” and always told me that the “Negroes” had ruined Haiti by throwing out the French. I put up with that abuse because I had no choice. Without an alien card, it’s hard to find a good job. I finally couldn’t stand it and left although I did not have another position.⁸⁴

For light-skinned Haitians, the rigidity of the system of racial classification in the United States was another factor that robbed them of the status they had had back in Haiti. According to Fouron, “the Haitian mulatto, ‘white’ by Haitian standards” was “black by the American point of view.” Haitians with a dark complexion, on the other hand, seeing the status of people of color in the United States and experiencing racial discrimination firsthand were, Fouron argues,

⁸²Charles, “A Transnational Dialectic of Race, Class and Ethnicity,” 227-29. Michel Laguerre regards these changes as so significant that he concludes, “It is probably in matters related to family . . . that the Haitian community in New York has experienced the most fundamental change.” Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 74.

⁸³Georges Fouron, “Patterns of Adaptation of Haitian Immigrants of the 1970s in New York City” (EdD diss., Columbia University, 1985), 141-42.

⁸⁴Buchanan, “Haitian Women in New York City,” 20.

reminded of “the negative reality [they] had known in Haiti as black and as poor.” While not all black people in Haiti were poor, of course, the experience of dark-skinned Haitians in the United States did seem to reinforce the practice that gave higher status to the lighter-skinned. The conflicting experiences of race in Haiti and in the United States led to divergent responses from Haitians in New York. While some in the Haitian community responded to their experience of racism in America by joining African Americans in the struggle for civil rights, many refused to identify with Americans of African descent.⁸⁵ Some even went out of their way to showcase their Haitian origin by overdoing their French accent. For these people, “staying Haitian to avoid being Black twice” was the best way to deal with the problem of race in American society.⁸⁶

Compounding the hardship of financial stress, difficult work, conflict in the family, and racial discrimination were the vulnerability and isolation that came with being undocumented. By 1979, 42,868 Haitians had obtained legal residency in New York, but this number represents a small minority of the Haitian community of New York.⁸⁷ Although accurate estimates of the size of the Haitian community (accounting for both legal and illegal immigrants) are difficult to come by, organizations working within the Haitian community provided approximate population numbers. An informal count conducted in 1971 by the Haitian Community Center in Brooklyn and the Haitian Neighborhood Center in Manhattan estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 Haitians resided in the New York Metro area.⁸⁸ Four years later, a group of Catholic priests working in the Haitian community put that number at 250,000, although other estimates in the mid-1970s

⁸⁵Fouron, “Patterns of Adaptation of Haitian Immigrants of the 1970s in New York City,” 141-43.

⁸⁶Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat?,” 187.

⁸⁷For statistics on legal residents among the Haitian community see Anthony V. Catanese, *Haitians: Migration and Diaspora* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 96, table 8.7.

⁸⁸“Refugees from Haiti Struggle to Open Up a New Life Here.”

ranged as high as 300,000.⁸⁹ If the Haitians living in New York numbered approximately 250,000 at the end of the 1970s, that means that less than one-fifth of Haitians in New York qualified as legal residents at the end of the decade. Those Haitians who were in the United States illegally were aware that they could at any time be discovered by immigration authorities and be deported. This led to a tremendous fear of anyone outside the Haitian community, and even among Haitians there was much mistrust.⁹⁰

Many also struggled with the heartache of being separated from their home. Like the earliest exiles to New York, they hoped their stay in New York would be a short one. Gazing out the window of her Manhattan apartment, one woman commented, “It is so terrible to sit in this building in summer, looking out at other buildings. How I wish I could sit under my old avocado tree!”⁹¹ Speaking in 1963, a member of the Haitian community articulated this sentiment even more directly: “Our bodies are in New York, but we are still living in Haiti all the time.”⁹² A religious leader agreed. “Haitians are a transient people,” he observed. “Their hearts are in Haiti, but they are in New York.”⁹³

Despite all the anxiety and pain of life in New York, Haitians managed to build institutions and networks that fostered culture and community and enriched life for those in exile. Although for most Haitians, social life centered on the family, a rich array of cultural and recreational opportunities began to flourish in the 1960s for those who chose to take advantage

⁸⁹Vidal, “7 Priests from Haiti Bridge a Cultural Gap in Brooklyn,” Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 50.

⁹⁰Glick, “Formation of a Haitian Ethnic Group,” 69.

⁹¹Lear, “New York’s Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc.”

⁹²Weil, “Troubles Beset Haitian Refugees.”

⁹³Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 73.

of them.⁹⁴ Along West Ninety-sixth Street between Broadway and Amsterdam, a favorite gathering spot for the Manhattan Haitian community, one might encounter a large group of Haitians socializing and engaging in heated debate about the future of their country.⁹⁵ In restaurants, barbershops, or in each other's homes, Haitians gathered to play cards, dominoes, and to socialize. Haitian bookstores, like the *Librairie Haiti* in Brooklyn and the Haitian Corner in Manhattan, provided French and Creole language reading materials for the community. On Saturday nights New York Haitians went dancing. In Queens the wealthiest Haitians attended exclusive private clubs, while those denied access attended large public dances and concerts in Brooklyn, small evening establishments like the *Chateau Caribe* in Manhattan, or parties in neighbors' and friends' apartments. Community festivals featured musical performances, folk dancing, and Haitian theater troupes performing in Creole for large Haitian audiences, and Haitian soccer matches drew community members in the summertime.⁹⁶

Steps toward a New Community Politics, 1965-1971

The growing population of Haitians in New York, the political orientation and culture created by the exile community, and the development Haitian cultural institutions, community organizations, and churches all contributed to a developing sense of a Haitian community.⁹⁷ A growing sense of community did not, however, mean that Haitians in New York were united. Despite some successful efforts to build political coalitions (which has already been discussed),

⁹⁴Glick, "Formation of a Haitian Ethnic Group," 90.

⁹⁵Murray Shumach, "Haitians Here Joyful, but Fear a Bloody Struggle," *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 1971, 44.

⁹⁶Glick, "Formation of a Haitian Ethnic Group," 70, 87-89; Charles, "Transnational Dialectic of Race, Class and Ethnicity," 238-40; Lear, "New York's Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc."

⁹⁷Charles, "Transnational Dialectic of Race, Class and Ethnicity," 207.

political rivalries among groups loyal to competing Haitian politicians as well as other sources of difference contributed to persistent divisions within the community.⁹⁸

In Haitian New York, as in Haiti, categories of class, often delineated by skin color, fractured the immigrant community. In fact, in the early years of Haitian New York, these class divisions were “more salient to Haitians than any idea of common cause based on common origins in Haiti,” Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc observe. More privileged Haitians often avoided any public organization or identification with those they considered below them, seeking “to preserve their class status in Haiti through their comportment in the United States and their maintenance, while away from home, of markers of social differentiation.” For this reason, those of bourgeois background erected high barriers to the social clubs of Queens and even attempted to maintain their separation in the words they chose for the Haitian settlement in New York; it was a “*colonie*,” not a “community.”⁹⁹

Despite such deep divisions, there were halting efforts in the mid-1960s to overcome these differences and to create a unified Haitian community. Some of these efforts centered on creating service organizations that promoted the concept of a single Haitian community and downplayed the fractured reality of the Haitian settlement in the city. Most of these community service organizations were initiated and supported by American institutions like the Catholic Archdiocese, the Episcopalian Archdiocese of Brooklyn, and the New York City Community Development Corporation. In 1967, as part of the national War on Poverty measures instituted by the Johnson administration three years earlier, the New York City Metropolitan Mobility Program initiated a pilot project that would become the Haitian Community Program, an

⁹⁸Charles, “Transnational Dialectic of Race, Class and Ethnicity,” 218.

⁹⁹Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, “Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields,” 188-89.

organization that provided New York Haitians with support in locating employment, housing, and other community services.¹⁰⁰ A similar organization, the Haitian Neighborhood Service Center, opened the same year in Manhattan. Led by Lyderic Bonaventure, a president of the Haitian Transport Workers Union before fleeing attempts on his life in Haiti, the Haitian Neighborhood Service Center also provided employment and other types of community services. Two years after the establishment of the Haitian Neighborhood Service Center, Bonaventure moved to Brooklyn to establish another Haitian community organization called *Centre Communautaire*.¹⁰¹

Another attempt to overcome divisions among New York Haitians grew out of a desire to increase Haitians' collective power in the American political system. In 1968 Henrique Douglas, an immigrant who had come to New York from Haiti years before the anti-Duvalier exodus began, started laying the groundwork for the Haitian American Political Organization (HAPO), also referred to in some sources as the Haitian American Citizens Society (HACSO). Amid the tumult of the student and anti-Vietnam War movements, urban rebellions, and the continuing demands of the multiple liberation movements of the period, the embattled Democratic Party in 1968 began courting the ethnic vote. Seeing the expanding Haitian population as a potential addition to its base, the Nationalities Division of the Democratic National Committee invited Douglas to create a Haitian political organization that could be mobilized to support the Democratic Party. In response, Douglas and other middle-income Haitians, motivated both by a desire to advance the Haitian community as well as their own status in it, created the Haitian American Political Organization. To try to overcome the barriers that divided Haitians in New

¹⁰⁰Glick Schiller et al., "All in the Same Boat?," 187-88; Glick, "Formation of a Haitian Ethnic Group," 107-10.

¹⁰¹Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, "Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields," 191; Anderson, "Haitians of New York," 62.

York, the founders of HAPO promoted the idea of a single Haitian community. And to promote unity, the organization decided to host a dance in Manhattan that would be open to all New York Haitians. But the effort failed as a community-bridging event because the HAPO leadership failed to reach out effectively to the largely working-class Haitian community in Brooklyn and because even leading members of HAPO refused to sell tickets or attend the event, indicating their extreme ambivalence about socializing and working with their working-class compatriots.¹⁰²

While the attempt to create a cross-class political organization like HAPO had little success in the late 1960s, much more influential were radical student groups that began gathering an increasingly large following among New York Haitians. These student groups, which were influenced in part by young people who had participated in the student movements of Montreal and Paris as well as the student and black liberation movements in the United States, promoted a nationalist message of revolution and anti-imperialism for Haiti. Through the mediums of radio and theater, they encouraged New York Haitians to embrace a form of Haitian nationalism that highlighted their cultural connections to Africa and the country's common mode of communication, Creole. Though the membership numbers in the many leftist organizations forming in New York in the late 1960s remained small, their political influence among New York Haitians was significant, not least in the major challenge they posed to the exiled political leaders like Magloire, Dejoie and Fignole, who had until this point largely controlled politics in the community.¹⁰³

¹⁰²Glick, "Formation of a Haitian Ethnic Group," 257-61, 265-67; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, "Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields," 192.

¹⁰³Charles, "Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left," 294-95; Glick Schiller et al., "All in the Same Boat?," 189.

The year 1969 saw a remarkable intersection of developments, the outcome of which would have a long-term impact both in New York and in Haiti. Two significant and interrelated developments in 1969 were critical to the growing power of the young radicals in the community. The first was the formation of *Troupe Kouidor*, a leading theater group that used drama and cultural presentations to promote Haitian nationalism and anti-Duvalier resistance. The other was the beginning of the weekly radio show *L'Heure Haitienne* (known to most as *L' Ayisyen*), a program that developed a wide following and would have a substantial influence on the politics of New York's Haitian community for decades to follow. From the beginning, *Troupe Kouidor* and *L' Ayisyen* worked closely, linked as they were by the same founding members.¹⁰⁴

Daniel Huttinot was one of the young people involved in the creation of both *Troupe Kouidor* and *L' Ayisyen*. Huttinot had arrived in New York in 1963 at the age of eighteen when he and his family joined his father in the city. (Huttinot's father had been a civil servant in Haiti who had supported one of Duvalier's opponents in the campaign of 1957. He had been fired and forced to flee the country once Duvalier came to power.) Like most Haitians in New York, Daniel Huttinot had to immediately begin working. But he also continued with his education, attending Pace University in the evenings after work.¹⁰⁵

As with many other young Haitians arriving in New York in the 1960s, Huttinot's political outlook was shaped by his experience in Haiti. Inheriting his father's opposition to Duvalier, Huttinot immersed himself in the student political activity around him while he was still in Haiti, joining *Bibliotec de Jen* (Youth Library), a discussion group started by young

¹⁰⁴Daniel Huttinot, Lionel Legros, and another member of SELA, Interview with author, New York, Aug. 30, 2010.

¹⁰⁵Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

Haitian priests recently returned from Europe. Other international and domestic currents also shaped his experience. “All university students and secondary students were very much involved in discussions about the Cuban Revolution,” Huttinot recalls. “And you also had in Haiti at the time under the dictatorship, underground left-wing activities that were going on. So you were caught in the midst of all those activities.”¹⁰⁶

Huttinot’s move to New York did not sever his connection with the student and anti-Duvalier movements in Haiti. Although it was dangerous, he remembers, “We did maintain contact one way or another with those who remained politically active in Haiti.” It was this close contact with the ongoing struggle back home that had a decisive impact on Huttinot’s political trajectory in New York. He recalls receiving the terrible news that his friend, an employee at the Bank of Agriculture and an active member of the movement against Duvalier, had been arrested while leaving work. In another incident, a member of Huttinot’s network in New York “lost his brother-in-law and his wife’s cousins who were very active in the underground movement in Haiti.” News of the arrest and killing of close associates and friends in Haiti spurred Huttinot and those around him to action. “When we learned of those news, we were very much affected here in New York, and we were saying to ourselves that we should do something. The struggle will continue. We cannot stay with our arms crossed.”¹⁰⁷

The major obstacle, as Huttinot and others saw it, was the fear of Haitians in New York, which kept them from speaking out against Papa Doc. The Haitian community “was so much afraid, even here outside of the country of Duvalier’s dictatorship. They were even afraid of naming Duvalier’s name, thinking that if they would name Duvalier’s name, their families back

¹⁰⁶Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

¹⁰⁷Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

home would be affected . . . So we said we have to do something in order to move that community.” To break the fear that silenced so many, Huttinot and others turned to cultural performances, an activity fearful Haitians might not interpret as explicitly political. When a friend “who was a poet and was very active in the theater movement in Haiti” joined Huttinot and others in New York, “the idea came up to start a theater group in order to have cultural activities in the community . . . Thinking that they were coming to a cultural activity,” Huttinot and his friends reasoned, “the people could start coming out and would not be afraid.” Another friend of Huttinot who had been active in theater in Haiti and France before coming to New York introduced the theories of Bertolt Brecht and worked to train Haitian high school students for the cultural performances. “That’s how in 1969 we founded a theater group called *Troupe Kouidor*,” Huttinot recalls.¹⁰⁸

As one of the groups that pioneered the use of theater and culture to educate and activate the Haitian community, *Troupe Kouidor* played a key role in popularizing a more radical political message throughout the community. These cultural performances presented the community with a broad political critique. For example, one performance featured “skits ridiculing what they saw as Haitian ‘bourgeois pretensions’ and ‘French mannerisms’ and sang songs bespeaking the need to liberate Haiti.” As one group of scholars notes, performances of this sort were “initially greeted with mixed reactions,” exciting and encouraging some while making others “uncomfortable with the attack on their lifestyle” or “frightened at being present at an event which publicly attacked the Haitian government.” But as the voice of radical young

¹⁰⁸Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

Haitians gained a broader following in subsequent years, cultural groups like *Troupe Kouidor* multiplied.¹⁰⁹

Working closely with Huttinot in *Troupe Kouidor* was Lionel Legros, a founder of the weekly radio program *L'Heure Haitienne*, or *L'Ayisyen*. Like Huttinot, Legros, who had arrived in New York in 1966, came from a family that opposed Duvalier, with one part supporting the bourgeois-backed Louis Dejoie and the other backing the populist labor leader Daniel Fignole. When he was a young man, Legros' parents sent him to their home in the countryside during periods of heightened political instability and violence in Port-au-Prince. While he was there, he spent time with students renting the house from his parents and joined them in political discussions and listening sessions when they gathered around the short-wave radio transmitting from Cuba.¹¹⁰

While family political debates and contact with Haitian university students initiated his early politicization, Legros says, "My political awakening came when in '66, I came here," to New York. His mother, employed as a domestic worker for a lawyer in the city, noticed that the children of the family she served attended college. "And my mother . . . [wanting] the best for me, actually asked [her employer] where that school was." Legros reflects, "I just came here in September '66, and she said where are you going to go to school?" The school Legros' mother was asking her employer about was Columbia University, and with her encouragement, Legros enrolled in night school at the university soon after his arrival.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Glick Schiller et al., "All in the Same Boat?," 189; Charles, "Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left," 296.

¹¹⁰Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

¹¹¹Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

Being at Columbia in the late 1960s continued Legros' political evolution. As Legros recalls, "Columbia was really the center of [the] explosive 1968 years, the student occupation, the proximity to Harlem." It was a moment when "racism [was] a very active question." And in response to the pressure applied by the student movement in New York City in those years, Columbia University informed the community that "the radio was going to be opened up" to minority voices and perspectives. Working at the library at the time, Legros met the engineer of the university radio station who invited him to create a program. Initially the idea was to do "something very soft -- a postcard kind of radio show where we speak about different parts of the country," Legros recalls. "We'll call it 'Haiti Unknown' or something like that where we'll play rare, nostalgic songs, and so on." But it was at that time "that we got a new crowd of people that were more seeing things politically," which channeled the show in a more radical direction. After this change, "some people left voluntarily because they did not want anything to do with anything political, because their parents were [in Haiti]." But those who stayed, including Legros, decided to go public with their opposition to the dictatorship and to turn the show into a tool to support the resistance. "So at that time it was done. I was going to be politically involved," Legros decided, "and known by the [Haitian] government, also." *L'Ayisyen* soon became a platform for "people to really tell us what they suffered under the regime. People would call us and we would read what they said."¹¹²

Like *Troupe Kouidor*, *L'Ayisyen* advanced a radical, anti-imperialist and anti-Duvalier message and developed a wide following. As Carole Charles observes, "For most members of the community, whatever their politics, *L'Heure Haitienne* was *ti radio* (our little radio)."¹¹³ The

¹¹²Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

¹¹³Charles, "Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left," 296.

Sunday morning discussions in *Kreyol* of Haitian politics attracted thousands of listeners.¹¹⁴ And the Haitian government, too, soon took notice, directing the Haitian consulate in New York to contact the University to ask for equal time and to protest the show's harmful impact on Haitian tourism.¹¹⁵ With its substantial audience and growing influence among Haitians of New York, *L'Ayisyen*, along with *Troupe Kouidor*, was an important part of the changing politics of Haitian New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The year 1969 also marked another coordinated attempt to topple the Duvalier regime in Haiti, a campaign in which Haitians outside of the country played a significant role. In the mid-1960s revolutionary organizations both inside and outside Haiti gathered their forces with the intention of launching a coordinated attack on the dictatorship. Underground student organizations, including the *Union Nationale des Etudiants Haitiens* (National Union of Haitian Students) and *Haiti-Progres*, maintained the resistance in Haiti and were linked to international opposition organizations like the *Federation des Etudiants Haitiens d'Europe* (Federation of Haitian Students of Europe, or FEHE). In 1968, two of the leading Communist parties, *Le Parti Populaire de Liberation Naitonal* (PPLN) and *Le Parti de l'Entente Populaire* (PEP), merged to create *Le Parti Unifie des Commnistes Haitiens* (the Unified Party of Haitian Communists, or PUCH).¹¹⁶ At the same time, young Haitians connected to the radical student organizations linking Haiti, Europe, Montreal, and New York were recruited to return to Haiti to join a guerilla campaign aimed at ousting Duvalier. In the spring of 1969, working under the banner of the

¹¹⁴Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, "Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields," 200.

¹¹⁵Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

¹¹⁶Buchanan, "Scattered Seeds," 248-50.

newly united Haitian Communist Party, the revolutionaries launched their insurrection, an effort that had some minor victories but that ultimately was crushed by Duvalier.¹¹⁷

Although the guerilla campaign in the spring of 1969 gave Duvalier another chance to eliminate his opponents, much more important to the Haitian leader was the opportunity it represented for Haiti to seek strengthened ties to the United States. The US State Department's Director of Intelligence and Research noted in May 1969 that "PUCH lacks sufficient resources to do more than organize sporadic acts of violence" and that "the Communists in Haiti are few in number and constitute no real threat to the [Duvalier] regime."¹¹⁸ However, Duvalier treated his counterinsurgency campaign as a response to a major threat. This was, according to the State Department official, Duvalier's attempt "to project an image of his country as 'the most solid bastion against Communism in the Caribbean'," the purpose of which was to secure the resumption of direct aid from the United States. The Director of Intelligence and Research further noted,

As arrests were being made, the Haitian Government launched a propaganda effort to promote its new anti-communist image and press for a resumption of US aid. Editorials in the Duvalier-controlled press expressed cautious hope that there would be an improvement in relations and Duvalier himself made mention in official pronouncements of the desirability of renewed economic assistance . . . In a conversation with our ambassador, Duvalier noted the danger of the "cancer of communism," and emphasized the international connections of Haitian communists . . . The Haitian press also hailed the discovery and capture by Florida police of a group of Haitian exiles in a training camp deep in the everglades as a victory over "communists agitators and agents."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Charles, "Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left," 194-95; Bernard Diederich and Al Burt, *Papa Doc and the Tonton Macoutes* (Port-au-Prince: Henri Deschamps, 1986), 385-87, excerpted in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, edited by Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Weiner, 1999), 149-50.

¹¹⁸Document 382, Intelligence Note from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to Secretary of State Rogers, No. 334, Washington, May 1, 1969, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972.

¹¹⁹Document 382, Intelligence Note, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972.

The State Department report concluded, “A crackdown on communists to coincide with the advent of a new administration in Washington probably seemed to him to offer reasonably good prospects. At the same time there is no indication that the ‘President for Life’ is any more prepared now than previously to change the brutal and corrupt practices of his regime.”¹²⁰

Despite the State Department’s acknowledgment of the ongoing brutality and corruption of the Duvalier regime, the Nixon administration was, as the Haitian president had hoped it would be, willing to strengthen its ties to Haiti. Soon after Duvalier executed his anti-communist campaign, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger informed the National Security Council that President Nixon wanted “the United States [to] encourage multilateral assistance for economic development in Haiti . . . [to] continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Haitian people primarily through multilateral and private channels” but also to provide “an additional \$100,000 of AID funds” directly to the Haitian government, part of the eventual restoration of full aid to Haiti that Nixon would oversee.¹²¹ In May 1969 American officials also terminated their support for the Haitian Coalition and the organization’s anti-Duvalier radio broadcast. Although transmission of the Haitian Coalition’s *Radio Vonvon* had been suspended in 1968, one year later the US ambassador to Haiti determined that “the resumption of the currently suspended broadcasts could interfere with the Embassy’s cautious steps toward attaining a worthwhile dialogue with Duvalier.” Believing that “the ending of the broadcasts would in all likelihood also mean the end of the Coalition,” a body that now seemed of little use to the U.S. government since “in case of a power struggle in Haiti . . . the Coalition’s ability to affect events in Haiti

¹²⁰Document 382, Intelligence Note, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972.*

¹²¹Document 397, National Security Decision Memorandum 94, Washington, Nov. 13, 1970, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972; Plummer, Haiti and the United States, 194.*

would be marginal at best,” the US government decided that it was time to end assistance to the Haitian exiles.¹²² The Nixon administration also sent New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller to Haiti to meet personally with Francois Duvalier, and licensed the export and sale of arms, six 65-foot patrol boats, and an F-51 fighter to Haiti, other symbols of strengthening US-Haitian ties.¹²³

The failed insurrection and subsequent crackdown in 1969 produced more than just a change in diplomatic relations. The renewed repression also produced a new wave of refugees to New York. In August 1969 Duvalier forced nine priests, faculty members at a Catholic school and advocates of liberation theology, to leave the country. The Haitian Fathers, as they came to be known in New York, included Antoine Adrien, Paul and Yves DeJean, and William Smarth. After a period in Africa and Europe, the priests joined the Haitian community of New York, where they moved into a house in the middle of the Haitian community of Brooklyn. Like the foundation of *Troupe Kouidor* and *L’Ayisyen*, the arrival of the Haitian Fathers made 1969 a watershed moment in the history of the New York Haitian community. While earlier efforts to establish a Catholic mission ministering to the Haitian community in New York had foundered on class, color, and political divisions, when Adrien, Smarth, and the other Brooklyn-based priests came to New York, they began building a lasting movement that Georges Fouron calls “the Haitian Catholic Church in exile.” The choice to live in the community rather than to separate themselves, as most other religious leaders did, placed them close to the social and political currents on the ground. Another significant factor in the priests’ influence was “the fact that they were themselves political exiles [which] gave them credentials in the Haitian diaspora.”

¹²²Document 383, Memorandum for the 303 Committee, Washington, May 27, 1969, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972.*

¹²³Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 200; Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 194-95.

From 1969 onward, the presence of the Haitian Fathers represented an important element driving the changing political orientation of Haitian New York.¹²⁴

By the late 1960s the increasing proportion of working-class Haitians, the growing strength of progressive and radical voices in the New York community, and the cutoff of CIA and State Department support for the Haitian Coalition contributed to the declining authority of traditional Haitian politicians in the New York community. Evidence of this shift among activists and the declining influence of earlier political exiles came in 1970 when The Haitian Coalition disbanded and some of its members joined with a number of the new groups that were part of the growing progressive-Left in order to launch *La Resistance Haitienne* (the Haitian Resistance).¹²⁵

Political Conflict and Community Change, 1971-1973

In the first months of 1971, it was rumored that Francois Duvalier was near death and that he was preparing to put forth his nineteen-year-old son, Jean-Claude, as his successor. In January the new coalition group *La Resistance Haitienne* held what Carolle Charles calls “the first large anti-Duvalier demonstration in front of the United Nations in New York,” the purpose of which was to try to block Duvalier from installing his son as leader of the regime. This protest, Charles argues, “marked the beginning of the hegemony of the anti-Duvalier Left in the community.”¹²⁶ It also showcased Haitian exiles’ anticipation of Papa Doc’s death as an opportunity to press for political change as well as their recognition that the international

¹²⁴Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 427; Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview; Fouron, “Patterns of Adaptation of Haitian Immigrants of the 1970s in New York City,” 132-34.

¹²⁵Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 146; Charles, “Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left,” 294-95.

¹²⁶Charles, “Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left,” 295; Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 146.

community, the United States in particular, could be instrumental in blocking the continuation of the Duvalier dictatorship.

After Duvalier's death the following April, Haitians in New York were not only excited and hopeful but also worried that the United States was preparing to support the presidency of Jean-Claude Duvalier. "We are scared that the state department will help the son," said Fitz Delince.¹²⁷ To some it was already clear what Washington's position would be. Lionel Legros interprets Nelson Rockefeller's 1969 visit with Francois Duvalier as a clear signal that the United States intended to support the Duvalier family's continuing in power. Legros also remembers that at the time of Duvalier's funeral, the American ambassador to Haiti, Clinton Knox, was wearing a button bearing an image of a seated Jean-Claude with his father standing behind him, hand on his son's shoulder. To Legros this "was a statement that the U.S. government was supporting the transition."¹²⁸ When Jean-Claude Duvalier became the second Duvalier to take the position of president for life, the Haitian Resistance called a press conference in New York at which they reasserted their demand that the United States withdraw its support for the younger Duvalier and "cease all interference in Haitian affairs."¹²⁹

Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier's coming to power did not precipitate a change in US-Haiti relations, as many in New York had hoped it would, at least not in terms of American withdrawal of support. In fact, under Baby Doc's leadership, political and economic ties between Haiti and the United States grew much stronger. US Ambassador to Haiti Clinton Knox was one of the key supporters of continuing US support for the Duvalier regime; even before

¹²⁷Murray Schumach, "Haitians Here Joyful but Fear a Bloody Struggle," *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 1971, 44.

¹²⁸Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

¹²⁹Deirdre Carmody, "Haitians Here Ask U.S. Not to Support New Regime," *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1971, 3.

Francois Duvalier's death, Knox called for an "alternative policy embodying closer cooperation [between the United States and Haiti]." Once Jean-Claude Duvalier took power, Knox identified "a general trend toward liberalization" that warranted increased US support.¹³⁰ With the increased US assistance that Knox helped deliver, Jean-Claude Duvalier oversaw a significant growth in Haiti's manufacturing sector and reoriented the country's agricultural production, structural changes that ultimately had a major influence on migration to the United States.

Throughout the 1970s, manufacturing in Haiti grew by an average of 7 percent per year, more than ten times the growth rate of the previous decade. By 1978 manufactured products had surpassed coffee as Haiti's top export, and by the early 1980s manufacturing accounted for more than 50 percent of the value of all exported items.¹³¹ Rather than engaging in traditional industrial production, however, like that of the auto or steel industry in the United States, Haiti's manufacturing sector took the form of the off-shore assembly industry. According to this formula, Haiti received pre-made goods, assembled them, and exported them to their final destination, often sending them back to their country of origin. American companies like Rawlings Sporting Goods, for example, reaped big profits by sending baseball parts to Haiti, cheaply shipped across international borders thanks to tariff concessions, to be hand-stitched together by factory workers in Port-au-Prince, costing a small fraction of what it would have cost to buy American labor. Electronic equipment was another common product assembled in Haiti's factories. Almost two-thirds of electronics assembled in Haiti saved their companies 20 to 40 percent and a fifth saved 40 to 60 percent over what it would have cost to produce the same

¹³⁰Document 399, Telegram 264 from the Embassy in Haiti to the Department of State, March 23, 1971, 2045Z, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972*; Document 402, Telegram 745 from the Embassy in Haiti to the Department of State, July 20, 1971, 2000Z, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969-1972*.

¹³¹Robert J. Tata, *Haiti: Land of Poverty* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 54, 59; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 100.

products in the United States. In addition, the Haitian government promised that the profits of international investors would be tax exempt. Cheap labor along with tariff and tax concessions made Haiti an extremely profitable location for American manufacturers.¹³²

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was the American institution that had the greatest role in shaping Haiti's restructured economy. In addition to the development of the assembly industry, USAID promoted export-oriented agriculture for Haiti. It did this by applying pressure on Haitian farmers to abandon production for local and domestic consumption and to specialize in a few specific crops for export. USAID also increased the flow of aid to Haiti for the development of agro-processing and other development projects that would enable the growth of commercial agriculture for export. The United States and international institutions like the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank justified this export-oriented development model for Haiti by reasoning that if Haiti were to continue producing agricultural products and manufactured goods primarily for domestic consumption, it would never escape poverty since the country was much too poor to absorb the expanded production that was required for economic growth to take place. The solution, therefore, was to plug Haiti into the global economy where it could sell its cheap labor and key agricultural commodities to those who could afford to buy them. While this economic model never delivered the sort of economic development its advocates promised for Haiti, it did for a time produce tremendous profits for international investors and elements of the Haitian elite. What's more, Haiti's new

¹³²Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 98, 100; Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order: The Limits of the Democratic Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 27-28.

economy also produced a massive surge in Haitian migration to the United States, an outcome US policymakers were less prepared for.¹³³

Lured by the economic opportunities represented by the low-wage assembly industry and by Jean-Claude Duvalier's pledge to initiate a process of political liberalization, a segment of the wealthiest New York Haitians, perhaps including a substantial number of the light-skinned bourgeoisie, chose to return to Haiti in the early 1970s. Believing that the darkest days of Duvalierism were over, these "technocrats, engineers, managers, bankers, and technicians" saw the arrival of Baby Doc as a chance to regain their lost status.¹³⁴ The new Haitian president publicly welcomed the return of those in exile, proclaiming his desire to "extend the olive branch" to Haitians living abroad. However, in his first address to the Haitian National Assembly, Duvalier warned that he would "admit no supporter of international communism or any troublemaker" and pledged to "continue the struggle of my father against communist subversion."¹³⁵

At the same time that some of the middle- and upper-class Haitians were returning to their home country, the economic transformation of Haiti and persistent political repression under Jean-Claude Duvalier increased the number of working-class and poor Haitians leaving for the United States, a development that will receive more attention in the next chapter. As a result, at a moment when the traditional Haitian politicians were losing their status in the Haitian community in New York, the proportion of upper- and middle-class Haitians in New York was

¹³³Josh DeWind and David H. Kinley III, *Aiding Migration: The Impact of International Development Assistance in Haiti* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 57; Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 24-25, 27, 33; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 212-13; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 100-1.

¹³⁴Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, "Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields", 160.

¹³⁵Homer Bigbart, "Duvalier Is Tough on Émigré Policy: Bars Return of 'Communists and Troublemakers'," *New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1971, 10.

also declining, factors that accelerated the cultural and political transformation already underway in the community.

Central to this cultural and political transformation in the 1970s was the proliferation of leftist-revolutionary organizations in the Haitian community. As mentioned earlier, the replacement of the Magloire-led Haitian Coalition with *La Resistance Haitienne* and the group's debut in front of the United Nations in January of 1971 marked a turn to the Left in the politics of the Haitian community. So did the sheer number of leftist organizations that were active in New York in the 1970s, organizations of which there were dozens by the end of the decade. Some of these were organizations that had been active in Haiti, such as the United Party of Haitian Communists (PUCH) and the Party of Haitian Workers (PTA), organizations that remained active in New York even after they were virtually wiped out during Duvalier's crackdown of 1969. In addition to their connections to the underground movement in Haiti, many of these organizations maintained connections to, and membership in, organizations in Europe, Montreal, and Latin America as well as in New York City.¹³⁶

Situated as they were in the milieu of the international student-Left of the late 1960s and early 1970s, many of the radical Haitian organizations operating in New York City adopted a vision and rhetoric similar to that being employed by the Black Power and third world liberation movements of the period. An April 1971 article entitled "Armed Struggle Remains the Only Solution" by *Voie Democratique*, an organization closely linked to PUCH and the PTA, typified much of the writing produced by the leftist-revolutionary groups of the period. Like its earlier, more conservative predecessors, such as the Magloire-led Haitian Coalition, *Voie Democratique* espoused armed insurrection to topple Duvalier. However, unlike the earlier exiles, *Voie*

¹³⁶Charles, "Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left," 295.

Democratique hoped its revolution would make way for a socialist state. Crediting Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution with triggering a rising tide of revolution in the Americas, the piece argued Haitians must draw upon the revolutionary lessons of Vietnam, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Venezuela, Cuba, and China and apply these “objectives, tactics, and strategies” to the “specific features of the Haitian reality.”¹³⁷

This sort of embrace of third world revolutions pervaded the Haitian political culture of the 1970s, forcing Francois Benoit, a former Haitian Army lieutenant and leader of the Haitian Resistance to take a careful position on the political location of his coalition (which included both traditional opponents of Duvalier as well as some young radicals). “We are part of the third world but we are nationalists first. The Haitian solution must come from Haiti,” argued Benoit, a somewhat perplexing statement from the leader of an organization seeking to build a rebellion from outside the country.¹³⁸ Others members of the old guard were more dismissive of the growing embrace of third world revolutions. “We have nothing in common with such a group, other than that we are both anti-Duvalier. I’m interested in a Haitian solution, not a Cuban solution, a Chinese solution, or a Muscovite solution. And these guys, the way I read them, that’s what they want,” said one of the leaders of the Haitian Coalition.¹³⁹

The origins of another organization, the *Mouvement Haitien d’Action Patriotique* (MHAP), also illustrate how the burgeoning Left in New York was inspired by its connections to international liberation movements and, at the same time, was a reaction against the type of Haitian politics that had been dominant in New York in the earlier period. Growing out of the

¹³⁷*Voie Democratique: Haiti Terre d’Avenir*, Apr. 1971, 11, 39.

¹³⁸Lear, “New York’s Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc.”

¹³⁹Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 65.

same networks that had produced *Troupe Kouidor* and *L'Ayisyen* as well as an organization called *En Avant*, MHAP aimed to reshape and radicalize the political scene in the city.¹⁴⁰ Inspiring MHAP's creation was "a new wave of students coming from Europe [who were] influenced by the Chinese revolution and [the global rebellions of] '68," Lionel Legros recalls. Members of MHAP "decided that they were going to do some political work, openly," aiming to "isolate the whole kind of leadership that did the meetings . . . and plan[ned] their invasion[s]" secretly. The young activists opposed the "big, ex-general or ex-deputy . . . [like Paul] Magloire, that whole guard of kind of politicians . . . [Daniel] Fignole, [Clement] Jumelle, and so forth . . . these people [that] had the gatherings that would invite a small group of people, clandestine[ly]." Rejecting what they saw as the tactics of the conservative old guard, activists from MHAP "said we're going to do work openly. And we isolated [the old leadership] through that."¹⁴¹

The articles and images in MHAP's newsletter, *Le Patriote Haitien*, illustrate the strong influence of the Black Power and third world liberation movements on this New York-based Haitian organization. In late January 1972, *Le Patriote Haitien* featured a piece on Angela Davis entitled "Portrait of a Revolutionary," which closed with the exclamations, "Death to American imperialism! The revolution will triumph!" The next month an article entitled "*Les Noirs Americains, Un Peuple Frere*" urged "patriotic Haitians" to "unite with black Americans to defeat American imperialists and their lackeys in the world." In addition to using similar diction, MHAP used the same imagery as many other radical student and Black Power publications of the time. Guns were omnipresent in the pages of *Le Patriote Haitien*. An April 1972 issue of *Le Patriote Haitien* featured a full-page picture of a young black woman, head wrapped, with an

¹⁴⁰Buchanan, "Scattered Seeds," 265.

¹⁴¹Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

infant on her left arm and an M-16 on her right. MHAP also displayed its internationalism through its connection to the *Organisation Revolutionnaire 18 Mai* (OR Mai 18), a European-based Marxist-Maoist organization.¹⁴²

The international currents stimulating radical political activity among New York Haitians also inspired the creation of feminist organizations within the New York community. In the early 1970s the Union of Patriotic Haitian Women (UFAP) began organizing women to support the struggle to liberate Haiti from the Duvalier dictatorship. Created by political exiles and activists formerly with the Haitian communist party, UFAP maintained close connections with the Montreal-based Rally of Haitian Women (RAFA), itself an outgrowth of *Union des Femmes Haitiennes*, an underground women's organization in Haiti. UFAP, like other radical feminist organizations of the period, "rejected all 'liberal' forms of feminism, which were, it claimed, based on a denial of class exploitation. For UFAP, only revolution would end women's oppression," Carolle Charles explains. "A women's movement had to work first for the liberation of Haiti as a basis for women's liberation."¹⁴³

With the rapid growth of the Left came much division and a period of intense political conflict between warring leftist groups as well as between radicals and more conservative voices in the community. Each organization or political tendency had its organ from which it launched lengthy polemics attacking conservatives in the Haitian community as well as its enemies on the Left. Michel Laguerre offers a critical assessment of the Haitian Left in the 1970s:

The Marxist-Leninist and Marxist-Maoist groups have very few members, most of them no more than four or five. The leftist intellectuals who form them have a great capacity

¹⁴²"Un Patriote a Vu: Portrait d'une Revolutionnaire," *Le Patriote Haitien*, Jan. 27-Feb. 10, 1972, 3; "Les Noirs Americains, Un Peuple Frere," *Le Patriote Haitien*, Feb. 10, 1972, 12; *Le Patriote Haitien*, Apr. 7-20, 1972, 10, 16.

¹⁴³Charles, "Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti," 149-51.

for political literary production. Their newspapers and other occasional publications show more familiarity with standard Marxist thought than with Haitian empirical reality . . . [They are] filled with revolutionary slogans and political rhetoric but with little systematic analysis of the current Haitian situation.¹⁴⁴

Laguette underestimates the participation in and significance of these organizations, and a broad reading of the different newsletters reveals a more systematic analysis of the situation in Haiti than Laguerre recognizes. Still, he is right to observe the overwhelming dogmatism of the writings, many of which devoted substantial space to sectarian squabbles, a phenomenon that could be found throughout the international Left in the 1960s and 1970s, splintered as it was among the Moscow-, China-, and Cuba-oriented Communists as well as other organizations with a whole range of ideological differences.¹⁴⁵

So many organizations were formed and disbanded during this contentious period that it is difficult to know how many separate organizations with their own membership existed, particularly because there seems to have been a significant amount of overlap among the membership of different organizations. It is possible, however, to trace the political splits that had lasting significance for the politics of the Haitian community. Two offshoots in particular are noteworthy. After *La Resistance Haitien* replaced the Haitian Coalition, conflict arose between the radicals in the group and the anti-communists remaining from the previous coalition. In 1971, unwilling to work with communists, Raymond Joseph, who had been a leader in the Haitian Coalition, left the Haitian Resistance and founded the Haitian community's first weekly

¹⁴⁴Laguette, *American Odyssey*, 148.

¹⁴⁵A State Department report discusses this phenomenon among Communists in Haiti, noting the "personal as well as ideological differences" that divided the groups. Until the unification of competing groups under the umbrella of PUCH, the Haitian Left maintained a "Castroite" Communist party and a "Moscow-oriented" Communist party. Document 382, Intelligence Note from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to Secretary of State Rogers, No. 334, Washington, May 1, 1969, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume E–10, Documents on American Republics, 1969–1972.

newspaper, *Haiti Observateur*.¹⁴⁶ In contrast, some on the Left refused to work with *La Resistance Haitien* because it included former Duvalierists and individuals (like Joseph) who had collaborated with the CIA and the State Department. Benjamin Dupuy, a leading figure in the *Mouvement Haitien Liberation* (MHL), was one who condemned such collaboration:

There are progressive groups within the Resistance but they consider it ‘practical’ to cooperate with certain people who participate in the reign of terror. They say these people are necessary to convince the American State Department that we are not revolutionary leftists. But why should we collaborate with such people? No program can be genuine if it depends on the approval of the State Department.¹⁴⁷

As time went by, Dupuy maintained his work with the MHL and its partner organization, the Association of Haitian Workers, and in 1983 founded *Haiti Progres*, a left-wing alternative to the anti-communist *Haiti Observateur*.¹⁴⁸

In 1973 a political event in Haiti electrified the New York Haitian community and gave further impetus to the growth of the leftist-revolutionary organizations rapidly spreading at that time. On January 23, three people, later reported to be members of the *Mouvement Anti-Duvalieriste*, kidnapped the US Ambassador to Haiti, Clinton Knox, a supporter of Duvalier and advocate of close US-Haiti relations, and the US Consul Ward Christensen. In return for the release of the hostages, the kidnappers demanded freedom for thirty-one known political prisoners and a \$500,000 ransom payment. After twenty hours of negotiations, Knox and Christensen were released in exchange for \$70,000, the release of twelve political prisoners (the Haitian government claimed the other nineteen originally identified were not in the prison), and safe passage to Mexico City where the Mexican government granted political asylum to the three

¹⁴⁶Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 146.

¹⁴⁷Lear, “New York’s Haitians: Working, Waiting, Watching Bebe Doc.”

¹⁴⁸Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 246; Charles, “Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left,” 295; Kim Ives, Interview with the author, Brooklyn, New York, Apr. 17, 2010.

kidnappers and twelve prisoners.¹⁴⁹ One Haitian exile organization in New York issued a statement that celebrated the release of political prisoners “that have been under constant threat to be eliminated in case of any disorder in the country. But disorder there will be,” as the Knox kidnapping demonstrated. “The actual, archaic, farcical government led by Clinton Knox and the State Department, must go,” the statement proclaimed.¹⁵⁰ *En Avant* devoted three pages to the Knox kidnapping, arguing that “it should be analyzed in its various aspects in order to draw lessons for the struggle.”¹⁵¹ *The Voice of Haiti*, a newsletter published by the Friends of Haiti and affiliated with Benjamin Dupuy’s Haitian Liberation Movement (MHL), called the kidnapping a “heroic political action” and claimed that it proved “that, in spite of the present regime’s being sustained in power by the US State Department, the Haitian people will be able to liberate themselves no matter what the price, following the example of the heroic people of Vietnam.”¹⁵²

In response to the energy and debate stimulated by the kidnapping, the Haitian Fathers, the exiled priests who had arrived in New York in 1969, joined with the young radicals grouped around *L’Ayisyen* and *Mouvement Haitien d’Action Patriotique* (MHAP), the Union of Patriotic Haitian Women (UFAP), *En Avant*, and the *Rassemblement des Forces Progressistes Haitiennes*, to create the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Haitian People (*Komite K’ap Defann*

¹⁴⁹“Revolutionary Action in Haiti,” *Voice of Haiti*, Feb. 1973, 4; “Resistance Emerges in Haiti,” *Voice of Haiti*, Jan. 1974, 1; “U.S. Envoy Is Held Hostage by Gunmen in Haiti,” *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1973, 8; “U.S. Envoy in Haiti Freed by Captors,” *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1973, 1.

¹⁵⁰“U.S. Envoy in Haiti Freed by Captors.”

¹⁵¹“Tirons Les Lecons de L’action du 23 Janvier,” *En Avant! Bulletin pour le developpement de la mobilization patriotique*, Mar.-Apr. 1973, 4.

¹⁵²*Voice of Haiti*, Feb. 1973, 3.

Doua pep Ayisyen), or KODDPA.¹⁵³ Among the many different leftist coalitions organized in this period, KODDPA was among the most significant, particularly for the role it would play in mobilizing the community around the issue of defending the Haitian refugees.

Despite the growing strength of the Haitian Left and the overwhelming anti-Duvalier orientation of Haitians in New York, there were those who opposed the widespread anti-Duvalier activity in the community. One such organization, the Committee for Unity, insisted on the need to overcome division, both among Haitians in New York and between Haitians abroad and those still in Haiti. Opposed to the anti-Duvalierist opposition, these advocates of “unity” stressed that “it is necessary to maintain a dialogue with Haiti,” calling the activity of the opposition in exile “fruitless exercises of Haitian politicians who are influenced by foreign interests.” In addition, they stressed, “We don’t want to engage in any activity which prevents us from traveling in Haiti.”¹⁵⁴

Louis Brun, president of the Haitian Unity Council, was an appropriate representative of this tendency in Haitian New York. Brun had been a leading voice in the drive to increase the Haitian presence in American politics, serving in 1972 as part of the New York State delegation to the National Black Political Convention and in the same year running for state assemblyman for the 53rd District.¹⁵⁵ Like Brun, many of members of the Haitian Unity Council were interested in breaking into American politics, wanting “to establish a power base for Haitians . . . to claim their rights as American citizens.” With these political goals, it was necessary to differentiate themselves from Haitians on the Left. While publications like *Le Patriote Haitien*

¹⁵³Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 252; Anderson, “Haitians of New York,” 65.

¹⁵⁴Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 412.

¹⁵⁵Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 151.

decried American imperialism, *Unite*, the publication of the Committee for Unity, issued a Fourth of July declaration that proclaimed, “Long live America!”¹⁵⁶ To further accentuate the difference between their program and that of others in the community, the president of the Committee for Unity explained in a public address, “I am not talking about returning to Haiti or of overthrowing Duvalier . . . We are interested in integrating into American society and in aligning culturally and politically with Black Americans.”¹⁵⁷

Although groups like the Haitian Unity Council couched their criticism of the anti-Duvalier opposition in arguments stressing the need for unity, many in the Haitian community of New York saw them simply as Duvalier supporters or *macoutes* (shorthand for Duvalier’s *Tonton Macoutes*). It was rumored that the Haitian government financed the organization and funded its activities, and the frequent attacks on anti-Duvalier groups published in the pages of *Unite* seemed to confirm this connection. Amid the newspaper’s frequent calls for reconciliation and cooperation, there occasionally appeared even more open statements of support for the dictator. In February 1976 the Haitian Unity Council summarized the address Jean-Claude Duvalier had made to the people of Haiti the previous month, commenting that “*Unite* wishes that all the programs envisaged by the President be fully implemented for a betterment of the general welfare of the people of Haiti.”¹⁵⁸ In September 1977 *Unite* promoted the idea that Duvalier was implementing the political liberalization he had promised with the huge front-page headline, “104 Political Prisoners Freed in Haiti.”¹⁵⁹ And the following December, next to a Christmas editorial that reminded the exile community of Christ’s instructions to “love one

¹⁵⁶*Unite*, July 1975, 6.

¹⁵⁷Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 414.

¹⁵⁸“Digest of President Jn. Claude Duvalier’s speech of January 2nd, 1976,” *Unite*, Feb. 15, 1976, 13.

¹⁵⁹“104 Prisonniers Politiques Liberes en Haiti,” *Unite*, Sept. 30, 1977, 1.

another” and “forgive those who have offended you,” *Unite* featured a large picture of a smiling, medal-clad Jean-Claude beneath the caption, “President Jean-Claude Duvalier Winner of Special Latin American Human Rights Award.”¹⁶⁰

Despite the existence of groups like the Haitian Unity Council, a diverse and increasingly radical anti-Duvalier opposition exerted the greatest influence on Haitian politics in New York. And though these groups were divided politically and ideologically, there was enough cohesion that by the early 1970s, it is possible to identify what one scholar has called “a general opposition movement in exile.”¹⁶¹ Because of their international orientation and their connections to the anti-Duvalier resistance in Haiti, and through new coalition organizations like KODDPA that replaced the political organizations of the old guard of the exile community, young radicals like the members of MHAP and *En Avant*, along with progressive activists like the Haitian Fathers, reshaped Haitian politics in the New York community.

Between 1957 and 1973 the political orientation of Haitian activists in New York evolved significantly. Through their anti-Duvalier activity, the first politicians and political activists forced into exile in the late 1950s and the 1960s rooted the Haitian community of New York firmly in Haiti-focused political activism. Later generations of activists would maintain this orientation. However, while the earliest politicians and activists determined the centrality of Haiti-focused political action, it was the subsequent arrival of young people with connections to the anti-Duvalier resistance in Haiti and other international cultural and political movements as well as the forced exile of other anti-Duvalier activists, more progressive in their orientation than the first exiles, that changed the dynamic of the anti-Duvalier exile movement and laid the

¹⁶⁰“President Jean-Claude Duvalier Winner of Special Latin American Human Rights Award,” *Unite*, Dec. 1977, 19.

¹⁶¹Buchanan, “Scattered Seeds,” 255.

groundwork for the trans-regional and transnational movement that would develop in the 1970s and 1980s.

Chapter 2

The Refugee Crisis and the Formation of Haitian Miami, 1973-1980

On December 13, 1972, Yvon Bruno, a barge operator from Port-au-Prince, and sixty-three other Haitians landed their fifty-six-foot sailboat on the shores of Pompano Beach, Florida. Three weeks earlier Bruno had been sitting in a jail cell in Port-au-Prince. Three of the other prisoners sharing the cell with Bruno had recently been removed and had not returned, an ominous sign for those who remained. After the disappearance of the three prisoners, “we decided it was time to leave,” said Bruno, whose father, also in the cell, then bribed the guard to secure their freedom. Deciding it would be too dangerous to remain in the country, they gathered their family and friends, a group including forty-two men, twenty women, and three children, and launched out for what would be a three-week journey that took them to Cuba, the Bahamas, and finally the United States. In the week it took the group to sail from Cuba to the Bahamian island of Bimini, they had to bail water around the clock and operate a hand pump just to keep their leaking vessel afloat. When they finally made it to Florida, the *New York Times* reported, the Haitians were “greeted by local residents who set up a beachfront kitchen to feed them. Later they were interviewed by immigration officials who took them to the Cuban Refugee Center in Miami until higher officials decided what their final reception would be.” They were ultimately denied asylum.¹⁶²

The Haitian refugees’ appearance on the Florida shore in mid-December 1972 was an unusual occurrence. Though not the first refugees to travel by boat from Haiti to the United States (an earlier group had made the trip in 1963), the phenomenon was at that time all but

¹⁶²“65 Haitian Refugees in Florida after Journey in Leaking Boat,” *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1972, 4; “It Was Time to Leave,” *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1972, E5; Carolle Charles, “Political Refugees or Economic Immigrants?: A New ‘Old Debate’ within the Haitian Immigrant Communities but with Contestations and Division,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, no. 2 (Winter 2006), 190-91.

unknown, which explains the cheerful welcome the Haitians' received from Florida residents as well as the initially uncertain response of Florida immigration officials.¹⁶³ However, the arrival on Florida shores of boats full of Haitian refugees soon became a common sight; the beginning of the exodus of Haitian "boat people" to the United States began a new chapter in the history of Haiti and the United States.

A steady stream of Haitians attempting to reach the United States by boat followed the December 1972 landing. One hundred and seventeen Haitians came to the United States by boat between December 1972 and April 1973. By 1976, 2,000 to 3,000 had made the trip.¹⁶⁴ And in 1977 the steady stream of Haitians widened into a great river. From November 1977 through July 1978, more than 1,000 Haitians in fifty boats landed in South Florida. Hundreds more arrived each month the following year, with 637 arriving in October 1979. In 1980 the flow became a full scale flood of refugees with a then record 1,366 coming in March 1980, and 326 Haitians in four boats arriving in a single day the following month.¹⁶⁵ By the time the deluge of refugees slowed in late 1981, the number of Haitians who had fled to South Florida had reached anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000 and might have reached as high as 80,000 by 1982 if some estimates are correct.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 94.

¹⁶⁴"125 Attend a Rally to Aid 117 Haitians," *New York Times*, July 29, 1973, 37; "Haitians Who Fled to the U.S. Suing for Asylum as Political Refugees," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1976, 56. Alex Stepick claims that as many as 1000 Haitians came annually beginning in 1972. "Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement," 15.

¹⁶⁵Jon Nordheimer, "Illegal Flow of Haitians to Florida Coasts Rising," *New York Times*, July 18, 1978, NJ19; "Haitian Refugee Tide at Peak; New Boats Swell Florida Total," *New York Times*, Mar. 27, 1980, A22; "35 Haitians Arrive, Two Drown," *Associated Press*, Apr. 1, 1980; "Most Haitians Ever in 1 Day Reach Florida in Four Boats," *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1980, A16.

¹⁶⁶The Immigration and Naturalization Service estimated the number of Haitians in South Florida to be 32,183 on March 31, 1981. However, other sources indicate that 25,000 Haitians arrived in 1980 alone. Added to the 12,000 to 15,000 that were already in South Florida in early 1980, Jake Miller's number of 38,947 known Haitians at the end of 1981 probably comes closer to the mark. Grenier and Stepick claim that 50,000 to 70,000 Haitians arrived by boat from 1977-1981 and an additional 5,000 to 10,000 came by airplane from Haiti in the same period. See

Several factors contributed to this new exodus of Haitian refugees. One was the effect of the economic restructuring of Haiti initiated by Jean-Claude Duvalier and his partners in the international community, as has already been discussed. The Haitian government, working with institutions like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), transformed Haiti's economy in the 1970s and 1980s. According to USAID officials, "the majority of AID activities in Haiti are designed to improve the well-being of the rural poor," but in its attempt to reach that goal, when the agency began its activities in the country in 1973, it confronted a host of difficult problems: "limited availability of financial, human, and natural resources in the country," a situation "further aggravated by an extremely poor and deteriorating agricultural base, high rates of unemployment, increasing population pressure, a high incidence of basic health problems and weak institutions." Therefore, USAID officials argued, addressing the problems of deforestation, soil erosion, and inefficiency in agricultural production required land reform and restructuring of the rural economy. And the unemployment and economic crisis in Haiti could best be addressed by "providing sound foundations for sustained growth in the private sector" and "gainful employment" through "investment in the export-oriented assembly manufacturing sector while concurrently promoting the development of capital markets and other support institutions for continued business and industrial expansion."¹⁶⁷ In other words, the best way forward for Haiti was an export-oriented economy driven by the assembly industry in Haitian cities and commercial agriculture in the countryside.

Metropolitan Dade County, *Social and Economic Problems among Cuban and Haitian Entrant Groups in Dade County, Florida: Trends and Indications* (1982-1983?), 3-4; Metropolitan Dade County Planning Department, Research Division, *Cuban and Haitian Refugees: Miami Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area – 1980* (1981), 1; Jake C. Miller, *The Plight of Haitian Refugees* (New York: Praeger, 1984), xii-xiii; Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 58.

¹⁶⁷"Fact Sheet," US Agency for International Development, Mission to Haiti, Aug. 1986, box 1, folder 16, Amy Wilentz Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Critics of the economic plan pointed out that promoting export-oriented commercial agriculture concentrated land holdings into fewer and fewer hands, discouraging production for local markets and encouraging importation of food from international producers. This process threatened the means by which Haitian peasants eked out a meager living. At the same time, the provision of “surplus food aid” to Haiti from the United States, accounting for one half of US assistance to Haiti from 1973 to 1981, drove down food prices.¹⁶⁸ The displacement of huge portions of the peasantry created waves of migrants from Haiti’s mountains and plains to its cities where they hoped to obtain work in the assembly industry, the supposed new economic engine for the Haitian economy.¹⁶⁹

However, after Haitian peasants made the trip to the city, they discovered that there were not enough jobs to go around, especially as they were joining an already sizable population of urban poor people. In the 1970s and 1980s urban unemployment always far exceeded job creation by the new assembly industry. In 1982 after a decade of growth for the manufacturing sector, unemployment in the Haitian capital and chief industrial city of Port-au-Prince still stood at 38 percent with more than half of the city’s residents unemployed or underemployed.¹⁷⁰

Even those who managed to beat out the competition and obtain factory work struggled for survival. Contrary to international agencies’ promises to those employed in the assembly industry, factory workers remained mired in poverty. In the late 1970s assembly workers

¹⁶⁸For “surplus food aid” as a proportion of overall US aid to Haiti see Charles Downs, *Negotiating Development Assistance: USAID and the Choice between Public and Private Implementation in Haiti* (Pittsburg, PA: Pew Charitable Trusts, 1988, and Washington, DC: Distributed by the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 1994), 2.

¹⁶⁹DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 57-60, 78-82, 97-101; Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 174, 181.

¹⁷⁰Paul R. LaTortue, Dianne Rochelau, and Karen E. Richman, *Haitian Migration and the Haitian Economy*, Occasional Paper no. 3 (Gainesville: Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 1984), 7; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 104-16.

labored for as a little as \$1.60 a day, less than one-tenth of what employers paid American workers. Confronting charges that “we are trying to keep wage rates in Haiti as low as possible for American companies,” Gerald Zarr, Director of USAID in Haiti insisted, “This is not true. The issue for most Haitians is not a high-paying job versus a low-paying job. Rather, it is a job versus no job.” Zarr claimed, “As the economy progresses, wages will increase.”¹⁷¹ And World Bank officials pointed out that the \$3.00 a day that a factory worker might have made in the early to the mid-1980s amounted to an income that was more than twice that of rural Haitians. However, many workers were not employed for full weeks and went through regular lay-offs. Workers were often hired on a probationary basis or as trainees and then dismissed just before this temporary status expired. Furthermore, with the much higher cost of living in the cities, this income was actually less than what rural people made. As inflation climbed in the early 1980s, years when the Haitian government had frozen the minimum wage for manufacturing workers, the real value of wages continued to collapse. As Josh DeWind and David Kinley show, by 1984 the real value of the minimum wage in Haiti was 21 percent lower than the minimum wage had been in 1971.¹⁷²

Whether employed or unemployed, rural migrants or urban natives, few Haitians experienced the rising standard of living that was supposed to accompany the country’s new economic orientation. Two-thirds of urban dwellers were crowded into slums, often without basic services such as sewage disposal, water and electricity. To survive, the urban poor,

¹⁷¹“Speech made by Gerald Zarr, Director of USAID in Haiti to the Rotary Club of Port-au-Prince, Jan. 26, 1987,” box 1, folder 16, Amy Wilentz Collection.

¹⁷²William R. Long, “Haiti’s Wages: Low for Business but High for Poor,” *Miami Herald*, Apr. 24, 1979, 18-A; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 104-9, 119-23.

especially those unable to get a factory job, had to rely on two alternative sources of support. One of these sources was income from the informal sector, which included a wide range of work activities including street work such as selling food, art and other products, cleaning, construction and repair work in private homes, or running an informal business such as a restaurant or a beauty parlor out of one's own home. By the mid-1980s roughly 60 percent of the urban population relied on the informal sector for survival. The other alternative source of support was the money flowing from Haitian family members and friends living abroad. The importance of these remittances grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, expanding along with the Haitian diaspora. From \$15 million in 1970, remittances to Haiti grew to \$52 million in 1980. But even with the critical support provided by the informal sector and remittances from abroad, the World Bank observed that in 1983 60 percent of Haitian city dwellers remained in "absolute poverty."¹⁷³

Deteriorating conditions both in the countryside and in Haitian cities, and the disruption caused by the implementation of the export-oriented economy drove the wave of refugees to US shores in the 1970s and early 1980s. Perceived opportunities in America also pulled Haitians to South Florida. Those who had been on the receiving end of remittances from the United States calculated that they too might be able to get a job in America and then send back money to support their families and communities. A social worker in a northwestern province of Haiti explained the attraction of the United States. "Say you are a young man and you want to get ahead, but you have no hope . . . You have heard about this wonderful place called Miami where you get paid a phenomenal sum of \$80 a week. Jesus! *Eighty dollars a week?*" But opportunity to earn was not the only reason to emigrate. "We know people who have gone," explained a

¹⁷³Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 28-29; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 104-9.

young Haitian man. “They write and tell us life is easier there.” Besides, “It’s very hard to find work here . . . You get up Monday morning and look at the sea, that’s all.”¹⁷⁴

Fear of political persecution, an everyday threat for many Haitians, intertwined with Haitians’ economic motivations to drive refugees to Florida’s shores. The interlocking nature of economic hardship and political persecution is illustrated through the experience of three refugees. Joseph Petit came to Miami in 1980. Five years earlier he had been standing on a street corner, complaining about life in Haiti, when he was overheard by a member of the *Tontons Macoutes*. The man returned with a group of thugs to deliver a severe beating to Petit, leaving him toothless and with a deep scar on his cheek. Petit decided to flee to the Bahamas and in 1980 to Miami. Andre Pierre was reading in a public park when he was arrested by Haitian police for “studying politics.” Marie Marthe Sannon was reported to Haitian authorities by a neighbor with whom she had had a routine argument. Sannon’s whole family was arrested. As common as the threat of hunger or unemployment was the everyday danger of political violence. As Joseph Petit reflected, Haitians are hungry, but “if you say you are hungry, they beat you. If you talk wrong about the government, they beat you.” Whether pursued by government agents or by hunger, Haitian refugees like Petit were certain that “we die if they send us back to Haiti.”¹⁷⁵

This apparently arbitrary political violence was backed up by the repressive capacity of formal state institutions like the Haitian army and the Leopards, Baby Doc’s personal security

¹⁷⁴Latortue, Rocheleau, and Richman, *Haitian Migration and the Haitian Economy*, 53-54; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 135; Carl Hiaasen, “Part I: The Flight from Haiti,” *Miami Herald [Tropic Magazine]*, Nov. 12, 1978, 19.

¹⁷⁵Margot Hornblower, “Haitians Facing Eviction; Quick Asylum Is Sought for Haitian Refugees; Quick Asylum in U.S. Asked,” *Washington Post*, May 9, 1980, A1; Thomas A. Johnson, “Haitian Refugees to Press U.S. for Political Asylum,” *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1977, 10.

force that was a revamped version of his father's *tontons macoutes*. Throughout the 1970s Duvalier was able to beef up security forces through military aid delivered by the US government as well as collaboration with private US companies specializing in the arms trade. In 1971 and 1972, for example, Luckner Cambronne, defense minister under Duvalier, brokered a deal with Aerotrade, a Miami-based company, for \$200,000 in arms and the services of contractors, former U.S. Marines, to train military and security forces in Haiti.¹⁷⁶

In addition to flight from political violence, some of the Haitians that arrived in Florida in the 1970s did so because they were expelled from other locations outside of Haiti. In June 1978, for example, in an attempt to address the 23 percent native unemployment rate in their country, Bahamian authorities threatened to deport Haitians living in the Bahamas. Facing imprisonment and forced return to Haiti, thousands of Haitians boarded boats for South Florida and joined the masses of people sailing to the United States from Haiti in the late 1970s.¹⁷⁷

Pushed by poverty and violence in Haiti and pulled by the hope of work and safety in the United States, tens of thousands took to the sea in the 1970s. Some may have underestimated the danger of the voyage while others surely knew the risks of the treacherous sea journey. Yvon Bruno and the sixty-three others who arrived in December 1972 barely escaped death. Many others were not so lucky. In 1978 twenty-three men, women, and children drowned off the coast of Freeport, Bahamas. The following January 19, more people drowned between the Bahamas and the United States. On a Sunday afternoon in 1980, the sea deposited the dead bodies of two people, a man and a woman, on a Florida beach. The Haitian woman wore a yellow skirt and a

¹⁷⁶ Tad Szulc, "Miami Company Employing Ex-Marines for Training Members of Haitian Forces," *New York Times*, Mar. 16, 1972, 2.

¹⁷⁷ "138 Haitians Flee Islands, Reach Florida in Tiny Boats," *Miami Herald*, June 28, 1978, 1-A; "Boat Carrying Haitian Refugees to Florida Capsizes and 10 Die," *New York Times*, July 23, 1978, 6.

matching vest. In her pocket was the evidence of what had inspired her to make the deadly trip: a letter written in Creole saying, “Darling, don’t cry anymore. Be patient. You have come to Miami. It’s good. It’s beautiful.”¹⁷⁸

To avoid the peril of an overcrowded sailboat, Haitians without visas (and therefore unable to travel by airplane to the United States) sometimes employed the services of smugglers to transport them to Florida. Although it cost anywhere from \$500 to \$2000 per person to be part of such clandestine trips, in some cases it was a more reliable way to get to America. From 1972 onward, the refugee-smuggling business boomed in Haiti, centered especially in the northern coastal city of Port-de-Paix. Some of those able to pay were packed into hidden compartments aboard motorized boats. Others were taken aboard US-bound freighters like the Panamanian *Tango Express* on which eight Haitians were discovered packed into the ship’s crawl spaces and bathrooms.¹⁷⁹

But paying a smuggler was no guarantee of a safe voyage to America. Individuals unable to pay hundreds or even thousands of dollars for an individual spot on a motorized boat or freight ship sometimes opted to join a more affordable, but overcrowded and less safe vessel. To avoid run-ins with police or immigration officials in the United States, smugglers sometimes abandoned their contraband before reaching American shores. In 1979 Betty Wiggs, spokesperson for the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, reported that “we have many cases of

¹⁷⁸Warren Brown, “Forced Off Boat into Atlantic, 6 Haitians Being Smuggled Die,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 14, 1979, A2; “35 Haitians Arrive, Two Drown,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 1, 1980; “Boat Carrying Haitian Refugees to Florida Capsizes and 10 Die.”

¹⁷⁹“11 on Ships Crew Are Charged with Smuggling Haitian Aliens,” *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1979, A18; Latortue, Rocheleau, and Richman, *Haitian Migration and the Haitian Economy*, 56-57.

people being dropped off on somebody's island and being told they were in Miami when they were nowhere near Miami.”¹⁸⁰

The story of the Lorfilms family demonstrates that traveling with smugglers could be just as deadly as making the trip independently. At dawn on August 13, 1979, police on shore spotted a boat off the Florida coast. Realizing that they faced discovery by the police, the smugglers tried to dump their human cargo and escape, firing shotguns into the air to scare the refugees into the water. When some would still not leave the boat, the smugglers threw the refugees' children overboard, forcing terrified parents to go in after their children. A young mother named Eliane Lorfilms begged the smugglers to allow her and her five children to stay on the boat, but the family was forced off at gunpoint. Police officers on shore who heard the screams quickly made their way out to the refugees in a raft, but Eliane Lorfilms and her five children, aged four to eleven, had already drowned. Word of the murdered refugees quickly spread throughout the Haitian community in Miami. Although Dieumerci Lorfilms normally might have heard such news from the two other Haitians he worked with in his job as a groundskeeper at a golf course, this time he read the news after he got home from work, discovering that the six dead were his wife Eliane and his five children, Demaby, Yvonne, Kewvis, Anoinette, and his youngest, four-year-old Michelle.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰Brown, “Forced Off Boat into Atlantic, 6 Haitians Being Smuggled Die.”

¹⁸¹“Drowning of Haitian Refugees Described,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 9, 1980, domestic news; Wayne King, “6 Sea Deaths Focus Attention on Plight of Haitians,” *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1979, 1; Brown, “Forced Off Boat into Atlantic, 6 Haitians Being Smuggled Die.” A fictionalized version of this incident appears in Russell Banks, *Continental Drift* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

For Haitians who made it safely to South Florida in the 1970s and early 1980s, it might have seemed the worst was behind them. It was a triumph to have successfully escaped Haiti and to have survived the dangerous trip to America. After hunger in rural villages, poverty in Haitian cities, and violence and terror all along the way, the hope and opportunity-filled life in America was finally set to begin. But confronting this fantasy of America was the reality of life for Haitians in Miami. For many of the new arrivals, poverty, unemployment, exploitation, and even violence remained the central features of life. And the immediate and largest obstacle to survival in the United States was the American government. From the start of the migration wave in the early 1970s, American authorities initiated a program to block the boat people's entrance and to imprison and deport undocumented Haitians. While the challenges to survival for Haitians in South Florida were many, they began with refugees' struggle to stay out of jail and to remain in the United States.

Campaigning for Freedom and Asylum

Most Haitians captured by the Miami police or the Florida Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the 1970s were sent to detention facilities in Immokalee and throughout South Florida and, in some cases, as far away as El Paso, Texas. Refugees who were unable to produce the money for bond, which was often set at a minimum of \$500, had to remain imprisoned under deteriorating conditions that throughout the 1970s grew rapidly worse as facilities filled up with more and more undocumented Haitians. Even children were sometimes subjected to imprisonment if they arrived illegally. In November 1978 eight-year-old Roselene Dorsainvil spent weeks in a city jail in West Palm Beach. Local authorities claimed they had

“mistakenly” jailed the child, who was kept among adult inmates and separated from her father, who occupied another cell in the same facility.¹⁸²

Haitians able to come up with bond were free until their court hearing, which would decide whether they could remain in the United States. Once they were released, the refugees had to find a place to live in an unfamiliar city. Many made their way to makeshift shelters like the one opened up in the basement of the Biscayne Boulevard Lutheran Church of Miami. Work was a bigger problem. For the first five years after the Haitians’ arrival in South Florida, the INS denied them permission to work, forcing them to work illegally or to rely upon the meager assistance available from charity and community groups. This policy by immigration officials put a strain on organizations supporting the Haitians and made it difficult for the Haitians to survive. Miamians like the Reverend John Merz from the Biscayne Boulevard Lutheran Church could help house the refugees, but as he said, by barring them from work, the US government was telling the Haitians to “beg, steal, starve, or go to jail.”¹⁸³

Even if Haitians managed to secure release from the immigration facilities and to find a place to stay and an illegal job, they still faced the likely prospect of deportation. In addition to denying work permits to Haitians, the INS had, since the beginning of the refugee influx, sought various methods to return the Haitians to their home country. These methods included coercing refugees into signing English language documents that they did not understand, failing to inform them of their right to representation or their right to claim asylum, and even forging signatures

¹⁸²Stepick, “Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement,” 15; “138 Haitians Flee Islands, Reach Florida in Tiny Boats;” Warren Brown, “Haitians in America: Illegal Aliens or Political Refugees?” *Washington Post*, May 14, 1979, A4; “Press Release: Priest Discovers 8-year-old child of Haitian Refugees Jailed for Two Weeks by Immigration Authorities,” Dec. 4, 1978, folder 6, box 28, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection. See also Miller, *Plight of Haitian Refugees*, 123.

¹⁸³Eleanor Blau, “Haitians in Miami Enmeshed in Job Conflict,” *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1975, 29.

authorizing refugees' voluntary return to Haiti.¹⁸⁴ Throughout the 1970s the INS maintained a policy of almost complete denial of asylum to Haitian refugees. Out of the approximately fifty thousand asylum claims Haitians refugees filed from 1972 to 1980, US immigration authorities granted only twenty-five.¹⁸⁵

Immigration officials justified this treatment of the Haitian boat people by arguing that the Haitians were not political refugees, but immigrants coming to the United States for economic reasons. Their status was “no different than that of the illegal Mexican alien who crosses the border on foot,” argued INS Deputy Commissioner Mario Noto. And since the Haitians were driven by economic concerns rather than a “well-founded fear of persecution,” the necessary criteria to qualify as a political refugee, they were not entitled to asylum or any other status that would allow them to legally remain in the country. Responding to the National Council of Churches (NCC) and other advocacy organizations that called for refugee status for the Haitians, Carol C. Laise, assistant secretary for public affairs, observed,

[Such groups] appear to argue that any Haitian that requests refugee status should receive such status. We do not agree. For example, some of the boats came to Florida from the Bahamas and carried people who lived in the islands for many years and were leaving because their work permits had been revoked. Are all these people refugees? Further, others enter the United States as tourists bearing Haitian passports, find illegal employment, and then claim to be refugees when faced with deportation. Are all these refugees? We do not believe so.¹⁸⁶

“Ninety percent of the Haitians come here looking for work,” concurred Richard Gullage, INS deputy district director in Miami. “Most of the political asylum applicants do not even

¹⁸⁴“U.S. Changes Refugee Policy, 900 Haitians to Get Hearing,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 4, 1977, A21; Miller, *Plight of Haitian Refugees*, 104.

¹⁸⁵Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 82.

¹⁸⁶Letter from Carol C. Laise to W. Sterling Cary, July 24, 1974, folder 1, box 32, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

come close to meeting the United Nations definition of a refugee.” Furthermore, US officials believed that if the INS opened the door to the Haitians, America would soon be inundated with economic migrants from all over the developing world.¹⁸⁷

The Cold War context also exerted a powerful influence on US policy toward the Haitians. Since 1956 the United States had maintained a refugee policy that gave preferential status to people fleeing communist countries. As part of this Cold War-influenced implementation of refugee policy, American officials developed the practice of distinguishing between totalitarian regimes (a term usually reserved for communist-controlled countries) and authoritarian regimes (repressive but non-communist governments). Fleeing a totalitarian regime usually accorded a person asylum while fleeing an authoritarian regime usually did not. In addition, special legislation like the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act and the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act also aimed to ensure that people fleeing specific communist-controlled countries considered hostile to the United States be granted asylum.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, the United States considered Duvalier’s Haiti a strategic ally against communist Cuba in the Caribbean and in the Organization of American States and was by the early 1970s strengthening its economic ties with the country as well. To grant the Haitians political asylum would have been an acknowledgement of repression in Haiti, a move that would have damaged relations between the two countries.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷Michelle Bogre, “Haitian Refugees: (Haiti’s) Missing Persons,” *Migration Today* 7, no. 4 (Sept. 1979): 9.

¹⁸⁸Charles, “Political Refugees or Economic Immigrants?,” 193-95; Bogre, “Haitian Refugees: (Haiti’s) Missing Persons,” 9.

¹⁸⁹Stepick, “Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement,” 17, 20-21; Miller, *Plight of Haitian Refugees*, 81.

The Haitian refugees, however, rejected the US government's rationale for their exclusion and viewed the differential treatment offered Cubans and Haitians as the greatest symbol of what they saw as an unjust and discriminatory policy. "The Cuban people come and they are welcome. When the Haitian people arrive, they send us right back where we came from," observes Rose Micheline Saint Jean, who fled from Haiti to Florida in 1978. "It is unfair the way they treat us. They don't treat us like a human being," she declares, voicing a sentiment commonly held among the refugees.¹⁹⁰ Echoing the same grievance, a flyer for an early demonstration in support of the Haitian refugees in New York observed that "Cubans arriving by plane are given residence. Why jail for Haitian refugees?" it asked.¹⁹¹

Sharing the new refugees' sense of injustice over the government's treatment of the Haitian refugees, Haitians in New York began building a campaign to obtain freedom and asylum for their newly arrived compatriots. The Haitian Fathers, the progressive priests forced to flee Haiti in 1969, were at the center of this campaign from the start. From their apartment in the heart of the Haitian community of Brooklyn, Father Antoine Adrien and the other Haitian Fathers organized protests and picket lines, letter-writing campaigns, and other actions to mobilize the Haitian community. Their residence became the meeting space for frequent ad hoc and coalition meetings to formulate campaign strategy. And their publication, *Sel*, became one of the main community newsletters that aided in the education and mobilization of New York Haitians around the refugee issue.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰Rose Micheline Saint Jean, Interview with author, Miami, FL, Apr. 23, 2008.

¹⁹¹"Emergency! Save the Haitian Refugees!," flyer for a Feb. 14, 1974, demonstration, box 21, folder 6, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

¹⁹²Buchanan, *Scattered Seeds*, 443-46; Guy Sansaricq, "The Haitian Apostolate in Brooklyn," *Migration Today* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 1979): 25.

Much of this work took place under the auspices of KODDPA, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Haitian People, an organization in which the Fathers partnered with young radicals from groups like *En Avant* and *Mouvement Haitien d'Action Patriotique* (MHAP). KODDPA sponsored one of the first events of the refugee campaign. On July 1, 1973, approximately 250 people congregated outside St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan to listen to speeches, to sing songs, and "to manifest their support for the Haitian refugees in Miami." The demonstrators then marched down to East Forty-second Street and the Haitian consulate where, according to *Haiti Observateur*, they "chanted anti-Duvalier slogans . . . sang 'The *Dessalinienne*,' [Haiti's national anthem] and unfurled the 'Red-and-blue' pre-Duvalier flag."¹⁹³

As this early demonstration in support of the refugees illustrates, from the start Haitian activists in the United States established multiple targets in their campaign: US immigration officials who denied asylum to the refugees, the US State Department, which maintained its support for the dictatorship in Haiti, and the Duvalier regime itself.

While the July 1973 demonstration culminated in front of the Haitian consulate, a demonstration the following February, which drew five hundred people and was sponsored by the Haitian Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of the Haitian Refugees (another coalition in which the Haitian Fathers played a leading role), occurred outside the offices of the US State Department regional office in New York City. Illustrating the activists' view of who was responsible for the crisis, the demonstration featured a group of protesters in chains, watched

¹⁹³“Demonstration in New York,” *Haiti Observateur*, July 6-13, 1973, 4.

over by a guard wearing an American flag, and followed by another man dressed as a *Tonton Macoutes*.¹⁹⁴

It was this multidimensional quality of the refugee campaign that made it such a powerful tool in mobilizing the Haitian community. Mobilizing the community in favor of asylum for the Haitian boat people resonated with those who felt compelled to speak out against what they saw as a biased US policy. Some Haitians were also motivated to participate in the movement because they identified with the boat people's experience of being undocumented. As Ray Laforest explains, "During that moment, there were Haitians that were not into politics [but that] might have joined a demonstration for immigration because even though they were doing okay here, they had come 'illegally'."¹⁹⁵ At the same time, the refugee issue offered an excellent opportunity to agitate for the discontinuation of US support for Duvalier. If the movement convinced the US government to grant the refugees asylum, it would necessitate a change in the diplomatic relations between the United States and Haiti. A statement by Father Guy Sansaricq, one of the priests doing organizing in the community, explained the work of the Haitian Fathers within this context:

The Haitian refugees appear as a sign of the times – poor, persecuted, helpless. Their poignant distress belies the Haitian government propaganda about so called "liberalization policies" of the present regime . . . The great hoax that the Haitian government had liberalized its policy was something that [the Haitian Fathers] had to denounce . . . The involvement of the State Department in the Haitian situation was also a painful fact that needed exposure.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴"Grand Manifestation a la Seme Avenue," *Haiti Observateur*, Feb. 22-Mar., 1974, 1, 4, 6, 9; Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 174.

¹⁹⁵Ray Laforest, Interview with author, New York, Apr. 10, 2010.

¹⁹⁶Sansaricq, "The Haitian Apostolate in Brooklyn," 25.

Many examples of this line of thinking also appear in the Haitian publications of the period. To provide just one illustration, in the spring of 1975, *Le Patriote Haitien* published an article entitled “The Illegal Alien Question and the Haitian Community,” in which it argued that KODDPA and the other organizations “struggling for the democratic rights of the Haitians abroad and at home . . . devote themselves above all to exposing through the [protest] events, the true nature of U.S. imperialism and to making the Haitian community realize that the main and determinant struggle is the one to overthrow the U.S. supported Duvalier regime in Haiti.” To that end, *Le Patriote Haitien* called on Haitians to continue to support the anti-Duvalier resistance and to “demand that the Ford administration immediately put an end to its policy of support to the Duvalier dictatorship.”¹⁹⁷

However, the refugee campaign, which attracted support precisely because it challenged both US policy and the dictatorship in Haiti, engendered fear and resistance in the Haitian community for the same reason. According to Susan Buchanan, the priests and other members of the refugee movement encountered resistance from people who were afraid of engaging in politics and wanted to avoid association with the anti-Duvalier exile groups. Others avoided the refugee issue out of a desire to avoid association with the desperate boat people.¹⁹⁸

To overcome this fear and resistance, activists utilized the same tools they had employed in their earlier campaigns to encourage Haitians to step out of the shadows and join the anti-Duvalier movement. *L' Ayisyen*, the Sunday morning radio program with such a large following, took up the refugee movement as a central focus of its programming. As Daniel Huttinot remembers, “Since 1972 when the first group of Haitian refugees arrived, we have been working

¹⁹⁷“The Illegal Alien Question and the Haitian Community,” *Le Patriote Hatien*, Mar. 26-Apr. 17, 1975, 11.

¹⁹⁸Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat?,” 192.

with the Haitian Fathers on the defense of the Haitian refugees.” In addition to defending the Haitian refugees, the activists associated with *L’Ayisyen* used the radio show as a tool for mobilization. *L’Heure Haitienne*, also the official name of the radio program, was one of the groups that made up KODDPA (the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Haitian People), a coalition that also included the Haitian Fathers’ organization, *Sel*.¹⁹⁹

Music, theater, and other cultural expressions also continued to be important tools that activists like Huttinot used to educate and activate the Haitian community. As Marie Lily Cerat recalls,

The music was engaged music, and it was the quickest way to communicate to a group of people who did not read necessarily. I mean when you have . . . a show in Creole, everybody can see, they can participate, they can get the message. If the music of [Haitian musician and political activist] Manno Charlemagne comes out, plays on the radio through *L’Ayisyen*, you hear the message, it is immediate . . . because you don’t have the literate people who are going to wait for the books to come out.²⁰⁰

Music and theater could also be a way to try to overcome class divisions in the Haitian community and to encourage unity around issues like asylum for the refugees. According to Cerat, cultural events “brought together a large swath . . . of people from different segments -- literate, illiterate, workers, professionals.” The events “offered something for everyone” and thus represented an effective tool for outreach and mobilization.²⁰¹

The 1975 release of *Haiti: Ki Sa Pou-n Fe? What is to be done?*, a record album produced by Atis Indepandan, a musical group linked to *L’Ayisyen*, exemplified the combined cultural and political work taking place in the Haitian community at the time. In addition to the printed Creole and English lyrics of each song, the album insert included a five-page political

¹⁹⁹Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview; “Emergency! Save the Haitian Refugees,” flyer.

²⁰⁰Marie Lily Cerat, Interview with author, Brooklyn, NY, July 14, 2010.

²⁰¹Cerat, interview.

statement from the artists that ranged broadly through Haitian history, culture, and politics and that provided a bibliography of suggested readings and “recommended sources of information,” a bibliography that included the bulletins of *En Avant* and publications of KODDPA. The goal of Atis Indepandan’s work, the statement concluded, was “to help in developing a new democratic, popular, revolutionary, proletarian culture.”²⁰²

An examination of Atis Indepandan’s lyrics also reveals the sort of message that cultural-political groups were putting out about the refugee issue. One song entitled “*Papa-m Monte Oun Bato*” (My Father Left on a Boat) presents the despair as well as the ongoing determination of those left behind when a family member fled Haiti.

My father left on a boat
 I’ve heard he went to Nassau
 To find some way to make a living,
 Because in Haiti we have no food or money.
 My mother is so poor she had to cut up an old dress
 To make a pair of pants for *Ti Rouj*.

My father worked hard to provide for us,
 But the *Tonton Macoutes* came and stole his land.
 He had no choice but to flee,
 And still we have no news from him
 My mother had to send the youngest child, *Ti Rouj*,
 To work hard for no pay in the big house in town.

Nobody knows where my father is.
 My mother passed away, after suffering from T.B.
 Misery lies on all of us in my country,
 But our courage is stronger than all our tears.²⁰³

The music of Atis Indepandan, like much of the Haitian music and theater of the period, was remarkable for its ability, in a few short stanzas, to present a powerful critique of institutions

²⁰²Atis Indepandan, *Haiti: Ki Sa Pou-n Fe? What Is to Be Done?*, Paredon Records, 1975, album insert, 1-5, 14.

²⁰³Atis Indepandan, *Haiti: Ki Sa Pou-n Fe? What is to be done?*, 6.

both in Haiti and in the United States. Another song entitled “*La Mizè*” (Misery) opens with an indictment of the economic restructuring of Haiti under Baby Doc.

Poverty is strangling my country.
 Terror grips the land
 Feudalism in the countryside
 And the bourgeoisie in the cities
 Have broken the peasants.

Those who haven’t fled to nearby places
 Can’t afford to work the land any more.
 Food is scarce for them,
 And they must buy their meager rice and beans from others.

The song goes on to introduce the impact of the refugee exodus in Haiti and the injustice faced by Haitians outside the country.

These days wherever you go in the world,
 You will find Haitian exiles,
 My countrymen, workers, peasants, intellectuals and progressives.
 This hemorrhaging has left Haiti weak and in agony,
 While the *Tontons Macoute* do as they please.
 My country is dying like a wounded man left alone.

(chorus)
 In the Miami jails
 In the canefields of the Dominican Republic
 And in the Canadian hell,
 Nothing is going right.
 In Nassau and the Bahamas,
 In Europe and in Africa,
 Anywhere we go, we Haitians have it the hard way.²⁰⁴

While theater and music were uniquely accessible and immediate in their capability to educate and mobilize New York Haitians, print media also played a critical role in the refugee movement. *Haiti Observateur*, the first full-length weekly newspaper published in the Haitian community of New York, became the principal publication to take up the refugee campaign in the 1970s. Founded in 1971 by Raymond Joseph and his brother, Leopold, *Haiti Observateur*

²⁰⁴Atis Indepandan, *Haiti: Ki Sa Pou-n Fe? What is to be done?*, 7.

was from the beginning envisioned by its founders as a tool of the anti-Duvalier opposition in exile.²⁰⁵ And its circulation of thirty thousand was, according to one source, “the largest of any Haitian newspaper in Haiti or abroad,” giving it substantial reach.²⁰⁶ From the point when Haitian refugees began arriving in Florida in December 1972, *Haiti Observateur* devoted much of its space to reporting on the unfolding refugee movement and the corresponding campaign for asylum. Just as other participants in the refugee campaign had done, the publishers of *Haiti Observateur* recognized that the refugee issue represented an exceptional opportunity to encourage Haitians in the United States to mobilize in defense of their compatriots as well as to join the anti-Duvalier opposition. Week after week, in articles and editorials, Ray and Leo Joseph used the pages of *Haiti Observateur* to attack the regime in Haiti that produced the wave of refugees. The newspaper also skewered US officials for their treatment of the Haitian boat people and urged the Haitian community to join the refugee movement, printing meeting announcements and calls to action, raising funds for the asylum campaign, and publishing petitions calling on American officials to grant asylum to the Haitian refugees.²⁰⁷

As the refugee campaign was developing in New York, another branch of the movement was taking root in Miami. The first to respond to the refugee crisis in South Florida were the

²⁰⁵Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 130.

²⁰⁶Untitled document detailing biographical information for Ray Joseph, Antoine Adrien, Yves Volel, and Father Francis Gagnon.

²⁰⁷For example, “Nouveaux Refugies Haitiens,” *Haiti Observateur*, Sept. 15-22, 1972, 12; “Que Faire de ces Refugies,” *Haiti Observateur*, Dec. 15-22, 1972, 12; Alliance contre le Racisme,” *Haiti Observateur*, July 6-13, 1973, 8; “No Pity for Black Refugees,” *Haiti Observateur*, June 29-July 6, 1973, 12; “Pas D’Accueil Aux Refugies Noirs,” *Haiti Observateur*, Oct. 5-12, 1973, 10; “Liberation des Refugies,” *Haiti Observateur*, June 28-July 5, 1974, 10; “Toujours Refugies Politiques et Economiques,” *Haiti Observateur*, Sept. 9-16, 1977, 8; “The Haitian Refugees, a Problem That Won’t Go Away,” *Haiti Observateur*, July 7-14, 1978, 8; “Asylum for Haitian Refugees,” *Haiti Observateur*, Oct. 20-27, 1978, 7; “Un Acte Barbare a Miami,” *Haiti Observateur*, Dec. 8-15, 1978, 8; “Help Needed for Haitian Refugee Center!,” *Haiti Observateur*, Jan. 4-11, 1980, 4.

Protestant churches rooted in the African American community that neighbored the northeastern part of the city, the area that would ultimately become known as Little Haiti. While some black residents of Miami were hostile toward the new arrivals, the Black Baptist Alliance and the Baptist Ministers Council responded by raising support for the refugees in the form of food, clothing, and shelter. The Reverend James Jenkins, minister of the Friendship Baptist Church in Miami and president of the Baptist Ministers Council of Miami and Vicinity, and Rev. Mompremier, associate minister of Friendship Baptist Church, were among the first to assist the newly arrived Haitian refugees. Jenkins and Mompremier became some of the first leaders of the South Florida community's political campaign for the refugees as well, soon drawing in other leading members of Miami's African American community, including the Reverend W.E. Sims of the Baptist Ministers Council, and Ray Fauntroy, leader of the Dade County chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Council.²⁰⁸

The work of these local churches and religious leaders was also buttressed by nationwide religious organizations, like the National Council of Churches, the United Methodist Church, and Church World Service, as well as labor unions, like the AFL-CIO and the Laborers Union Local 478, which together in 1973 funded the creation of the new Haitian Refugee Center in Miami (initially called the Haitian Refugee Information Center). Like the Baptist church organizations, the Haitian Refugee Center worked to meet the immediate needs of the new arrivals, helping them to locate clothing, food, and shelter. But the most important service the Haitian Refugee Center contributed to the asylum campaign came in the form of legal assistance and advocacy. Initially depending on the direction of the Reverend Jacques Mompremier but soon relying on

^{208c} A Historical Sketch of the Haitian Refugee Information Center," n.d., box 22, folder 22, "Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; "Haitian Refugees Jailed," *Haiti Observateur*, June 29-July 6, 1973, 4; Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 322-23.

the legal expertise of immigration attorney Ira Kurzban, the Haitian Refugee Center provided legal assistance to refugees hoping to gain asylum and the right to work.²⁰⁹ Regular Saturday night meetings at the Center presented the nascent refugee community with opportunities to hear updates on legal developments concerning the refugees, and center staff performed role-playing skits with refugees to prepare them to present themselves as political refugees during their immigration interviews.²¹⁰

The National Council of Churches (NCC) soon became the leading national organization to take up the cause of the Haitian refugees. In February 1974 the Governing Board of the NCC adopted a resolution that expressed “profound disquiet for what appears to be a fundamental violation of United States due process of law.” The resolution also commended its partner organizations in the Haitian refugee campaign for their “well-coordinated efforts,” called upon “NCC’s member communions” to provide “urgent and continuing financial and legal assistance” to those groups working on the campaign, groups that included the Haitian Refugee Information Center in Miami and the Committee for the Defense of Haitian Refugees in New York City, and authorized the president of the Council to appoint a task force “to research the issue of Haitian refugees to the United States.”²¹¹ The resulting task force interviewed three hundred Haitians and submitted affidavits to the INS that the task force claimed established “the well-founded fear of

²⁰⁹Melanie Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami: A Social History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 215; Miller, *Plight of the Haitian Refugees*, 174.

²¹⁰“A Historical Sketch of the Haitian Refugee Information Center;” Alex Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice: Haitians in the United States* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 78; Carl Hiaasen, “Part II: Haiti,” *Miami Herald [Tropic Magazine]*, Nov. 19, 1978, 38.

²¹¹“National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Resolution in Support of Haitian Refugees. Adopted by the Government Board, Feb. 28, 1974,” box 21, folder 17, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

political persecution entitling [the Haitians] to asylum under the refugee law” (U.N. Protocol).²¹²

In May of the same year, the NCC brought together more than five hundred people representing political, religious, community, and labor groups in South Florida to formulate a response to the Haitian refugee crisis. In addition, working closely with the legal staff at the Haitian Refugee Center, the NCC filed a motion in federal court that sought the release of Haitians awaiting asylum hearings and requested that those released be granted work permits.²¹³

Reporting from New York, *Haiti Observateur* applauded the leadership of the National Council of Churches in the refugee campaign and predicted that the NCC’s involvement meant that more Americans were becoming aware of the plight of the Haitian refugees. “The problem of the Haitian refugees in Miami finally is getting the attention it deserves,” an editorial in *Haiti Observateur* observed. “That the approximately 50 representatives on the fact-finding mission represent organizations with a combined membership of some 20 millions [*sic*] is indeed reassuring. In other words, the case of the Haitian refugees is no longer the concern of a few Haitian immigrants and exiles in New York.”²¹⁴

While *Haiti Observateur*’s hope that the NCC’s initiatives would “force a change of policy in favor of the Haitian refugees” was not to be immediately realized, the editorialist correctly observed that the movement was growing beyond its origins among the opposition in exile of New York City. An escalating series of demonstrations in 1974, drawn from a broad range of individuals and organizations, particularly from labor unions and the labor movement,

²¹²“Document on Haitians Seeking Asylum,” National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Feb. 2, 1978, box 22, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²¹³“Grande Campagne en Faveur des Exiles,” *Haiti Observateur*, May 24-31, 1974, 2, 8; “Fact Finding Mission in Miami,” *Haiti Observateur*, May 24-31, 1974, 4, 6; “National Council of Churches Assails U.S. Immigration,” *Haiti Observateur*, July 14-21, 1975, 4.

²¹⁴“Refugees: At Last Recognition,” *Haiti Observateur*, May 24-31, 1974, 12.

showcased the growing support for the Haitian refugee cause. In fact, as early as November 1972, E.T. Stephenson, president of the Dade County [Miami] Federation of Labor, issued a statement that articulated the belief “that [the Haitian refugees’] presence in our community in no way affects the livelihood of those presently employed in Dade County.” Stephenson further declared that “these people have a right to earn a livelihood and that they should be granted the democratic right of an appeal in order to remain here.”²¹⁵

Building on Stephenson’s support, the campaign for Haitian refugees captured the support of many other labor leaders, unions, and political organizations in New York and across the country in the spring and summer of 1974. In January, Patrick E. Gorman, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, wrote to President Richard Nixon asking the president “to intercede in a situation that is of deep concern to the undersigned as well as our 550,000 members by recommending that asylum in this free country of ours be given to the Haitian refugees who fled the terror and despotism that exists in Haiti and have been ordered to return.”²¹⁶ Henry Foner, president of the Joint Board of the Fur, Leather, and Machine Workers Union, writing “on behalf of the 6,500 members of our union,” exhorted US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to “treat these refugees as refugees under the guidelines of the United Nations” and to “call a halt to the continued harassment of these individuals.” Foner also pointed out “the heartless manner in which Haitian refugees are received as compared with the ‘red carpet’ treatment accorded to refugees from Cuba.”²¹⁷ In a

²¹⁵Letter To Whom It May Concern from E.T. Stephenson, Nov. 26, 1972, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²¹⁶Letter to President Richard Nixon from Patrick E. Gorman, Jan. 31, 1974, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²¹⁷Letter to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger from Henry Foner, Feb. 4, 1974, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

letter to Senator John V. Tunney of California, Cesar Chavez, president of the United Farmworkers Union, urged support for asylum for the Haitian refugees. “Can we not do as much for the Haitians as we did for the Cubans?” Chavez asked.²¹⁸ In a letter to Dr. Paul Lehman, chairman of the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, another organization that had taken a leading role in the refugee campaign, leaders of the Illinois Chapter of the American Indian Movement offered their support to help secure asylum for Haitian refugees in the United States, proposing that if the campaign for asylum failed, “perhaps it is not inconceivable that as a sovereign nation the Anishnawbe Nation (Ojibwa-Chippewa) would consider granting political asylum to the Haitian refugees.”²¹⁹

While the refugee campaign was gaining the support of a wide range of unions and other organizations, the National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees was particularly involved in the campaign for the Haitian refugees. In May 1974, Local 1199 submitted a resolution expressing support for the Haitian refugees. “Many of the Haitian refugees have found work in our shops and in hospitals under contract with our Hospital Division in New York and other cities. As Americans and as fellow workers of these refugees we call upon the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department to grant them refugee status under our laws,” the resolution stated. Union leaders and staff from 1199 also represented the union at a rally in June in support of asylum for the Haitian refugees and co-sponsored an event, a Community Speak-Out to Save the Haitian Refugees. Later that summer Leon Davis, the 1199

²¹⁸Letter to Senator John V. Tunney from Cesar Chavez, Feb. 6, 1974, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²¹⁹Letter from Eddy Two Rivers and Kenneth Little Fish to Paul Lehman, Apr. 6, 1974, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

union president, joined other labor and religious leaders in signing an open letter on behalf of the Haitian refugees' campaign for asylum.²²⁰

The growing support from labor and other segments of the American population was just one way in which the campaign for the Haitian refugees was gaining momentum in 1974. Another way that the campaign for the refugees advanced came in the increasingly close coordination of the different participants based in New York, Miami, and elsewhere. On November 20, 1974, the Rescue Committee for Haitian Refugees, an organization led by the Haitian Fathers and the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born, staged a day of protest in Washington, DC, that highlighted the increasing coordination of movement activists from around the country. The day's activities, held to protest the "starvation order of U.S. Immigration officials" that "barred the refugees from obtaining a livelihood while awaiting a decision on their asylum applications," began with a demonstration in front of the White House, then moved to a picket line outside the Justice Department, followed by a rally at the Capitol and visits to more than sixty Senators and members of Congress. The rally was chaired by the Reverend J.E. Jenks, pastor of the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Miami; it included seven recently arrived refugees from Haiti and drew supporters from New York and Miami as well as Boston and Baltimore. In addition, the day of action featured members of Congress Charles Rangel and Shirley Chisholm of New York and Cardiss Collins and Ralph Metcalf of Illinois, all members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who joined with Congressman Claude Pepper of Florida in endorsing the activists' demands for asylum and fair treatment for the

²²⁰“Resolution on Haitian Refugees submitted by 1199 National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees,” May 1974, box 28, folder 13, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; “Local 1199 Supports Asylum for Haitians,” 1199 News, May, 1974, box 28, folder 13, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; “Labor Has a Stake,” Flyer for June 21, 1974, Community Speakout, box 28, folder 13, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; Letter to Father Robert P. Kennedy from Ira Gollobin, August 12, 1974, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

Haitian refugees.²²¹ In this first “March on Washington” by the Haitian refugees and their supporters, coordinated action among the various branches of the refugee campaign and the participation and support of members of Congress suggested that the movement was beginning to gain momentum.²²²

Another political development that seemed to bode well for the refugee campaign was the 1976 presidential election of Jimmy Carter. Haitians in the United States had been arguing all along that to solve the refugee crisis, the US government needed to address it at its root and cease its support for the Duvalier dictatorship. This seemed a distinct possibility when Carter entered office since, as Odd Arne Westad observes, “Carter wanted to emphasize human rights and what he saw as American ideological principles in combating Communism and other forms of authoritarian government,” a stance that suggested that the United States might reconsider its support for the Haitian dictatorship.²²³ In a letter to the newly elected president, *Haiti Observateur* publisher Raymond Joseph claimed to be “heartened by your concern for human rights” and urged Carter “to exert your influence in the defense of Haitian refugees. Moreover,” Joseph continued, “I think a review of the American government’s dealing with the government of the Duvaliers is of utmost importance.”²²⁴

²²¹Press Release: “Rescue: Rescue Committee for Haitian Refugees Press Release, Nov. 20, 1974, box 28, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; Press Release: “Haitian Refugees Get Congressional Support Pledge,” n.d., box 28, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²²²“Haitian Refugees to Demonstrate in Washington D.C.,” *Le Patriote Haitien*, Oct. 14-Nov. 1, 1974, 11; “Les Refugies Haitiens a Washington,” *Le Patriote Haitien*, Nov. 22-Dec. 12, 1974, 1, 7; “Marche Sur Washington,” *Haiti Observateur*, Nov. 29-Dec. 6, 1974, 2, 7.

²²³Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 248.

²²⁴Letter to President Jimmy Carter from Raymond A. Joseph, Jan. 24, 1977, box 32, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

Indeed, the Carter administration did soon press Duvalier to respond to human rights concerns and threatened to withhold US aid to Haiti if reforms were not made. In response, the Haitian government set free some political prisoners, slightly loosened its grip on the country's media, and permitted the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to enter Haiti for an investigation in 1978. According to Lionel Legros, the opposition movement in Haiti and in the United States perceived this process as a "valve opening," releasing some of the pressure from the dictatorship and giving political activists and opposition groups slightly more room to operate. Still, Legros also remembers that Haitian journalist and political dissident Jean Dominique advised his radio listeners to exercise caution, reminding them that "when the porridge is too hot you have to eat around the edge."²²⁵

To support the budding resistance movement that the slight opening in Haiti had created, Haitian activists launched a new phase of their campaign. By 1977 Benjamin Dupuy's Haitian Liberation Movement (MHL) claimed to have branches of the organization working both inside and outside Haiti. In May of that year, the interior front of the MHL obtained a confidential report of the World Bank that contained evidence that the Duvalier regime had siphoned off \$50 million of the total \$95 million in government revenue for fiscal year 1975. *Agence France Press* and *Haiti Observateur* published the report, prompting World Bank spokesmen to swiftly deny any knowledge of Duvalier's looting of public funds.²²⁶

Other groups also found ways to work with and to support the resistance movement inside Haiti. "For once the movement was not something that was going to be coming from the outside," Lionel Legros recalls. "We understood from our viewpoint that . . . things need to

²²⁵Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview; Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 19-199; Arthur and Dash, "Foreign Interventions," *Libete*, 212; Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 52.

²²⁶"MHL in the Interior," *Haiti Report*, Spring/Summer 1977, 1, 6.

change from within. So we encourage that kind of movement.” To do so, Legros and the other directors of *L’Ayisyen* used the radio show to promote the voice of Haiti’s domestic opposition movement, obtaining cassette tapes of Jean Dominique and other opposition journalists and playing them during their weekly radio program for the New York community.²²⁷

While the slight loosening of Duvalier’s control in the late 1970s did invigorate the resistance movement inside and outside Haiti, it did not stem the flow of refugees. The political and economic crises in Haiti were far too deep to stop the exodus with the sort of superficial changes engineered by the Haitian government in the period. As a result of the ongoing crises in Haiti, the flow of Haitian boat people traveling to US shores increased significantly in 1977. From November to the following July, fifty boats carrying more than one thousand people landed on the beaches of Florida, and each ensuing month hundreds more made the dangerous journey.²²⁸

In response to the intensifying refugee crisis and to counter Duvalier’s claims of liberalization, Haitian activists in the United States decided to stage a new March on Washington. In January 1977 activists in New York, working with partners in Montreal, formed the *Comite Haitien Organize pour Les Manifestations des Washington*, or CHOMAWASH, to carry out the action. To prepare for the march, which was to take place on April 4, CHOMAWASH established committees to handle the various aspects of the event and mobilization teams based in Miami, Newark, Boston, and Rockland County, New York. As in earlier campaign actions, *Haiti Observateur* provided critical support for the mobilization by

²²⁷Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

²²⁸Miller, *Plight of Haitian Refugees*, xii-xiii; Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 58.

offering its pages in support of the mobilization and fundraising effort.²²⁹ *Haiti Observateur* also presented readers with the aims of the march:

- 1) Protest against the plight of Haitian refugees, a great number of whom are jailed in Miami and in El Paso, Texas.
- 2) Protest against the recommendation of a State Department commission . . . that the Duvalier regime receive financial and military aid.
- 3) Protest against an insidious propaganda fed by some press organs and espoused by certain American officials alleging that the Jean-Claude Duvalier regime is liberalizing.
- 4) Denounce once more the continued violation of human rights and democratic freedoms in Haiti.
- 5) Protest against the tolerance shown by the Organization of American States (OAS) toward the hereditary regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier in violation of the OAS Charter which, among other things, stipulates that periodic elections be held.²³⁰

“Your participation in the march,” the editors told their readers, “will carry much weight in the present international climate where great emphasis is put on human rights.”²³¹

On the day of the march, Haitians and their American supporters, coming from New York, Miami, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Canada, and even Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, converged on Washington to march from the Capitol to the White House. The march was followed by a press conference at the Capital Hilton, where march organizers presented the findings of a sixteen-page white paper on human rights violations in Haiti, which they reported would be delivered to US Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young as well as to representatives of the Organization of American States and to the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The March on Washington, which three years earlier had drawn only 120 people, in

²²⁹Buchanan, *Scattered Seeds*, 268-70.

²³⁰“March on Washington,” *Haiti Observateur*, Mar. 11-18, 1977, 8.

²³¹“March on Washington,” *Haiti Observateur*.

1977 attracted more than 2,000, a turnout that was hailed by march organizers as a major success. “Twelve buses [and] more than 50 cars” had transported people to Washington, *Haiti Observateur* proudly proclaimed. The success of the event can also be gauged by the response of the Haitian government, which seemed to view the March on Washington as a substantial threat. On state-run radio, the Duvalier regime attempted to discredit the march by characterizing its organizers as enemies of the nation who were maneuvering to “get favor” from President Carter and the American government. Haitians in the United States also learned that the Duvalier regime intended to have its own demonstration outside the US embassy in Port-au-Prince, though it would have to bring in peasants from the countryside to pose as protesters.²³²

While the March on Washington demonstrated the growing strength of the joint refugee and anti-Duvalier campaign, it also stirred up conflict in the Haitian community of New York. The pro-Duvalier Haitian Unity Council opposed the March on Washington, warning Haitians that the event was really “an intervention in their country’s internal affairs under the pretense of defending ‘human rights,’” and urged the community not to be “manipulated” by the “‘worn out’ politicians” who were organizing the event. Instead of using the United States as a base to attack the Haitian government, the Haitian Unity Council argued, Haitians should be seeking to improve their country bit by bit. “To improve, add and gradually replace the bad by the good is our aspiration,” it claimed. And once again, seeking to differentiate itself from those groups that criticized the American government for its policy toward Haiti and the Haitian refugees, it reminded readers of its “satisfaction to have observed the practice of the principles upon which

²³²“2,000 Marched in Washington,” *Haiti Observateur*, Apr. 8-15, 1977, 4, 11; “12 Buses, More Than 50 Cars to the MARCH,” *Haiti Observateur*, Apr. 1-8, 1977, 4; Buchanan, *Scattered Seeds*, 269-70.

the American democracy rests,” particularly “the right of free speech” being exercised by its political opponents in Washington.²³³

Organizations on the Left also opposed the March on Washington, though their opposition stemmed from concern over the motives of some of the members of CHOMAWASH. The Haitian Liberation Movement (MHL) was one of the fiercest critics from the Left of the March on Washington movement. The “traditional sectors,” as the MHL called the former Haitian leaders and politicians that were now part of the opposition in exile, were political opportunists who were using the March on Washington in a maneuver to “replace the Duvalier dictatorship with their own dictatorship,” it claimed. The MHL also opposed the way the march framed its political appeal to the U.S. government. CHOMAWASH needed to do away with the “servile attitude” it had adopted toward the Carter administration. Both Republicans and Democrats, the MHL argued, were “the exploiters of the Haitian people” and responsible for “the economic plundering of resources and manpower of our country.” At the conclusion of its two-page explanation of why it was opposing the March on Washington, the MHL presented a graphic illustration of its interpretation of the march. Facing a grotesque image of a grinning Jimmy Carter was a small group of faceless, black figures carrying a sign reading, “Saint Carter . . . Save us!!!”²³⁴

Despite the ongoing divisions among Haitians in the United States, the refugee movement was gaining strength and starting to have an impact on policy. In November 1977, facing a lawsuit filed on behalf of the Haitian refugees by the National Council of Churches and

²³³“Haitian Marchers Demonstrate in Washington,” *Unite*, Apr. 30, 1977, 12; Buchanan, *Scattered Seeds*, 270; “12 Buses, More than 50 Cars to the MARCH,” *Haiti Observateur*, Apr. 1-8, 1977, 4.

²³⁴“Marche sur Washington? Ou Demarche a Washington?” *Mouvement Haitien de Liberation: L’alternative*, Mar. 5, 1977, 2-3.

its partner organization, the Haitian Refugee Center, and amid an expanding campaign by Haitians and their supporters, the INS finally agreed to release Haitians without bond, to issue work permits to the refugees, and to allow them full asylum hearings before an immigration judge. This was a major victory for Haitians in Miami and for the refugee campaign, striking a blow against the three greatest obstacles to the refugees' survival in the United States: imprisonment, unemployment, and deportation. "Prolonged legal action and pressures by religious, civil rights, social service agencies, trade unions, and community groups" were the forces that had accomplished this policy change, a NCC report observed.²³⁵ Though not all refugees in detention were freed immediately (the federal government continued to hold a group of sixty-five in an Everglades stockade because officials could not find friends or family to take them in), the policy change represented an exciting achievement for the refugee campaign.²³⁶

The hope created by the policy change did not last long, however. The initial relaxation of restrictions regarding the Haitians had come in the form of a settlement with the National Council of Churches and the Haitian Refugee Center, the plaintiffs in a lawsuit on behalf of the Haitian refugees. But political pressure from those opposed to a more inclusive policy as well as the apparent dissatisfaction by the INS over concessions it had been forced to make to the refugees and their advocates led the agency to reverse its policy in June 1978, revoking the opportunity for the refugees to receive work permits. Immigration officials argued that in fact the legal agreement with the NCC and the Haitian Refugee Center had only authorized work permits for Haitians with asylum requests already in process. And after this clarification, the

²³⁵“Document on Haitians Seeking Asylum,” National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Feb. 2, 1978, box 22, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²³⁶Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 215; “Haitian Refugees Win Chance for Work Permits,” *Miami Herald*, Nov. 9, 1977, 1-B; “U.S. Changes Refugee Policy, 900 Haitians to Get Hearing,” Jon Nordheimer, “Haitian Refugees’ Freedom Delayed for Lack of Quarters,” *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1977, 20.

INS began denying work permits to Haitians altogether. This change had serious consequences for Haitians like Evodise Lacroix, who had come to Florida in 1978, had obtained a work permit, and was working as a cook for a Miami Beach couple. Lacroix's job had enabled her to move herself and her five children into a \$195-a-month apartment. But with the change in policy, Evodise Lacroix lost her job; as a result, the family of six faced eviction. To make matters worse, the INS used the information provided by the four to five thousand Haitians that had applied for work permits after the apparent policy change to carry out deportation proceedings against them.²³⁷

One month after the INS revoked Haitians' work permits, the government began the Haitian Program, a plan to speed up the processing, immigration hearings, and deportation proceedings of the refugees. The Haitian Program was a response to the growing backlog of Haitian deportation cases, which by the spring of 1978 had reached 6,000 to 7,000, and hundreds of new refugees were arriving every month. The new program once again began detaining all Haitians upon arrival, and it threw deportation proceedings into overdrive, escalating the pace from 10 to 150 per day. With proceedings taking place at such a rapid rate, the likelihood of receiving a full and fair hearing was greatly diminished.²³⁸ In a virtual deportation assembly line, ill-prepared defense lawyers paraded their clients before judges, at which point they were sometimes presented with pre-signed forms denying them asylum. Judges shortened the allotted time to fill out the required I-589 asylum form and even carried out deportation hearings without entertaining asylum claims, a violation of the established process. With the initiation of

²³⁷Stepick, "Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement," 15-16; Bill Curry, "Haitian Immigrants Gain Victory on Work Permits, Blanket Revocation Held Violation of U.S. Procedures," *Washington Post*, July 31, 1979, A2; Miller, *Plight of Haitian Refugees*, 161-62; Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 215; Naomi Flink Zucker, "The Haitians Versus the United States: The Courts as Last Resort," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 467 (May 1983): 154-55.

²³⁸Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 215.

the Haitian Program, undocumented Haitians in Miami were once again threatened with immediate expulsion from the United States.²³⁹

The US government's reversal of its policy on work permits and the initiation of the Haitian Program stimulated further action by the refugees and their supporters. In particular, a growing number of African American leaders and organizations, driven by the belief that American officials treated Haitians differently (than, for example, Cuban refugees) because they were black, began to treat the fight for Haitian refugees as a civil rights issue. An April 1979 demonstration in Miami that drew 1,600 participants highlighted the fact that a growing number of African Americans from the Miami chapter of the NAACP were taking a leading role in mobilizing black Americans of South Florida around the Haitian issue.²⁴⁰ Vernon E. Jordan Jr., president of the National Urban League, issued a statement that pointed out that the Haitians were "clearly as much political refugees as were the Hungarians, the Cubans, and the Vietnamese" to whom the American government offered both asylum and resettlement assistance. "For [the Haitians] to be denied access to due process in the effort to prove their status raises the question of whether the color of their skin makes them somehow different in the eyes of our government."²⁴¹ Although INS Deputy Commissioner Mario Noto protested, "We resent any implications that these Haitians are being treated differently because of their color,"

²³⁹Dennis Williams et al., "Florida's Boat People," *Newsweek*, Apr. 2, 1979, 37; Stepick, "Structural Determinants of the Haitian Refugee Movement," 16-17; Ken I. Boodhoo, "The Problems of Haitian Refugees in the United States," in *Perspectives on Recent Refugees and Immigrant Waves into South Florida*, Occasional Papers Series, Dialogues #6 (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Aug. 1982), 27-29.

²⁴⁰"1600 personnes manifestent en faveur des refugies," *Haiti Observateur*, Apr. 27-May 4, 1979, 18, 20.

²⁴¹Press Release: National Urban League, June 22, 1978, box 28, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

critics refused to believe that race was not a factor in US policy toward the Haitians because of the much different reception of lighter-skinned Cuban refugees.²⁴²

While local and national civil rights organizations increasingly joined the refugee campaign at the end of the 1970s, the campaign's legal action continued. In the summer of 1979 the National Council of Churches and the Haitian Refugee Center maintained their legal challenge to the government's Haitian refugee policy and in July achieved another victory. While hundreds of people demonstrated in favor of the refugees outside a federal courthouse in Miami, District Court Judge William M. Hoeweler issued an injunction against immigration officials' most recent actions, ordering them to reinstate the work permits they had recently revoked. The ruling marked another significant, though short-lived, victory in the ongoing tug-of-war between the refugees and their supporters and the US government.²⁴³

By the end of the 1970s the campaign for the Haitian refugees had grown into a major movement, linking multiple communities in the United States and Canada and bringing together Haitian and American activists. By 1979 the refugee movement was also gaining much national attention. In May the *Washington Post* told readers that "the case of the Haitian Refugees has taken on a new impact." Haitians have "increased their marches and demonstrations in Miami, stepped up their criticism of the Haitian government and worked with their lawyers to wage a full-scale legal battle against deportation proceedings . . . In short," the *Post* reported, "they have started a new civil rights movement in South Florida."²⁴⁴

²⁴²Williams et al., "Florida's Boat People;" Carl Lindskoog, "Defending the Haitian Boat People: Origins and Development of a Movement," in *International Conference on Caribbean Studies: Selected Proceedings*, ed. Hector R. Romero (Austin: University of Texas-Pan American Press, 2007), 186-91.

²⁴³Clary, "Court Order Lets Haitians Work Again," *Miami Herald*, July 29, 1979, 1-B; Bryan O. Walsh, "Haitians in Miami," *Migration Today* 7, no. 4 (Sept. 1979), 43.

²⁴⁴Brown, "Haitians in America: Illegal Aliens or Political Refugees?"

While the focus of much of the activism was on South Florida as the place where most of the Haitian refugees were arriving and were being imprisoned, the center of the refugee campaign throughout the 1970s was New York. Leading this campaign in New York were the same activists who had reshaped Haitian politics in the city in the late 1960s, activists like Antoine Adrien and the Haitian Fathers and the radical young artists and musicians associated with *L'Ayisyen and Troupe Kouidor*. The coalition of activists leading the refugee campaign also included a prominent member of the old guard, Raymond Joseph, who brought a key tool to the movement, the Haitian weekly *Haiti Observateur*. These activists built a movement that simultaneously pushed for asylum for Haitian refugees and for the discontinuance of US support for Duvalier. Activists in the refugee campaign also managed to win broad backing from influential American religious, labor, and civil rights organizations, evidence that the refugee movement was gaining substantial momentum in the mid-1970s. Furthermore, the connections forged in these first years of the Haitian refugee campaign provided the foundation upon which further political action -- the defense of new waves of refugees and the support for political change in Haiti -- would take place.

Struggling for Survival: Life and Labor in Haitian Miami

Alongside the political campaign for freedom and asylum for the refugees grew the new Haitian community of South Florida. Haitian life in Miami centered in a neighborhood in the northeastern part of the city that in time came to be known as Little Haiti. Called Edison-Little River before the Haitians' arrival, the neighborhood had undergone major demographic and economic changes in the postwar years. Throughout the 1950s Edison-Little River, which sat adjacent to the more well-to-do bayside neighborhood of Buena Vista, was a stable, white,

working-class neighborhood with a small population of blacks living on the western edge of the community. In the 1960s, however, Edison-Little River began to change, the first stage in the transformation that would ultimately produce Little Haiti.²⁴⁵

Two new groups started settling in Edison-Little River in the 1960s. African Americans displaced by the demolition of their homes (a phase in the redevelopment campaign of the historic black neighborhood of Overtown) made their way to Edison-Little River. Other African Americans, uprooted by the construction of Interstate 95, were also forced to relocate in Edison-Little River and the surrounding neighborhoods of Brownsville and Liberty City. In addition, Cubans increasingly made their home in the neighborhood in the 1960s, joining the growing number of low-income blacks. White residents' response was to flee, leaving only the poorest and the most elderly whites in the neighborhood. Many businesses followed, taking with them the economic foundation of the community. The once mainly white neighborhood had become more than one-third Latin and black by 1970. By 1980, Edison-Little River had shifted further from the "tri-ethnic community" it had been a decade earlier to an area that had become 70 to 80 percent black.²⁴⁶

The addition of Haitians to Edison-Little River was a significant cause of the sizable increase of black residents throughout the 1970s. By the end of the decade, there were eight thousand Haitian households in the neighborhood, making Haitians 40 to 50 percent of the overall black population of Edison-Little River. Although the neighborhood was impoverished and crowded, the high concentration of blacks and Cubans made Edison-Little River more open

²⁴⁵Alex Stepick, *The Business Community of Little Haiti*, Occasional Papers Series, Dialogues 32 (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Feb. 1984), 8.

²⁴⁶Behavioral Science Research Institute, *Demography, Social Status, Housing and Social Needs of the Haitian Population of Edison-Little River* (Miami, FL: City of Miami, 1983), 1-3; Yetta Deckelbaum, "Little Haiti: The Evolution of a Community" (master's thesis, Florida Atlantic University, Aug. 1983), 45, 47; Stepick, *Business Community of Little Haiti*, 8.

to Haitians than many other Miami neighborhoods. Furthermore, the exodus of white residents and the accompanying capital flight in the 1960s and 1970s had lowered real estate values, making Edison-Little River one of the most affordable neighborhoods for Haitians arriving in the 1970s. With the Haitian population booming after 1977, Edison-Little River began the next stage in its metamorphosis. The landscape of the neighborhood began to reflect the emergence of Little Haiti. Notre Dame Academy, a Catholic girls' school and convent, became the *Notre Dame D'Haiti*. The Grace Methodist Church became *Eglise Baptiste Haitienne Emmenual*, and the formerly white, middle-class residential complex, the Sabal Palm Villas, became the Haitian Village. By the early 1980s, the Miami neighborhood of Little Haiti had become well known as the center of Haitian life in South Florida.²⁴⁷

The population growth of Little Haiti and the surrounding neighborhoods put pressure on an already troubled housing situation. One result was that Haitians arriving in the late 1970s and early 1980s were forced to pay high rental rates for the limited number of available units.²⁴⁸ To negotiate this difficult housing situation, Haitians shared apartments with friends and relatives. In addition to overcrowding and high rental costs, a large number of the newly arrived refugees cited vermin infestation as the worst housing problem they faced (54 percent in one group of fifty-four Haitians and 62 percent in another group of fifty-two). One-quarter to one-third

²⁴⁷Deckelbaum, "Little Haiti," 49, 57; *Demography, Social Status, Housing and Social Needs of the Haitian Population of Edison-Little River*, 3; Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 66; Stepick, *Business Community of Little Haiti*, 8.

²⁴⁸Metropolitan Dade County, *Social and Economic Problems among Cuban and Haitian Entrant Groups in Dade County, Florida*, executive summary section, no page no.; *Demography, Social Status, Housing and Social Needs of the Haitian Population of Edison-Little River*, summary section, no p. no.; "Haitians: Black Flotsam," *Economist* (London), Dec. 30, 1978, 23.

identified the poor condition of their housing as a major problem and roughly one in five claimed that the dangerous neighborhood was a problem for them in Miami.²⁴⁹

However, beyond the significant problems related to housing, an even greater problem for Haitians was employment or rather, unemployment. In a 1983 profile of the Haitian population living in the Edison-Little River area, the Miami Behavioral Science Research Institute reported that approximately one-third to one-half of Haitians able to work were unemployed.²⁵⁰ This estimate did not include the huge wave of Haitians that came during the Cuban-Haitian influx of 1980 (discussed below); for them, the unemployment level exceeded 50 percent. Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick placed the unemployment number at 58.5 percent among 1980 Haitian entrants and noted that Haitian women were disproportionately represented among the jobless. (Eighty percent of Haitian women among the 1980 entrants were unemployed as compared to one-third of Haitian men.)²⁵¹ Part of the problem, as identified by investigators from Metropolitan Dade County, was that Haitians arriving in 1980 were “poorly trained in job skills that are necessary for anything but the most rudimentary positions . . . [and they possessed] few marketable skills and little proficiency in English.”²⁵² It also didn’t help that the arrival of the 1980 Cubans and Haitians coincided with an economic recession, another likely

²⁴⁹Metropolitan Dade County, *Social and Economic Problems among Cuban and Haitian Entrant Groups in Dade County, Florida*, 47.

²⁵⁰This study contains conflicting evidence: page 17 reports an unemployment rate of 27 percent, but the study’s summary claims that half of Haitian workers were unemployed. Additionally, page 27 notes that 34 percent of heads of households were unemployed. Behavioral Science Research Institute, *Demography, Social Status, Housing and Social Needs of the Haitian Population of Edison-Little River*, summary section, 17, 27.

²⁵¹Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, “Unwelcome Immigrants: The Labor Market Experiences of 1980 (Mariel) Cuban and Haitian Refugees in South Florida,” *American Sociological Review* 50, no. 4 (Aug. 1985): 497-98. The specific percentages of male versus female unemployment rates come from Alex Stepick and Alejandro Portes, “Flight into Despair: A Profile of Recent Haitian Refugees in South Florida,” *International Migration Review* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 338.

²⁵²Metropolitan Dade County, *Social and Economic Problems among Cuban and Haitian Entrant Groups in Dade County, Florida*, executive summary section, no page no.

cause for the climbing unemployment rate throughout Miami. Unemployment in Dade County went from 6.3 percent in 1979 to 10.5 percent in July 1980, and even before that spike, in 1979 non-white Miamians (not counting Hispanics) were already disproportionately unemployed at 9.3 percent.²⁵³

Considering these unemployment levels among Miami Haitians, it is not surprising that two-thirds of those targeted in one 1982 study of the Haitian community reported “finding work” as their biggest problem in the United States.²⁵⁴ Still, these unemployment figures might not give an entirely accurate picture of the work experience of those Haitians that self-identified as “unemployed.” Many of these Haitians, this same study reports, were not unemployed but underemployed, working in the informal sector, doing small-scale work, or laboring on a temporary or job-by-job basis. Since many Haitians did not consider such short-term, seasonal, or informal work to be “having a job,” they described themselves as unemployed.²⁵⁵

With no clear division between unemployment and underemployment in the Haitian community, it is hard to tell how many Haitians could find no work at all. What is clear is that at least two-thirds of the Haitians in the workforce were either unemployed or underemployed. Underemployed Haitians were concentrated overwhelmingly in either the secondary sector or the informal sector: 84.2 percent of employed Haitians held a job in one of these two employment sectors in the early 1980s.²⁵⁶ Secondary sector employment in manufacturing consisted of working in small and medium-sized firms that were usually non-union, doing low-wage, labor-

²⁵³Latortue, Rocheleau, and Richman, *Haitian Migration and Haitian Economy*, 41-43.

²⁵⁴Alex Stepick et al., *Haitians in Miami: An Assessment of Their Background and Potential*, Occasional Papers Series, Dialogues 12 (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Dec. 1982), 5.

²⁵⁵Stepick et al., “Haitians in Miami,” 4.

²⁵⁶Portes and Stepick, “Unwelcome Immigrants,” 501.

intensive work, like operating a sewing machine in Miami's garment industry. Certain service jobs, including unskilled, low-wage positions in hotels and restaurants, were also considered to be secondary sector employment.²⁵⁷

The informal sector also relied upon low-wage, unskilled and semi-skilled labor, but it was even more remote than secondary sector employment was from regulatory, legitimizing institutions like the Department of Labor or the Internal Revenue Service. Informal operations typically held no business license, paid no taxes, and remained invisible to the governmental agencies responsible for regulating wages, hours, and workplace safety. Manufacturing workers in the informal sector worked in Miami sweatshops where, as in the garment industry, they might get paid by piecework rather than by hourly wage. Illegal employment existed in agricultural work, of course, as well as in service positions in restaurants, hotels, and homes. Carpenters, auto mechanics, laborers, farm workers, cooks, maids, factory workers, self-employed street vendors, and many other positions represented typical jobs in Miami's informal sector.²⁵⁸

Even though there was no well-developed informal sector for them to fit into when the Haitians arrived in Miami in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the large number of both Haitians and Cubans who arrived in 1980 were able to find work in the informal economy and so contributed significantly to its development. With unemployment on the rise city-wide and a large pool of undocumented and desperate refugees looking for work, the sweatshop-driven garment industry flourished, restaurants and hotels increasingly staffed positions through "under-the-counter hiring," and the construction industry shifted to labor provided by the informal

²⁵⁷ Alex Stepick, *Haitians Released from Krome: Their Prospects for Adaptation and Integration in South Florida*, Occasional Papers Series, Dialogues 24 (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Mar. 2, 1984), 15-16.

²⁵⁸ Stepick, "Haitians Released from Krome," 15-16.

sector, which allowed construction companies to go non-union. As a result, unionized labor in Miami construction starts decreased from 90 percent to less than 10 percent in 1985.²⁵⁹

Haitians' concentration in secondary and informal sector manufacturing and service jobs meant that most worked non-union jobs for low wages. One study of the Haitian community in the early 1980s reported that 76.9 percent of Haitians had no union at work, though 19.2 percent of Haitians in the sample were unionized.²⁶⁰ In addition, Haitian workers received low wages. The Miami Behavioral Science Research Institute found that only 12 percent of Haitian heads of households earned more than \$200 per week, 21 percent earned \$150 to \$199 per week, 32 percent earned \$100 to \$149 per week, and a full 35 percent earned less than \$99 per week.²⁶¹ According to these figures, almost 90 percent of Haitian heads of households earned less than \$10,400 per year (\$23,500 in 2011) with the bottom 65 percent earning less than \$7,748 (\$17,500 in 2011) per year, and the bottom third earning less than \$5,148 (\$11,600 in 2011) annually. But even these calculations may overestimate the annual income of employed heads of households since the majority of Haitians employed in the secondary and informal sectors spent many weeks and months of the year unemployed (in the traditional sense).²⁶² In their profile of the South Florida Haitian community in the early 1980s, Alex Stepick and Alejandro Portes put the median annual income among employed Haitians at just over \$6700 (\$15,100 in 2011).²⁶³

²⁵⁹Portes and Stepick, "Unwelcome Immigrants," 511.

²⁶⁰Stepick et al., "Haitians in Miami," 14.

²⁶¹Behavioral Science Research Institute, *Demography, Social Status, Housing and Social Needs of the Haitian Population of Edison-Little River*, 31.

²⁶²For example, Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick found that Haitians arriving in 1980 spent an average of twenty-five weeks a year fully unemployed. Portes and Stepick, "Unwelcome Immigrants," 497-98.

²⁶³Stepick and Portes, "Flight into Despair," 340. These figures were obtained by multiplying the 1983 amount by the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index from 1977 to 2011. See <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/>

Even when they combined their earnings with those of other family members or housemates, Haitian workers rarely made enough to escape poverty. Portes and Stepick found that 61 percent of Haitian families arriving in 1980 lived below the poverty line with almost as many families in the broader Miami Haitian community in poverty. Such a high poverty rate reveals that the Miami Haitian community was significantly worse off than Haitians in other parts of the state and the country in the same period. The estimated median annual income of \$6700 for Miami Haitians was only two-thirds of Haitian incomes in other parts of Florida in 1980 and less than half of the median annual income of Haitians nationwide. Similarly, while nearly 60 percent of Haitian families in Miami lived below the poverty line, only 40 percent of Haitian households in other parts of the state and 25 percent nationwide lived in poverty.²⁶⁴

Facing such a difficult life in Miami, Haitians relied on social services and support from organizations like the Haitian Catholic Center to find work and housing, to learn English, and to receive childcare. In addition, new arrivals turned to family and friends already embedded in the social networks of the Miami community. These social networks provided critical assistance in finding jobs and housing in the city. Family and friends also provided transportation, child care and other essential types of assistance for their newly arrived kin. Financial support (through individual loans, in addition to those available from community credit associations) and emotional support made kinship networks indispensable to new refugees.²⁶⁵ And the support of Haitians for their friends and family was not limited to additions to the Miami community but extended to family who remained in Haiti. Despite poverty wages and miniscule household

²⁶⁴Portes and Stepick, "Unwelcome Immigrants," 497-98; Stepick and Portes, "Flight into Despair," 340.

²⁶⁵Stepick and Portes, "Flight into Despair," 339; Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 15, 20.

incomes, one study reported that 79 percent of Miami Haitians continued to send money to relatives back home.²⁶⁶

But even with the support of friends and family, Haitians struggled to survive in a city where they saw discrimination wherever they turned. Examining Haitian refugees' perception of discrimination, Dade County officials reported that Haitians felt most discriminated against in the areas of employment (hiring and wages) and housing. Half of the refugees in one group reported experiencing discrimination when looking for employment.²⁶⁷ What's more, Haitians perceived discrimination from all Americans, not just white Americans. For those Haitians with sufficient exposure to non-Haitians to have a basis for judgment, 39 percent reported discrimination from black Americans with only slightly more reporting discrimination from white Americans (41.4 percent).²⁶⁸

Native born Miamians' hostility toward the Haitians stemmed from anxiety about their place in a city fraught with ethnic and racial tension. Many saw the Haitians as yet another faction that would compete for power, jobs, and resources and further destabilize and divide the already fractious city. Many of Miami's white Americans feared the growing number and power of the city's Cubans and did not welcome another non-American and non-white group to the city. At the same time, many black Americans in Miami already felt themselves to be third-class citizens in this historically white-dominated and more recently, immigrant-dominated city. Adding another immigrant group to the mix, many native-born blacks feared, would only lessen their chances for advancement. A tuberculosis scare that swept Miami in the late 1970s gave

²⁶⁶Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 73-74; Behavioral Science Research Institute, *Demography, Social Status, Housing and Social Needs of the Haitian Population of Edison-Little River*, 25.

²⁶⁷Metropolitan Dade County, *Social and Economic Problems among Cuban and Haitian Entrant Groups in Dade County, Florida*, 58, table 24.

²⁶⁸Stepick, *Haitians Released from Krome*, 26.

native-born residents further reason to fear the growing Haitian population. Rumors flew around the city that the growing population of newly arrived Haitians carried tuberculosis and would spread the disease. Business owners quickly fired the Haitians they had hired to work in their restaurants and hotels, magnifying the image of Haitians as disease-ridden and dangerous.²⁶⁹

But conflict and mistreatment of Haitians on the job existed well before the tuberculosis scare. As early as 1975 the *New York Times* reported that “tales of exploitation are common” among Haitians: “a man promised \$8 a day wages for farm work drives off with a truckload of Haitians who later report they are paid almost nothing.”²⁷⁰ As soon as they began offering legal services, organizations serving the Haitian community were flooded with complaints from Haitian workers that they had been underpaid or not paid at all, that they had gone up to a month working in a local factory without being paid, or that they had been fired just before they became eligible for vacation.²⁷¹

As at work, in school young Haitians encountered discrimination. In his study of a high school sitting on the border between Little Haiti and the neighborhood of Liberty City, a predominantly African American neighborhood, Alex Stepick found that “students severely ridiculed and beat up anyone who looked Haitian or spoke Creole or accented English. African American students mocked newly arrived Haitian boys for playing soccer instead of football and basketball.” In periods of the most extreme anti-Haitian discrimination, this sort of treatment led many young people to try to cover up their Haitian origins and to pass as African American.²⁷²

²⁶⁹Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 34-35; Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 58.

²⁷⁰Blau, “Haitians in Miami Enmeshed in Job Conflict,” 29.

²⁷¹Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 43.

²⁷²Alex Sepick et al., *This Land Is Our Land: Immigrants and Power in Miami* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 117-21.

For Haitians in Miami in the 1970s and early 1980s, life was difficult. Poor housing and working conditions, unemployment and underemployment, low wages, poverty, and discrimination were everyday challenges. And added to this was the fear of arrest and deportation. At the end of the 1970s, life in Miami was for most Haitians a precarious existence.

1980: A Moment of Crisis and Advance

In 1980 the current of Haitian boat people flowing to Miami surged. As has already been observed, in March alone 1,366 Haitians arrived in Florida and 326 arrived in a single day in April.²⁷³ By the time the flood of refugees slowed, as many as 30,000 more Haitians had settled in South Florida. In the same year 130,000 Cuban refugees also arrived in Miami, a parallel migration that had a tremendous impact on local and national politics and assisted the asylum campaign in winning some consequential legal and political victories.²⁷⁴ In the history of Haitians in the United States, 1980 was a signal year.

Part of what set the stage for the massive influx of Haitian and Cuban refugees was the passage of a new piece of legislation that raised the cap on refugee admissions, more than doubling the number allowed in the country, and that redefined the category of refugee to include “anyone who had a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion in their home nation.” This change was designed to bring US refugee law in line with international standards as determined by the United Nations Protocol and Convention on Refugees. It was also an attempt to placate Haitian asylum activists and others who repeatedly objected to US refugee policy for its bias in favor of

²⁷³Nordheimer, “Illegal Flow of Haitians to Florida Coasts Rising;” “Haitian Refugee Tide at Peak;” “35 Haitians Arrive, Two Drown;” “Most Haitians Ever in 1 Day Reach Florida in Four Boats.”

²⁷⁴Charles, “Political Refugees or Economic Immigrants?,” 195-96.

those fleeing communist countries and against those escaping nations controlled by US allies. Although the Refugee Act of 1980 did away with the preference given to those fleeing communist countries in the law, this preference continued in policy.²⁷⁵

In the spring of 1980, under pressure from tens of thousands clamoring to leave Cuba, President Fidel Castro authorized their exit, dismissing the would-be refugees as “the scum of the country.” This opening created a mass exodus of Cubans to the United States, most of whom traveled through the port of Mariel, which earned them the nickname *marielitos*. The Carter administration’s initial response toward the new refugees might best be characterized as ambivalent. Ronald Copeland, a staff member working for the US coordinator for refugee affairs when the Cuban refugee crisis occurred, explained that the administration was “uncertain whether to exploit the boatlift because it offered a propaganda edge over Cuban Premier Fidel Castro or to discourage it because it presented an unlawful and unmanageable situation for the government.” Thus, the US government initially withheld refugee status for the Cuban *marielitos* but allowed their entry.²⁷⁶ However, the local response to the Cuban refugees seemed less ambivalent as officials mobilized to receive them. Florida Governor Bob Graham declared a state of emergency. Centers to process and assist the refugees were erected around Miami. The city’s football stadium was converted to a massive processing and aid center. Ultimately President Carter lifted the cap on refugees just established by the new refugee law to accommodate the *marielitos*. “We’ll continue to provide an open heart and open arms to refugees seeking freedom from Communist domination and from the economic deprivation

²⁷⁵Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 217; Stepick, “Structural Determinants of Haitian Refugees,” 7, 14; Zucher, “The Haitians Versus the United States,” 153.

²⁷⁶Ronald Copeland, “The Cuban Boatlift of 1980: Strategies in Federal Crisis Management,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 467 (May 1983), 139, 145-46.

brought about by Fidel Castro and his government,” Carter proclaimed.²⁷⁷

Thousands of Haitians were also seeking refuge in Miami each month in the spring of 1980, and with US expansion of its refugee definition, Haitians wanted to know if immigration officials and the Carter administration were prepared to give the Haitians as warm a welcome as they were giving to the Cuban *marielitos*. To press their case, in May, Haitian activists returned to Washington to stage a protest outside the White House. Building on the momentum of the growing asylum campaign, members of the refugee movement sought to take advantage of this exceptional moment when the president of the United States was ignoring the just established limits on refugee admission and was calling America “a country of refugees.”²⁷⁸ If the United States was willing to embrace those fleeing “Communist domination and . . . economic deprivation brought about by Fidel Castro and his government,” what about those fleeing violence and economic ruin in Haiti? Antoine Adrien of the Haitian Fathers, one of the organizers of the May demonstration in front of the White House, explained the movement’s indignation at the ongoing exclusion of Haitians. “For eight years, 13,000 Haitians have been knocking at America’s door. Within 10 days, 25,000 Cubans have arrived and have been granted everything. We simply cannot understand Mr. Carter.”²⁷⁹

As in Washington, in Miami the refugee campaign was elevating its profile, in part through support from an increasingly diverse set of city leaders. In March 1980 the Puerto Rican mayor of Miami, Maurice Ferre, sent an urgent telegram to President Carter, enjoining him to instruct his attorney general to “exercise his parole authority to grant group refugee status –

²⁷⁷Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 218-19.

²⁷⁸Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 219.

²⁷⁹“Angry Haitians Protest U.S. Refugee Response,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 1980.

political asylum to South Florida's approximately 10,000 Haitian refugees [emphasis in the original].” Carter needed to listen to the voices of “black, Hispanic, religious, and political leaders [that] have each called forcefully for political asylum,” Ferre insisted, citing “uncontradicted, massive evidence presented before U.S. District Court, the Organization of American States, the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy and U.S. Congress [that] confirms Haitians are ‘political’ not ‘economic’ refugees subject to *severe persecution* – imprisonment and even death – upon deportation.” Ferre’s statement also revealed concern over the economic impact of ten thousand undocumented Haitians, unable to work legally in the city: “*starvation* is now the primary health problem in the local South Florida Haitian community.” Ferre argued that “*political asylum is the only practical and moral solution to these problems.*”²⁸⁰ A statement issued by Lucrezia Granda, president of the YWCA of Greater Miami and Dade County and executive committee member of the Spanish-American League against Discrimination, also shows that some Cubans backed the Haitians’ bid for asylum and illuminates their motives in doing so:

As a Cuban who has been through the process of being a political exile myself, I have the most profound sympathy for the unfortunate situation of the Haitian refugees. It is the tradition of the United States to receive and welcome refugees in flight from persecution—political refugees – and in accord with this excellent tradition, the Haitians should be granted political asylum. They should, quite simply, be treated in the same manner in which other groups of refugees, including but not limited to the Cuban refugees, have been treated.²⁸¹

The Haitian refugee campaign also continued to cultivate its growing partnership with African American leaders and organizations. Less than a year earlier, the *Washington Post* had reported that Haitians and their black American allies were forging “a new civil rights

²⁸⁰Telegram to President Jimmy Carter from Mayor Maurice Ferre, Mar. 19, 1980, box 32, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²⁸¹Statement of Lucrezia Granda, n.d., box 32, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

movement” in South Florida. As the campaign escalated in the spring of 1980, it continued to receive support from leading African Americans. In mid-April, Vernon Jordan Jr., president of the National Urban League, sent a telegram to the White House urging President Carter to “move immediately to exercise your emergency powers to grant political refugee status to the thousands of Haitians who have arrived and will continue to arrive in this country in flight from their native land.”²⁸² At the same time, Jesse Jackson arrived in Miami to support the Haitians’ cause. On two consecutive days of protest, more than 1,000 people jammed the streets of Miami to call for asylum for the Haitian boat people, of whom a record 975 had arrived in the previous ten days. Continuing to capitalize on a racial explanation for the refugee crisis that brought Haitians and black Americans together, Jackson told a crowd of 1,100 people gathered at the Mount Zion Baptist Church that US policy toward the Haitians was not determined by “politics or economics . . . [T]he distinction is whether you’re black or whether you’re white.” The gathering also sang “We Shall Overcome,” a program choice that would have carried more meaning for the African Americans in attendance than for the Haitians.²⁸³

In the spring of 1980, the refugee campaign wasn’t the only thing animating black residents of Miami. In an extraordinary confluence of events, the mass arrival of Cuban and Haitian refugees in Miami occurred just as another event was about to enflame racial and ethnic tensions in an already divided city. On May 17, jury members delivered a verdict in the trial of four Miami police officers charged with the death of Arthur McDuffie, a thirty-three-year-old black insurance agent who five months earlier had been chased, arrested, and brutally beaten to death after he had rolled through a red light and allegedly had made “an obscene gesture” toward

²⁸²Telegram to President Jimmy Carter from Vernon E. Jordan Jr., Apr. 17, 1980, box 32, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

²⁸³“Jackson Says He’ll Plead Haitians’ Case,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 21, 1980, Domestic News.

nearby police. The four police officers were declared not guilty and acquitted of all charges. With black unemployment at 17 percent (double the rate of white unemployment), and with anger growing over incident after incident of police abuse, the police officers' acquittal was the last straw for black Americans in Miami. In several days of violence and destruction, black Miamians unleashed their rage on the city. When the "McDuffie riots" were finally over, eighteen people were dead and rioters had caused millions of dollars of damage.²⁸⁴

Black Americans cited the privileged status of Cubans and the unequal treatment of Haitians in comparison as part of what triggered their uprising. Wellington Rolle, a community activist in Miami, explained how he thought the Cubans contributed to black marginalization. "We are third-class citizens in our own country," he said. "At least in other cities blacks are second class. But here, we're not even up to that." James McQueen, a black attorney in Miami, agreed. "The Cubans have been given everything by the government. But the Haitians have been shuttled off to jails and detention centers, denied the right to work, and treated like trash. Black people here see that, and they figure that the only reason Haitians get that kind of treatment is because they're black, too. The people know it's not fair."²⁸⁵

In the wake of the "McDuffie Riots," Haitians and black Americans continued to find common cause. When President Jimmy Carter visited Miami less than two months after the riot, Haitians joined black and white Americans for a protest organized by the Miami Coalition for Racial Justice. Chanting in English and Creole, the group called on Carter to increase assistance to the city beyond the \$71 million pledged for federal aid for riot recovery. Members of the

²⁸⁴"The Miami Riot," *Washington Post*, May 20, 1980; "Smoke signals from Miami" *Economist*, May 24, 1980, 35; Stephen C. Smith, "Two Groups of Demonstrators Greet Carter" *Associated Press*, July 5, 1980; Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 219-20; Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 43-44.

²⁸⁵Warren Brown, "Black Miami's Voices; Black Miami: Stories of Hatred and Love; Deep Undercurrents of Despair, Racial Hatred--and Love," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1980.

group linked the problems facing Haitians and black Americans. "We need political asylum for Haitians. We need jobs for blacks," declared Christian Louis, a twenty-year-old Haitian refugee. The Miami Coalition also criticized the NAACP for choosing to hold its national convention in Miami after the May riots had exposed the racial injustice of the city.²⁸⁶

The Haitian refugee movement also continued to receive support from African American leaders in Washington, another valuable tool in the campaign to pressure the Carter administration into a policy change. In an "Open Letter to the Haitian Community," Shirley Chisholm, the chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus's Task Force on Haitian Refugees, castigated President Carter for failing to grant Haitians refugee status by the May 15 deadline "when his power to parole the Haitians into the U.S. as political refugees expired." According to Chisholm,

The President's inaction is only a further indication of the discriminatory treatment his administration has directed toward the Haitians in stark contrast to the hospitality shown other refugees. Further, the connection between the racist treatment of the Haitians and this government's lack of concern for the injustices suffered by Black Americans is clear and of tragic proportions.²⁸⁷

With the May 15 deadline past, "only new legislation can now give the Haitians currently in the U.S. political refugee status," Chisholm explained. "The Black Caucus is committed to obtaining political refugee status for Haitians," she argued, since "we believe as a matter of principle that Haitians are as deserving of political refugee status as persons from Cuba, Indo-

²⁸⁶ "Two Groups of Demonstrators Greet Carter."

²⁸⁷ "Open Letter to the Haitian Community," *Haiti Observateur*, May 30-June 6, 1980, 9.

China or the Soviet Union.”²⁸⁸ Chisholm also demonstrated her support for the movement by attending a demonstration in New York that drew more than one thousand people.²⁸⁹

Under pressure from Haitian and African American communities, confronted with the contradiction between the treatment of the Cuban refugees and that of the Haitians, and heading toward the homestretch of his presidential reelection campaign, President Carter agreed to a policy change. In June 1980 Carter formed a Cuban-Haitian Task Force, which linked policies governing the two groups of refugees and created a new “Cuban-Haitian entrant” status for those who arrived in the spring’s flood of refugees. Equalizing their status gave both Cuban and Haitian “entrants” access to federal benefits, resources for resettlement and training, the ability to receive medical and financial support, and the ever critical right to work.²⁹⁰ While some in the Haitian community dismissed Carter’s action as a “wishy-washy policy” that aimed “to avoid upsetting any voting constituency before the November elections” and while the action applied to a limited number of refugees – only those arriving before June 19, 1980, were eligible for “entrant” status, the creation of the Cuban-Haitian entrant program was nonetheless a crucial step forward for the asylum campaign for Haitian refugees.²⁹¹

Carter’s creation of the Cuban-Haitian entrant program was also the administration’s effort to prepare for a much anticipated legal ruling on the status of the Haitian refugees that was expected later that summer. In *Haitian Refugee Center v. Civiletti*, refugee advocates challenged the legality of the Haitian Program, the government’s measure that aimed at dispatching the

²⁸⁸“Open Letter to the Haitian Community.”

²⁸⁹“Pres de 1000 manifestants solidarisent avec les refugies Haitiens a New York,” *Haiti Observateur*, vol. 10 no. 19, 1, 8.

²⁹⁰Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 81; Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat?,” 192-93; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, “Establishment of Haitian Transnational Social Fields,” 201.

²⁹¹“The Refugee Problem Continues,” *Haiti Report*, Fall 1980, 7.

growing backlog of Haitian asylum cases by accelerating hearings and deportation proceedings.

Attorneys from the Haitian Refugee Center and the National Center for Immigrants Rights

claimed the US government was guilty of

systematic violation of regulation in the attempt to rush the Haitians through asylum and deportation hearings, deprivation of counsel by mass scheduling of asylum interviews and deportation hearings, failure to inform the Haitians of their right to counsel and remain silent before interrogation [as well as] failure to maintain prior asylum decisions [and] incarcerations of Haitians who asserted their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.²⁹²

In July 1979 District Court Judge William M. Hoeverler had issued a restraining order

temporarily halting the Haitian Program. Now, in July of 1980, Judge James L. King was

prepared to issue a ruling in *Haitian Refugee Center v. Civiletti*.²⁹³

When Judge King's ruling finally was delivered, it was a major victory for the Haitian refugees. The government's treatment of the Haitians revealed a "pattern of discrimination," the court ruled. "Much of the evidence is both shocking and brutal, populated by the ghosts of individual Haitians – including those who have been returned from the U.S. – who have been beaten, tortured and left to die in Haitian prisons." This "callous" policy toward the Haitians, Judge King ruled, ignored the truth that Haitians' "economic situation is a political condition The manner in which INS treated the more than 4,000 Haitian plaintiffs violated the Constitution, the immigration statues, international agreements, INS regulations and INS operating procedures. It must stop," ruled Judge King. Based on this conclusion, the court halted Haitian deportations and ordered the INS to initiate hearings to revisit the Haitian cases

²⁹²“Immigration Law Bulletin,” *Migration Today* 7, no.4 (Sept.1979), 18.

²⁹³Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 81.

that had received less than fair treatment.²⁹⁴ Following Judge King's ruling, the legal system continued to favor the refugees when in October another federal court ruling restored Haitians' right to work in Florida.²⁹⁵

By the fall things looked hopeful for Haitian refugees and their advocates. The new refugee law, the growing backing for the refugee campaign, Carter's move to equalize Cuban and Haitian entrants, and especially the movement's legal victories further established that the cause of Haitian refugees had grown into a formidable social and political movement. Assessing the state of the campaign for the Haitian refugees in September 1980, Phillip Buskirk of the American Friends Service Committee observed,

Led by the Congressional Black Caucus, National Council of Churches, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Archbishop of Miami – and backed by most of the Florida Congressional delegation, many national denominations, the Dade County Commission, the Greater Miami Jewish Federation – and groups throughout the country, “Asylum for Haitian Refugees” has become a movement of some power.²⁹⁶

At the same time, there were signs that the international opposition to Duvalier was becoming increasingly coordinated. In May 1980 activists representing Haitian exile organizations throughout the Americas, including organizations in New York, Miami, Canada, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, met in Mexico City to plan the “First Inter-Continental Conference of Solidarity with Haiti,” calling upon “Haitians of all countries, including those born abroad . . . to

²⁹⁴Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 103; Stepick, “Structural Determinants of Haitian Refugee Movement,” 16-18; Boodhoo, “Problems of Haitian Refugees in the United States,” 30; King quoted in Miller, *Plight of Haitian Refugees*, 87; Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 175-76.

²⁹⁵Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 220.

²⁹⁶“Haitian Refugee Update,” internal document from P. Buskirk, AFSC, Sept. 26, 1980, box 23, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

hold hands, think together, combine our forces and work as one body toward the liberation of our dear mother country.”²⁹⁷

If in the spring of 1980 the refugee campaign and the anti-Duvalier opposition in exile seemed to be gathering real strength, it was the result of the activism of the past decade that had brought the related movements to that point. In the 1970s a refugee crisis had reshaped the terrain of Haitian politics in the United States and had drawn many of the leading activists in New York into the campaign to obtain refuge for those fleeing Haiti. In the course of the campaign, these activists put together a broad coalition of religious, labor, and civil rights organizations. Though committed to defending their compatriots from what they saw as abuse by the US government, activists in New York and the developing Haitian community of Miami also recognized the refugee movement as a useful political tool to press for political change in Haiti. This recognition was the beginning of the movement that treated refugee rights in the United States and political change in Haiti as intertwined parts of a single political movement. From 1976 to 1980, activists in New York and Miami strengthened their ties through their cooperation in the refugee movement; at the same time, a slight political opening that coincided with the Carter presidency allowed increased action by anti-Duvalier activists in Haiti and an accompanying strengthening of ties between movement activists in Haiti and in the United States. A movement that would connect New York, Miami, and Haiti was beginning to form.

Just as the plight of the Haitian refugees in the 1970s had given Haitian activists in the United States new opportunities for political action, the refugee crisis of 1980 gave them the opportunity to highlight the disparity between the US government’s treatment of Cuban and Haitian refugees and, in the process, to continue to cultivate support from black Americans,

²⁹⁷“Statement on Solidarity with Peoples Struggling for Independence,” May 24, 1980, box 22, folder 15, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

many of whom joined forces with the Haitians in response to what they saw as racist and discriminatory policies at both the local and the federal levels. In 1980 the refugee movement achieved some significant legislative and legal victories. Along with the burgeoning resistance movement that was developing in Haiti and that was supported by the Haitian communities in the United States, a new day seemed finally to be dawning for Haitians.

Chapter 3

Building the Opposition, Uprooting the Dictator: Resistance and Revolution in New York, Miami, and Haiti, 1980-1986

On the morning of Sunday, November 30, 1980, the streets of Port-au-Prince were unusually quiet: “deserted,” in fact, according to one report. The government was arresting political dissidents, people said. Haitians listening to Radio Haiti-Inter, the station featuring the popular opposition journalist Jean Dominique, had heard reports that Dominique had disappeared at 11 a.m. the previous Friday and that the Haiti-Inter’s station manager, Richard Brisson, had been arrested hours later. After Radio Haiti-Inter began reporting on the disappearance of Dominique and the arrest of Brisson, the Haitian military arrived and arrested everyone in the building. This time listeners heard no report of the arrests since there was no one left to deliver the information. The album that was playing at the time simply came to an end; for forty-five minutes listeners heard the eerie sound of a record spinning, until the station went off the air. Though there were few other official reports of the wave of arrests sweeping Port-au-Prince that weekend, word of the crackdown spread quickly by word of mouth. The opening for opposition activity that had developed in the late 1970s, best symbolized by the outspoken criticism of the Duvalier regime by radio journalists like Jean Dominique, was over, it seemed. And since no one knew how extensive the government’s crackdown would be, it was best to stay indoors for the time being.²⁹⁸

The Arrival of Reagan: “the Dance is Over”

On November 4, 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected president of the United States, an election that was to have a substantial impact in Haiti. When it came to Haiti’s economic

²⁹⁸“Haitians Stay Indoors to Avoid Arrest,” *United Press International*, Nov. 30, 1980, AM cycle; Jo Thomas, “Haiti, Facing Economic Crisis Arrests Major Critics,” *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1980.

program, the Reagan administration maintained the policy the United States had had since the late 1960s, still promoting agricultural production and manufacturing for export. But Reagan's economic vision for Haiti's total international orientation and economic liberalization was more extreme than his predecessors', and he pursued initiatives to fulfill this vision in Haiti and throughout the Caribbean. The major tool Reagan used to advance this program in Haiti and the Caribbean was the Caribbean Basin Initiative of 1980.

The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) aimed to promote foreign investment in countries like Haiti, to increase international trade between the United States and the Caribbean, and to overhaul Caribbean nations' economies in the neoliberal model, stripping import substitution industries and other state-subsidized operations, to promote production for export, and to dismantle the public sector.²⁹⁹ To encourage Caribbean nations to increase the flow of trade to the United States, the CBI offered duty-free access to American markets. To foreign investors, the CBI granted tax and tariff exemptions as part of its creation of Caribbean Free Trade Zones throughout the region. The United States also sponsored "investment opportunity missions" to promote foreign investment, according to the CBI plan. And Haiti, American planners argued, was a perfect model for the potential of investment and neoliberal adjustment that the initiative advertised: the structural transformation that moved Haiti toward export-oriented agriculture and the assembly industry was already well under way, Haiti had an abundant supply of impoverished people, giving it a substantial "comparative advantage" in the form of cheap labor, and it was ruled by an anti-communist strongman who ensured a pro-business environment and political stability in the country.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 26.

³⁰⁰Karen E. Richman, "They Will Remember Me in the House: The Pwen of Haitian Transnational Migration" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1992), 39-40; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 71-74.

International agencies also partnered with the US government to promote the CBI vision for Haiti. In November 1981 the World Bank, working with the United States Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank, created the Ad-Hoc Subgroup on Haiti, an organization with the goal of increasing foreign investment in Haiti and of speeding the country down the path toward privatization. In the same month the Overseas Private Investment Corporation sponsored an “investment opportunity mission,” which brought the representatives of twenty US-based corporations to the country. The National Office for Promotion of Investments, joining the effort to paint Haiti as an ideal place for foreign investment, reminded corporate representatives that in Haiti “strikes are almost unheard of, and trade unions . . . are of little importance in the manufacturing industry.” Florida Governor Bob Graham even pitched foreign investment in Haiti as a potential solution to the refugee crisis in Florida, claiming that the sort of economic development promised by the CBI and the Ad-Hoc Subgroup on Haiti might be the key to stemming the flood of refugees to US shores.³⁰¹

While the Reagan administration’s initiatives under the CBI did succeed in carving out a greater portion of Haiti for foreign investment, it did not substantially improve the lives of ordinary Haitians nor did it fulfill Governor Graham’s hopes for a solution to the refugee crisis. In fact, the increased foreign investment and international orientation merely intensified the push factors that had been forcing Haitians to flee the country since the early 1970s.

The election of Reagan and the departure of Carter also invited a change in the political orientation of the Duvalier regime, another factor that had major implications for the flow of Haitians attempting to reach the United States. Highly critical of the Carter administration’s

³⁰¹Richman, “They Will Remember Me in the House,” 39-40; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 71-74, 147-49; Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 26.

attempts to employ the principle of human rights in its policy toward Latin America and the world, the Reagan administration pledged to get tough on leftist governments and to reinstitute support for the United States' anti-communist allies. In the Western Hemisphere the administration's primary focus was on Central America, where Reagan sought to reverse the revolution in Nicaragua by helping to strengthen the right-wing forces in neighboring El Salvador as well as in Guatemala. "Central America was a gauge of the United States' global position," Odd Arne Westad observes. "If it failed there, the Cold War in the Third World was lost."³⁰² President Reagan, in a meeting with Cuban-American leaders, put it this way: "Central America and the Caribbean are of utmost strategic importance to the United States. If we don't give friends so close to home the means to defend themselves against Soviet-supported insurgents, who will trust us anywhere in the world, especially in the Middle East and Europe?"³⁰³ American officials had also been warily monitoring other developments in the Caribbean, such as the ascendance for a period in the 1970s of the left-leaning People's National Party in Jamaica and the seizing of power by radical leaders in Grenada in 1979.³⁰⁴

Reagan's commitment to roll back the Nicaraguan revolution and the broader leftward tilt in the region, and his repudiation of Carter's human rights-oriented foreign policy had a major impact on Latin America and the Caribbean; Haiti was no exception. With Reagan's election, the slight opening the opposition movement had experienced during the Carter years slammed

³⁰²Westad, *Global Cold War*, 338-39.

³⁰³Document 511, "Statement by President Reagan at a meeting with Cuban-American leaders, March 19, 1984 (extract)," *American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1984*, (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1986), 1045.

³⁰⁴Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 198-99.

shut. As Daniel Huttinot recalls, “Carter loses, Reagan comes, and the Haitian government says, ‘The dance is over’.”³⁰⁵

At the end of November, just weeks after Reagan won the presidency, Duvalier unleashed a massive crackdown on opposition organizations and the independent press. Announcing that it was responding to a “communist plot,” part of which was being advanced by “two Cuban agents” who, it reported, had been arrested, the Haitian government attacked and arrested opposition figures and forced a new wave of political exiles to flee Haiti for safe haven abroad. The *Centre Autonome des Travailleurs Haitien* (CATH), a leading Haitian labor union that had been rebuilding, came again under attack and CATH leaders were forced into exile. The independent press, which had been nurturing the nascent grassroots movement, became a particular target. Many of the leading voices of the opposition were forced to leave Haiti, joining the Haitian community in exile during the months following Reagan’s election.³⁰⁶

To Jean-Claude Duvalier, as to those targeted in the wave of repression, the implications of Reagan’s election were clear. Michele Montas, one of the journalists to take refuge in New York, told *Haiti Observateur* that “the election of Ronald Reagan . . . is perceived by Haitian officials as ‘the death of human rights’.” Speaking to an assembly of the government’s internal security force, the *Volontaires de la securite nationale* (VSN), Jean-Claude Duvalier signaled that what had been tolerated during the Carter years was finished. “We must straighten out all those who think that liberalization means free rein, who understand democratization to mean

³⁰⁵Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

³⁰⁶*Human Rights in Haiti*: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, First Session (April 17, 1985); “Retrospectives: 1980, the Year of Repression,” *Haiti Observateur*, Dec. 26-Jan. 2, 1981, 11; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 242.

anarchy, as if anyone can do what they please,” declared Duvalier.³⁰⁷ In an end-of-the-year retrospective entitled “1980, the Year of Repression,” the editors of *Haiti Observateur* declared that “history books will record that Haiti’s so-called liberalization program came to a screeching halt at year-end 1980 as the Duvalier regime unleashed a wave of repression to silence its critics.”³⁰⁸

While the massive crackdown of 1980 and 1981 had a devastating effect on the budding opposition movement in Haiti, it stimulated an even closer connection between the domestic resistance movement and the anti-Duvalier opposition in exile. When the Haitian government deported twenty-three leading dissidents and many others fled on their own, the Haitian community in New York received and supported the exiled journalists and activists forced to flee their country, remembers Marie Lily Cerat.³⁰⁹ Duvalier’s 1980 crackdown and the subsequent flight of activists to New York produced what Kim Ives called “the first really major cross-pollination of the internal struggle and the external [movement].”³¹⁰ Figures like Gregoire Eugene and Jean-Jacques Honorat, activists associated with the anti-Duvalier resistance in Haiti, joined the resistance in exile. Also forced into exile, Marcus Garcia, dissident journalist and chief editor of *Radio Metropole*, carried his political and journalistic skills to the United States, founding in 1986 the Miami-based newspaper *Haiti en Marche*, a publication which, like *Haiti Observateur* and *Haiti Progres*, maintained a narrow focus on Haiti and facilitated the communication between Haitians inside and outside the country. Furthermore, Haitian activists

³⁰⁷Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 185; DeWind and Kinley, *Aiding Migration*, 135.

³⁰⁸“Retrospectives: 1980, the Year of Repression.” See also Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 242.

³⁰⁹Cerat, interview; Greg Chamberlain, “Up by the Roots,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, May/June 1987, 20, box 1, folder 2, Amy Wilentz Collection.

³¹⁰Ives, interview.

in New York who had been hearing reports and commentary by Jean Dominique on *L'Ayisyen* now had Dominique and his wife and fellow journalist, Michele Montas, alongside them at meetings and demonstrations.³¹¹

The combined effect of Reagan's economic policies toward Haiti and the intensified repression that accompanied Reagan's election to office created the conditions for an even greater surge in the number of Haitian refugees than the one that had occurred from the late 1970s through 1980. To deal with the continuing flood of Haitian boat people attempting to reach American shores, the Reagan administration decided to implement another policy regarding Haitians. In September 1981, President Reagan issued an executive order instructing the US Coast Guard to patrol the sea passage between Haiti and Florida and to interdict boats of refugees attempting to reach the United States. Captured refugees were to be brought aboard the US vessel, interviewed (without access to legal counsel), and, depending on their eligibility for asylum, either be allowed to enter the United States or be returned to Haiti. Michel Laguerre has documented that in the first ten years following the creation of Reagan's "interdiction" program, American officials conducted twenty-four thousand such asylum interviews at sea. Only twenty-eight refugees were allowed to enter the United States to pursue asylum. The rest were returned immediately to Haiti.³¹² As a result of Reagan's interdiction program as well as of the administration's determination to intensify efforts to jail and deport virtually all undocumented Haitians already in the United States, the number of Haitians attempting to reach Florida by boat

³¹¹Flyers produced by activists in the United States provide specific details on who was targeted in the 1980 crackdown including which well-known members of the resistance in Haiti were forced into exile and joined the opposition in the United States. "S.O.S. for Haitian Victims," flyer for Dec. 6, 1980, demonstration, box 21, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; "A New Wave of Repression in Haiti," flyer for Dec. 6, 1980, demonstration, box 1, folder 27, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

³¹²Charles, "Political or Economic Immigrants," 199-200; Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 82.

declined substantially in 1981 from many thousands the previous year to only hundreds annually for much of the rest of the decade.³¹³

The Reagan administration's new interdiction program, its increased efforts to imprison and deport undocumented Haitians, and the belief that the US government was backing Duvalier's campaign of repression spurred Haitians in the United States to take action. In New York the Haitian Fathers, members of *En Avant* and producers of *L'Heure Haitienne* (or *L'Ayisyen*), Raymond Joseph's *Haiti Observateur*, and nine other leading political organizations came together under the banner of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Repression in Haiti.³¹⁴ On December 6, 1980, members of the Ad Hoc Committee, along with others groups, including Benjamin Dupuy's *Mouvement Haitien Liberation* (MHL), staged a demonstration in Brooklyn to "protest against the repression now taking place in Haiti . . . [to] underline the terrible consequences of [President Reagan's] statements on human rights" and to urge "Amnesty International and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to protect the lives of Haitian political prisoners and all Haitian people."³¹⁵ In Miami, Haitian activists continued to build upon the partnership they had forged with members of the black American community, holding their own demonstration to call on the US government to reestablish its commitment to human rights, to end its support for the Duvalier dictatorship, and to grant asylum to Haitian refugees. Marching through downtown Miami, demonstrators chanted, "Freedom for Haitian people. Freedom for black people. Freedom for all people." Bill Perry, president of the local NAACP chapter, announced, "We [have] joined not only to support Haitian efforts for political asylum,

³¹³Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 103.

³¹⁴"Ad Hoc Committee against Repression in Haiti," box 21, folder 1, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

³¹⁵"S.O.S. for Haitian Victims."

but to get our country to use its policies with Haiti to relieve pressure on the Haitians." The Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste of the Haitian Refugee Center affirmed the unity of Haitians and black Americans that the asylum campaign had been cultivating. "More and more black Americans understand that the Haitian struggle is their struggle and we understand that the black struggle is our struggle," said Jean-Juste. "We can't let the struggle be lost."³¹⁶

At the national level, too, Reagan's policy toward Haiti and Haitian refugees caused African American leaders to publicly challenge the administration. The Congressional Black Caucus, whose members had been among the first political leaders to support the refugees' cause, sent a letter to President Reagan protesting the policy of interdiction. At the same time, the CBC issued a press release with the title "Congressional Black Caucus Charges Interdiction Racist and Inhumane." Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, chairman of the Caucus, stated, "It seems hypocritical to urge Southeast Asian nations to fulfill their commitments as countries of first asylum . . . while the U.S. intercepts Black refugees on the high seas." He added that the CBC was weighing the possibility of legal action against the new policy.³¹⁷ The NAACP also sought to apply pressure on the Reagan administration to reverse its policies toward the Haitians. In a November 1981 letter to President Reagan, Benjamin L Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, called the president's Haitian policy "clearly discriminatory, because it amplifies a pattern which, for the last five years has singled out Haitian refugees for special and harsh treatment unlike any other refugees and in spite of the fact that we have welcomed more than a half million refugees from elsewhere in the past two years." Hooks concluded by urging the

³¹⁶Denise Brazier, "Black Americans and Haitians Unite for Miami Human Rights Rally," *Associated Press*, Dec. 13, 1980.

³¹⁷"Congressional Black Caucus Charges Interdiction Racist and Inhumane," Press Release, Aug. 17, 1981, box 22, folder 14, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

president “to reverse your announced order and give asylum to Haitian refugees . . . [and to] cease the blanket reference to Haitians as illegal immigrants.”³¹⁸

As the movement to challenge the Reagan administration’s foreign and immigration policies escalated in the early 1980s, the Krome Avenue Detention Center in the Florida Everglades, just southwest of the city of Miami, became a central site in the struggle. A decommissioned US Air Force base, Krome was turned into an immigration detention center in 1980 in order to handle the influx of Cuban and Haitian refugees that arrived in Miami in the spring of that year. In the same year, the Dade County Department of Health ordered Krome closed due to overcrowding and poor health conditions within the center, but the federal government refused to follow the directive and continued to use the facility to house people who were charged with immigration violations or who were awaiting hearings. As the Reagan administration stepped up its efforts to detain those who were in the country illegally, the Krome Avenue Detention Center filled up with Haitians and thus became the locus of struggle in South Florida for Haitian activists and their American supporters.³¹⁹

A key participant in the campaign for freedom and fair treatment for the Haitians imprisoned at Krome was the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste. Jean-Juste had come to the United States by way of Canada after leaving Haiti at the age of fourteen. In 1971 Jean-Juste was ordained into the priesthood of the Catholic Church in New York City, making him the first Haitian priest to be ordained in the United States. He returned to Haiti soon after Francois Duvalier’s death, where he immediately threw himself into politics, supporting a campaign by

³¹⁸Letter to President Ronald Reagan from Benjamin L. Hooks, Nov. 25, 1981, box 24, folder 3, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

³¹⁹Fouron, “I Too Want to be a Big Man,” 106.

striking bus drivers. The next year Jean-Juste left Haiti again, traveling to New York and then to Boston. In 1977 he made his way to Miami, where he promptly joined the asylum fight for the Haitian boat people. Hoping to serve the community as a Catholic priest, Jean-Juste applied twice for a parish assignment in South Florida, but he was denied both times, an outcome that he attributed to “religious racism” but that was more likely the result of alienation from church leaders over Jean-Juste’s criticism of the local archbishop for not doing more to help the Haitian refugees. The Catholic hierarchy subsequently barred Jean-Juste from saying mass. Without a parish to serve as his base in the community, Jean-Juste directed his energy entirely toward community organizing and building the refugee movement. In 1978 he formed *Combit Liberte*, a grassroots political organization based in Little Haiti, and soon after he became the director of the Haitian Refugee Center of Miami.³²⁰

As the director of the Haitian Refugee Center and the leader of *Combit Liberte*, Jean-Juste continued to be the focus of much conflict and controversy. In September 1980 the Christian Community Service Agency, the organization responsible for Miami’s Haitian Refugee Center, fired Jean-Juste as director of the center for “incompetence and insubordination.” With characteristic defiance, Jean-Juste challenged his dismissal, claiming his firing was more about politics and financial control of the Haitian Refugee Center than it was about job performance. In the campaign to win his job back, Jean-Juste and his supporters gained the backing of the majority of the steering committee of the Haitian Refugee Center, the center’s attorneys, and key support from leaders of the black American community, including the leaders of the local SCLC and NAACP chapters and Congresspersons Shirley Chisholm and Walter Fauntroy, not to mention the support of many ordinary people in the Haitian community of South Florida. With

³²⁰Hines, “Haitian-Center Director Chafes at Inability to Get Parish Here,” *Miami Herald*, July 28, 1979; Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 78.

such broad backing, Jean-Juste launched his own, independent Haitian Refugee Center in the heart of Little Haiti.³²¹

As much as Jean-Juste's stubborn outspokenness stirred up conflict, his willingness to challenge authority also earned him a reputation among his compatriots as a fearless defender of the Haitian people. Furthermore, the Haitian Refugee Center under the leadership of Jean-Juste and its partner organization, *Combit Libete*, stood out as the leading voices for the Haitian community of South Florida throughout the tumultuous years of the 1980s.

The Haitian Refugee Center was not the only Haitian organization providing service and support to the community. The Haitian American Community Agency of Dade (HACAD), led by Roger Biamby, provided legal assistance, job training, English language classes, and other services that overlapped with the work of the Haitian Refugee Center. In fact, HACAD was able to enlarge its role in the community precisely because of the political activism and positions taken by Jean-Juste and the Haitian Refugee Center. Alex Stepick notes that although HACAD was founded in 1974, its impact remained small until the "Dade County government began to patronize it as a politically acceptable alternative to [the Haitian Refugee Center]." After that, HACAD began to rival the Haitian Refugee Center in terms of services it provided the Haitian community of Miami.³²²

But it was leaders and activists linked to the Haitian Refugee Center that led the political activity of South Florida Haitians, and in the early 1980s, political activism centered on the campaign to challenge the prolonged incarceration of Haitian refugees at the Krome Avenue Detention Center. Marleine Bastien, who would in time become a leading voice of Miami's

³²¹Deckelbaum, "Little Haiti: The Evolution of a Community," 60-63; Miller, *Plight of the Haitian Refugees*, 172-74.

³²²Stepick, "Haitians in Miami," in *Miami Now!*, 72.

Haitian community, participated in the Haitian Refugee Center's campaign to free the Haitians at Krome. Coming to the United States from Haiti in 1981, Bastien got involved in the politics of the South Florida community as soon as she arrived. Part of her motivation to join the refugee campaign came from her shock at witnessing the treatment and the experiences of Haitians in the United States. "When I was in Haiti, I was always so interested in the US. I could recite all of Martin Luther King's [speeches]. I knew songs in English. I always felt so close to the US . . . I was very close to the culture. And I thought it was such a big democracy. I really believed it," Bastien recalls.

So two days after I came here, I volunteered at the Haitian Refugee Center. My dad brought me to Father Gerard Jean-Juste and said, "Here is my daughter, she is very smart. Put her to work." The next day I was working . . . And they were so happy to see me because I came -- a newly arrived refugee -- and I could speak English. So, of course, the same week I was at Krome.³²³

What she saw at Krome shocked and angered Bastien even more:

Big compounds. Haitians there being treated so harshly, and I could see the discrepancy in the treatment right there. The Cubans would be released . . . a few days after they arrived, and the Haitians were there -- placed in isolation for speaking Creole or not obeying an order quick enough because they didn't understand.³²⁴

Conditions at Krome soon led to an escalation in the struggle against the federal government and its treatment of the Haitian refugees. By the summer of 1981 Krome, which had a capacity of 581, housed more than 1,000 Haitian refugees, and local and state officials continued to press for the facility's closure. In July Florida Governor Bob Graham sued to close the Krome Avenue Center, but he was again rebuffed by federal authorities.³²⁵ Frustration over deteriorating conditions and their prolonged incarceration soon roused the detainees to action.

³²³Marleine Bastien, Interview with author, Miami, FL, Aug. 7, 2010.

³²⁴Bastien, interview.

³²⁵Fouron, "I Too Want to be a Big Man," 106.

Another factor contributing to the fear and anger within Krome was the authorities' decision to transfer a growing number of Haitians to Fort Allen, a detention facility in Puerto Rico. At the end of August, one hundred Haitians detained at Krome staged a hunger strike to protest their ongoing incarceration. Days later, the protest turned into a full-scale uprising. To put down an angry protest of one thousand Haitian detainees in an outdoor yard, guards fired tear gas on the demonstrators. After forcing the guards to retreat, the Haitians rushed a rear fence, tearing it down and pouring into the shallow Everglades water that surrounded the camp. Miami authorities were able to recapture the Haitians, transfer the leaders of the rebellion to a "secure area," and ensure future stability by bringing in "riot-equipped guards" and a fifty-member "reaction team" on loan from a Dade county federal corrections facility and the US border patrol. Even though it was quickly subdued, the Haitian rebellion at Krome worried local authorities and emboldened the Haitian community in their struggle for the prisoners' freedom.³²⁶

In the next month of September, after the bodies of thirty-three Haitian refugees washed ashore in Florida and after increasingly violent confrontations broke out at the overcrowded Krome Avenue facility, forty-five Miami clergy representing the Greater Miami Religious Community sent a letter to President Ronald Reagan, condemning the "concentration camp" at Krome. "Why has the Administration allowed so many human beings to be stacked up like dishes? Are these people being used as pawns in a political game?" they asked. Prominent signatories included Monsignor Bryan Walsh, executive director of the Catholic Service Bureau, Frank Magrath, regional director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the Most Reverend Edward A. McCarthy, Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Miami. Rev.

³²⁶"Haitians Stage Hunger Strike," *United Press International*, Aug. 31, 1981; James R. Merriam, *United Press International*, Sept. 3, 1981.

Conrad R. Willard, pastor of Miami's Central Baptist Church, called the imprisonment and treatment of Haitians at Krome "deplorable."³²⁷

Other religious groups were also joining the outcry against the government's treatment of Haitian refugees. On October 30, 1981, the Inter-Religious Council, led by Dr. Claire Randall, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, Bishop Thomas C. Kelley, general secretary of the US Catholic Conference of Bishops, and Rabbi Bernard Mandelbaum, general secretary of the Synagogue Council of America, sent a letter of protest to President Reagan. "Mr. President, we deplore the return to Haiti of 56 Haitian 'boat people' by the U.S. Coast Guard on October 26," the letter stated. It went on, "The recently announced policy of 'interdicting' small boats from Haiti also violated the fundamental principles for which this nation stands. We recall clearly the outcry from the United States and the world community when the governments of Malaysia and Thailand 'interdicted' small leaky boats fleeing from Vietnam." The religious leaders also addressed the government's treatment of Haitians imprisoned in Krome and other facilities throughout the United States. "Certainly, fundamental ideals of this country have been forgotten when Haitian asylum seekers are incarcerated on a long-term basis in Federal prisons or on isolated military facilities. This action is unprecedented in our nation's history and it is clearly discriminatory."³²⁸

In the last days of December, another violent confrontation between guards and Haitian prisoners further spotlighted the crisis at the Krome Avenue facility, which, according to some, portended a growing rebellion within the larger Haitian community. On Christmas Eve, 650 prisoners at Krome launched another hunger strike. To support the action, activists

³²⁷*United Press International*, Oct. 17, 1981, PM cycle.

³²⁸"Inter-Religious Council 'Pilgrim Day' Letter," to President Ronald Reagan, Oct. 30, 1981, box 22, folder 7, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

gathered outside the facility's gates, insisting on access to the hunger strikers to ensure their health and safety. When the activists were denied entrance, more than two hundred broke through the security divide and had begun to tear down the outer fence before they were met by riot police with clubs and tear gas. In the melee more than 100 imprisoned Haitians escaped and twelve acres of land surrounding the facility were set ablaze.³²⁹

Haitian Miami was about to explode, community leaders warned. "The frustration is getting over the limit . . . it's overboard now," said Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste. Viter Juste, a business owner and well-known leader of Haitian Miami, agreed. Though Haitians were "hard working" and "cooperative," an exasperated Juste explained, "our backs are against the wall. We have come to the point where only violence will make them understand."³³⁰ *Newsweek* informed readers that the Haitian movement in South Florida was growing in size and intensifying in violence. The magazine also reported that "outside pressure groups" and "national civil rights figures" were joining the Haitians in their campaign. "Haitians' Anger Reaches a Boiling Point" proclaimed the *Associated Press*.³³¹

Despite the expanding asylum campaign, the Reagan administration was determined to maintain its policy toward the Haitians. A "fair but firm decision on how the law should be applied" was the best way to defuse the explosive situation argued Associate Attorney General Rudolph Giuliani. What's more, the administration's policies had demonstrated success, Giuliani claimed, and the numbers spoke for themselves. A mere 47 Haitians had

³²⁹*United Press International*, Oct. 17, 1981, PM cycle; Robert B. Cullen, "Rally for Haitian Refugees," *Associated Press*, Dec. 12, 1981, AM cycle; Miller, *Plight of the Haitian Refugees*, 175-76; "Haitians Riot at Camp," *Associated Press*, Dec. 21, 1981, PM cycle; Randle Hackley, "Haitians Begin Hunger Strike at Detention Camp," *Associated Press*, Dec. 24, 1981, AM cycle; Michael Reese, "The Haitian Chant: Libete," *Newsweek*, Jan. 11, 1982, 27.

³³⁰"Haitians' Anger Reaches Boiling Point," *Associated Press*, Jan. 3, 1982, AM cycle.

³³¹"Haitians' Anger Reaches Boiling Point;" "The Haitian Chant: Libete;" "1,000 March in Support of Asylum for Haitian Refugees" *Associated Press*, Jan. 2, 1982, AM cycle.

been apprehended on Florida's shores in November 1981, down from 1,021 one year earlier. This fact demonstrated that the Reagan administration's interdiction policy, combined with its refusal to release undocumented Haitians into the community, was having the intended impact. People in Haiti knew that they would not be granted freedom in the United States, he continued, even if they were able to make it past the Coast Guard stationed off the Haitian coast. Denying accusations of bias, Giuliani argued that Haitians did not qualify under the law for asylum. Haitians "came to the United States in search of better jobs and housing, not to flee political persecution," he claimed. And, Giuliani wondered, what would happen if the United States started granting asylum to all international migrants fleeing economic disaster? "We don't have the space to take care of the two-thirds of the world which has severe economic problems. We have to take care of our own people," he argued.³³²

To heighten the pressure on the Reagan administration, Haitians activists and their American allies coordinated another demonstration in Washington on December 12, 1981. An NAACP press release publicized the event: "Characterizing the Reagan administration's interdiction policy for Haitian refugees as 'a barbaric assault on human freedom,' the NAACP, as part of its campaign to free the 2700 Haitian refugees now being held in detention centers, joined forces with the Coalition for the Defense of Haitian Refugees to secure their release before Christmas."³³³ The demonstration attracted a sizable turnout of ten thousand people, the largest yet in the refugee campaign. Members of the Miami and the New York Haitian communities as well as members of the Congressional Black Caucus and NAACP head

³³²"Demonstrations Will Not Change Policy, Official Says," *Associated Press*, Dec. 31, 1981, AM cycle.

³³³"NAACP and Haitian Coalition Demand Freedom for Haitian Refugees by Christmas, Announce March on Washington December 12th," Press Release, Dec. 1, 1981, box 24, folder 3, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

Benjamin Hooks marched from the Capitol to the Washington Monument, calling on the Reagan administration to “free the refugees” and “stop supporting Duvalier.”³³⁴ Although the action failed in its stated objective to secure the refugees’ release before Christmas, it drew unprecedented numbers and national attention and was the capstone of a series of escalating mobilizations that had occurred throughout the year.³³⁵

The policies of the Reagan administration had set back the movement for freedom and asylum for the Haitian refugees. However, the US government’s ongoing exclusion and imprisonment of the boat people, and its continuing support for the Duvalier dictatorship had also roused Haitian activists in the United States to an unprecedented level of militancy and mobilization.

Ongoing Resistance in Haiti and the U.S.

In the first half of the 1980s, despite major setbacks, the grassroots resistance both in Haiti and in the United States kept growing, continuing in both places the significant advances that had occurred in the late 1970s. The asylum campaign continued to build momentum. On January 2, 1982, a demonstration, followed by a march down Eastern Parkway, in Brooklyn drew, according to one source, as many as five thousand people, marking it the largest yet mobilization of New York Haitians in the asylum campaign.³³⁶

³³⁴Cullen, “Rally for Haitian Refugees;” Miller, *Plight of the Haitian Refugees*, 175-76; Charles, “Transnational Dialectic,” 269-70; Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat,” 193.

³³⁵For other interpretations of the significance of the Dec. 12, 1981, demonstration, see Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 200-1 and Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat,” 193.

³³⁶Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat?,” 193.

The surging support for the Haitian refugee movement and the ongoing political evolution of Haitian New York also stimulated the creation of organizations that would become key players in future political struggles. On March 2, 1982, members of forty-five organizations that included Haitian, religious, labor, legal, and civil and human rights groups assembled at the Interchurch Center in Manhattan to found the National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees (later called the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees).³³⁷ The outreach materials for the new organization identified the cause for its formation and stated its goals: “The National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees was formed in response to an emergency: the jailing by order of the Attorney General on July 31, 1981, of all the Haitian ‘boat people’ who had fled across 800 miles of open seas to seek asylum in the United States.” The NECHR aimed to win “fair treatment and procedural and substantive due process” for the Haitian refugees, to “further public consideration of the necessity of an administrative solution of the legal status dilemma of the Haitian ‘boat people,’” and to “obtain an end to our government’s policy of intercepting on the high seas and forcibly returning to Haiti the small sailboats in which these asylum seekers have fled (interdiction).” To achieve these goals, the NECHR outlined its plan: to 1) “act as a clearinghouse for information between legal groups, national voluntary agencies, Haitian and local groups and the refugees themselves . . . 2) stimulate the involvement of local members of national organizations belonging to the Coalition . . . [and] 3) compile and distribute to coalition members and a wide range of interested public actors information concerning the plight of the

³³⁷Meeting Agenda and Organization Bylaws, National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees, Mar. 2, 1982, box 24, folder 8, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

Haitian ‘boat people’ in the United States, their reasons for leaving Haiti and possible solutions to this contemporary tragedy.”³³⁸

The creation of the National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees was a landmark event. Although it was not the first time national organizations had coordinated on behalf of Haitian refugees, the founding of the NECHR brought together a group made up of individuals, and national and local organizations that was unparalleled in both size and influence. Chaired by Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua, the NECHR’s thirteen-member executive committee included Father Antoine Adrien of the Haitian Fathers, Ira Gollobin, attorney for the National Council of Churches, Jay Mazur, vice president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee, Michael Posner, executive director of the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, and, representing the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, longtime civil rights activist Bayard Rustin.³³⁹ The new organization counted among its membership twenty-four national organizations, including labor unions like the AFL-CIO and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), religious organizations like the American Jewish Committee, the Church World Service of the National Council of Churches, and the US National Catholics Conference, and civil rights groups like the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union. The more than twenty state and regional organizations that joined the NECHR represented New York City and New York State, Miami, Detroit,

³³⁸“What Is the National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees?,” n.d., box 24, folder 8, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

³³⁹National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees letterhead featuring Executive Committee Members, box 24, folder 8, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

Philadelphia, New Orleans, Washington, DC, and the states of New Jersey, West Virginia, and Delaware.³⁴⁰

In the same year that the National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees was founded, the community activists responsible for the weekly radio program *Le Heure Haitien*, or *L'Ayisyen*, launched a new project: the Haitian Information and Documentation Center. To extend the political work they were already doing through their radio show, Lionel Legros explains, they now aimed for something that was “more open toward organizing the Haitian community. So we started the center in 1982.” But the Haitian Information and Documentation Center was the initiative of more than the *L'Ayisyen* activists. The opening of the center “was an instigation of the listeners of the radio show. They said, ‘That’s not enough to hear you guys on Sunday morning . . . We [have to be able to] contact you for the rest of the week’ . . . And they supported it all the way through,” the center’s founders recall. Community members also determined what the new center would be called. “The Haitian Information and Documentation Center did not mean anything to the people in the community. To them, it was the Center of *L'Ayisyen*,” the Sunday morning radio program. As a result, the Haitian Information and Documentation Center became *Sant Enfomasyon L'Ayisyen*, or SELA.³⁴¹

Like the formation of the National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees, the founding of SELA reflected the expanding politicization and mobilization of the Haitian community. The years from 1982 to 1986 were, in the words of one member, “the formative years” of SELA. Located in Brooklyn, SELA provided a space for open discussion and political organizing, a library, film screenings, performances by singers and poets, and forums to discuss

³⁴⁰“Member Organizations for the National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees,” n.d., box 24, folder 9, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

³⁴¹Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

and connect with other struggles in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador. In addition to political work, SELA soon expanded to provide other services to the community. By 1986, Lionel Legros remembers, “Learning the computer was very important, so we started to buy computers and have schools.” The center hosted a GED program and offered assistance with immigration and other legal services, among other things. Those first years of SELA were “very alive,” Legros recalls.³⁴²

One year after the founding of SELA, the New York community produced yet another institution that would have a lasting impact on the political history of Haiti and Haitians in the United States. In 1983, Benjamin Dupuy, leader of the *Mouvement Haitien Liberation* (MHL), founded the newspaper *Haiti Progres*. According to Kim Ives, future *Haiti Progres* correspondent and stepson to Dupuy, “*Haiti Progres* was formed by MHL as an alternative to [the other existing Haitian weekly] *Haiti Observateur*.” In contrast to *Observateur*’s “fairly conservative orientation and claims to present objective journalism,” *Haiti Progres* maintained a “definite radical political orientation,” Carolle Charles notes. It “opposes Haitian integration into U.S. society,” and “concentrates on analyses of historical experiences of third world and progressive societies, and on criticism of U.S. imperialist intervention.”³⁴³

Assessments of *Haiti Progres*’ influence and place in the Haitian community vary. While Michel Laguerre somewhat dismissively characterizes *Haiti Progres* as a “niche” paper with a “leftist banner” (as opposed to the “more ecumenical” *Haiti Observateur*), Kim Ives claims that Dupuy’s newspaper became “the new left-wing rallying point” and “the journal of

³⁴²Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

³⁴³Ives, interview; Charles, “Transnational Dialectic,” 238-39.

record of [the] anti-imperialist movement” that crossed the boundaries between Haiti and the United States in the 1980s and beyond.³⁴⁴ According to political activist and labor organizer Ray Laforest,

Some people might buy the paper not because they necessarily accept its conclusion that you needed a Fidel Castro type society in Haiti. But they knew that the news they were getting there was the truth . . . They had credibility. So even if you didn’t necessarily buy all the agenda, most of the Haitians here who were involved in politics in one way or another accepted the legitimacy of *Haiti Progres*.³⁴⁵

On the other hand, Laforest allows, “There were some people who never did [accept the paper’s legitimacy], I’m assuming.” Laforest adds, “If you were a businessman, maybe you would put an ad in *Haiti Progres* only because you know people were going to see it, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that you accepted the line.” Laforest’s comment suggests that even those who might have opposed the newspaper’s political agenda recognized its reach into the community.³⁴⁶

The early 1980s featured the formation of new organizations in Miami as well as in New York, but there they were reflective of the increasing class diversity of the South Florida Haitian community. By the early 1980s Dade and Broward counties were becoming home to a substantial number of middle-class Haitians, many of whom had originally settled in other cities, such as New York and Boston, and who relocated to South Florida. These people were more likely to be better educated and to be legal residents or US citizens than those migrating to Miami directly from Haiti. In 1982 members of this growing Haitian middle class founded the Haitian American Chamber of Commerce and the Haitian Task Force. Both organizations functioned to support Haitian entrepreneurs and small business owners in Miami. The Haitian

³⁴⁴Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 130; Ives, interview.

³⁴⁵Laforest, interview.

³⁴⁶Laforest, interview.

Task Force, which received funding from the City of Miami and the Ford Foundation, provided loans to Haitian business owners and supported cultural events for the South Florida Haitian community.³⁴⁷

As the asylum campaign grew and added organizations, it also maintained its strategic approach of combining mass mobilization with challenges through the legal system. In June 1982 Federal District Judge Spellman admonished the Reagan administration for denying the Haitian refugees due process and for unlawfully detaining them for more than a year; he ordered the Haitian detainees to be released on parole. The Haitian Refugee Center celebrated the ruling as a “historic legal decision.”³⁴⁸ In a visit to the Haitians detained at the Krome Avenue Detention Center, Archbishop of Miami Edward A. McCarthy addressed the Spellman ruling and urged immigration officials’ immediate compliance with the ruling. “We thank God for the court’s decision that mandated the release of these people ‘forthwith’ . . . Many have been here behind barbed wired for thirteen months. It would be truly disheartening to see the day of freedom delayed because of any unnecessary ‘foot-dragging’,”³⁴⁹ the archbishop declared. Though the Spellman ruling was less of an achievement than the earlier King ruling, since it cited immigration officials for misconduct in administrative duties rather than the more sweeping charge of bias and discriminatory treatment, it was nonetheless another landmark in the Haitian asylum campaign.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷Stepick, “Haitian in Miami,” in *Miami Now!*, 70, 74.

³⁴⁸Press Release, Haitian Refugee Center, June 18, 1982, box 22, folder 21, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

³⁴⁹“Statement of Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy, July 4, 1982, visit to Krome,” box 24, folder 9, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

³⁵⁰Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat,” 193; Richman, “They Will Remember Me,” 56-57.

While much of the attention and energy of activists and community organizers continued to focus on the defense of refugees in the early 1980s, Haitians in the United States encountered a new obstacle. In July 1982 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) disclosed that thirty-four Haitian immigrants in the United States were among those diagnosed with infections characteristic of a puzzling new syndrome that seemed to lead to a breakdown of the immune system. Scientists observed high rates of infections among homosexuals, heroine users, and hemophiliacs, but the Haitians diagnosed with the deadly new virus denied they had engaged in homosexual activity or had taken intravenous drugs and reported that they had never had a blood transfusion, leaving researchers baffled about the relationship between Haitians and the disease. Even so, the CDC concluded that because Haitians appeared to be among those groups that were particularly likely to spread the disease, which would come to be known as AIDS, it placed Haitians on the list of high-risk groups in March 1983, along with homosexuals, hemophiliacs, and intravenous drug users (a grouping soon to be called the “4 H Club”).³⁵¹ After the CDC’s ruling that all Haitians in the United States were in the high-risk category for AIDS, the theory that Haiti was the source of AIDS began to appear frequently in both scholarly and medical journals as well as in the popular press. Despite substantial evidence to support the conclusion that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was making its first appearance in Haiti at that same time that it was emerging in other areas of the Americas, the myth that Haiti was the origin of AIDS proved remarkably resilient.³⁵²

³⁵¹Robert Byrd, “First Homosexuals and Haitians, Now Hemophiliacs,” *Associated Press*, July 15, 1982, AM cycle; Paul Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 210-11; Grenier and Stepick, *Miami Now!*, 65.

³⁵²Farmer, *AIDS and Accusations*, xii, 2, 125-26, 212. Jennifer Brier also notes the prevalence of the false claim that the United States received AIDS from Haiti and documents the spread of the idea in the mainstream press. Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 31, 226, n. 101.

The idea that the United States had gotten AIDS from Haiti and the CDC's designation of all Haitians at high risk for contracting the disease had a disastrous impact on Haitians in the United States. Haitian immigrants, already associated by many with the stigma of the poor and desperate boat people, became the target of exclusion and attack. Haitian students were shunned by teachers and students and even became the victims of violence in New York City schools. Customers stopped patronizing Haitian businesses, causing them to fail. Haitian tenants were evicted, and Haitian employees lost their jobs.³⁵³

Haitians viewed their community's label as a high risk for AIDS as the result of racism and the ongoing anti-Haitian bias. "They have blown this thing out of proportion so much that there's no other reason for it than to indicate a subtle form of racism," argued Roger Biamby of the Haitian-American Community Association of Dade. Yves Savain of the Haitian Task Force also saw anti-Haitian discrimination at work. "We have always been an easy target for anything mysterious," declared Savain. The Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste feared that the AIDS stigma was being used as a tool by those already prejudiced against Haitians to justify continuing to exclude them. "Those who did not like the Haitians have found a new element . . . saying they do not want Haitians here because they are AIDS carriers."³⁵⁴

Their association with AIDS produced divergent responses among Haitians in the United States. Just as some had distanced themselves from the Haitian community to avoid the stigma brought by the Haitian boat people, so did some Haitians avoid any public

³⁵³Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 213-15; Glick Schiller et al., "All in the Same Boat?," 194.

³⁵⁴Reginald Stuart, "Haitians, Seeking Freedom and Jobs, Find Heartaches Instead in America," *New York Times*, June 28, 1983, 18; "Entire Haitian Community Affected by AIDS Scare," *Associated Press*, July 11, 1983, PM cycle.

identification with their compatriots out of shame and fear over the AIDS association.³⁵⁵ Others, however, mounted a campaign to try to counter the AIDS stigma. Haitian community leaders, including many Haitian physicians, began mobilizing and presenting information that contradicted the notion that Haitians were a particularly high-risk group. In July 1983 the *Miami Herald* reported that only 1 percent of Haitians in Miami-Dade County were diagnosed as AIDS carriers. The Associated Press estimated the number of Haitian AIDS victims in Dade County to be much lower, a mere one-tenth of 1 percent. Nonetheless, as the *Miami Herald* and most other observers recognized, “Fear causes people to view Haitians as disease spreaders. Little Haiti’s community representatives have been stymied in their effort to downplay the unexplained connection between AIDS and Haitians.”³⁵⁶

Later that month, New York City officials, acknowledging how much damage the AIDS stigma had done to the Haitian community, announced the city would be removing Haitians from the “at-risk” category. “There is no reason to continue to stigmatize Haitians at a time when they already face considerable job and housing discrimination,” announced Dr. David J. Sencer, New York City health commissioner. This announcement was a victory for Haitians, to be sure, but the nationwide CDC designation remained. In fact, the change in New York City’s policy called forth the national body’s defense of its decision to keep Haitians on the list. Dr. James Curran, head of the AIDS task force at the Federal Centers for

³⁵⁵Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 195-96; Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat?,” 193-94.

³⁵⁶Chris Vaughan, *Miami Herald*, July 10, 1983; “Entire Haitian Community Affected by AIDS Scare.”

Disease Control, insisted that while Haitians made up only 0.3 percent of the population, they represented approximately 6 percent of the reported AIDS cases.³⁵⁷

Despite New York City's change, the federal position remained the same until April 1985 when the Centers for Disease Control announced that it was removing Haitians from the "at-risk" group but gave no explanation for its actions.³⁵⁸ It is likely that a combination of factors led to the change. Scientists had learned more about the disease and how it was transmitted. They had also learned more about the Haitian community, concluding that those Haitians who were diagnosed with AIDS most likely engaged in at-risk behaviors that had nothing to do with being Haitian *per se*. Probably equally important as a factor was the campaign of public education and political pressure coming from Haitian organizations like the Haitian Coalition on AIDS, which provided a persuasive public argument that there was nothing that made Haitians biologically predisposed toward AIDS infection and that their inclusion as an at-risk group was the product of a larger climate of anti-Haitian discrimination.³⁵⁹

Although vindicated by the CDC's policy change, the damage that had been done to Haitians in the United States could not be undone. For workers who had lost their jobs, for homeowners who had been unable to sell their property or tenants who could not find a place to live, for students who had been isolated or attacked in schools, and for the many other Haitians who had been hurt by their association with AIDS, the stigma would not disappear

³⁵⁷Ronald Sullivan, "City Takes Haitians Off List of High Risk AIDS Groups," *New York Times*, July 29, 1983; Betty Anne Williams, "Haitian's Remain on High-Risk List," *Associated Press*, Aug. 11, 1983, AM cycle.

³⁵⁸Christine Russell, "Haitians No Longer Listed as Known AIDS Risks; Action by Disease Control Centers Unexplained," *Washington Post*, Apr. 9, 1985.

³⁵⁹Lawrence K. Altman, "Debate Grows on U.S. Listing of Haitians in AIDS Category," *New York Times*, July 31, 1983; *Miami Herald*, Aug. 20, 1983, section 2, 1.

anytime soon.³⁶⁰ Indeed, when the AIDS issue resurfaced at the end of the decade, it would stimulate the Haitian community to action precisely because the wounds of the early 1980s went so deep.

While efforts to counter the AIDS association and stigma became a focus for Haitian activists for a period in the early 1980s, efforts to defend the Haitian refugees and push for political change in Haiti continued apace. And the organizing taking place in the early 1980s in New York and Miami was paralleled by the development of a grassroots movement in Haiti that had survived the crackdown of 1980 and 1981. A major part of this grassroots resistance grew out of work being done by progressive elements in the Catholic Church. Unlike many earlier political opposition movements, the *ti legliz* groups did not function exclusively in the cities but reached deep into the countryside and into the lives of Haitian peasants. In the early 1980s the *ti legliz* movement established training and education centers throughout Haiti, centers that became community-based organizations, forming an essential network connecting the various nodes of grassroots organizing. The *ti legliz* groups also received critical support from the Catholic-run Radio Soleil, which became the public voice of the opposition, particularly after other opposition stations like Radio Haiti Inter were shut down during the 1980 crackdown. In addition, the *ti legliz* movement received an enormous boost in 1983 when Pope John Paul II visited Haiti and declared that “things must change,” a statement Haitians understood as a criticism of the dictatorship and an expression of solidarity with the grassroots resistance.³⁶¹

³⁶⁰Kathy McCarthy, *Miami Herald*, section 4, 1; “AIDS: Virus of Fear; Haitians Still Suffer from AIDS Image,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 15, 1985, BC cycle.

³⁶¹Arthur and Dash, *Libete*, 141-42; Robert Maguire, “The Peasantry and Political Change in Haiti, in *Caribbean Affairs*, Vol. 4 No. 2, 1991, excerpted in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, edited by Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Weiner, 1999), 152-53.

The opposition to the Duvalier dictatorship that was growing in the early 1980s was also a response to several other developments that drew the ire of the Haitian people and intensified their dissatisfaction with the Duvalier regime. In 1980 Jean-Claude Duvalier had married Michele Bennett, the daughter of Ernest Bennett, a leading member of Haiti's commercial bourgeoisie with key interests in agricultural exports and the import and distribution of European automobiles. Symbolizing Baby Doc's alliance with Haiti's light-skinned bourgeoisie, the Duvalier-Bennett marriage further alienated Haiti's black middle class, the group that Jean-Claude's father, Francois Duvalier, had relied on as the regime's key base of support.³⁶² In addition to alienating the black middle class, Duvalier's marriage and lifestyle provoked resentment and the anger of the Haitian masses, far from the centers of power. While Haiti struggled through severe food shortages and drought, the playboy president and his new wife went out of their way to show off through lavish, televised parties and conspicuous displays of wealth.³⁶³

In the early 1980s the Duvalier regime and the United States implemented other policies that deepened Haiti's misery, policies that we can now see contributed to the furious uprising of 1985 and 1986. In May 1982 the Haitian government, under pressure from the United States to arrest the spread of swine fever, ordered the slaughter of its entire population of native black pigs. This move decimated what one observer called "the peasant's most valuable livestock."³⁶⁴ The black pig was adept at scavenging and surviving on very little, making it a most cost-effective resource for rural Haitians. After the slaughter of the entire Haitian black pig

³⁶²"Here Comes the Bride," *Haiti Report*, Fall 1980, 6; Alex Dupuy, *The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the International Community, and Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 53.

³⁶³Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 218.

³⁶⁴Richman, "They Will Remember Me," 45.

population, the Haitian and the United States governments repopulated the countryside with white pigs from Iowa, animals that shared none of the black pigs' survival skills and, in fact, required an enormous amount of money to sustain. Although the Haitian and US governments claimed that the slaughter was an act in defense of public health, they failed to convince many of the rural Haitians affected by the program that it was a necessary step, adding to the frustration and resentment brewing in Haiti's countryside.³⁶⁵ To make matters worse, the Reagan administration's policy regarding Haitian immigration cut off a major destination for out-migration, reducing Haitians' ability to escape the deteriorating conditions in the country.³⁶⁶

In 1984 Haitians in five northern towns launched four days of protests over hunger and dwindling food supplies; during that time they raided warehouses for staples and rations. In the course of the uprising, "*aba lamize*" (down with poverty) became "*aba Duvalier*."³⁶⁷ In 1985 Haitians again launched a series of protests, this time targeting high gasoline and fuel prices. Although we can now see the worsening crisis of the early 1980s and the uprisings of 1984 and 1985 as preludes to the nationwide rebellion that forced the dictatorship's collapse less than one year later, the outcome was not at all clear at the time. In fact, Haitians had one more severe test to endure under Duvalier.

In November Ronald Reagan won a second term as US president, an outcome that again had negative consequences for the grassroots resistance in Haiti. As in November 1980, Duvalier took the occasion of Reagan's reelection to clamp down on his political opponents. Human rights groups reported a major spike in violence, arrests, "increased incommunicado

³⁶⁵Richman, "They Will Remember Me," 45-48; Bernard Diederich, *Swine Fever Ironies*, excerpted in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, 104-5.

³⁶⁶Arthur and Dash, "Forces for Change," *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, 142.

³⁶⁷Trouillot, *State against Nation*, 217.

detentions,” new bans on political parties, and a renewed attack on the independent media. In congressional hearings, Michael S. Hooper, speaking on behalf of the human rights monitoring group Americas Watch, testified that the wave of repression in 1984 was “the most significant deterioration in the Haitian government’s respect for the fundamental human and legal rights of its own citizens since the massive crackdown by Haitian security forces in late 1980 and early 1981.” The National Coalition for Haitian Refugees and the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights joined Americas Watch in documenting the crackdown and urged the State Department to cut off aid to the Duvalier government and to decertify Haiti in the Department’s annual review of human rights.³⁶⁸ It would take even greater turmoil in Haiti, however, to convince the US State Department that it was time to sever its ties to the Duvalier regime.

In late 1984 and early 1985, anti-Duvalier forces in Haiti were reeling from a renewed campaign of repression, and Haitians in the United States were feeling the harmful effect of the AIDS stigma. But the early to mid-1980s were also filled with promise for Haitian activists. Resistance to the Duvalier regime in Haiti was growing more determined and protests more frequent. In the United States the movement in defense of the Haitian refugees kept growing; the founding of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees in 1982, an organization that brought together Haitian, religious, labor, and civil rights organizations, was evidence of this expanding movement. The founding of the Haitian Information and Documentation Center, or SELA, in 1982 and the launching of the Haitian weekly *Haiti Progres* in 1983 marked two other important events in the history of Haitian politics and activism in New York. SELA and *Haiti Progres*

³⁶⁸*Human Rights in Haiti*: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 20-22; “3 Rights Groups Urge U.S. to Move to Curb Abuses in Haiti,” *New York Times*, Dec. 2, 1984, 5.

both would play leading roles in community education and mobilization. While the linked campaigns for democracy in Haiti and freedom for the Haitian refugees continued to face major obstacles, movement activists were going forward.

The Uprooting and “the Muzzle is Off”

In July 1985 Jean-Claude Duvalier announced a referendum vote in which Haitians would decide whether he should remain in power. The outcome, the Haitian Ministry of Information announced, was 99.8 percent in favor of the “President for Life.” Although designed to demonstrate the regime’s commitment to political liberalization, the vote failed to placate its critics either at home or abroad and actually further eroded the regime’s legitimacy in the eyes of many. In an op-ed piece published in the *International Herald Tribune*, Michael Hooper, executive director of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, observed that the results of the sham referendum “put most Soviet bloc countries to shame. They rank right behind the 1983 elections in Albania in which only a single ‘no’ vote was recorded, and behind the results of the 1971 referendum in Haiti in which 100 percent of the voters were recorded as approving Francois Duvalier’s designation of his 19-year-old son to succeed him.”³⁶⁹ Jean-Claude Duvalier’s attempt to silence those who criticized the fraudulent vote also aided his detractors and emboldened the opposition in Haiti and abroad. For publicly challenging the legitimacy of the referendum, the regime had three Belgian priests expelled from the country. A

³⁶⁹Michael Hooper, “Reagan’s Nicaragua is Haiti,” *International Herald Tribune*, Aug. 30, 1985, box 24, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection. See also: Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 103; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 220.

fourth priest mysteriously died a day before his expulsion, a victim of the Haitian secret police, the Vatican's *Observatore Romano* reported.³⁷⁰

The incident in Haiti and the presence of the exiled priests in Miami encouraged Haitians in the United States to renew their call for the dictatorship's end. At the *Notre Dame d'Haiti* in the Little Haiti neighborhood of Miami, three thousand people assembled for a solidarity meeting with the Belgian priests organized by the Haitian Refugee Center. The Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste took the gathering as an opportunity to argue for close partnership between the resistance in Haiti and the dictator's opponents abroad. "We are fighting for the liberation of our people," argued Jean-Juste. "Nothing can intimidate us . . . I hope that the Haitian community in Miami, in New York, etc., continues to show solidarity in the struggle of liberation waged by Haitians along with those within the diaspora."³⁷¹

In New York the Haitian community organized a protest at the United Nations to be culminated in a march to the Haitian Consulate on Forty-Second Street. Although the demonstration was intended to draw attention to repression in Haiti, the incident instead spotlighted the problem of police violence in New York City. When the one thousand Haitian protesters approached the consulate offices, they encountered mounted New York police officers, who violently broke up the demonstration; many of the protesters were wounded and two landed in the emergency room.³⁷² In response, the Haitian Fathers issued a statement of protest, as did the Haitian-American Citizens for Action, which in an open letter to New York Mayor Edward Koch claimed that the "blatant act of brutality and civil rights abuse" against the

³⁷⁰"New York: El Diario defend le droit des Haitiens a manifester," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 14-20, 1985, 8.

³⁷¹"Miami: meeting de solidarite avec les pretres expulses," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 7-13, 1985, 8-9.

³⁷²"New York: un millier de personnes manifeste contre l'expansion des petres. Graves brutalites policieres 22 manifestants blesse," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 7-13, 1985, 1, 10, 20.

Haitian protesters was just another example of the city's disrespect and "lack of sensitivity toward the Haitian community."³⁷³ The July 28th Contingent, which described itself as "a coalition of Haitian revolutionaries, progressive forces, and patriots," argued that there was a relationship between the incident in New York and what was going on in Haiti, seeing parallel attempts "to stifle the righteous upsurge of the masses and suppress their anger. Thus, the premeditated and brutal attack launched on Haitian demonstrators by policemen," they concluded. As a result of the police action, the group called members of the Haitian community to another demonstration on August 31, this one against police violence.³⁷⁴

In Haiti in the summer and fall of 1985, despite signs of growing unrest, it was not at all clear that the decades-long dictatorship was entering its last months. An incident at the end of November in the coastal city of Gonaïves eventually lit the flame of protest that would soon spread across all of Haiti and ultimately force Duvalier's departure. On November 27, 1985, students of the coastal city of Gonaïves took to the streets to protest the Duvalier dictatorship. Continuing the tradition of protest that had emerged in the same city one year earlier, a mass of young people, including twenty-year-old Jean-Robert Cius, nineteen-year-old Daniel Israel, and thirteen-year-old Mackenson Michel, marched through the streets chanting, "*Nous bezwen chanjman radikal nan peyi a!*" (We need a radical change in the country!) When the military fired upon the demonstrators, killing Cius, Israel, and Mackenson, Gonaïves erupted. Soon all of Haiti had joined the rebellion. The Duvalier regime's rather routine attempt to suppress a single

³⁷³ "Manifestation contre les brutalites policières du 3 aout," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 28-Sept. 3, 1985, 10; "Une action en justice contre les brutalities policières du 3 aout," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 16-22, 1985, 10; "Manifestation du 3 aout: une letter au maire de New York," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 28- Sept. 3, 1985, 10; "New York: El Diario defend le droit des Haitiens a manifester," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 14-20, 1985, 8; "Manifestation du 3 aout: une action intentee contre la police de New York," *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 20-26, 1985, 7.

³⁷⁴ "Haiti, Azania: Same Struggle," box 1, folder 26, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

expression of dissent had this time provoked an uprising. This event was the beginning of the end for Duvalier.³⁷⁵

The shooting of the student protesters in Gonaives on November 28 galvanized the movement in New York and Miami just as it did in Haiti. Flyers circulating throughout the community provided detailed accounts of the violence in Haiti and called Haitians abroad to action. “Transform the cry from Gonaives into strength for revolution!” one leaflet ordered.³⁷⁶ On Manhattan’s Upper West Side, more than one thousand Haitians gathered for mass at the Holy Name Roman Catholic Church in honor of the martyred young people of Gonaives. At the conclusion of the service, men wearing black armbands and women with heads covered with black scarves went out into the bitter December cold to march down Amsterdam Avenue, carrying three coffins draped in the red and blue Haitian flag. The event concluded in an auditorium with speakers and the singing of the *Dessalinienne*, the Haitian national anthem. *Haiti Progres*, always both chronicler and participant in the movement, judged the event a success but also encouraged the diaspora not to allow this to be just “a symbolic act around a tragic event” but instead to make it “a step in the fight” for Haitian freedom.³⁷⁷ In Miami the protests that erupted in the wake of the Gonaives incident were smaller but more militant and spontaneous. On the streets of Little Haiti, several protests sprang up in the weeks following the shooting deaths in Gonaives. On December 10, echoing the Gonaives protests from spring 1984,

³⁷⁵*Haiti Progres*, “Gonaives: *Symbole de la resistance*, 1986,” in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, 154-55; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 220-21.

³⁷⁶“Transform the cry from Gonaives into strength for revolution,” July 28th Contingent, Dec. 1985, box 1, folder 27, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection. Another example of the detailed information featured in the leaflets circulated in this period is “No to Repression in Haiti,” flyer for June 15, 1985, demonstration, May 23rd Committee, box 1, folder 26, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

³⁷⁷“New York: un millier de personnes manifeste contre l’assassinat des jeunes aux Gonaives,” *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 18-24, 1985, 8, 20.

several hundred Haitians marched through the streets chanting, “Down with Duvalier! Down with misery! Down with oppression! Down with dictatorship!”³⁷⁸

As the new year of 1986 approached and the crisis facing the Duvalier regime grew more serious, Haitians in New York planned another event that they hoped would support the uprising in Haiti. On Sunday December 22 more than one hundred activists met in Brooklyn to decide upon further action. After listening to the testimony of Leone Cius, father of one of the slain student-protesters of Gonaives, the group unanimously voted to hold a demonstration in Brooklyn on January 11, 1986.³⁷⁹ A flyer for the demonstration soon began circulating, calling New York Haitians to action. The flyer explained that “*Grande Manifestation a Brooklyn*” on January 11 was called to protest “the assassination of Jean-Robert Cius, Mackenson Michel, Daniel Israel, and many other compatriots” and to demand an end to America’s support of Duvalier. Haitians were exhorted to support the young people of Gonaives, Jeremie, Petit-Goave, Port-au-Prince, and other regions that had declared an end to the “dictator-for-life” and to “misery-for-life.” The flyer also featured a telling statement regarding the protest organizers’ sense of connection to the struggle in their homeland: Haiti was in revolt and the people of Okay, Jeremie, Okap, Petit-Goave, Port-au-Prince were all doing their part. Pointedly, it asked, “*E nou menm Nouyok, sa n’ap tann?*” (And, now, New York, what are we waiting for?)³⁸⁰ On a chilly winter afternoon, New York Haitians responded to the call for protest, packing the streets

³⁷⁸“Miami: la communaute haitienne manifeste avec un ampleur croissante,” *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 18-24, 1985, 9, 23.

³⁷⁹“Grande manifestation projetee a New York, Une reponse unanime a initiative du Comite Contre la Repression en Haiti,” *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 25-31, 1985, 8, 26.

³⁸⁰“Grand Manifestation a Brooklyn,” flyer, Committee against Repression in Haiti, box 1, folder 26, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

along Nostrand Avenue and Eastern Parkway to listen to speeches and the popular music of Farah Juste and So Ann.³⁸¹

Back in Haiti, the country was slipping out of the dictator's hands. To try to placate the growing popular movement, Duvalier rearranged the government and offered the people a 10 percent price reduction on government-controlled commodities. This concession failed to bring peace, however. As the country became increasingly uncontrollable, Duvalier announced he was doing away with the hated "political police" unit that had orchestrated much of the surveillance and repression the regime had used against its opponents. But the rebellion continued, virtually paralyzing the country by the end of January 1986 with daily roadblocks and protests.³⁸²

To support the effort to topple the Duvalier regime, activists in the United States attempted to pressure the US government to withdraw its support for the dictator. The Committee of Solidarity with the Haitian People (COSPA) initiated a petition campaign asking the US government and international lending institutions to "withhold economic and/or military assistance to the present government of Haiti, because of its misuse of funds and human rights violations, including the recent killing of children."³⁸³ Michael Hooper, executive director of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, joined Aryeh Neier, vice chairman of Americas Watch, and Michael Posner, executive director of the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, to communicate to Secretary of State George P. Shultz their "utmost dismay with the continuing deterioration in the Haitian government's respect for the fundamental rights of its

³⁸¹"Grand Manifestation a Brooklyn," "Manifestation de solidarite avec le peuple haitien: une reussite eclatante," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 15-21, 1986, 15-19.

³⁸²Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 220-21.

³⁸³"Washington: appel pour une petition reclamant la cessation de toute aide etrangere au regime," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 29-Feb. 4, 1986, 8-9.

own citizens and to request immediate assurances that our government will strongly condemn these gross violations.” Hooper, Neier, and Posner also pointed out that “this deterioration occurred at the time of, and just subsequent to, your October 12, 1985, report certifying an overall improvement in the human rights picture [in Haiti].” They concluded by asking to know “how our government . . . [can] encourage an end to these tragic abuses and this pattern of cynical flaunting of international standards by the Haitian government.”³⁸⁴

The US government did ultimately withdraw support for Duvalier, one of the factors in the regime’s collapse. Regarding the growing instability in Haiti with unease, the United States had determined by the end of January 1986 that Duvalier had lost control of the country. In an attempt to moderate the outcome of the uprising, the United States abandoned Duvalier, hoping to have an influence on the regime’s successor while also recognizing that Duvalier’s continued presence actually advanced the revolutionary fervor in Haiti.³⁸⁵ On January 30 the US government announced it would delay delivery of \$26 million in aid to Haiti; the following day administration spokesperson Larry Speakes announced that the Duvalier government had collapsed. Duvalier denied the report and declared that his government remained “as strong as a monkey’s tail.” However, mounting protests, the apparent withdrawal of American support, and the rumors that Speakes’ announcement created were too much for the dictatorship to bear.

³⁸⁴Letter to Secretary of State George P. Shultz from Michael Hooper, Aryeh Neier, and Michael Posner, Dec. 6, 1985, box 25, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection. For further evidence of the US government’s positive assessment and support of the Haitian government as late as fall 1985 see: “Report on the Emigration and Human Rights Policies of the Government of Haiti and its Cooperation with United States Development Assistance Programs in Haiti,” Department of State, Washington, Oct. 12, 1985, box 1, folder 15, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

³⁸⁵Brenda Gayle Plummer argues that by the mid-1980s “Reagan administration officials now partially endorsed the popular liberal wisdom that neglect of the democratic center in developing countries led to tyrannies of the rights and left,” and in the case of Haiti “it thought the dangers of radical usurpation great enough to warrant better support for the center.” Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 208. See also Westad, *Global Cold War*, 340.

Duvalier's downfall was imminent, though he was able to stave off total collapse for another seven days.³⁸⁶

When rumors of Duvalier's collapse reached the people of Haiti, they took to the streets in joyous celebration. These same unconfirmed reports sent the Haitian communities of New York and Miami into several frenzied days of celebration and protest. On Thursday January 30 roughly fifteen hundred Haitians poured into the streets of Little Haiti, waving palm fronds and tree branches, and bearing the red and blue national colors. "Duvalier is out!" they cried in jubilation. Anger at the regime and its supporters surfaced when a group of men, rumored to be members of Duvalier's secret police force, neared the crowd. Their red Camaro surrounded by the protesters, the driver tried to escape; throwing the car into reverse, he plowed into the crowd, killing a forty-seven-year-old woman. The outraged crowd, claiming to have heard the words, "*Vive Duvalier*," seized the driver and beat him until he was rescued by police on the scene. Confronted by riot police, the protesters briefly resisted, torching the suspected *macoutes'* car and temporarily unleashing their fury on the surrounding eight blocks. In the wake of the short-lived rebellion, Miami city officials sought to calm the Haitians. Miami mayor Xavier Suarez promised to investigate police violence against the protesters, and police spokesperson Mike Stewart refused to characterize the incident as a riot, calling it a "disturbance" instead.³⁸⁷

The celebration continued the following morning as residents of Little Haiti returned to the streets, dancing, singing and waving red and blue banners. Though far from their home in Haiti, Haitians in Miami symbolically demonstrated their role in the collapse of the dictatorship. A group of Haitian leaders, accompanied by Mayor Suarez, staged a symbolic takeover of the

³⁸⁶Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 209; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 220-21.

³⁸⁷Jackie Hallifax, "Little Haiti Celebrates Report Collapse of Duvalier Government," *Associated Press*, Jan. 31, 1986, PM cycle; Jeff Hardy, *United Press International*, Jan. 31, 1986, PM cycle.

Haitian consulate. Every thirty minutes a parade of joyous funeral-goers carried a coffin through the heart of the neighborhood, representing the death of the Duvalier regime. And an effigy of Duvalier was first hung up for everyone to see, then torn down and dismembered. The celebration intensified when the community received the Reagan administration's report that Duvalier had fled the country, but their mood descended into disappointment and anger when Duvalier appeared to refute the claim, and the US government retracted its statement. All in all, despite the conflicting reports, the mood was one of joy and hope. "Whether or not he's out, he's still going to go," said Jay Louis, a thirty-six-year-old taxi driver and seven-year resident of Miami. "He just won't be able to survive," asserted Louis, confidently. Twenty-six-year-old Ruby Stannys was also hopeful. "We'll soon be able to see our parents safely and kiss the land that we love so much,"³⁸⁸ Stannys claimed.

On February 1, for the third day in a row, the Haitians of Miami hit the streets in protest against the Duvalier regime. Just as they had two days earlier, the protesters channeled their anger at Duvalier into anger against those they believed supported him. Police were called in to protect Phil Dorceant, a record storeowner who had a reputation of being pro-Duvalier. As he finished clearing out his store and preparing to leave the area, angry protesters began hitting Dorceant's car with their hands and pelting it with rocks. Police arrested four and soon isolated a two-block area of Little Haiti that contained the nucleus of the protests. Leaders of the Miami police department anxiously wondered how long the protests would last and what it would take to bring peace. "Ultimately, the time is going to come when law and order will have to prevail,"

³⁸⁸Andrew Mangan, "Miami's Haitians Celebrate Reports Of Duvalier Falling," *Associated Press*, Jan. 31, 1986, AM cycle; Andrew Mangan, "Demonstrations Peaceful in Miami; Envoy Jostled In Bahamas," *Associated Press*, Feb. 1, 1986, PM cycle; George Volsky, "Haitian Joy Twice Turns to Anguish in Miami," *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1986, 6; Jeff Hardy, "Mood swings in Miami's Haitian Community," *United Press International*, Feb. 1, 1986, PM cycle.

said Col. C. J. Zamora. From his perspective amid a growing storm in Haiti, Jean-Claude Duvalier must have been thinking the same thing.³⁸⁹

The rumors of the collapse of Duvalier's government also sent shock waves through the Haitian community of New York. Frustrated over the conflicting reports about the status of their homeland, fifty Haitians demonstrated in front of the Haitian consulate in New York, demanding information about what was going on in Haiti. Just as in Miami, Haitians of New York were initially exuberant and then disappointed over the confusing information coming from the White House. "Why would Larry Speakes, the 'well-informed' White House spokesman, announce the downfall of the Duvalier government? . . . Why is the Reagan administration playing this dangerous game with the future of the Haitian people?" one leaflet asked.³⁹⁰ Leo Joseph, Raymond Joseph's brother and co-editor of the conservative (but staunchly anti-Duvalier) newspaper *Haiti Observateur*, offered this interpretation: "I believe Duvalier has left. They don't want the people to know because they will rampage all the businesses and buildings of the government." But whether or not the dictator had in fact fallen, most were certain the tide had turned in Haiti. Said Joseph, "When you have a boiling kettle that you keep tight, it explodes."³⁹¹

To increase the heat on Duvalier, New York Haitians targeted financial aid from the United States. Although the US government announced that it had already withheld certification on \$26 million in aid to the country, Haitian leaders in New York insisted that the United States eliminate all assistance to the Duvalier government. "Right now, people are dying on the streets

³⁸⁹Eva Parziale, "Police Arrest Four as Haitians Demonstrate for Third Day," *Associated Press*, Feb. 1, 1986, AM cycle.

³⁹⁰"Support the Struggle of the Haitian People," Flyer, Concerned Haitians for the Support of the General Strike in Haiti, n.d., box 1, folder 27, Dechoukaj Collection.

³⁹¹Barbara Goldberg, *United Press International*, Jan. 31, 1986, AM cycle.

all over Haiti," said Rev. Antoine Adrien, referring to the fifty-five people killed in Haiti in the previous four days. "We are running out of time," he urged. "The way out is clear." If the United States would suspend all aid to Haiti, he claimed, "Within one week, it will be over." Members of the New York community also urged black Americans to support them, and they enlisted House of Representatives member Major Owens in their effort. Owens agreed, calling on the Reverend Jesse Jackson to "issue a definite call on black Americans to take action."³⁹²

Close to one week after the White House's erroneous report, Haitians in New York and Miami still anxiously waited on news from Haiti. "I can't sleep because I have the feelings that I'm going to see my children," said Saint Sois Charles, a Miami factory worker and father of six who had been separated from his family for eleven years.³⁹³ Finally, on February 7, 1986, they got the news they were waiting for. Shortly before 4:00 o'clock that morning, Jean-Claude Duvalier had fled Haiti.³⁹⁴

The news of Duvalier's departure reached Haitians in the United States before the sun rose on February 7. In the words of *Haiti Progres*, the news "shot like an arrow from Miami to Montreal," and as it did, each community exploded in joyful and cathartic celebration. Although New York was experiencing a nasty winter storm, hundreds of Haitians held a celebration in Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza, followed by a special celebratory mass and an all-night party in East Flatbush, the predominantly Haitian neighborhood nicknamed *La Saline* for its connections to the area of the same name in Port-au-Prince. The next day twenty-five thousand people

³⁹²Barbara Goldberg, *United Press International*, Feb. 3, 1986, AM cycle.

³⁹³Clara Germani, "In Miami's Little Haiti, People Think They Will Soon Be Going Home," *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 5, 1986, 5.

³⁹⁴Jeff Hardy, "Haitian Refugees Celebrate Duvalier's Fall," *United Press International*, Feb. 7, 1986, AM cycle.

carrying banners and draped in red and blue returned to the plaza while Haitian taxi drivers mounted the Haitian flag on their cars as they drove through Brooklyn.³⁹⁵

In the streets of Little Haiti the celebration started before dawn. Soon two to three thousand Haitians were on the streets of the northeastern Miami neighborhood, dancing, singing and marching arm-in-arm through the pouring rain chanting, “*Libete, libete!*” Marlene Athouriste cried, “I’m overwhelmed with joy.” Deeply indentifying with the long struggle of her people, the twenty-seven-year-old exclaimed, “After 28 years of oppression, how would you feel? We’re going back home finally. It is unbelievable. Home, sweet home.” Saying a public prayer, the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste expressed thanks for the opportunity “to see the torturer leave the country we love so much.” He claimed that it was finally time for the Haitian people to collect the divine blessing that was theirs. “Lord Almighty, it is about time you turned a sweet breath to our mouths. We are your children,” said Jean-Juste.³⁹⁶

At the Haitian consulate of Miami, one hundred Haitians sought to confront those unfortunate enough to be associated with the toppled Duvalier regime. Standing between the consulate and the protesters, however, were Miami police in full riot gear. The protesters persisted, chanting, “Down with Duvalier,” and demanding the emergence of those inside. The standoff ended only when the police allowed three members of the crowd to enter the building so that they could see it was empty. Before leaving, however, the protesters left the red and blue

³⁹⁵Eva Parziale, “Miami Haitians Revel Over Duvalier's Departure; Two Men Shot,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 7, 1986, AM cycle; “New York: des compatriots fetent le depart de Duvalier,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb.12-18, 1986, 8; Robin Toner, “Exit from Haiti: Jubilation and Doubt; Haitians in U.S. Hopeful for Democracy,” *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1986, 4; “Entevansyon Ben Dupuy nan manifestasyon 8 fevriye a” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 19-25, 1986.

³⁹⁶Parziale, “Miami Haitians Revel Over Duvalier's Departure; Two Men Shot;” Hardy, “Haitian Refugees Celebrate Duvalier's Fall.”

Haitian flag, replacing the red and black flag that had been displayed during the Duvalier years.³⁹⁷

In Boston, too, Haitians came as close as they could to taking back their government while living in the United States. At 10:30 a.m. on February 7 they burst into Boston's Haitian consulate, tore pictures of the former Haitian president and his wife from the wall, and demanded the key to the building, informing the consul that "since the Haitian government has been toppled, it no longer represents the Haitian people in Boston." Outside of the building, Haitians danced and talked excitedly, waving the blue and red Haitian flag and watching as the red and black flag burned on the sidewalk.³⁹⁸

In the hours and days after Duvalier's departure, there was plenty of celebration in Haiti and throughout the diaspora. But Haitians had their minds on more than mere celebration. There was also the urgent task of defending their freedom now that the dictator was gone. Protesters outside the Haitian consulate in Boston expressed the need for a means to recoup the fortune Duvalier had stolen from the Haitian people; they demanded that the *tontons macoutes* and other members of Duvalier's network be tried for the crimes that they had committed against the people.³⁹⁹ The same desire drove Haitians in Miami into conflict with supporters of Duvalier and with workers at the Haitian consulate. Being away from Haiti, however, the people were limited in what they could do to eliminate the dictator's network and to bring those responsible for state terrorism to justice.

³⁹⁷"Chicago: 200 personnes marchent sur le consulat haitien," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 12-18, 1986, 8; Robin; Haitian Exiles Celebrate in Boston, Miami, New York, *Associated Press*, Feb. 8, 1986, PM cycle.

³⁹⁸Christopher B. Daly, "Boston Haitians Celebrate Collapse of Duvalier Government; Smash Portraits," *Associated Press*, Feb. 7, 1986, PM cycle.

³⁹⁹Daly, "Boston Haitians Celebrate Collapse of Duvalier Government; Smash Portraits."

In Haiti, on the other hand, those who had suffered violence and repression during the Duvalier era carried out a campaign to dismantle the system that had victimized them and to punish the individuals responsible. They called this *dechoukaj*, or “uprooting,” and it was a bloody affair. Known or suspected Duvalier supporters were exposed to violent acts of retribution. Perhaps the most common image associated with *dechoukaj* is that of Duvalier supporters burning to death after having a flaming tire placed around their necks. “Necklacing,” as this form of execution was called, was one of the most grisly manifestations of the uprooting. Another powerful image captures another important aspect of the *dechoukaj*: the sense that the uprooting was a blow against imperialism and a step toward self-determination: in the celebration over Duvalier’s collapse, a statue of Christopher Columbus was torn from its foundation in a public square in Port-au-Prince and thrown into the bay. The people renamed the square for a leader of the resistance to the US occupation, Charlemagne Peralte.⁴⁰⁰

Haitians not only sought vengeance on individual *macoutes*, but they also endeavored to smash the whole system of power Duvalier had used to control them. University students battled to wrest control of their schools from the State. Haitian women marched through the streets of Port-au-Prince, demanding an end to the practice that required them to exchange sex for jobs and celebrating the demise of a regime that especially victimized them. In the countryside, peasants came together to eliminate the system of section chiefs, the network of village strongmen that Duvalier had employed to maintain control outside of the cities. And at the same time, Haitians were also working to put something new in place of that which they were uprooting. New political parties sprang up throughout the country. New newspapers and radio stations popped up all over. And labor unions re-formed or reactivated their members, as all sectors of the

⁴⁰⁰Marx-Vilaire Aristide and Laurie Richardson, “Haiti’s Popular Resistance, 1994,” in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, 161; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 107.

popular movement sought to take advantage of their new freedom. The Haitian people implemented a systematic campaign to literally do away with the filth from the previous decades, scrubbing clean and repainting their city streets and walls. As Paul Farmer has documented, a popular saying at the time was “*Babouket la tonbe*,” which means “The muzzle is off;” the people intended to use their freed voices.⁴⁰¹

A New Era in Nationalist Organizing

The uprooting of the Duvalier dictatorship utterly transformed both Haiti and the Haitian communities of New York and Miami. Duvalier’s departure cleared away many of the obstacles that had hindered close cooperation between movement activists in Haiti and the United States. After the regime’s collapse, communication and travel between Haiti and the United States dramatically increased, bringing the already connected grassroots movements closer together.

With Duvalier out, many who had lived in the United States for many years and had been key members of the opposition outside of Haiti decided to return to their home country. Antoine Adrien and the other Haitian Fathers, who had been such an important part of the anti-Duvalier movement and the asylum campaign in the New York community, all returned to Haiti by 1987. Many of the Haitian women activists who had been active in the United States and had been deeply influenced by the American and the international feminist movements also returned home to join the burgeoning women’s movement in Haiti.⁴⁰² As working people who relied on their US-based jobs and social networks to survive, the majority of Haitians in the United States could

⁴⁰¹Aristide and Richardson, “Haiti’s Popular Resistance, 1994,” 161; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 107; Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 164.

⁴⁰²Charles, “Transnational Dialectic,” 278; Charles, “Gender and Politics,” 152-53.

not afford to return after 1986.⁴⁰³ Still, key figures in the Haitian communities in the United States did go back, and ongoing ties between these individuals and their contacts who remained in the United States encouraged a more transnational social and political movement in the years after 1986.

For those that stayed in the United States, there were many new media and information networks to keep them connected to Haiti. In the wake of Duvalier's departure, many of the journalists that had earlier been forced into exile returned and, with funding from compatriots abroad, launched radio stations with bases in both Haiti and the United States. Haitian radio and television stations also began to use telephone connections to broadcast news from Haiti directly to American cities like New York and Miami. As one source observes, "Now a Haitian immigrant may be sitting in a kitchen in Brooklyn or driving a taxi up the East Side Drive in Manhattan and listening to news of a home town in Haiti."⁴⁰⁴ Radio stations that remained rooted in the Haitian communities of the United States were also transformed by the uprooting of Duvalier. For example, Moment Creole, a New York-based radio station that had before 1986 been principally focused on life in the United States, offering Haitian immigrants information on education, employment, housing, and the legal system, and encouraging Haitians to participate in American politics, after 1986 started featuring reports from Haiti, debates about the country's future, and phoned-in news and commentary straight from the home country.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³Lionel Legros argues that those who returned were mostly the middle class and "intellectuals . . . People that came here to work could not afford [to return]. They still had to stay to work." Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

⁴⁰⁴Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 175.

⁴⁰⁵Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 205.

The collapse of the dictatorship also transformed the shape and function of print media for Haitians at home and abroad. After 1986 the two New York-based Haitian weeklies began distribution in Haiti. They maintained the focus they had always had on Haiti but also continued to feature advertisements and news from New York, Miami, and Montreal.⁴⁰⁶ Like the radio stations and new communication networks, the newspapers began to support information sharing and dialogue between Haiti and the United States. Kim Ives recalls that in 1986 “essentially all of *Haiti Progres* shifted its focus to the ground in Haiti,” and the newspaper established an office in that country. Ives argues that this development had a substantial impact on the future course of events in Haiti. “When *Haiti Progres* arrived in Haiti in 1986, it was like a chemical reaction . . . All of a sudden, you had this revolutionary organ in their hands,” which from that point onward began “affecting the liberation theologians, the young militants” and ultimately contributed to “what became the Lavalas movement [that] brought Aristide to power.”⁴⁰⁷ Like *Haiti Progres*, *Haiti en Marche*, a Miami-based newspaper launched in 1986 by Marcus Garcia, one of the journalists expelled from Haiti in the purges of November 1980, facilitated increased communication between those in Haiti and those abroad.⁴⁰⁸

Beyond increased travel and communication between Haiti and the Haitian communities of the United States, the period after Duvalier’s departure featured the development of what Michel Laguerre has aptly called “border crossing political practices.”⁴⁰⁹ Those who returned to Haiti established political organizations and projects that maintained their connection to New York and Miami and drew critical support from Haitians abroad. Antoine Adrien and William

⁴⁰⁶Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 175.

⁴⁰⁷Ives, interview.

⁴⁰⁸Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 130-31.

⁴⁰⁹Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 157.

Smarth of the Haitian Fathers founded *Tet Ansanm*, an organization that relied on assistance from Haitians in the United States to advance its program of grassroots organizing and enhanced literacy in Haitian Creole. After 1986 many political organizations and parties in Haiti on both the Left and the Right established chapters in New York, Miami, and Montreal. Benjamin Dupuy, leader of the MHL and founder and editor of *Haiti Progres*, also returned to Haiti, where he began building the National Popular Assembly (APN), a political organization that maintained close contact with supporters in New York and Miami. This process of transnationalization ensured that the Haitian communities of the United States would remain closely connected and deeply involved in the unfolding history of Haiti.⁴¹⁰

The migration of formerly US-based Haitian activists back to Haiti and the establishment of transnational political organizations had a lasting impact not only on Haitian politics in the United States but also on politics in Haiti. A twenty-five-year-old named Yves, who identified himself as a “cultural nationalist,” recalled the impact that this process had on the development of an anti-imperialist consciousness among young Haitians. “You know that after February 7 there were a lot of different kinds of people that returned to the country. And there were leftists among them. And they also were anti-imperialists . . . So anti-Americanism developed, with the press conferences” that the leftist groups held. Jean, a student leader from Carrefour, also remembered the impact of “the appearance of a series of groups and individuals who returned and gave press conferences which showed all of the positions of the U.S. on the development of the country.” Guy, a third student activist, linked the political activity of activists who had returned from the United States to the political development of Haitian students, remembering that “the people who returned permitted youth to develop . . . For example, people honored

⁴¹⁰Ives, interview; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 208; Charles, “Haitian Life in New York and the Haitian-American Left,” 299.

Charlemagne Peralte [the leader of the nationalist resistance against the US occupation of Haiti in the early twentieth century] as a true national hero.”⁴¹¹

The uprising in Haiti, the departure of Duvalier, and the establishment of networks and organizations that tightened the connection between Haiti and Haitians in the United States all contributed to what one source characterizes as “an upsurge in Haitian nationalism among people who had become firmly rooted in the U.S.” Following the dictatorship’s collapse,

Haitians in New York, for the first time since the beginning of the migration, flaunted their Haitian identity. Haitian taxi drivers decorated their cabs with bumper stickers declaring “Haiti Libere (Haiti is Liberated).” Haitians could be seen in the subway wearing tee shirts or buttons with Haitian flags. Virtually all Haitian immigrant organizations were swept up in the excitement and began to discuss organizing activities towards Haiti and setting up organizational linkages or offices in Haiti.⁴¹²

Events in 1985 and 1986, culminating in the collapse of the almost thirty-year dictatorship, ushered in “a new era of nationalist organizing” for Haitians in the United States.⁴¹³ But since Haiti continued to be the site of turmoil, haunted by the lingering specter of repression and political violence, Haitian activists had to channel the community’s embrace of Haitian nationalism into ongoing protest rather than sustained celebration. Nonetheless, Duvalier’s departure in February 1986 had fundamentally altered the terrain of Haitian politics in New York and Miami. After this point in 1986, Haitian activists in the United States drew on the expanded communication networks, the media operations that were operating in both Haiti and the United States, and the connections among activists who had returned to Haiti and built cross-border political organizations to inform and to drive their political activism.

⁴¹¹Interview with student activists by Nadine Andre, Dec. 9, 1987, box 1, folder 3, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

⁴¹²Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 163.

⁴¹³Glick Schiller et al., “All in the Same Boat,” 195.

Fighting Against “Duvalierism without Duvalier”

In New York and Miami the Haitian activists that had worked for so long to topple the Duvalier regime and to support the resistance inside Haiti shared the hope that Baby Doc’s departure signified a new beginning for their country. But they also maintained a deep sense of doubt about the prospects for change and a deep fear that “Duvalierism” would persist despite the absence of Jean-Claude, concerns that appeared ever more legitimate as events continued to unfold in Haiti.

After Duvalier’s departure, Haitian leaders, with US government guidance and support, formed the *Conseil National de Gouvernement* (National Council of Government, or CNG).⁴¹⁴ Representing both civilian and military leaders and a range of political positions, the National Council of Government appeared to offer a greater voice to the Haitian people. It took steps to distance itself from the past regime, freeing political prisoners, repealing the Duvalier’s constitution of 1983, and announcing the dissolution of the hated *tontons macoutes*.⁴¹⁵ Despite the appearance of change, however, the CNG did not represent much of a departure from the past. Of the six positions in the National Council of Government, four were occupied by individuals who had previously served the Duvalier family, including Duvalier’s former minister of information and his minister of defense and interior. Heading the National Council of Government was Henri Namphy, a US Army-trained general who had served both Papa Doc and

⁴¹⁴Brenda Gayle Plummer observes that Haiti’s provisional government was “crafted, like other interregnum regimes, with the help of foreign powers represented in Haiti. The U.S. embassy played a major role in persuading U.S.-Army trained General Henri Namphy to be chief of State.” Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 218. Trouillot and Dupuy also document US involvement in the creation of the CNG. See Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 226, and Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 191.

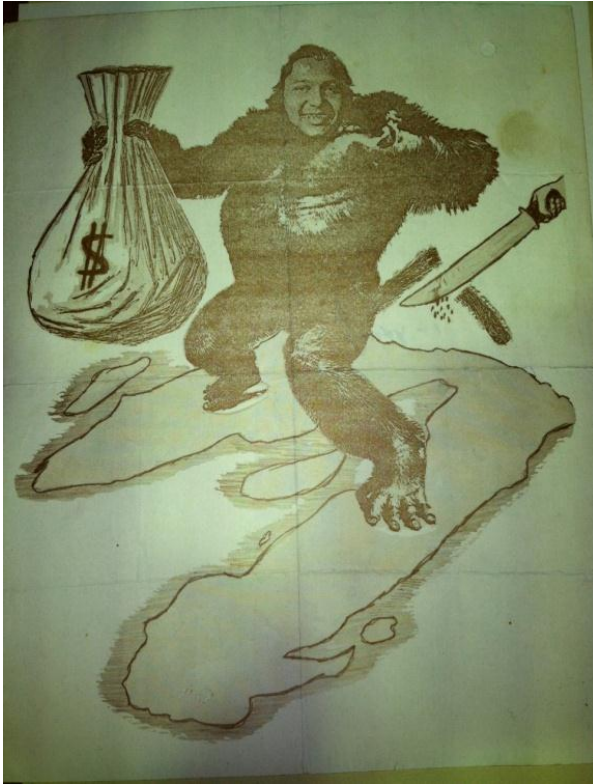
⁴¹⁵“Haiti,” Amnesty International Report, 1987, 173-74, box 1, folder 16, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection; Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 50-51; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 225.

Baby Doc.⁴¹⁶ Regarding the continuity between Duvalier dictatorship and the newly formed CNG, Fritz Longchamp -- program director for the Washington Office on Haiti, an organization founded in 1984 to support democracy and human rights in Haiti -- reported that “people have expressed their frustration over the new National Governing Council. The overwhelming presence on this council of military and civilians who were closely associated with the Duvalier regime is a matter of great concern.”⁴¹⁷ Viter Juste, a businessman and community leader in Little Haiti, agreed. “It doesn't sound to me like Baby Doc has really gone into exile. He has left all his friends in power. Perhaps he has just gone on a European vacation.”⁴¹⁸ In Haiti, too, many were distressed by the degree of continuity between the previous and the current governments. Throughout the spring and summer of 1986, activists distributed flyers demonstrating the need to “cut the monkey’s tail of Duvalierism,” an indication that they interpreted the CNG as a continuation of the dictatorship.

⁴¹⁶Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 218; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 225; Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 191.

⁴¹⁷The Washington Office on Haiti described itself as “an independent, nonprofit, ecumenical organization founded in 1984 to support the Haitian people’s movement for democracy and human rights, with particular emphasis on the effects of U.S. policy on the Haitian poor.” *Democracy Intervention in Haiti: The USAID Democracy Enhancement Project*, Washington Office on Haiti, 1994, front matter.

⁴¹⁸Toner, “Exit from Haiti: Jubilation and Doubt; Haitians in U.S. Hopeful for Democracy;” Jon Nordheimer, “Haitian Exiles Think Many Will Stay in U.S.,” *New York Times*, Feb. 13, 1986, A6.



1. Cutting the Monkey's Tail of Duvalierism. A handwritten note on the reverse side reads, "Haiti, Spring/Summer, 1986. One of many flyers distributed throughout Haiti during the period of 'dechoukaj.' It illustrates cutting the monkey's tail of Duvalierism. Courtesy of *Haiti-Progres*," Source: Haiti Dechoukaj Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Although the first commercial flight from the United States to Haiti after Duvalier's departure was completely packed with excited homeward-bound exiles, many also remained skeptical about the new government and hesitant to immediately rush back to Haiti. While many, like Joseph Etienne of the Haitian Center's Council of New York, expressed their desire to return, they also might have agreed with Etienne that it was wise "to wait to see the shape of the new government" before doing so. The Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste also advised caution. "There was no coup or revolution," he said. And since "we still have a lot of Duvalier's people

in the government” and “we don't know what has changed,” he warned that Haitians considering returning home needed to be careful.⁴¹⁹

An even greater concern for some Haitian activists in the United States was the fear of an American intervention in Haiti if popular unrest continued. Almost immediately after the collapse of Duvalier’s government, this concern began surfacing at events in Haitian communities in the United States. A central message of a large demonstration in Brooklyn on February 8 was “No to American interference.” Two days after Duvalier had left Haiti, a rally and celebration in Miami featured a banner on stage that read “No U.S. Intervention in Haiti.” Likewise, a demonstration on February 15 in the Boston City Hall Plaza announced its first objective as the denunciation of “the menace of American intervention” in Haiti, and a protest in front of the United Nations in New York on February 21, which began as an action against the Namphy-led CNG, soon featured protesters chanting, “USA, CIA, Hands off Haiti!”⁴²⁰

Although the Reagan administration was not inclined to send a US military force to Haiti in 1986, it was, to the dismay of anti-CNG activists, publicly embracing General Namphy and the National Council of Government. After Duvalier’s departure and the formation of the CNG, the United States resumed foreign assistance to Haiti and pledged increased assistance and new sources of aid to the country. US Ambassador to Haiti Brunson McKinley congratulated Namphy on “his sincere commitment to build democratic institutions.” Although “some are dissatisfied that General Namphy has not carried through more basic social and developmental reforms,” Ambassador McKinley acknowledged, the CNG was “doing its best to fulfill its pledge

⁴¹⁹Dan Sewell, “Homesick Haitians Jam First Post-Duvalier Flight,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 13, 1986, AM cycle.

⁴²⁰Phil McCombs, “Haitian Refugees Revel Another Night in Miami; Work to Rebuild Haiti to Follow, Leader Says,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 1986, A28; “Boston: Grande manifestation de solidarite avec la lute du people haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 12-18, 1986, 12; “Pres de 3000 personnes manifestent a New York,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 26-Mar. 4, 1986, 13.

to the Haitian people” and thus “needs and deserves our help and support.”⁴²¹ In November 1986 the Reagan administration invited General Namphy to the White House where he met with the president, the vice president, the secretary of state, and the administrator of the Agency for International Development. An official statement on Namphy’s White House visit declared, “President Reagan expressed his firm support for General Namphy’s efforts to build democratic institutions and achieve the goal of a working democracy.” The White House also took the occasion of Namphy’s visit to herald the increase of US aid to Haiti to just over \$100 million.⁴²²

The American government’s role in overseeing the transition from Duvalier to Namphy and its strong support for the CNG instilled resentment and anti-American sentiment among some student activists in Haiti. In a December 3, 1987, interview, Guy, a seventeen-year-old student activist, described how hostility toward the United States spread in the wake of Duvalier’s departure:

Anti-Americanism developed little by little in Haiti. There were youth who realized that it was the Americans who were the cause of the problems. After February 7 [the day Duvalier left Haiti] it exploded. What made it explode? [Secretary of State George] Schultz was the first one to announce that Jean-Claude had left, but he hadn’t left yet. Then people saw that it was a U.S. Air Force plane that came to get Jean-Claude. As soon as they saw that it was an American compromise, and then out of nowhere the KNG appeared and they asked who formed it? People didn’t quite understand where these people came from, who put them there. So they started asking questions . . . They understood that the Americans gave them arms for repression against the people. Then everyone started to understand.⁴²³

⁴²¹“U.S. Policy toward Haiti: Remarks of U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Brunson McKinley delivered at the Caribbean/Central American Action Conference, Miami, Florida, Nov. 18, 1986,” box 1, folder 16, Amy Wilentz Haiti Collection.

⁴²²White House Statement on President Reagan’s Meeting With President Henri Namphy of Haiti, Nov. 21, 1986. The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan. Accessed online: http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/search/speeches/speech_srch.html.

⁴²³Interview with student activists by Nadine Andre.

Haitian activists in the United States were also distressed by the US government's support for the Namphy regime. In response to Washington's support for the CNG, the Brooklyn-based Committee against Repression in Haiti, the coalition that six years earlier had led the mobilization against the 1980 crackdown that coincided with President Reagan's first election, called a demonstration in Washington, DC, for the end of March 1986. A flyer advertising the demonstration highlighted the three greatest threats to the Haitian people: "the establishment of a Duvalierist junta under the aegis of the United States, the menace of North American intervention in Haiti, and the interference of the State Department in the internal affairs" of the country.⁴²⁴

In Miami, too, members of the Haitian community were critical of US policy toward Haiti, but, as in earlier periods, they linked their protests to the imprisonment and deportation of Haitian refugees. Although developments in Haiti took center stage for many Haitian activists in this period, the campaign in defense of the refugees imprisoned at the Krome Avenue facility and in other immigration prisons never stopped. In fact, the Haitian Refugee Center hoped to channel some of the excitement over Duvalier's departure and the anger over US support for Namphy into the movement for the refugees. As the US government prepared to deport one hundred more Haitian refugees imprisoned at Krome, the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste, the leading voice of grassroots activism in Haitian Miami, addressed a letter to immigration officials. Jean-Juste warned that Haitians of Miami had shown their will to take to the streets the previous week when they demanded and celebrated the end of the dictatorship. Now, he declared, they were willing to do the same thing to defend their compatriots facing deportation.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁴“Grande Manifestation a Washington,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 19-25, 1986, 29.

⁴²⁵“La lutte en faveur des refugies de Krome continue,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 12-18, 1986, 9.

At the end of April 1986 a violent incident in Port-au-Prince further entrenched Haitian activists in their opposition to the Namphy regime. On April 26 tens of thousands of people marched from a service memorializing the estimated sixty thousand people who had perished in the Duvalier years to Fort Dimanche, the prison where many of the victims had lost their lives. The army, though now serving at the pleasure of Henri Namphy rather than of Jean Claude Duvalier, opened fire on the crowd, killing at least six and wounding fifty, according to Amnesty International. When the human rights organization appealed to the Haitian government for an independent inquiry into the Fort Dimanche incident, the Namphy regime responded that while it would conduct an investigation, it considered the army's action the "normal reaction of enlisted soldiers in the face of an attempted invasion by individuals openly encouraged by agitators."⁴²⁶ In the eyes of many US-based activists, the incident confirmed what they had been saying for some time: Namphy represented little more than "Duvalierism without Duvalier."⁴²⁷ The event also drew the attention of Haitians in New York and Miami to one of the leaders of the memorial service: Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Aristide would ultimately become perhaps the most well known figure in the popular movement of Haiti. But in April 1986 he was just one of many leaders in the grassroots insurgency fighting against the Namphy regime. As a young man, Jean-Bertrand Aristide had made his way from a modest, rural upbringing to the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Cite Soleil, where he enrolled in a school run by the Salesian order of the Roman Catholic Church. During this period he embraced the ideas of liberation theology, crucial in his development since the core ideas of liberation for the poor and oppressed shaped every aspect of his subsequent

⁴²⁶"Haiti," Amnesty International Report, 1987, 174.

⁴²⁷Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment* (New York: Verso, 2007), 27; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 109.

political activity and life. In 1979 Aristide left Haiti for Israel, where he studied biblical theology, but he returned to Haiti three years later and began to garner a reputation for his sharp and witty sermons that criticized the Duvalier dictatorship. Such criticism rarely went unnoticed by the dictatorship, so the Salesians sent Aristide to Montreal and into exile where he was less of a threat to the Duvalier regime and the regime was less of a threat to him.⁴²⁸

In January 1985 as the popular movement against the dictatorship was gathering momentum, Aristide returned to Haiti and took a position in the parish of Saint-Jean Bosco, an area at the periphery of the slum neighborhood of La Saline in Port-au-Prince. It was a fortuitous time to return to the country, and Aristide threw himself into the popular movement, soon becoming a center of anti-Duvalier activity in Haiti's capital city. Aristide and the community formed *Solidarite Ant Jen* (SAJ) (Solidarity among Youth), and the poor youth of SAJ partnered with the *ti kominote legliz* (base ecclesiastical communities), grassroots popular organizations associated with the church that were sprouting up in the countryside. From his pulpit Aristide delivered weekly messages of liberation, encouraging the overflow crowds to join the movement for freedom. Despite ominous warnings and a failed attempt on his life, Father Aristide, or *Pe Titid* as he was known in the community, carried on, making Saint-Jean Bosco the locus of Port-au-Prince's popular movement that toppled Duvalier and later fought on to resist the CNG and General Namphy.⁴²⁹

As the conflict between the Namphy regime and anti-government activists escalated in Haiti in the spring and summer of 1986, Haitians in the diaspora found new ways to support the resistance in Haiti. In March the *Union Intersydicale d'Haiti* (UIH) issued an appeal to Haitian

⁴²⁸Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 20-21; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 103-05; Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), x, xii.

⁴²⁹Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 20-21; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 103-05; Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor*, x, xii.

workers in the country and throughout the diaspora to join the upcoming May Day mobilization in Haiti. May Day in 1986 could be historic, the UIH argued, since it was the one hundredth anniversary of the Chicago eight-hour movement and the Haymarket affair, and the fortieth anniversary of the Haitian Revolution of 1946, which represented an important moment in the struggle for labor rights in the country. The New York-based Association of Haitian Workers (ATH) answered the UIH call by sending a delegation to join the International Workers' Day in Haiti. Although the ATH reported disappointment at the size and nature of the May Day events, indicating perhaps the limited influence of the UIH, members of the New York Haitian delegation were able to make a number of appearances on Haitian radio stations to share a statement of solidarity with Haitian workers and to detail ways in which the movement in the United States was working to support the popular movement in Haiti.⁴³⁰

As New York-based activists were trying to assist the rebuilding of the Haitian labor movement, young Haitians in American cities noticed the leading role students were taking in the popular movement. As a result, Haitian students in New York, Miami, and Boston responded by building their own branch of the solidarity campaign. In April 1986 students in New York formed the Haitian Association of Students (ASETHA), announcing that the first meeting of the organization was to be held on April 13 at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn. "The action of students in Haiti has awakened the conscience of youth in the diaspora," the provisional committee of ASETHA declared. The committee saw that it was time to "consolidate and mobilize the students at the university level, vocational and secondary education and establish a close link with other student organizations;" their goal was to "eventually unite in a federation whose head office is in Haiti." At the same time, the founding

⁴³⁰ "Appel de l'Union Intersyndicale d'Haiti," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 19-25, 1986, 15; "L'Association des Travailleurs Haitiens et la fete du 1er Mai," *Haiti Progres*, May 7-13, 1986, 6, 26-27.

members of ASETHA aimed to “elevate the level of awareness of students on social, political, and cultural problems” and generally to “support and defend the interests of students against injustice.”⁴³¹

Later that summer, as students in Haiti went on strike against the leaders of the CNG, Haitian students in the United States mobilized to support them. On June 28 the Association of Haitian Students of Miami issued a statement supporting the National Federation of Students of Haiti and condemning the CNG and American interference in Haiti. The next day the Association of Haitian Students of New York and Massachusetts followed suit. As *Haiti Progres* observed, the Haitian students, “even far from home, intend to contribute to the campaign conducted by the popular, progressive sector in Haiti.”⁴³²

In the fall, protests in Haiti multiplied. In September, protests against the CNG led by students and young people sprang up once again in the city of Gonaives. “They still haven't done anything for the people except change the black and red flag to blue and red,” charged Alphonse Joseph, one of the Gonaives organizers. In Port-au-Prince, those calling for the resignation of Namphy and the other leaders of the CNG staged back-to-back days of protest. While praying and singing hymns in front of the National Palace, protesters were suddenly met by police who fired rubber bullets and grenades of tear gas into the crowd. By early October people were demonstrating their anger and frustration with the CNG all over Haiti as the cities of Port-de-Paix, Cap Haitien, Jeremie, Les Cayes, and Miragoane all joined Gonaives and Port-au-Prince as sites of popular unrest. Fearing the threat posed to his regime, General Namphy warned that

⁴³¹ “Les etudiants haitiens s’organisent,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 9-15, 1986, 10.

⁴³² “Les etudiants haitiens de New York et Boston se solidarisent avec les etudiants en Haiti,” *Haiti Progres*, July 2-8, 1986, 13, 30; “Miami: l’Association des Etudiants Haitiens appuie les revendications populaires en Haiti,” *Haiti Progres*, July 2-8, 1986, 13, 29.

Haiti was at “the edge of anarchy.” Participants in the popular movement in Haiti and the United States, on the other hand, saw promise rather than peril in the widespread uprisings.⁴³³

Haitians activists in New York and Miami responded to the escalation in Haiti with a major escalation of their own, revealing the extent to which the movements in Haiti and in the United States were becoming ever more tightly joined. Ironically, it was a backfired attempt to capture the support of the Haitian diaspora by the imperiled Namphy regime that helped clarify this relationship. At the end of September, the CNG endeavored to rally the diaspora by inviting Haitians to return to the country. In response, a group of Haitians living in cities across the United States and around the world rejected the appeal, saying, “Duvalierism is in full swing in Haiti;” as a result, the exiled Haitian remained “a stranger in his own country.” The statement went on to explain that even though they could not return to Haiti, those in the diaspora identified with the Haitian people, “sons and daughters of the same nation, members of the same body, even victims of a dictatorial regime,” and they remained “comforted by the tenacity of our people to conquer their political rights.” At the same time, the Haitian Refugee Center, the heart of the popular movement in Miami, also issued a statement of solidarity with the Haitian people, as did other elements of the Miami community. The Association of Haitian Students, too, issued a statement denouncing the CNG offer and stating support for the people of Haiti.⁴³⁴

⁴³³Yves Colon, “Men Armed with Clubs, Machetes, Break Up Anti-Government Demonstration,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 12, 1986, AM cycle; “Anti-government demonstration in Haiti,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Sept. 25, 1986; Michel Lamisere, “Anti-government demonstrations in two cities,” *United Press International*, Sept. 26, 1986, AM cycle; Michel Lamisere, “Police fire bullets, tear gas to break up protest,” *United Press International*, Sept. 27, 1986, AM cycle; “Anti-government demonstrations continue in Haiti,” *Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, Oct. 4, 1986; Joseph B. Treaster, “Haiti Lingers on ‘The Edge of Anarchy,’” *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1986, section 4, 3.

⁴³⁴“Message de solidarite de la diaspora au peuple haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 8-14, 1986, 13, 27; “Miami: un message de solidarite au peuple haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 8-14, 1986, 13; “Miami: un avertissement au CNG du Comite de Solidarite avec la lutte du peuple haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 22-28, 1986, 19, 25; “New York: l’Association des Etudiants Haitiens denonce l’appel demagogique du CNG a la diaspora,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 15-21, 1986, 15.

In mid-October activists in the Haitian communities of both New York and Miami stepped up their involvement in the effort to support the anti-CNG resistance in Haiti. The Miami-based Committee of Solidarity with the Haitian People announced they would lead four straight days of protests and picketing outside the Haitian consulate of Miami. These actions were presented as a way for Haitians in Miami to act “‘*en symbiose*’ (in harmony) with the popular movement in Haiti.”⁴³⁵ Haitian activists in Miami also staged numerous demonstrations through the month of October 1986 in the largest mobilizations in Miami since Duvalier had fled Haiti.⁴³⁶

Activists in the New York community sought to mobilize the community *en symbiose* with the resistance in Haiti. Reminding Haitians of the role they had played in tearing down the Duvalier dictatorship, the Committee against Repression in Haiti declared that it was time to reinvigorate such action. “Once again, as before the fall of Duvalier, democratic and progressive organizations, youth groups, priests and engaged laity . . . [all] require the support of the diaspora in their fight.”⁴³⁷ At an emergency meeting in Brooklyn at the headquarters of the Association of Haitian Workers (ATH), a group affiliated with Ben Dupuy’s Movement for Haitian Liberation (MHL) and the newspaper *Haiti Progres*, activists formed the Ad Hoc Committee to Support the Struggle of the Haitian People. Reporting on the development, *Haiti Progres* commented on the role of Haitian activists abroad: “The Haitian Diaspora in the U.S. is a force that must be maximally utilized.” The article pointed out that as the CNG became “more and more isolated,” it tried to suppress the popular movement. But Haitians in the diaspora could “help our people

⁴³⁵“Miami: actions en symbiose avec le mouvement populaire en Haiti,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 8-14, 1986, 12.

⁴³⁶“Miami: grande manifestation en solidarite avec la lutte du peuple haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 15-21, 1986, 13, 27; “Manifestation a Miami: l’opinion publique nord-americaine sensibilisee,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 22-28, 1986, 19; “Miami: une nouvelle manifestation contre le CNG,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 29-Nov. 4, 1986, 19.

⁴³⁷“Appel a la diaspora! Supportons la lutte du peuple contre le CNG,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 8-14, 1986, 12.

be the *coup de grace* for this illegal government, [and] at the same time, uproot imperialism.”⁴³⁸

On December 6 nearly two thousand people participated in a march and demonstration against the CNG and its American support at Brooklyn’s Grand Army Plaza, the first major action since Duvalier’s departure brought thousands into the street on January 11.⁴³⁹

While thousands of Haitians answered the call to protest in Miami and New York, not everyone supported actions like the December 6 demonstration in Brooklyn. The conservative newspaper *Haiti Observateur*, for example, had called on its readers to boycott the action. Seeing the action as the work of *Haiti Progres*, its ideological and political opponent, *Haiti Observateur* refused to support the demonstration and ran the headline, “No to the Demonstration of [*Haiti Progres* editor-in-chief] Ben Dupuy”⁴⁴⁰ Despite the opposition, however, activists at *Haiti Progres* and other organizations in New York and Miami were increasingly able to raise consciousness of the relationship of Haitians in the United States to the struggle back home; in the years following Duvalier’s departure, they were also increasingly able to mobilize their own Haitian communities.

As 1986 came to a close, people in Haiti, New York, and Miami had experienced a major transformation. The previous year, which had witnessed the collapse of an almost thirty-year dictatorship and the popular fury and excitement that had surrounded that event, turned over new ground in both Haiti and the Haitian communities of the United States. And in the struggle against “Duvalierism without Duvalier,” activists in Haiti, New York, and Miami would, in close cooperation, continue to forge new paths.

⁴³⁸“New York: la communaute s’aprete a manifester,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 15-21, 1986, 13, 27.

⁴³⁹“New York: la diaspora sentient la lutte du peuple haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 10-16, 1986, 16-17, 26-27.

⁴⁴⁰“New York: la diaspora sentient la lutte du peuple haitien.”

This period of new opportunities and political openings had, somewhat ironically, been initiated by a severe crackdown on anti-Duvalier forces in Haiti as well as on Haitian refugees attempting to enter the United States. In 1980 the repression in Haiti that accompanied the election of President Ronald Reagan temporarily closed the door on the political opening of the Carter years. But the crackdown on the grassroots resistance in Haiti caused activists in the United States to intensify their anti-Duvalier organizing. And the Duvalier regime's effort to force opposition journalists and other leading dissidents into exile tightened the connections between the anti-Duvalier resistance inside and outside Haiti. At the same time, the Reagan administration's stringent new policies that had been introduced to staunch the flow of Haitian refugees to the United States further galvanized the refugee movement.

From 1980 to 1986, and especially after February 1986, activists in Haiti and in the United States developed a closely linked, cross-border movement. Haitians in the United States recognized that they were part of a border-crossing movement that was *en symbiose* with the movement in Haiti. Furthermore, activists in each location drew upon this international movement, first as a tool in their battle against "Duvalierism without Duvalier" and later as a tool to construct a democratic alternative to "Duvalierism" and to empower Haitians seeking freedom and equal treatment in the United States.

Chapter 4

A Growing People's Movement, 1987-1989

On February 7, 1987, Haitians in the United States marked the first anniversary of the collapse of Duvalier's dictatorship. In Miami the day began with a memorial service for the victims of the Duvalier regime and for the woman killed after being struck by a car in Little Haiti in the previous year's celebration. In the afternoon the unity of the memorial service gave way to discord, revealing the level of frustration felt by Haitian activists one year after Duvalier. In Little Haiti some attended a block party featuring a fashion show, live music, and food vendors. At the same time, several hundred angry protesters approached the Haitian consulate, carrying signs that read "Namphy Must Go" and "We Want True Democracy!" Carmen Biambi, an organizer of the protest, insisted, "Haiti is under a state of siege, and people are getting arrested day and night." She accused organizers of the Little Haiti festival of being "pro-government loyalists," a charge Henri C. Marcellus, director of the Radio Cultural Club, a co-sponsor of the event, denied. Whether the day's competing events revealed differing perspectives on Namphy and the CNG, one thing was clear. The jubilation of the year before for many had faded.⁴⁴¹

On the streets of Port-au-Prince the scene contrasted even more starkly with that of the year before. There was no joyous celebration or thrilling destruction of monuments to Duvalier. Instead, the capital was eerily calm. Fearing violence, most Haitians stayed inside and off the streets. Stores remained closed. To guard against what he called the "demogogic and anarchic forces that wish to direct the nation on a path of chaos," Lieutenant General Namphy sent armored vehicles and truckloads of soldiers into the streets and ordered others to sack the homes and offices of opposition leaders, arresting five in the days leading up to the anniversary.

⁴⁴¹A.J. Dickerson, "Haitian Exiles Mark First Anniversary of Duvalier Downfall," *Associated Press*, Feb. 7, 1987.

Observing Haiti just over a year after Duvalier's departure, the North American Congress on Latin America reported that Haiti "remains in an eerie and uneasy interregnum. Rather than revolution, the transition represents a continuum, suggesting the French adage, *plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose* – the more things change, the more they stay the same."⁴⁴² In Haiti, as in the diaspora, one year after Duvalier there was little to celebrate.⁴⁴³

Given the situation in Haiti, many Haitians in New York and Miami who hoped to return to a post-Duvalier Haiti were still reluctant to make the trip. Some had returned, including the Haitian Fathers, Ben Dupuy, and other leaders of the popular movement in the diaspora. The Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste of the Miami Haitian Refugee Center had been back to Haiti four times since Duvalier's departure but still insisted that things would fundamentally have to change for him and many other Haitians for them to return permanently. "Unless there is some stability and development, I don't think we will go back," said Jean-Juste. Lucien Christophe, a forty-three-year-old Miami businessman, agreed, saying, "We have been working to build something here, and it is hard to give it up to go to a situation where you could have nothing. Duvalier is gone, but the things of Duvalier are still there." For many Haitians in the diaspora, the persistent "things of Duvalier" included both political repression and the lack of economic opportunity in Haiti.⁴⁴⁴

As they had during the Duvalier era, Haitians at home and abroad saw the American government's hand in the persistence of Duvalierism. Reports of US military assistance to Haiti, which in 1987 helped the Haitian military grow in size and which supplied upgraded weapons

⁴⁴²NACLA Report on the Americas, May/June, 1987, 20, box 1, folder 2, Amy Wilentz Collection.

⁴⁴³Joseph B. Treaster, "Haitians Mark Their First Year without Duvalier," *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1987.

⁴⁴⁴Dan Sewell, "Few Haitians Going Home Year after Fall of Duvalier," *Associated Press*, Feb. 2, 1987, PM cycle.

and military advisors trained to school Haitian soldiers and police in “disturbance control techniques,” seemed to confirm the perception that the United States was backing repression.⁴⁴⁵

Attempting to counter the increasingly negative image of the US presence in Haiti, State Department officials circulated a memo among US Mission employees stressing that military aid to Haiti represented less than 1.5 percent of the total economic assistance the United States provided to the country. Regarding the civil disturbance training and equipment the United States was providing to the Namphy government, it was, the memo stated, “designed to give these [Haitian] soldiers the ability to deal with genuine threats to public security without resorting to inappropriate force, which has led to injuries and even loss of life in the past.”⁴⁴⁶

Many Haitians, however, appeared unconvinced that such assistance was good for their country. Walking through downtown Port-au-Prince in early 1987, one could see “U.S. Out of Haiti” spray-painted on city walls.⁴⁴⁷ Resentment against the United States also reflected the desire of some Haitians to break free of the economic model imposed by Washington. As discussed earlier, the importation of US-produced rice and the imposition of North American white pigs were policies that Haitian peasants believed undercut their ability to survive. And the export-oriented assembly industry, proposed as the economic salvation of the country, was also seen by critics as something that benefited the wealthy and international investors much more than it did ordinary Haitians. Giving voice to this frustration, Jean-Bertrand Aristide criticized US presence in Haiti: “U.S. companies put in one dollar and take out four.” Only a small number of Haitians

⁴⁴⁵“U.S. Military Advisors in Haiti to Train the Local Army,” *Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, May 27, 1987.

⁴⁴⁶“Information Memo” on Security Assistance to U.S. Mission Employees from USIS, Oct. 13, 1987, box 1, folder 16, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

⁴⁴⁷Pierre-Yves Glass, “U.S. Viewed with Resentment, Distrust by Many Haitians,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 18, 1987, AM cycle.

benefited from the country's relationship with the United States, Artistide argued; he claimed that "the Americans haven't helped the poor people. They help the rich, the army."⁴⁴⁸

In the United States, Haitians viewed their continued exile and the ongoing refugee crisis as evidence of the continuity between Duvalier and the leaders that succeeded him in the National Council of Government (CNG). As *Haiti Progres* observed in April 1987, refugees kept attempting to flee Haiti despite the fact that Duvalier was gone and a more "democratic climate is supposed to reign in Haiti." But "the same causes produce the same effects," the newspaper noted, concluding that "from the persistent attempts to flee the country we can measure the extent of 'change' that took place in the country from Duvalier to the CNG."⁴⁴⁹

The Haitian Refugee Center and its partner organization *Kombit Libete* continued to be the driving force in the Haitian grassroots movement in Miami. However, in the wake of Duvalier's departure, *Kombit Libete* became *Komite Veye Yo*, or *Veye Yo* as the group was known. Translated as "Watch them," *Veye Yo* signified its members' suspicion of the new Haitian government and their belief in the need for active vigilance of events in Haiti and all those that would usurp the popular uprising taking place there. In the spring of 1987 *Veye Yo* announced its intention to facilitate a "permanent mobilization against the CNG and to demonstrate the refusal of the Haitian people with respect to North American military aid" to Haiti. Towards this end, *Veye Yo* called Haitians of Miami to join a demonstration every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from noon until one o'clock in the heart of Little Haiti.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸Glass, "U.S. Viewed with Resentment, Distrust by Many Haitians;" Pierre-Yves Glass, "Farmers, Importers Battle over Rice from U.S.," *Associated Press*, Feb. 18, 1987, AM cycle; Diederich, "Swine Fever Ironies;" Chris Hengry, "Haiti: Stalemate over Introduction of Foreign Pigs," *Inter Press Service*, Feb. 16, 1987.

⁴⁴⁹"Voyage au bout de la nuit' d'Haitian camp de concentration de Krome," *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 22-28, 1987, 12.

⁴⁵⁰"Refugies haitiens a Miami!," *Haiti Progres*, May 6-12, 1987, 22.

While Haitian activists in the New York and Miami were dismayed over the unfinished nature of the uprooting and the ongoing refugee crisis, the spring also brought hope. In March 1987 the Cuban-Haitian Adjustment Act went into effect. A provision of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, the new law gave Haitians and Cubans who arrived as part of the large wave of refugees in the early 1980s a chance to apply for permanent residency. As long as they had arrived before January 1, 1982, refugees were eligible for residency, a provision that not only would allow them to stay in the United States without fear of imprisonment and deportation but that also would make it much easier to travel back and forth between Haiti and the United States. This provision provided tremendous relief for people like Vilbert Myrthil, a thirty-nine-year-old co-owner of a welding shop in Little Haiti who came to Florida by boat as part of the great surge in Haitian refugees at the end of the 1970s. The same was true for Marie Joseph, a forty-eight-year-old resident of New York. “I’ve been waiting so long,” said Joseph. “Now I can go back to Haiti and see my family and bring them back to New York.” On the first day the law was enacted, the Miami INS offices were flooded with thousands of Haitians eager to file an application for residency.⁴⁵¹

The passage of the Cuban-Haitian Adjustment Act was the product of years of hard work, coordinated by a leading organization in the refugee movement, the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees (NCHR). Michael Hooper, the executive director of the NCHR, authored the bill, after which the NCHR and its allies exerted substantial effort to mobilize political support

⁴⁵¹“Thousands of Haitians Take Advantage of First Day of Residency Change,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 11, 1987, PM cycle; Morris S. Thompson, “Haitian Refugees’ Uncertainty Ending; New Law Helps Many Who Fled to U.S. Seeking Political Asylum,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 4, 1987, A6; Elizabeth Neuffer, “Haitians Find Hope in Special Status,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1987, section 1, part 2, 42.

for the legislation.⁴⁵² The legislative campaign ultimately won the active support of influential members of the labor and civil rights communities. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) put forth a resolution in support of the legislation, and AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, also a member of the Executive Committee of the NCHR, sent a letter of support to Congressman Peter Rodino, who had introduced the legislation in the House of Representatives.⁴⁵³ Also in support of the campaign, Clarence N. Wood, vice president of the National Urban League, addressed a letter to Immigration and Naturalization Commissioner Alan Nelson, insisting that “any regularization of Cubans must also include the regularization of this comparable group of Haitians.”⁴⁵⁴ The executive directors of the League of United Latin American Citizens and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights also sent letters of support.⁴⁵⁵

When the Cuban-Haitian Adjustment Act finally became law, it was a milestone achievement, albeit with significant limitations. The new law was attached to the larger Immigration Reform and Control Act, which established stiffer sanctions on employers of the undocumented workers and authorized expanded enforcement against those in the country illegally. These aspects of the legislation would hurt undocumented Haitians in the United States,

⁴⁵²“U.S. Senate Votes to Legalize Haitian Refugees,” *Haiti Observateur*, Sept. 20-27, 1985, box 25, folder 4, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; “Long Overdue Justice for Haitian Refugees,” *Haiti Observateur*, July 4-11, 1986, box 25, folder 7, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

⁴⁵³ILGWU “Resolution on Haitian Refugees and Haiti,” n.d., box 25, folder 9, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; Letter to Congressman Peter W. Rodino Jr. from Lane Kirkland, Feb. 23, 1984, box 32, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

⁴⁵⁴Letter to Alan Nelson from Clarence N. Wood, Jan. 26, 1984, box 28, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

⁴⁵⁵Letter to Congressman Peter W. Rodino Jr. from Arnoldo S. Torres, Feb. 28, 1984, box 32, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection; Letter to Congressman Peter W. Rodino Jr. from Ralph G. Neas and Benjamin L. Hooks, March 27, 1984, box 32, folder 2, Ira Gollobin Haitian Refugee Collection.

Michael Hooper was quick to point out. The Cuban-Haitian Adjustment Act also gave legal status only to those who could verify that they had arrived before January 1, 1982, leaving many Haitian refugees still in limbo. Nonetheless, Hooper wrote for *Haiti Observateur*, “The 32 member organizations of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees and myself personally are proud to have been able to work to craft and propose legislation to bring a minimum of justice to the lives of the Haitian boat people who have suffered for so long.”⁴⁵⁶

In Haiti, too, the first months of 1987 brought promising signs that the efforts of grassroots activists were bearing fruit. In January 1987 a broad range of popular organizations in Haiti came together under the leadership of schoolteacher Victor Benoit to form the *Komite Nasyonal Kongres Organizasyon Demokratik* (National Committee of the Congress of Democratic Organizations), or KONAKOM. In a statement issued at the conclusion of its first meeting, KONAKOM declared that one year after Duvalier’s departure, no meaningful changes had taken place in the country and therefore the Congress of Democratic Organizations was forming to ensure democracy, end poverty, and protect the freedom of all segments of the population.⁴⁵⁷

Another hopeful development was the creation of a new constitution that limited the power of the president, decentralized political power from Port-au-Prince, and elevated Creole and Voodoo, the language and the religion of the majority of Haitians, to nationally-recognized status. Although the previous year’s election of a national assembly to draft the constitution attracted little interest, what emerged, according to a report by the North American Congress on

⁴⁵⁶“Long Overdue Justice for Haitian Refugees.”

⁴⁵⁷“National Democratic Organisation Set Up in Haiti,” *Tass* (Havana, Cuba), Feb.2, 1987; Greg Chamberlain, “Up by the Roots,” *NACLA Report on the Americas XXI*, no. 3 (1987): 22-23, in *Libete*, 158; Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 54.

Latin America, was “a daringly liberal constitution promising rights most Haitians have never known.”⁴⁵⁸ Once it became clear that the new constitution was different from those that preceded it, it began to gather support. The proposed constitution also reflected many of the demands articulated by the member organizations of KONAKOM, another reason for the heightened interest in and support for the document. What’s more, aspiring politicians in the diaspora appreciated that the national assembly rolled back the CNG’s efforts to exclude them from seeking elected office in Haiti, a right they would enjoy under the proposed constitution. “I am for the constitution because it is the first one really in the interest of all the miserable people,” said Alexander Flerum, an unemployed ironworker from Leogane. However, some considered the new constitution less significant. As one retired surveyor remarked, “The constitution on paper is good, but experience tells me it won’t be respected.” Despite some questions about how much the new governing document would change the situation in Haiti, it enjoyed a substantial degree of support and would become an important symbol in succeeding political struggles in Haiti.⁴⁵⁹

Even though KONAKOM and the new constitution enjoyed much popular support, not all elements of the grassroots movement got behind either initiative. It was, according to the leftist Democratic Unity Confederation (KID), “a pretty flower with no fragrance, fine sounding promises . . . aimed at putting the people to sleep.”⁴⁶⁰ In March organizations representing the grassroots Left came together to create a new confederation that would oppose the constitution.

⁴⁵⁸Greg Chamberlain, “Up by the Roots,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, May/June 1987, 20, box 1, folder 2, Amy Wilentz Collection.

⁴⁵⁹Joseph B. Treaster, “Haitian Assembly Works to Draft a Democracy,” *New York Times*, Mar. 6, 1987, A6; Pierre-Yves Glass, “Draft Constitution Approved; Referendum Set for March 29,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 10, 1987; Pierre-Yves Glass, “Haitian Vote Appears Heavily in Favor of Constitution,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 29, 1987; Chamberlain, “Up by the Roots,” 20; Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 27.

⁴⁶⁰Chamberlain, “Up by the Roots,” 20.

In Saint-Jean Bosco, the home parish of Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, one thousand people crowded into a community hall to hold the founding meeting of the National Popular Assembly (APN). The APN was a national organization made up of local popular assemblies representing peasants and urban workers. Ben Dupuy, editor of *Haiti Progres* and longtime activist in New York, was one of the chief figures behind the founding of the APN. With the launch of the APN, Dupuy sought to create a more radical alternative to KONAKOM, which he considered too reformist. Instead of focusing on the new constitution and the elections scheduled for November, the APN advocated direct action, such as land occupations, demonstrations, strikes, and grassroots organizing and education. Francois Pierre-Louis, another leading figure of the APN and member of Dupuy's New York-based network, explained, "APN's approach is different in that we think the origins of Haiti's social, political, and economic problems lies in class conflict and the country's heavy dependence on the United States and other capitalist countries." One of the APN's critics claimed that the organization "want[s] to immediately install a revolutionary people's democracy," a charge that Dupuy and other founding members would have likely agreed with.⁴⁶¹

Along with KONAKOM, the founding of the APN illustrates the blossoming of a diverse grassroots movement in Haiti in the spring of 1987. In addition, the APN's roots and its ongoing engagement with organizations in the United States provides an interesting example of the border-crossing politics that connected Haiti with other centers of movement activity after 1986. The APN was directly connected to key grassroots organizations in New York and Miami, organizations that often promoted its vision and its activity to members in the diaspora. The Brooklyn-based Association of Haitian Workers (ATH), which was also affiliated with Dupuy

⁴⁶¹Ives, interview; "The National Popular Assembly: Profile of a Mass Organization," *Haiti Report*, Nov. 1988, 2-4; Chamberlain, "Up by the Roots," 20.

and his earlier organization, the Haitian Liberation Movement (MHL), sent a statement of support and solidarity to the founding meeting of the APN as did *Veye Yo* from Miami.⁴⁶² From the summer of 1987 onward, Dupuy and his supporters drew on this network of organizations; in return, to stay connected to their allies in other cities and countries, movement participants could turn to Dupuy's *Haiti Progres*, now distributed widely in Port-au-Prince, Miami, and New York.

In the spring of 1987, the achievements of grassroots activists in both Haiti and the United States gave Haitians reason to be cautiously hopeful. The passage of the Cuban-Haitian Adjustment Act was a significant achievement by Haitian activists and their supporters in the labor and civil rights communities. The development of a diverse grassroots movement in Haiti with close connections to the grassroots movement in New York and Miami also held out much promise. That summer, however, the struggle between the CNG and the popular movement suddenly intensified, and the sharpened conflict threw Haitians in Haiti, New York, and Miami into emergency mode.

Under Attack

At the end of June, the Confederation of Autonomous Haitian Workers (CATH), according to one report, "the most active union [in Haiti] . . . with scores of affiliates in industry, the transport sector, and peasant cooperatives," called a forty-eight-hour general strike to protest the economic policies of Namphy and the CNG.⁴⁶³ In response, the Namphy regime moved to dissolve the union, sending soldiers to union offices and arresting five, including CATH

⁴⁶²"New York: l'Association des travailleurs Haitiens donne son appui a l'Assemblee Populaire," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 4-10, 1987, 11; "Miami: le Comite Veye Yo soutient l'Assemblee Populaire," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 11-17, 1987, 10.

⁴⁶³Michael S. Hooper, "The Monkey's Tail Still Strong," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, May/June, 1987, 27, box 1, folder 2, Amy Wilentz Collection.

executive secretary Jean Auguste Mezieux. At the same time, Namphy moved to further circumscribe his opponents' influence by announcing that he would be the sole arbiter of Haiti's upcoming elections rather than allowing the Provisional Electoral Council to oversee elections as directed by the newly approved constitution. In response, the multi-faceted and, at times, divided popular movement issued a unified call for a general strike to protest Namphy's action. On June 29, the cities of Jacmel, Petit Goave, St. Marc, Les Cayes, and the capital city of Port-au-Prince were shut down. Protesters erected burning barricades of tires and garbage on the streets of the cities and constructed a burning roadblock that paralyzed the highway running from St. Marc to Port-au-Prince. In their attempt to dismantle the barricades and break the strike, the Haitian army killed at least six and wounded many more in the first day of the action. However, the government's show of force failed to break the strike, which continued to paralyze the country for a second and a third day.⁴⁶⁴

Acting in concert with the general strike in Haiti, Haitians in Miami also mobilized. On the third day of the general strike, Haitians assembling for a regular meeting of *Veye Yo* occupied the street outside the Haitian Refugee Center in Little Haiti and called for an end to the CNG and an end to US support to the Namphy regime. Only one day earlier Father Willy Romelus, bishop from the Haitian city of Jeremie, had called for the resignation of the CNG. On the streets of Miami, Haitians repeated Romelus' exhortation to "*rache manyok, bay te a blanch*" (uproot the plants, clear the land of Duvalierism). The next day more than eight hundred Haitians massed

⁴⁶⁴Michel Lamisere, "Haiti Dissolves Leftist Union Group," *United Press International*, June 24, 1987, AM cycle; "Parties of All Persuasions Condemn Decree on Election Rules," *Associated Press*, June 24, 1987; "Haitians Strike to Protest Government Decree," *Associated Press*, June 29, 1987; "Six Reported Killed as Protests over Elections Break Out in Haiti," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, July 1, 1987, 4A.

outside the Haitian consulate in Miami to call for the departure of the Namphy regime.⁴⁶⁵

Finally, after days of determined protest in Haiti and abroad, the Namphy regime announced that it would reverse its decision and place control of the elections back in the hands of the Provisional Electoral Council.⁴⁶⁶

This concession by the CNG did not resolve the standoff, however, as opponents of the government took Namphy's backtracking as an opportunity to go on the offensive. One week after the initial launch of the general strike, Haiti was again paralyzed. This time, however, the demand was for the CNG to step down. As protests continued, so did violent reprisals by soldiers. By the end of June, at least 28 people were dead and 110 were wounded.⁴⁶⁷

As the crisis in Haiti entered its fourth week, the coordinating committee of fifty-seven organizations, including the National Committee of the Congress of Democratic Organizations (KONAKOM), issued an appeal to the Haitian people to sustain the struggle against the CNG, to continue the general strike, and to support CATH, the union federation under attack by the Namphy regime. "The people are standing fast, in order to show that it no longer wants that CNG," the statement proclaimed. The statement also exhorted the people to resist the government:

The people will do nothing, not go to elections or anything else under this *Macoute* government, which is a totally dependent flunky of a foreign government . . . We ask all chauffeurs, all merchants, all workers, all civil servants, all the unemployed, all patriots

⁴⁶⁵“Miami: manifestation sur manifestation contre le KNG-PRAN,” *Haiti Progres*, July 8-14, 1987, 13; *Aristide: An Autobiography* (Marynoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 78.

⁴⁶⁶Jim Mannion, “New Violence Shakes Haiti; Election Decree Revoked,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, July 3, 1987, 2A; Joseph B. Treaster, “Military Leaders in Haiti Yield on Plans for Control of Elections,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1987, A1.

⁴⁶⁷Hooper, “The Monkey’s Tail Still Strong;” Joseph B. Treaster, “Calls Grow Amid Violence for Ouster of Haiti’s Rulers,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1987, section 1, 4; Joseph B. Treaster, “Haiti Protest Leaders Reject Concessions,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1987, section 1, 3; Jim Mannion, “General Strike Cripples Haiti as Opposition Softens Demands,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, July 7, 1987, 6A.

who are struggling to emerge from the darkness in both Port-au-Prince and the provinces, to respect the strike directive. We specially ask Gonaives and Cap Haitien to stand fast and not stray from the path of deliverance until that CNG steps down.

The statement concluded, “Long live the constitution of 1987. Long live the people’s alternative. Long live the CATH. Long live democracy for Haiti.”⁴⁶⁸

Observing the prolonged crisis, the US State Department appeared frustrated with all sides of the conflict and worried about the outcome. In a confidential memo to State Department officials and US Mission employees, US Ambassador to Haiti Brunson McKinley argued that General Namphy had “provoked the crisis by badly miscalculating the public mood and his own room for maneuver.” But the anti-government opposition was also to blame, McKinley indicated. “Overconfident after their initial victories, [the opposition] decided to push for the departure of the CNG. Groups of the democratic left (i.e. interested in elections) decided to make common cause with diehard rejectionists” including ‘the communists’ and ‘the New York-based *Haiti-Progres* group’.” As a result, “control of the strike and public perception of it slipped inevitably towards the left,” McKinley warned, citing as evidence a march led by Rene Theodore of PUCH (the United Haitian Communist Party) “in which red banners were waved and at least one American flag burnt.” In addition, Ambassador McKinley noted that the month-long crisis had also heightened the profile of “Father Aristide, the radical firebrand” who had “reemerged in the second half of the crisis in an overtly political guise.” Considering the outlook for Haiti, the ambassador argued that “the current crisis may be coming to an end,” noting that public support for continuing the general strike seemed to be waning. Still, “the crisis has led to a sharp and unhealthy polarization,” Ambassador McKinley concluded, and the United States

⁴⁶⁸“Haiti: Opposition Calls on People to Support Strike,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 18, 1987.

could not be particularly confident in either the CNG or the Haitian politicians that might replace it.⁴⁶⁹

Like certain State Department officials, Haitian activists in the United States were watching the protracted struggle in Haiti carefully. What is notable about the activity in the Haitian communities of New York and Miami in the summer of 1987 is how in sync the US-based activists seemed to be with the activists and actions on the ground in Haiti. In early July, when the anti-government opposition launched the second phase of the general strike in Haiti, five hundred Haitian protesters and their supporters held a march of their own in New York.⁴⁷⁰ On July 11, when leaders of three Haitian political parties in Haiti made a public call for an unlimited general strike to continue until the CNG collapsed – an effort they were unable to sustain, as many as two thousand people marched through the Miami neighborhood of Little Haiti and more than one thousand people participated in a demonstration at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn.⁴⁷¹ Haitian activists in the United States were able to parallel the action in Haiti so effectively, in part, because there were members who participated in the struggle at both locations. For example, some like Ben Dupuy of the APN and *Haiti Progres*, participated directly in the struggle in Haiti and then traveled to the United States to mobilize the community in its support for the struggle in Haiti. Furthermore, transnational media like Dupuy's *Haiti*

⁴⁶⁹“Haiti: the Crisis after One Month,” Confidential Memo from Ambassador B. McKinley, July 20, 1987, box 1, folder 16, Amy Wilentz Collection.

⁴⁷⁰William K. Rashbaum, “Haitian-Americans Protesters: Stop U.S. Aid to Junta,” *United Press International*, July 7, 1987, AM cycle.

⁴⁷¹“Haiti: Opposition Leaders Call for Strike Until CNG Falls,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 11, 1987; “Miami: la commun aute continue de manifester contre le KNG-PRAN et l’imperialisme,” *Haiti Progres*, July 15-21, 1987, 12.

Progres, which according to one report was “widely read” in Haiti just as it was among Haitians in the United States, also carried news back and forth between activists in the two locations.⁴⁷²

While Port-au-Prince and other Haitian cities were engulfed in conflict, Namphy worked to shore up his base in the countryside, making a trip to Haiti’s rural northwest region to demonstrate his support for powerful families and large landowners that were facing an increasingly mobilized peasant population. On July 23 in the northwestern town of Jean-Rabel, landowners sent a large group of hired men to attack members of the group *Tet Ansanm*, a local peasant organization that was leading the struggle for land reform in the region. Peasants who were caught traveling along the road to Jean-Rabel were hacked to death and dismembered with machetes. Bodies were tossed into a nearby ravine.⁴⁷³ A Haitian government-sponsored commission that investigated the incident issued a report that acknowledged that the July 23 violence had resulted in “200 plus [dead], over 100 wounded and an unknown number disappeared.” However, the commission’s report also downplayed the responsibility of the large landowning families for the violence, characterizing the incident instead as the culmination of a series of confrontations between “the *Tet Ansanm* movement” and “various sectors of the Jean-Rabel area population,” including not only landowners but also peasants not affiliated with the *Tet Ansanm* movement. The government-sponsored report also blamed “the Church Institution [which] failed to take action to rein in a movement – and its leader,” the liberation theology-

⁴⁷²Marie C. Racine, ‘La Diaspora Proclame sa Solidarite Avec l’interieur,’ *Haiti Demain Hebdo*, July 22-28, 1987, 10; ‘New York: manifestation contre le KNG-PRAN,’ *Haiti Progres*, July 22-28, 1987, 16-17, 19; ‘Miami: la commun aute continue de manifester contre le KNG-PRAN et l’imperialisme;’ Chamberlain, ‘Up by the Roots,’ 20.

⁴⁷³Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 114; ‘Toll in Haiti Is Put at 50 or More,’ *New York Times*, July 28, 1987, A2; ‘200 Died in Massacre in Haiti,’ *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1987, 9.

inspired Father Jean-Marie Vincent, who had been among the religious leaders helping to organize the peasant movement around Jean-Rabel.⁴⁷⁴

The massacre at Jean-Rabel effectively silenced some of the regime's critics, but it also inspired others to intensify their resistance. Jean-Bertrand Aristide was one of those that continued to speak publicly against Namphy. In the days and weeks after the Jean-Rabel massacre, Aristide used the radio and his pulpit to indict the Namphy regime for the peasant deaths in the northwest. Aristide's denunciations of Namphy aired on the radio program *L'Ayisyen*, which played tape-recorded sermons and messages from the outspoken priest; these broadcasts enabled Haitians in New York to hear Aristide's indictments of the Namphy regime. In both Haiti and the Haitian communities of the United States, Aristide's public statements during such times of crisis served to bolster the transnational resistance movement.⁴⁷⁵

To neutralize Aristide and the *ti legliz* movement of which he was a part, Namphy obtained the cooperation of Catholic Church leaders. In an attempt to sever the priest from his base in Saint-Jean Bosco parish in the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of La Saline, the church authorities directed Aristide to relocate to a distant suburban parish on the outskirts of the city. In response to the transfer order, young people whom Aristide lived among and worked with in La Saline staged a sit-in and hunger strike at Haiti's national cathedral, Notre Dame d'Haiti, refusing to cease until "Pe Titid" was returned. Facing the determined youth and the ongoing political crisis in the city and country, the church authorities rescinded Aristide's transfer.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴"Synopsis of Report," by a Haitian Government Commission composed of Representatives of the Ministries of Cults (President), Information and Coordination, Interior and National Defense," n.d., Box 1, folder 7, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

⁴⁷⁵Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 115; Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

⁴⁷⁶Greg Chamberlain, "Haiti Faces New Wave of Strikes," *Guardian* (Manchester), Aug. 12, 1987; Arthur and Dash, "Political Resurrection" in *Libete*, 159.

When its initial attempt to undercut Aristide and the *ti legliz* movement failed, the Namphy regime shifted to a more direct attack on progressive priests. On Sunday August 23, a group of progressive priests and nuns, including Father Antoine Adrien and Father William Smarth, several members of the Holy Ghost Fathers, who had been known as the Haitian Fathers during their time in exile in New York, and Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was gathered in a small church in Saint Marc, a city in the northwest region of the country. The *ti legliz* leaders had been invited to the church to perform a memorial mass for the peasants murdered at Jean-Rabel. As the local church leader was introducing Aristide, gunmen burst into the building, firing their guns and attacking members of the congregation. Aristide, Adrien, Smarth, and Jean-Marie Vincent, another clergyman and organizer of peasants in the Northwest, managed to escape the attack, but as they sped away from the scene, they encountered a roadblock that had been set to ambush them. In the pouring rain, soldiers and *macoutes* beat the priests and smashed the car windows. The priests barely managed to escape with their lives. This incident, meant to scare the priests and their followers into silence, instead backfired as spreading news of the incident provoked even more anger and agitation from their supporters in the grassroots opposition movement.⁴⁷⁷

The deteriorating situation in Haiti, perhaps along with the continued pressure of US-based Haitian activists and their supporters, began in the summer of 1987 to have an impact on lawmakers in Washington. In the first week of August, a group of thirty-six members of the House of Representatives issued a statement that criticized the Namphy-led government, called for an independent commission to investigate the scores of deaths in Haiti in recent weeks – twenty-four were dead and many more injured in the last week of July alone, and insisted that the

⁴⁷⁷*Aristide: An Autobiography*, 81-85; Pierre-Yves Glass, “Gunmen Attack Liberal Haitian Priests,” *Associated Press*, Aug. 24, 1987, AM cycle.

Reagan administration suspend military aid to the junta. For its part, the Reagan administration also expressed concern about the situation in Haiti, although it was unclear whether it was more disturbed by the violent attacks on protesters or the protests themselves. “Anytime the people are in the streets you have to worry,” one member of the administration commented. Still, the turmoil in Haiti and the growing attention that American lawmakers were paying to the country prompted the State Department to affirm its “unequivocal support” for Haitian democracy and to pledge to review the situation. Later in the month the Reagan administration ruled that Namphy and the CNG were making satisfactory progress toward a democratic transition, and US military aid to Haiti would thus continue.⁴⁷⁸

Some Haitians in the United States were concerned with ending military aid to the Namphy regime not only because they supported a democratic Haiti but also because continued state-sponsored violence endangered their many family members and friends that remained in the country. One incident in Boston illustrates how this personal connection with the crisis in Haiti made demands for the United States to cease aid to the CNG urgent. At seven o’clock on Monday morning, August 31, Antoine Thurel, a fifty-six-year-old cabdriver who had lived in Boston since the mid-1970s, walked up the steps of the Massachusetts statehouse, doused himself in flammable liquid, and set himself on fire with a burning cigarette. He died within a minute. Before he took his own life, Thurel had hung a sign, handwritten in French, on the fence near the steps. It stated that he, like many Haitians in the diaspora, was sick with grief and anxiety over the situation in Haiti and angry with the United States for perpetuating the crisis.

Thurel’s note stated:

⁴⁷⁸Hooper, “The Monkey’s Tail Still Strong,” 26; E.A. Wayne, “US takes firm line on Haiti,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 7, 1987, 1; “Military Aid to Haiti Will Continue, U.S. Says,” *Associated Press*, Aug. 27, 1987, AM cycle.

Because of many difficulties and my family responsibilities, I want to offer myself in holocaust for the complete liberation of my country. Note to the C.N.G. *Macoute*, a product of the C.I.A. Note to the soldiers of death paid by the U.S. through [Haitian businessman] Raphael Bazin. Note to the American Hand on the country. May Father Aristide live in Haiti. May Haiti live for the New Liberation.

According to Thurel's wife, and as his statement indicated, he was distraught over the re-emergence of the *Tontons Macoutes* in Haiti. One of Thurel's daughters who was still living in Haiti had been almost killed when Haitian police had forced their way into her home. At his funeral, which drew two thousand people, Thurel was hailed as a martyr for his country.⁴⁷⁹

The Promise and Peril of National Elections

As the fall approached, the future for Haiti was uncertain, and this sense of uncertainty was felt throughout the diaspora, just as it was in Haiti. What would it take to end US support for the Namphy regime? Would national elections actually happen in November as the new constitution directed? If they did, would they be truly democratic or yet another farce aimed at keeping the old guard in power? General Namphy addressed some of these questions in a speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1987. Aware that US support for the CNG was slipping away, and in an effort to cling to what little legitimacy remained for his government within the international community, Namphy announced that elections would go forward as planned in November. After the elections were over, he stated, power would be transferred to an elected civilian government. While Namphy explained his intentions to members of the General Assembly, however, outside the UN building, angry demonstrators

⁴⁷⁹John Diamond, "Haitian Burns Self on Statehouse Steps in Protest," *Associated Press*, Aug. 31, 1987, AM cycle; John Diamond, "Political, Domestic Troubles Contributed to Burning Suicide," *Associated Press*, Sept. 1, 1987, PM cycle; Arlene Levinson, "Hundreds of Haitians Attend Funeral to Praise Cab Driver as Hero," *Associated Press*, Sept. 5, 1987, AM cycle.

accused the CNG of state terrorism; they expressed doubt that free and democratic elections could ever happen under such a regime.⁴⁸⁰

In both Haiti and the diaspora the reaction towards the promised elections was mixed. Some, like those who protested Namphy's visit to the United Nations, thought fair elections such an impossibility that they considered non-participation to be the best strategy. The National Popular Assembly (APN), for example, called for a boycott of the upcoming elections.⁴⁸¹ But others in the popular movement thought elections held the promise to do away with Duvalierism in Haiti. The most prominent group to embrace this latter position was the *Front National de Concertation* (National United Front), or FNC, an organization that included KONAKOM and that had evolved out of the Committee of 57, the group that had led the summer strikes and protests. At the beginning of October, the FNC selected Gerard Gourgue, leader of the Haitian Human Rights League and former minister of justice under the CNG, as their candidate for president in the upcoming November elections.⁴⁸²

As the appointed date approached, it became more and more difficult to believe that the election would be fair and democratic. On October 13, Yves Volel, a presidential candidate who had lived in exile in Manhattan for fifteen years, was making a speech outside the police headquarters in Port-au-Prince when he was approached by men suspected to be plainclothes policemen and shot in the head.⁴⁸³ Another incident occurred after the Provisional Electoral Council announced that twelve presidential candidates would be barred from running in the

⁴⁸⁰Francisco Perez Rivera, "Haiti Junta Leader Promises Free Elections," *Associated Press*, Sept. 25, 1987, AM cycle.

⁴⁸¹"How Do You See Haiti?" *Haiti Report*, Sept. 1988, 4.

⁴⁸²Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 56; Michael Tarr, "Left-leaning Alliance Picks Presidential Candidate," *United Press International*, Oct. 6, 1987, AM cycle.

⁴⁸³Joseph B. Treaster, "Haitian Candidate Killed by Gunmen," *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1987, A1.

election due to their ties to Duvalier; enraged supporters of the former dictator attacked election offices and machine-gunned and torched the homes and stores of Electoral Council members and rival presidential candidates, sending some election officials into hiding. Those hoping to derail the elections also burned down one of the buildings where ballots were being printed.⁴⁸⁴ Despite the wave of violence, the CNG refused to provide protection to the Provisional Electoral Council or its members, and Namphy even refused to speak about the violence in a national address just days afterwards. The Reagan administration, too, refused to publicly condemn the attacks, choosing instead to keep a low profile as the election approached.⁴⁸⁵

One week before the election, Port-au-Prince was again engulfed in violence. Members of the Tontons Macoute burned down the Marche Salomon, a large market area in Port-au-Prince. Magalie St. Louis, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a market woman who lost everything in the blaze, observed “a little child, three years old. They told him to say ‘*viv l’arme*’ [long live the army]. He couldn’t say ‘*viv l’arme*’ he said ‘*viv l’arma*.’ Maybe that’s why they cracked his skull. They put a big hole in his head.”⁴⁸⁶ More than twenty people were killed and many more wounded in the days leading up to the election. One body was deposited on the doorstep of the house of Gerard Gourgue, the candidate backed by the National United Front. “You see how Haiti is now? Nothing but trouble,” declared one person who had fled to

⁴⁸⁴Michael Tarr, “Violence Erupts in Haiti after Candidates Disqualified,” *United Press International*, Nov. 3, 1987, BC cycle; Michael Tarr, “Violence Flares Again over Haiti Election,” *United Press International*, Nov. 4, 1987, PM cycle; Joseph B. Treaster, “Election Panel Officials in Haiti Flee New Violence in the Capital,” *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1987, A10; Michael Tarr, “Arsonists Burn Plant Printing Haiti’s Ballots,” *United Press International*, Nov. 5, 1987, PM cycle.

⁴⁸⁵Joseph B. Treaster, “Haitians Speak Little of Violence,” *New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1987, 2; Paul Glickman, “Haiti: U.S. Hit for Maintaining ‘Wall of Silence’ on Violence,” *Inter Press Service*, Nov. 20, 1987; “Haiti: U.S. Again Refuses to Criticize Army after New Violence,” *Inter Press Service*, Nov. 24, 1987.

⁴⁸⁶Interview with Magalie St. Louis, a young market woman, by Nadine Andrea, Dec. 6, 1987, box 1, folder 3, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

the Dominican Republic. “Before the *Tontons Macoute* used to go after people at night; but now they do it in broad daylight. The army is behind and they are in front.”⁴⁸⁷ In the absence of any government or police protection, residents of Port-au-Prince began organizing their own neighborhood defense groups with the aim of creating “zones free of violence and fear” and a safe space from which to participate in the election. Despite the terror in the days leading up to the election, many Haitians remained determined to vote. Standing around the body of a man murdered the previous night, a group of neighbors and friends shouted, “We’re going to vote anyway. We won’t be abused!”⁴⁸⁸

On the eve of the first national elections in thirty years, Port-au-Prince was like a ghost town. Fearing violence, stores were shut up tight and street vendors and even beggars were conspicuously absent from the city streets. Uncertain what the next day might bring, many left the city for the countryside.⁴⁸⁹ Watching from abroad, Haitians in the United States may have been hopeful, but they also shared the deep sense of apprehension that pervaded Haiti as the sun went down on Saturday November 28.

When they turned on the radio and television Sunday morning to get news from Haiti, Haitians in the United States learned of the blood bath that had taken place in the early morning hours of election day. Voters, some wearing their finest suits or their white dresses, lining up at polling stations at 6:00 a.m. were mowed down by gunfire and hacked to death with machetes.

⁴⁸⁷Interview with Haitian immigrants at Mercado Modelo, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, by Nadine Andre, n.d., box 1, folder 3, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

⁴⁸⁸Michael Tarr, “Gunmen Unleash New Wave of Violence in Haiti,” *United Press International*, Nov. 23, 1987, AM cycle; Michael Tarr, “8 Bodies Found after Night of Terror,” *United Press International*, Nov. 26, 1987, AM cycle; Joseph B. Treaster, “Vigilantes Emerge Amid Haiti Strife,” *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1987, A5; Howard W. French, “We’re Going to Vote Anyway,’ Haitians Insist,” *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1987, A10.

⁴⁸⁹Howard W. French, “Shaky but Ready, Haitians Are Mapping Voting Strategy,” *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1987, 16.

Polling stations were burned to the ground. Gunmen targeted international journalists. Thirty-four people were reported dead, but it later became clear that many more had died in the election eve and election day violence.⁴⁹⁰ As one observer reported, “Bodies lay sprawled atop one another.” A horrified French cameraman gasped, “We have seen a massacre.” Whereas before the election day violence, as one observer noted, “The army doesn’t want to show its face in front, but they’re behind those in civilian clothes who carry out the attack,” on November 28 and 29 the army’s position became clear.⁴⁹¹ According to James Ferguson, “The thin line between the army and the *Tontons Macoutes* had finally vanished. Army vehicles were to be seen, but they were merely following the cars of the death-squads, lending open support to the Duvalierist gangs.” Just three hours after the polls opened, the Haitian government declared the elections cancelled. Hours later Lieutenant General Namphy dissolved the Provisional Electoral Council.⁴⁹²

When Haitians in the United States learned of the election day violence, they frantically tried to reach relatives and friends in Haiti. In Brooklyn, Marie Jeanne unsuccessfully tried to contact her two sisters in Port-au-Prince and her parents in Cap-Haitien. Others rushed to informal community centers like the store operated by Wilson Desir, where worried friends and relatives desperately waited to hear about their loved ones. “I am very scared for my family. I haven’t heard from them. I’ve tried to call,” said Alubtion Cadet as she sat with others at Desir’s store. A report came in that the *tontons macoutes* had switched back into their blue uniforms for

⁴⁹⁰Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 223.

⁴⁹¹Interview with Haitian immigrants at Mercado Modelo, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic by Nadine Andre.

⁴⁹²James Ferguson, *Papa Doc, Baby Doc* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 174-75, excerpted in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, 66-67; *ABC World News Tonight, ABC News Transcripts*, Nov. 29, 1987; Ed McCullough, “Coup or Chaos, No One Knows,” *Associated Press*, Nov. 29, 1987, AM cycle; Neil A. Lewis, “Voting Canceled as Haiti Is Caught in Wave of Terror; U.S. Suspends Aid,” *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1987, A1; Ian Simpson, “Bodies Lay Sprawled Atop One Another. I Felt Like Crying,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Nov. 30, 1987, 1A.

the first time since the Duvalier era, adding to the fear that Haiti had relapsed into full-scale dictatorship. Grief and fear mixed with anger over the violence and the aborted election. The only solution now, according to Hempstead, Long Island, resident Evans Romelus was to remove the Namphy regime by force. "We have to fight. We have to organize, buy weapons and go down there," he claimed.⁴⁹³

Like those in New York, many Haitians in Miami were shocked and outraged by the violence and the cancelled election. At the Haitian Refugee Center in Little Haiti, a crowd hastily prepared signs for an emergency protest. Shouting over the noise created by the angry congregation, Farah Juste explained the feeling of Miami Haitians. "They're very mad. They want to block up the street.

They want to take a boat there to help out." Juste also noted that many blamed the US government as well as the CNG for the election tragedy. After making their preparations, protesters flowed out of the doors of the Haitian Refugee Center and into the street, where they joined hundreds of others in a spontaneous protest that shut down the main thoroughfare running through Little Haiti.⁴⁹⁴

For Haitians in Miami, the flame of anger that ignited on November 29 grew all week. Nightly protests drew hundreds and sometimes up to one thousand people. On Saturday December 5 as many as ten thousand people (twelve to eighteen thousand, according to some Miami radio stations) joined a protest march that stretched ten blocks through northeastern Miami and wound through the streets of Little Haiti. Like Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who stated that "the American government is responsible – along with the Haitian government – for

⁴⁹³Sam Howe Verhovek, "For Haitians In New York, Trying Times," *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1987, A 14; Hilary Stout, "Brooklyn Haitians Anxiously Seek News," *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1987, 1B.

⁴⁹⁴Sandra Walewski, "Haitians Protest Canceled Homeland Elections," *Associated Press*, Nov. 29, 1987, AM cycle.

those who have died,” Haitian protesters in Miami blamed both the CNG and the Reagan administration for what had happened on election day.⁴⁹⁵

But Haitians had another threat to respond to. In the wake of the election day massacre, a growing chorus of American policymakers were calling for a US invasion of Haiti.⁴⁹⁶ Many protesters at the demonstration engaged this idea. One large banner read, “Don’t even think about intervention. Give the weapons to us and we’ll do the job!” Michelle Baptiste, a Miami resident since 1981, addressed a potential US invasion. ““The guns they used to shoot our people were provided by the U.S. government. Now they talk about U.S. intervention in Haiti. We don't want any more U.S. help. All we want is freedom.”⁴⁹⁷

Grassroots activists were not the only ones prepared to condemn the Namphy regime’s role in the election day violence. After the massacre of November 29 and the dissolution of the Provisional Electoral Council, the Reagan administration suspended military aid to the Haitian government. Soon after, the US House of Representatives and the US Senate both voted unanimously to cut off aid to Haiti until a civilian electoral council was reestablished. The Organization of American States also condemned the election day violence and called for new, democratic elections.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵Interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide by Nadine Andre, St. Jean Bosco Church, Dec. 6, 1987, box 1, folder 3, Haiti Dechoukaj Collection.

⁴⁹⁶Paul Glickman, “Haiti: U.S. to Junta: Arrest and Punish Those Guilty of Violence,” *Inter Press Service*, Dec. 1, 1987; Mark Tran and Greg Chamberlain, “Demands for US Action to End Unrest in Haiti: Washington Faced with Calls for Military Intervention on Island,” *Guardian* (Manchester), Dec. 1, 1987; “Former Gov. Thomson: Invade Haiti,” *United Press International*, Dec. 6, 1987, AM cycle.

⁴⁹⁷Barry Klein, “10,000 Haitians protest in Miami,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Dec. 6, 1987, 1B; James Martinez, “Thousands of Haitians March In Miami,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 5, 1987, AM cycle; “Plus de 10,000 Haitiens manifestent a Miami,” *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 9-15, 1987, 9.

⁴⁹⁸Dan Sewell, “Haitian Capital Crippled by Strike,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 7, 1987, AM cycle; Ed McCullough, “Labor Unions, Opposition Plan Strike to Oust Junta,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 5, 1987, PM cycle; Jim Drinkard, “House Votes Cut-Off of U.S. Aid to Haiti,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 3, 1987, AM cycle.

In an attempt to placate both domestic and international critics, Namphy announced that new elections would be held on January 17 of the following year. To oversee the election, a new electoral council would be created. This time, however, the electoral council would not be composed of independent, civilian members. Instead, Namphy himself would handpick the members of the electoral council, a provision that for most observers cast even more doubt on the legitimacy of the process.⁴⁹⁹ “Even if the government forms another electoral council again, the people wouldn’t go for it. It would be another *Macoute* election,” argued a Haitian refugee living in Santo Domingo.⁵⁰⁰ Few believed that the new elections scheduled for January would be anything more than a farce.⁵⁰¹

In Haiti, Miami, and New York, Haitian activists condemned the January elections and called for a boycott. Louis Roy, a retired doctor who had returned to Haiti after many years of exile in Canada during the Duvalier era, articulated the position of the majority of Haitians. “Anyone who believes [the CNG and the newly appointed electoral council] are going to give us a fair election is a fool. And if the American government believes this, they are as much a fool as anyone else,” he declared. In mid-December Roger Biamby of the Haitian American Community Association of Dade County and seven other leaders of the Miami Haitian community traveled to Washington to convey the same message and to urge American officials to refuse to recognize the upcoming election. At the same time, the New York-based Committee against Repression in Haiti was holding a press conference at the United Nations. Adding its voice to the widespread condemnation of the January elections, the Committee called on the

⁴⁹⁹Joseph B. Treaster, “Haiti Sets a Date for New Election,” *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1987, A15.

⁵⁰⁰Interview with Haitian immigrants at Mercado Modelo, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, by Nadine Andre.

⁵⁰¹Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, 58.

United States to discontinue all forms of aid to the Namphy government and to pursue a formal investigation of human rights abuses under the regime.⁵⁰²

On New Year's Day, 1988, as Haitians celebrated their national independence, Namphy delivered a speech from the National Palace. In the address, which was broadcast on state-run radio and television stations, the leader of the military government called for national reconciliation and unity, appealing to Haitians' "love of the nation" and "defense of the country." As he spoke, thousands of Haitians were marching through the streets of Miami in yet another large protest against the CNG and the upcoming election.⁵⁰³

No one knew what the new election day would bring. Would there be more violence or would Haitians escape more bloodshed? To be safe, many decided to board boats and buses that would take them away from the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince until the election was over.⁵⁰⁴ Some American authorities were also anxious about the elections. Referring to the massive wave of Haitian and Cuban refugees that had arrived in South Florida at the beginning of the decade, Florida Governor Bob Martinez told reporters that he "had a great concern that what happened in 1980 does not occur again in 1988."⁵⁰⁵ As the election approached, US Naval ships neared Haiti, ostensibly as part of long-planned training exercises; however, the Navy made sure

⁵⁰²Joseph B. Treaster, "Many in Haiti, Vowing Vote Boycott, Fear a New Dictatorship Is in Power," *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 1987, A6; "Haitian Community Urges U.S. To Condemn Upcoming Elections in Haiti," *Associated Press*, Dec. 17, 1987, PM cycle; "Haiti: New York Group Calls for CNG'S Resignation," *Inter Press Service*, Dec. 17, 1987.

⁵⁰³"Haiti's Military Leader Calls For National Reconciliation," *Associated Press*, Jan. 1, 1988, AM cycle; "Haitians March in Miami, Protest U.S. Involvement and Elections," *Associated Press*, Jan. 1, 1988, AM cycle.

⁵⁰⁴Joseph B. Treaster, "Vote Spurs Exodus from Haiti Capital," *New York Times*, Jan. 12, 1988, A10.

⁵⁰⁵Mary Ann French, "Florida Should Be Ready for Wave of Haitian Immigrants, Martinez Warns," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Jan. 8, 1988, 4A.

its ships were well positioned in case they were needed to evacuate the seven thousand American citizens living in the country or to stem a new tide of Haitian refugees.⁵⁰⁶

On the eve of the election, the Namphy government carried out a last-minute crackdown on individuals and groups calling for a boycott and a general strike; the crackdown again brought the Haitian capital to a standstill. On election day voting proceeded without the violence feared by many. Participation was sparse and widespread irregularities pointed to suspected fraud. But despite these problems, the Reagan administration promised to work with whoever emerged as the victor. That person was Leslie Manigat, a rotund, fifty-seven-year-old political scientist and university professor.⁵⁰⁷

The day before Manigat was set to take office as president, Haitians in the diaspora organized joint actions to assert their opposition. On February 6 more than one thousand Haitians marched through the commercial district of Miami, chanting, “Down with Manigat, People Power! Down with all *macoute* government, people power!” According to Gerard Jean-Juste, Haitians of Miami refused to “give Manigat a chance,” even though the US State Department and those close to the Haitian government counseled them to do so. Instead, they were saying that they “did not want ‘Papa Doc,’ ‘Baby Doc,’ ‘Namphy Doc,’ or ‘Manigat Doc.’” According to Jean-Juste and the Miami activists, the new president was nothing more than a “*popet wel*” or marionette, and to accept him would be to endorse and strengthen Macoutism and

⁵⁰⁶Norman Black, “Navy Ships to Be Near Haiti Should Evacuation Be Needed,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 15, 1988, AM cycle.

⁵⁰⁷Alan Tomlinson, “Wave of Pre-poll Arrests in Haiti,” *Times* (London), Jan. 15, 1988; Joseph B. Treaster, “Strike Paralyzes the Haiti Capital on Eve of Election,” *New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1988, 1; Ian Simpson, “Haiti Elections Marred by Irregularities,” *United Press International*, Jan. 18, 1988, PM cycle; Paul Glickman, “Haiti: U.S. Will Deal with Winner of Army-Run Election,” *Inter Press Service*, Jan. 19, 1988; “David K. Shipler, “U.S. Calls Haiti Voting ‘Clouded’ but Vows to Work with Winner,” *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1988, A8; “Sketches of Candidates in Haiti Election,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 17, 1988, AM cycle; Pierre-Yves Glass, “Manigat Wins Junta-Run Election,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 24, 1988, AM cycle.

Namphy himself, who was the one pulling the strings. “Now more than ever it is time for Haitians to roll up their sleeves and not lower their arms,” argued Jean-Juste. That same day four hundred people gathered in Brooklyn to add their voices to those condemning Manigat’s election.⁵⁰⁸

In the first months of the new presidency there was little change in the political situation in Haiti, but then Manigat attempted to take on the powerful military leader and former head of the CNG, General Hanri Namphy. On June 17 Manigat ordered the removal of Namphy from his position in the army, placing him under house arrest. President Manigat then appeared on state-run television to announce to the country that Namphy had been retired. But hours after Manigat’s announcement, gunfire and grenade explosions erupted around the Haitian capital in attacks by soldiers loyal to General Namphy. Manigat, who had misjudged his ability to challenge Namphy and the Haitian military, lost the intervening struggle. By the morning of Monday June 20, General Namphy had reestablished himself as head of the Haitian government and had dismissed President Manigat, sending him into exile in the Dominican Republic. The removal of Manigat and Namphy’s own reestablishment as head of the Haitian state was done in “protection of the nation’s highest interests,” the general explained to the Haitian people. He claimed that without his intervention, Haiti would have been “on a path that was leading [it] irrevocably to the most brutal form of dictatorship,” a fate from which Namphy claimed to have saved the nation.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸“Manifestation a Miami: la communaute n’entend pas donner dechance a Manigat,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 10-16, 1988, 9, 22; “6 Fevrier 1988: manifestation a New York oligarchie et bourgeoisie denoncees!” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 10-16, 1988, 8, 22-23.

⁵⁰⁹Michael Norton, “New President Challenges the Generals Who Ensured His Election,” *Associated Press*, June 16, 1988, PM cycle; Jean-Pierre Cloutier, “Manigat Orders Namphy's retirement,” *United Press International*, June 18, 1988, PM cycle; Ian Simpson, *United Press International*, June 19, 1988, AM cycle; Richard Cole, “Haitian Exiles

To his opponents, Namphy's resumption of power seemed to confirm their position: despite the recent election, the Namphy-led military remained in control. While some, like Miami resident Viter Juste, believed that "it is still better to keep Manigat" because the coup "means more than ever, the Duvalier regime is getting back in power," others agreed with Gerard Jean-Juste, who described Manigat's ouster as "just one more intrigue between hard-core Duvalier supporters." No wonder, then, that Haitians in South Florida ignored Manigat's visit to their city and turned a deaf ear to his appeal for support. Speaking at the Miami International Airport just days after his removal, Manigat begged the diaspora for its "support against the military coup" and "for the reestablishment of democracy in Haiti." But Manigat's arrival and press conference drew only about two dozen people, most of whom had family connections to his short-lived regime. "We could care less about Manigat," said the president of the Haitian American Community Association of Dade County, Roger Biamby. The Reagan administration, too, ignored Manigat's appeals for support, announcing one day after the coup that it would maintain diplomatic relations with Namphy and that it would not consider economic sanctions against the military regime.⁵¹⁰

New Campaigns, International and Local

As the "hard core Duvalier supporters," as Jean-Juste called them, were maneuvering for power in Haiti, Haitians in Miami and New York were developing new areas of struggle in the

Support Neither Manigat nor Namphy," *Associated Press*, June 20, 1988, AM cycle; "Haiti Namphy Explains Reasons for Takeover," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, June 22, 1988.

⁵¹⁰Cole, "Haitian Exiles Support Neither Manigat nor Namphy;" Richard Cole, "Manigat Pleads For U.S. Support," *Associated Press*, June 25, 1988, PM cycle; Neil Roland, "U.S. to Work with Haitian Coup Leaders," *United Press International*, June 21, 1988, BC cycle; David B. Ottaway, "U.S. Plans No Pressure To Reverse Haitian Coup," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1988, A18.

local branches of the popular movement. In the spring and summer of 1988, Haitians in the diaspora found ways to support their allies in Haiti while at the same time building campaigns to defend their communities in the United States.

For the Miami Haitian community, the first of these spring campaigns focused on an environmental threat suddenly facing the people of Haiti. In the first months of the year, a cargo ship containing thousands of tons of incinerated garbage from the city of Philadelphia decided to deposit its load on a coastal area near the Haitian city of Gonaives. The waste company, which had been contracted by the city of Philadelphia to dispose of the refuse, settled on Haiti as the repository for its cargo after unsuccessfully attempting to unload the waste in Honduras and other Latin American countries. Despite one successful attempt by Haitians to block the unloading of the waste, by early February Philadelphia's garbage was being dumped daily on the Haitian shore. The incinerated waste-ash contained dioxin and other suspected cancer-causing agents; three to four thousand tons of it had been dumped on Haitian shores by mid-February.⁵¹¹

To support the people of Gonaives in their campaign to have the waste removed, *Veye Yo*, the grassroots activist group led by Father Gerard Jean-Juste, made the toxic waste a top target in its campaigns that spring and summer. On March 19 Miami Haitians gathered for a rally to condemn the dumping and to call for the removal of the waste. Farah Juste, a popular performer and community leader active with *Veye Yo* and the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, called on Miami Haitians "to mobilize, stick together and fight," declaring that "our country is not a garbage can." Other speakers at the rally did not focus exclusively on the toxic waste piling up near Gonaives; they connected the environmental crisis to the political crisis in Haiti. Haitians were not only being exposed to harmful toxic waste but also to the "macoutes infecting

⁵¹¹"Waste From Philly, in Transit for 18 Months, Rejected by Haiti," *Associated Press*, Feb. 2, 1988, PM cycle; "Haiti Says Philadelphia Garbage Was Dumped by Ship on Its Beach," *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1988.

the country;” they demanded the removal of both.⁵¹² On April 2, at the next, even larger demonstration, the activists were joined by other South Florida organizations and the environmental group Greenpeace. The protests continued to have a dual focus, aimed at removing both the physical waste from Gonaives and the “trash government” of Haiti. At the demonstration on April 2, protesters also began a new strategy, deciding to target Haitian consul to Miami Antonio Jean-Paix, the Haitian government’s representative who had recently provoked the community by dismissing their concerns, claiming the waste was “just trash” and nothing to worry about.⁵¹³ Throughout the spring and summer of 1988, activists with Veye Yo maintained the campaign against both toxic waste and what they considered the toxic government of Haiti.⁵¹⁴

The second new campaign initiated by Haitians in the United States in the spring of 1988 centered on a legal battle that would determine the security and legal status of thousands of Haitian farm workers. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which had allowed Haitians who had come to the United States before 1982 to obtain permanent residency, also offered residency to agricultural workers that had worked in the perishable crop industry for at least ninety days in the period from May 1985 to May 1986. Many undocumented Haitians qualified for residency under this provision. The problem for farm workers, however, was proving that they met these minimal requirements. Living in migrant labor camps, few farm workers were able to provide proof of residence. As the growing seasons changed, most laborers

⁵¹²“Miami: manifestation contre le depot de dechets toxiques ou ‘fatralanmo,’” *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 23-29, 1988, 12, 20; “Miami grande manifestation Samedi 2 avril 1988,” *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 23-29, 1988, 12.

⁵¹³“Dechets toxiques: contre vents et marées la communauté haitienne de Miami continue de manifester,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 6-12, 1988, 11, 30.

⁵¹⁴“Miami: le consul Jean-Paix se voit en passé d’être ‘dechouque’,” *Haiti Progres*, May 4-10, 1988, 9; “Miami: la communauté défend les droits du peuple haitien, et en Haiti et en diaspora,” *Haiti Progres*, May 11-17, 1988, 9, 12; “Miami: le ‘Komite Veye Yo’ poursuit différentes actions,” *Haiti Progres*, June 29-July 5, 1988, 9.

changed employers frequently, many traveling up and down the East Coast wherever there was work. Growers paid in cash, kept few records, and were often unwilling to file the necessary affidavits to verify their employees' status since it would expose their failure to pay Social Security and to provide other legally required benefits to their undocumented workforce.⁵¹⁵ Without this documentation, there was no way for the many Haitians that qualified for it to reach this path to legal residency.

The case of Marie-France Jean Philippe, a thirty-four-year-old Haitian woman who had come to the United States by boat in 1985, illustrates the quandary that many Haitian farm workers were in. After arriving in South Florida, Jean Philippe soon made her way to the town of Homestead, where she started by picking lemons but soon switched over to working in the bean fields. She labored from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and was paid \$2.50 per bushel of beans that she picked; from this sixteen-hour day in the field Jean Philippe earned a maximum of \$200 a week, an income with which she supported her three children who remained back in Haiti. When she learned that she was eligible to become a legal resident of the United States, Jean Philippe went to her crew chief and requested a document verifying her status, which she received and which she submitted to the INS. But when the INS contacted the owner of the company for which she worked, the owner denied knowing her, and so the immigration office denied Jean Philippe's application. Even though she had been partially successful in navigating the complex process required by the new law, Jean Philippe encountered other obstacles that kept her from achieving residency.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁵Marvin Howe, "Farm Workers Confounded by Immigration Laws," *New York Times*, July 4, 1987, 31.

⁵¹⁶"Miami: le cas de 14,000 travailleurs agricoles haitiens, mexicains . . . porte devant un tribunal federal," *Haiti Progres*, July 13-19, 1988, 9, 23.

To expose this problem, the Haitian Refugee Center and its partner organization *Veye Yo* began organizing a residency for farm workers campaign. One of the first rallies in defense of farm workers' legal rights occurred on May 7. Then, on June 13, seventeen Haitian and Mexican farm workers, along with the Haitian Refugee Center and the Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach, sued the Immigration and Naturalization Service in a class-action suit that charged that the agency's application of the law for farm workers violated the intent of the legislation, discriminated against agricultural workers, and was illegal.⁵¹⁷

On July 6, the first day of hearings on the lawsuit, hundreds of members of the Haitian community rallied outside the Miami federal courthouse. For the next five days of proceedings, farm workers, including Marie-France Jean Philippe, testified to the trouble they had had with the INS's application of the law. Inside and outside the courtroom, hundreds of Haitians gathered daily to support their compatriots. Even after the conclusion of the opening hearings, the Haitian Refugee Center and *Veye Yo* continued to mobilize the community in defense of the farm workers. On Saturday, July 23, five hundred farm workers and community supporters rallied and marched for four hours, concluding with a protest outside the Miami INS offices.⁵¹⁸

Finally, on Monday August 22, the long-awaited ruling was ready. In federal district court, Judge Clyde C. Atkins ruled in favor of the farm workers, citing the "excessive documentary proof" required of them by the INS as evidence that the law had been applied illegally. Judge Atkins ordered the immigration service to establish new hearings for the fourteen thousand agricultural workers covered under the lawsuit and granted the workers

⁵¹⁷"Farm Workers Sue Immigration Agency," *United Press International*, June 13, 1988, BC cycle; "Miami: le cas de 14,000 travailleurs agricoles haitiens, mexicains . . . porte devant un tribunal federal."

⁵¹⁸"Miami: le cas de 14,000 travailleurs agricoles haitiens, mexicains . . . porte devant un tribunal federal;" "Miami: les travailleurs agricoles decides a manifester en cas de jugement defavorable," *Haiti Progres*, July 20-26, 1988, 7; "Miami: manifestation pour la defense des droits des travailleurs agricoles," *Haiti Progres*, July 27-Aug. 2, 1988, 9, 23; "Miami: manifestation en faveur des travailleurs agricoles immigres," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 17-23, 1988, 9.

temporary work permits until the new hearings took place. The ruling also shifted the burden of proof onto the INS, easing the pressure on the workers themselves. In the future the agency would be required to accept workers' affidavits unless it could prove the documents to be false.⁵¹⁹

News of the favorable ruling occasioned a celebration at the office of the Haitian Refugee Center in Little Haiti. At a rally the day after the ruling, 150 cheering and singing people gathered to celebrate their victory. Ira Kurzban, attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center, explained that the ruling not only gave new hope to the many Haitian and Mexican farm workers in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama that were represented in the class-action suit, but it also could be used as a precedent in addressing the immigration agency's discriminatory treatment of the four hundred thousand farm workers across the country. Judge Atkins' ruling represented another significant legal victory by a South Florida-based Haitian community that had become adept at combining legal challenges, political pressure, and mass mobilization in its defense of the undocumented.⁵²⁰

New Attacks and a Shifting Movement

While Haitian activists in the United States were spending the spring and summer months organizing around environmental and legal issues, their compatriots back home were experiencing an intensifying assault by the military junta. Once back in power, Namphy abandoned any pretense of separateness from Duvalierism. On July 8, 1988, the Haitian leader announced that his government was doing away with the provision of the Constitution of 1987

⁵¹⁹Richard Cole, "INS Worries as Haitians Hail Work Permit Ruling," *Associated Press*, Aug. 23, 1988, AM cycle.

⁵²⁰"Miami: premiere victoire pour les travailleurs agricoles haitiens," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 24-30, 1988, 9; Cole, "INS Worries as Haitians Hail Work Permit Ruling."

that had barred members of Duvalier's regime from holding political office for ten years. Now, Namphy declared, Duvalierists would be officially welcomed back into formal political positions. To underscore the point, two prominent Duvalier supporters, General Claude Raymond and the former finance minister Clovis Desinor were in attendance for the announcement.⁵²¹ Three days later Duvalierism reasserted itself in another way as Lafontant Joseph, a veteran human rights activist in Haiti, was found stabbed to death in a jeep near the Port-au-Prince airport. Caribbean Rights, a regional human rights organization, called Joseph's murder "an act of political assassination."⁵²²

The murder of Lafontant Joseph was just the beginning of a wave of violence that engulfed Haiti in the summer of 1988. One of the bloodiest incidents, which occurred on the morning of September 11, attempted again to eliminate Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who continued to be a leading voice for the grassroots resistance in Haiti. During a Sunday morning worship service led by Father Aristide, twenty to thirty men dressed in civilian clothes and carrying guns and machetes burst into the church at Saint-Jean Bosco and began attacking the crowd. Congregants moved to surround Aristide, who was shielded and successfully evacuated, but the violence left more than one dozen dead and close to eighty wounded. One witness reported seeing "a pregnant woman with a bullet hole in her belly." Aristide's church in Saint-Jean Bosco was torched. After attacking the congregation at Aristide's church, the assassins moved on to the offices of opposition politicians and the headquarters of Radio Cacique, an anti-Namphy station. In the hours after the attacks, a group of men claiming responsibility appeared on television and

⁵²¹Alan Tomlinson, "Namphy Returns Duvalier Backers to Centre Stage; Haiti Constitution Scrapped," *Times* (London), July 11, 1988.

⁵²²"Haiti: 'Brutal Killing' of Rights Activist Condemned," *Inter Press Service*, July 12, 1988; Michael Norton, "Priest Calls on Haitians To Continue Fighting State Terrorism," *Associated Press*, July 20, 1988, AM cycle.

radio. "We were after Father Aristide. What you saw yesterday (Sunday) was child's play," said the men. "In whatever parish Father Aristide is accepted, a heap of corpses will attend that Mass."⁵²³

If, as many suspected, the violence was orchestrated by the Haitian government in order to strike a fatal blow against the popular movement, the action failed completely. In fact, the massacre at Saint-Jean Bosco and the subsequent violence were the last major events that finally led to Namphy's ouster. On September 17, less than one week after the church attacks, a group of non-commissioned officers led by Prosper Avril, commander of the Presidential Guard, removed General Namphy and declared Avril president of Haiti. Since Namphy's removal happened through a rank-and-file rebellion of sorts within the Haitian military, some thought it a positive step for the popular movement. Avril and the non-commissioned officers, or "*ti solda*" (little soldiers), attempted to cultivate this image as well, promising to "raise the prestige of the Haitian people degraded by so many acts which have revolted the conscience of the Haitian people and the world."⁵²⁴

As excited as they were to see Namphy's departure, many elements of the popular movement both in Haiti and in the diaspora refused to put their trust in Avril, pointing out that Prosper Avril had been a top aide to Jean-Claude Duvalier and had likely played a major role in facilitating Baby Doc's draining of the national treasury, both before and after the collapse of the

⁵²³Michael Norton, "Gunmen Stage Massacre During Church Service," *Associated Press*, Sept. 11, 1988, AM cycle; Michael Norton, "Hoodlums Burn Church to Ground," *Associated Press*, Sept. 13, 1988, PM cycle; Pierre-Yves Glass, "Priest a Hero to Poor, Villain to Government," *Associated Press*, Sept. 13, 1988, AM cycle; Mike Norton, "Attackers Burn Second Church, Attack Radio Station," *Associated Press*, Sept. 14, 1988, AM cycle; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 123.

⁵²⁴Roosevelt Jean-Francois, "Former Duvalier Aide Ousts Haiti Ruler," *United Press International*, Sept. 18, 1988, BC cycle; Michael Norton, "Atrocities Linked to Namphy Regime Seen as Key Factor in Coup," *Associated Press*, Sept. 19, 1988, AM cycle.

dictatorship. “He is known as a Duvalierist and all Duvalierists are criminals,” argued Sylvio Claude, leader of the country’s Christian Democratic Party.⁵²⁵ When news of the coup and Avril’s assumption of power reached Miami, the Haitian community of South Florida hit the streets once again in three consecutive days of action, the largest of which drew six thousand people. “The replacement of Namphy by Prosper Avril cannot solve the problems of the Haitian people,” declared members of *Veye Yo*. “A serious mobilization” against the “*macoute* element” was the only way toward “a total liberation.”⁵²⁶

In the months following the coup, the popular movement in Haiti and in the diaspora became increasingly unified in its opposition to Avril. Jean-Bertrand Aristide continued to be one of the leading figures articulating the stance of many in the popular movement, actions for which he once again became a target. Having gone into hiding in the aftermath of the Saint-Jean Bosco massacre, Aristide dramatically reemerged at a church mass for thousands of people two weeks later. Soon after his return, Aristide made a statement on Haiti’s *Radio Soleil* in which he praised the “valiant soldiers” carrying out the rank-and-file rebellions, but he also criticized Avril, cautioning the new president that the people “must consider all of the great Duvalierists as great criminals until they prove otherwise.”⁵²⁷

In late September 1988, the Catholic Church leaders again attempted to rein in the outspoken priest by removing him from his base in Saint-Jean Bosco. After rumors began circulating that the church was going to try again to force Aristide’s transfer, fifteen hundred

⁵²⁵Michael Norton, “Opposition Hopeful After Coup,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 18, 1988, AM cycle; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 124.

⁵²⁶“Miami: 6000 Haitiens reclament le jugement de Namphy et manifestent leur opposition a Avril,” *Haiti Progres*, Sept. 21-27, 1988, 9.

⁵²⁷Pierre-Yves Glass, “Thousands Fill Church for Mass Celebrating Coup,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 25, 1988, AM cycle; Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor*, 97.

young people held a demonstration and a march in Port-au-Prince. Two weeks later the Catholic Bishops Conference issued a statement condemning liberation theology and its practitioners, and the Vatican informed Aristide that he was being transferred to Canada. On October 13, just days before the deadline the church had given Aristide to leave Haiti, six thousand people took to the streets to protest the order. The next day ten thousand came out to demand that Aristide be allowed to stay in the country. Protesters erected burning roadblocks and seized buses, and one hundred youths staged a sit-in in front of the National Cathedral in Port-au-Prince.⁵²⁸ In the United States, too, Haitian activists mobilized in defense of Aristide, mounting demonstrations in Miami, New York, and Boston. The Association of Haitian Students of the diaspora issued a statement of solidarity with Aristide and the progressive church as did the Association of Haitian Workers in New York, *Veye Yo* in Miami, and other Haitian community and professional organizations.⁵²⁹ This large-scale mobilization succeeded in shielding Aristide from removal, allowing him to remain in Haiti past the October seventeenth deadline the church had given for his transfer. Unsuccessful in its efforts to quiet the outspoken priest, on December 15, the

⁵²⁸Michael Norton, "1,500 Demonstrate in Support of Radical Priest," *Associated Press*, Sept. 30, 1988, AM cycle; Roosevelt Jean-Francois, "Radical Haitian Priest Called to Vatican," *United Press International*, Oct. 10, 1988, BC cycle; "Around the World: Haiti priest transferred to Canada," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), Oct. 12, 1988; Michael Norton, "Thousands Demonstrate in Support of Radical Priest; Prison Closed," *Associated Press*, Oct. 13, 1988, AM cycle; Roosevelt Jean-Francois, "Haitians Seize Buses to Protest Radical Priest's Transfer," *United Press International*, Oct. 14, 1988, BC cycle; Michael Norton, "Mass Held in Palace for Army; Youths Sit in for Radical Priest," *Associated Press*, Oct. 19, 1988, AM cycle.

⁵²⁹"Miami, New York, Boston: les Manifestations en faveur du pere Aristide se multiplient a travers la diaspora," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 19-25, 1988, 10-11; "Nouyok: Pe Titid, tout moun konsyan e vanyan sipote w nan lit la!" *Haiti Progres*, Sept. 28-Oct. 4, 1988, p. 7, 9; "New York: 'Lafanmi Selavi' revoltee par la mesure prise contre le pere Aristide," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 12-18, 1988, 9; Etats-unis: protestations de medecins haitiens contre la decision arbitraire du Vatican," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 12-18, 1988, 9, 25; Association des Travailleurs Haitiens: 'An nou manifeste aktivman pou Pe Titid pa ale en egzil!'" *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 12-18, 1988, 9; "Miami: lettre ouverte aux eveques d'Haiti," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 12-18, 1988, 9, 23.

Selesian Order of the Catholic Church expelled Aristide for being a “destabilizing” force and for “incitement to hate and violence” and “the exaltation of class struggle.”⁵³⁰

At the end of November the popular movement in Haiti and abroad stepped up its campaign against Avril. Coordinated actions took place around the first anniversary of the election day massacre of 1987. As the anniversary day approached, the Confederation of Autonomous Haitian Workers (CATH), along with the National Popular Assembly (APN) and other popular organizations, called a nationwide general strike to advance a series of political and economic demands, demands that included the prosecution of Duvalierists responsible for crimes, the disarming of *macoutes*, the release of political prisoners, and the rescinding of the Catholic Church’s transfer order for Jean-Bertrand Aristide. At the same time, Veye Yo was preparing the South Florida community for a demonstration in solidarity with the planned general strike in Haiti.⁵³¹

The week after the call for a general strike had been made, people in Haiti and the United States observed the first anniversary of the election day massacre. In Port-au-Prince as many as ten thousand people, organized by the United Haitian Communist Party (PUCH) along with other organizations, participated in a protest march that began at the burned-out ruins of Aristide’s church at Saint-Jean Bosco. The march made its way through the city to the Bellegarde Argentine School, the place where one year earlier fifteen people had been murdered, and on to Rue Valliant, where many more had died in the attack on voters. “The country will have democracy,” chanted the marchers. Haitians in New York, too, remembered those murdered one

⁵³⁰ Michael Norton, “Reformist Soldiers Discharged, Priest Expelled From Order,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 15, 1988, AM cycle; “Selesian Order Expels Father Aristide,” *Haiti Report*, Dec. 1988, 1, 4; Michael Norton, “Ouster of Radical Priest Silences Voice of Poor,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 23, 1988, AM cycle.

⁵³¹ “The Popular Movement Rebounds,” *Haiti Report*, Dec. 1988, 2; “Miami: manifestation en solidarite avec la greve generale,” *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 23-29, 1988, 8, 27.

year earlier by organizing a picket line in front of the Haitian consulate in New York.⁵³² Just as they had done in the parallel mobilizations to defend Father Aristide, in these protests on the anniversary of the election day massacre, Haitian activists in the United States staged actions that were designed to support the work of their partners in the grassroots movement in Haiti.

Refugee Rebellions and Haiti “In the Mouth of the Wolf”

As many poured their energy into organizing for the general strike and the protests on the anniversary of the aborted election, Haitian refugees imprisoned in Miami’s Krome Avenue Detention Center renewed their own campaign for freedom and asylum. On November 15 the approximately two hundred Haitians still imprisoned at Krome contacted Father Gerard Jean-Juste to inform him that they intended to carry out a hunger strike in one week to protest their ongoing incarceration. The hunger strikers demanded the release of the pregnant women and the children imprisoned in the facility, the reunification of the families separated by the policy of refugee incarceration, and the abandonment of procedures that they claimed were discriminatory towards Haitians. Starting on November 23, as Haiti was crippled by the general strike, the refugees launched a three-day hunger strike at the Krome Avenue prison.⁵³³

Even as the refugees attempted to exert pressure on local authorities to grant them their freedom, they also sent out an appeal to national leaders. Three days after the conclusion of the hunger strike, the prisoners at Krome sent an open letter to President-elect George H. W. Bush. The letter, signed by “all the Haitian prisoners of detention at Krome,” articulated a protest both

⁵³² Roosevelt Jean-Francois, “Thousands mark election massacre,” *United Press International*, Nov. 29, 1988, BC cycle; Chris Henry, “Haiti: Protesters March against Army, Catholic Hierarchy,” *Inter Press Service*, Dec. 16, 1988; “New York: ‘picket line’ devant le consulat haitien a l’occasion du 29 novembre,” *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 30-Dec. 6, 1988, 9.

⁵³³“Krome: les refugies haitiens entament une greve de la faim,” *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 23-29, 1988, 8, 27.

against their incarceration and against the unjust situation in Haiti that had propelled them into their current situation. “*Monsieur le President,*” the letter opened, “We young Haitians detained at Krome, Miami, ask you to say a word in our favor as you do in favor of the Cuban [refugees].” The letter writers pointed out that the Haitian government was carrying out a campaign of “repression, assassinations, the crushing of democracy, denial of all rights to workers, the persecution of students, smuggling, robbing from the people . . . [and] it is because of these governments ‘*kraze zo*’ that we are forced to risk our lives in small boats and to use false papers to flee Haiti.” They appealed to Bush, “You should understand our problems.” They explained:

We want freedom in our country. We want respect for human rights for all Haitians. We want to abolish the system of *Tonton Macoutes*, of ‘*kraze zo*,’ of repression. Do not send weapons to these Duvalierist assassins . . . Mr. President-Elect, before you take the oath, come help us. Say a word for us Haitians who are at Camp Krome in Miami. We know you are a believer, so are we. We would like to find the freedom to celebrate Christmas with our families.⁵³⁴

Though the campaign by the refugees at Krome failed to stimulate any action from the incoming president, it successfully caught the attention of the refugees’ compatriots in the Haitian community of Miami. Indeed, before launching the action, the refugees inside Krome had informed Father Jean-Juste of their actions so that Haitian activists outside the prison could coordinate their refugee support work with the strike, which the organization Veye Yo did with renewed vigor once the hunger strike began. On December 11, fifty members of the Miami community traveled to visit those imprisoned at Krome. When the group learned that the authorities at the prison intended to bar their delegation from further contact with their imprisoned compatriots, they blocked the entrance to the facility, insisting that if they were not allowed to enter, neither would anyone else be allowed to enter. Finally the group was allowed

⁵³⁴“Krome: les refugies haitiens ecrivent a George Bush, president elu des Etats-Unis,” *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 7-13, 1988, 9, 19.

in. As a result of the standoff, authorities also conceded part of the protesters' demands, agreeing to free three of the Haitian children at the facility.⁵³⁵

During the next month, the conflict at Krome intensified significantly. When Haitians arrived at the facility for a planned protest, they found themselves confronting a line of guards, standing just inside the fence, a line of guards outfitted in full body armor, holding shields and clubs. Helicopters circled overhead as the center was placed on modified lockdown, restricting the movement of the refugees inside the prison walls. This militarized response to the Haitian protesters added to their indignation. "If they treat us like this and we're on the outside, how do you think they're treating them on the inside?" Betty Ferguson wondered. "When they are ready to shoot us down like dogs, then that means they know we are right!" she exclaimed. Joining the protest were members of the black American community of Miami, including Ray Fauntroy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Dade County. Fliers distributed at the protest listed "equal treatment for black refugees" as a key demand, and the protesters appealed to black Americans' sense that black people, whether American or immigrant, were not being treated fairly in the city of Miami.⁵³⁶

If authorities at Krome seemed to be prepared for war, it was because the city of Miami had in the previous weeks resembled a war zone. At the beginning of the year, Miami had experienced a great influx of Nicaraguan refugees who, unlike Haitians, were not being sent back to their country or locked in detention facilities like the Krome Avenue prison. "They interdict the Haitians at sea . . . and they meanwhile offer the red-carpet treatment to Nicaraguans,"

Gerard Jean-Juste angrily observed. Black Americans were also concerned about the arrival of

⁵³⁵"Miami: des membres de 'Veye Yo' rendent visite aux refugies haitiens de Krome," *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 14-20, 1988, 8.

⁵³⁶"Krome: des manifestants haitiens attendus par des polices armes de boucliers et mat raques," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 1-7, 1989, 9; Tracy Fields, "Haitians Protest Treatment of Their Countrymen at Detention Facility" *Associated Press*, Jan. 29, 1989, AM cycle.

the Nicaraguan refugees, whom they saw as another immigrant group who they feared would push them further back in line when it came to the search for jobs and economic opportunity.⁵³⁷

As a result, Miami was a tense place when on January 16, 1989, Clement Lloyd, a black motorcyclist, was shot and killed by William Lozano, a member of the Miami police department. Black Miamians reacted with furious violence to the incident, which they regarded as only the most recent in a long history of police attacks on the black community. For days the black neighborhoods of Overtown and Liberty City were engulfed in flames, in acts of looting, more shootings, and more deaths. Though some Haitians were eager to separate themselves from the violent rebellion, casting the riot as exclusively the work of black Americans, others saw the police violence and the black community's response as yet another illustration of racial inequality and injustice that affected both black Americans and black immigrants in this Southern city.⁵³⁸

As authorities in Miami struggled to regain control of their city, in Haiti the Avril regime too found itself confronting a rebellious population that was demanding change. By the first months of 1989, there were few who still held to the hope that Avril represented any opening for popular empowerment. The Avril government's decision to grant Franck Romain (the Port-au-Prince mayor suspected to be responsible for the attack on the congregation at Saint-Jean Bosco) safe passage to the Dominican Republic especially indicated to the people that Avril intended no break with Duvalierism. Even the regime's public statements suggested it no longer intended

⁵³⁷Kenneth S. Allen and Barry Klein, "Racial Discord Rocks Miami," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Jan. 18, 1989, 1A; Jeffrey Schmalz, "Miami's New Ethnic Conflict: Haitians vs. American Blacks," *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1989, 1.

⁵³⁸Dan Sewell, "Shooting Sparks Miami Tensions; Similarities to 1980 Seen," *Associated Press*, Jan. 17, 1989, AM cycle; David Shoalts, "Miami Riots Erupt over Police Killing; Sections of City Cordoned off as Crowds Throw Rocks, Set Fires," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), Jan. 18, 1989; Allen and Klein, "Racial discord rocks Miami;" Schmalz, "Miami's New Ethnic Conflict."

any transition to democratic government. While one official promised that elections would take place in twelve to fifteen months, another member of the Avril government stated that “with 75 percent illiteracy and 50 percent unemployment,” the Haitian people were “not ready for immediate democracy.”⁵³⁹

In the spring of 1989, unwilling to wait until the Avril government deemed them adequately prepared for democratic involvement, members of the popular movement launched a major campaign to force Avril out and to uproot the remaining elements of Duvalierism. In mid-January, the Confederation of Autonomous Haitian Workers (CATH) along with a number of popular organizations, including the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP), the National Popular Assembly (APN), and the League of Former Political Prisoners (LAPPH), called a general strike. The strike was intended to force the extradition of Franck Romain from the Dominican Republic and the removal of toxic waste from Gonaives, and the acceptance of a series of other popular demands. The day before the general strike was to commence, students in Cap Haitien erected flaming barricades and clashed with soldiers. As the third anniversary of Duvalier’s collapse approached, more protests and clashes between soldiers and groups of students and workers occurred in other parts of the country.⁵⁴⁰

Although they saw February 7, the anniversary of Duvalier’s departure, as a key moment for mobilization, popular organizations also treated the occasion as critical time to take stock and to determine strategy. A group of popular organizations in Haiti proposed to put together a

⁵³⁹Susana Hayward, “Six Months after Coup, Democracy Remains Elusive in Haiti,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 27, 1989, BC cycle; “Franck Romain Given Safe Conduct to the Dominican Republic,” *Haiti Report*, Jan. 1989, 1, 4; Jerry Timmins, “Haiti 'Is Not Ready for Democracy',” *Independent (London)*, Jan. 5, 1989, 9.

⁵⁴⁰“Haitian Workers Call General Strike,” *Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, Jan. 12, 1989; “General Strike Paralyzes Haiti Again,” *Haiti Report*, Jan. 1989, 1, 4; “Army Breaks Up Student Demonstration with Tear Gas; Leftists Call for Strike,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 16, 1989, AM cycle; “Soldiers Beat Workers; Hundreds Demonstrate in Gonaives,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 27, 1989, AM cycle.

three-day forum, which would bring together participants of the popular movement from around the country. To fund this people's forum, a wide range of organizations, including the Confederation of Autonomous Workers (CATH), the National Popular Assembly (APN), the Peasant Movement of Milot (MPM), the Haitian Workers Committee (COH), the Revolutionary Committee of the Unemployed, the student group *Zafe Elev Lekol*, and the women's group *Famn Ayisyen Leve Kanpai*, sent a message to their partners in the diaspora asking for financial support. Members of Veye Yo and the Miami Haitian community responded by raising six hundred dollars for the people's forum.⁵⁴¹ To mark the anniversary of Duvalier's departure, Haitians in New York also organized an event, headed by the 28 July-Charlemagne Peralte Coalition, which featured Jean-Baptiste Chavannes of the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP) but which significantly included the playing of a taped message from Father Aristide to the members of the movement in the diaspora.⁵⁴²

On February 7, the anniversary of the collapse of Duvalier's government, the movement in Haiti launched another general strike; this time they demanded the departure of Prosper Avril. Protesters followed the strike with another round of nationwide actions on February 20. To defuse the explosive situation, Avril announced the creation of a new electoral council and tried to shield his government from charges of macoutism by restoring portions of the 1987 constitution, including the banning of Duvalierists from office. Significantly, however, the

⁵⁴¹“7 Fevrier 1989: appel urgent des organizations populaires a la diaspora,” *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 25-31, 1989, 1, 25; “Miami: ‘Veye Yo’ a repondu a l’appel lance par les organizsateurs du forum populaire,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 8-14, 1989, 8.

⁵⁴²“New York: mobilization pour commemerer le 7 fevrier 1986,” *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 25-31, 1989, 9; “New York: commemoration du 7 fevrier avec Jean-Baptiste Chavannes,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 8-14, 1989, 8.

proposed restorations did not bring back the elements of the constitution that limited the role of the army.⁵⁴³

The turmoil in Haiti was also producing a new surge in the number of refugees attempting to reach US shores. In the first four months of 1989, 2,669 Haitians were stopped by the US Coast Guard and returned to Haiti. In March alone, 1533 would-be refugees on sixteen boats were stopped and turned back, the largest monthly number since the interdiction program had begun in 1981.⁵⁴⁴ Many of those who managed to reach US shores were sent to Krome, adding to the deteriorating situation and intensifying crisis at the facility. By mid-April the number of detainees at the Krome Avenue facility was back up to fifty, most of whom were Haitian.⁵⁴⁵

While Haitians of Miami were fighting for the refugees' freedom, the young people of the New York Haitian community were engaged in a struggle that centered upon their experience as students in New York. In late April, in response to a proposed cut in public funding for the City University of New York and a rise in tuition rates, students at City College barricaded themselves in administration offices to protest the increased costs. According to Georges Vilson, a City College student and member of the school's Haitian Club, "It was an extraordinary thing to see the Haitians participate in such large numbers in this action." Following closely on the City College protests and the occupation of administration offices, protests spread to many of the

⁵⁴³“Haiti to Set Up Electoral Council,” *Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, Feb. 25, 1989; “Avril Decrees Partial Restoration of Haiti's 1987 Constitution,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 13, 1989, AM cycle; Hayward, “Six Months after Coup, Democracy Remains Elusive in Haiti.”

⁵⁴⁴“Boat People Returned to Haiti in Record Numbers,” *Haiti Insight*, May 1989; “Des centaines d’Haitiens tentent de fuir le pays,” *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 8-14, 1989, 1, 11; “Plus de trois cents refugies haitiens arrivent a Miami,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 12-18, 1989, 10; Julia Preston, “Haitian Refugee Stream Grows; Coast Guard Forced to Double Its Efforts to Intercept Boats,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 30, 1989, A30.

⁵⁴⁵*Haiti Insight*, May 1989, 6.

other colleges that were part of the City University of New York system. On May 1 young Haitians joined other Brooklyn College students in an attempt to shut down the campus by chaining the doors of the college's Boylan Hall and occupying the road at the corner of Nostrand and Flatbush Avenue for almost an hour.⁵⁴⁶

If in the spring and summer of 1989 Haitians in the diaspora were deeply involved in local struggles, they were also anxiously watching developments back in Haiti. Prosper Avril had once again successfully staved off threats to his power, it seemed, after crushing a revolt that had sprouted within the Haitian military.⁵⁴⁷ But few judged the political situation to be sustainable. As one observer noted, Haiti was “in the mouth of the wolf – you don't know when it might snap shut.”⁵⁴⁸

The popular movement in Haiti certainly recognized the precarious political situation, which it attempted to take advantage of in its push for an opening. KONAKOM remained active in the summer of 1989 through a wide array of activities that brought its members into conflict with the military regime. In June, for example, one leader of the KONAKOM chapter in Northern Limbe was arrested for organizing a peasant cooperative. In July KONAKOM sent an open letter to General Herald Abraham, interim commander-in-chief of the Haitian Army, urging the military to “stop treating members of vigilance brigades [the neighborhood self-defense groups that had sprung up in anticipation of the election violence of 1987] as potential

⁵⁴⁶“New York: mouvement de greve dans les universites,” *Haiti Progres*, May 3-9, 1989, 9; Jeffrey K. Parker, “Barricades Up at 14 CUNY Schools; Sympathy Strike at SUNY,” *United Press International*, May 1, 1989.

⁵⁴⁷Roosevelt Jean-Francois, “At Least 60 Reported Killed in Haiti Uprising,” *United Press International*, Apr. 9, 1989, BC cycle; “Haitian Capital Returns to Normal after Revolt Crushed,” *Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, Apr. 10, 1989.

⁵⁴⁸E.A. Wayne, “Haiti's Calm Belies Turmoil Beneath,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 4, 1989, 8.

terrorists.”⁵⁴⁹ At the end of August twenty-five popular organizations, including the Confederation of Autonomous Haitian Workers (CATH), the National Popular Assembly (APN), the League of Former Political Prisoners, and the Confederation for Democratic Unity (KID), called a press conference to announce that they had joined to form a “common front against repression.” Francois Pierre-Louis, co-leader of the APN, denounced the Avril regime for supporting “death-squads” that “operate with complete impunity.”⁵⁵⁰

At the end of September, in response to growing domestic and international pressure, Avril announced that elections would be held in the next year, but as a report co-authored by the New York-based National Coalition for Haitian Refugees (NCHR) stated, democratic elections were impossible unless the military government ceased its campaign of repression, violence, and human rights abuses.⁵⁵¹ The Avril regime confirmed its unwillingness to take such steps two months later when it arrested Evans Paul, Jean-Auguste Mesyeux, and Etienne Marino. The three men, arrested in Carrefour, a suburb of Port-au-Prince, just after signing a statement urging Haitians to join a month-long mobilization against the Avril government, were all leaders of popular organizations: Paul headed the Confederation for Democratic Unity (KID), Mesyeux the Confederation of Autonomous Haitian Workers (CATH), and Marino the September 17 Popular Organization. The day after their arrest, the government presented the beaten and bloodied prisoners to the nation on state-run television. According to the Avril regime, they were guilty of trying to violently overthrow the government. This attempt by the Haitian government to

⁵⁴⁹*Haiti Insight*, Aug. 1989, 2, 8.

⁵⁵⁰Michael Norton, “Leftists Denounce Alleged Human Rights Abuses,” *Associated Press*, Aug. 31, 1989, AM cycle; “Broad Front Formed to Counter Growing Repression,” *Haiti Report*, Sept. 1989, 1.

⁵⁵¹Michael Norton, “Military Government in Haiti Announces Elections,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 24, 1989, AM cycle; Michael Norton, “Human Rights Groups Denounce Abuses in Haiti,” *Associated Press*, Oct. 7, 1989, PM cycle.

intimidate the movement, however, failed, as had happened so often before. Instead of being frightened into inaction, the movement was spurred on, particularly after seeing the images of the bloodied prisoners on government-controlled television.⁵⁵²

To protest the leaders' arrest and assault, CATH called a forty-eight-hour general strike. As the strike got underway, angry Haitians in both New York and Miami descended upon their cities' Haitian consulates. Writing on behalf of the Committee against Repression in Haiti, Ben Dupuy sent an open letter to General Avril that stated, "We demand the immediate release of three jailed leaders and an end to attacks against those who oppose your regime." In an open letter to Amnesty International, Dupuy pointed out that "it is the hallmark of Duvalierists to concoct completely phony plots in an attempt to justify crackdowns on their political opponents. Avril's round-up of leaders of the opposition is likely to broaden unless quick and strident international protest is made." In Miami the Haitian Refugee Center, Veye Yo, and Amnesty International held a press conference to highlight the Avril regime's responsibility for human rights violations. One week later even larger protests occurred, with thousands of Haitians filling the streets of both Brooklyn and Miami. When the men still were not free after a week and a half, five activists in New York initiated a hunger strike in solidarity with their imprisoned allies.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵²Michael Norton, "Leftist Opposition Leaders Arrested," *Associated Press*, Nov. 2, 1989, AM cycle; "Haitian Labor Leaders Call 48-hour Strike," *Washington (DC) Times*, Nov. 17, 1989, A2; "Avril Televises Torture to Deter Growing Protests," *Haiti Report*, Nov. 1989, 1, 4.

⁵⁵³"Haitian Labor Leaders Call 48-hour Strike"; "Demonstrations against Avril's Repression Take Place Throughout the Haitian Diaspora," *Haiti Report*, Nov. 1989, 2-3; "A New York et a Miami, la diaspora s'in surge contre la barbarie d'Avril," *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 8-14, 1989, 9; "Le Comite contre la Repression en Haiti acrit a Avril et a Amnesty International," *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 8-14, 1989, 10; "New York: la rassemblement contre le terrorisme d'Etat en Haiti reclame le depart d'Avril," *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 15-21, 1989, 9, 20; "Des Haitiens a New York commencement une greve de la faim contre le terrisme d'etat," *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 22-28, 1989, 9.

It took two more months of virtually constant mobilization to obtain the freedom of the three prisoners, and weeks more of protest before Prosper Avril's departure. Though it might not have been apparent at the time, as the year came to a close, the people of Haiti and Haitians in New York and Miami were approaching a period of great change and enormous victories for the popular movement in each place. And on the eve of this watershed moment, there were indications that Haitian activists in the United States were increasingly effective in building and carrying out campaigns that would make 1990 and 1991 such important years. The new campaign of resistance by refugees in the Krome Avenue facility, coordinated with assistance by Father Gerard Jean-Juste and activists with Veye Yo and supported by members of the Miami African American community, showed the tightening partnership between those inside and those outside the prison. Similarly, the parallel actions in Haiti, New York, and Miami that protested the arrest of the three opposition leaders in Haiti show that Haitian activists outside the country identified with the movement and shared many of the same objectives as the grassroots resistance inside Haiti. This overlap and coordination among activists in Haiti and in the Haitian communities of the United States was stronger at the end of 1989 as the result of the previous years of organizing and building the networks of political activism.

From 1987 to 1989 Haitian activists nurtured their border-crossing, grassroots political movement and in the process continued to strengthen the relationship among organizations and activists in Haiti, New York, and Miami. When in the years after Duvalier's departure, activists in Haiti came under intense attack by those trying to roll back the popular movement, activists in Miami and New York as well as in Haiti responded with vigorous mobilizations. In addition, in this difficult period Haitians in the United States not only helped to defend the popular movement in Haiti, but also channeled some of the energy generated in this struggle toward

campaigns in defense of Haitians in the United States. In 1990 and 1991, Haitians at home and in the diaspora would finally be able to bring to harvest the seeds they had sown throughout the many years of difficult struggle.

Chapter 5

The Tipping Point, 1990-1991

On May 5, 1990, the *New York Times* featured a front-page article with the headline, “Long Docile, Haitian-Americans Turn Militant.” Below a picture of Haitians imprisoned at the Krome Avenue Detention Center, the *Times*’ James LeMoyne described the transformation that was underway. “Deeply angered at being treated as suspected AIDS carriers, illiterates and unwanted black immigrants, Haitian-Americans are abandoning years of quiet acceptance and sharply demanding redress for what they charge is a pattern of prejudice and abuse.” As evidence for his observation, LeMoyne cited the large demonstrations that had taken place in Miami and New York the previous month. These actions, the work of “increasingly active political and community groups,” LeMoyne stated, signaled “a new determination to organize politically to force the Federal Government to change the way it treats both Haitians seeking entry to this country and those who live here.”⁵⁵⁴ Two months later an article by Rick Bragg in the *St. Petersburg Times* made a similar observation about Haitians in Miami. A “passive philosophy has been in practice in this city of expatriates, exiles and refugees since significant numbers of Haitians first came here in the late 1970s.” But now, the author argued, Haitians’ passivity has been replaced with militancy. “Lately those sounds of supplication are being drowned out by angry crowds and breaking glass, signs that Miami Haitians are tired of being a non-aggressive, submissive ingredient in this so-called melting pot.”⁵⁵⁵ Haitians in the United States had undergone a sudden and profound change, it seemed.

⁵⁵⁴James LeMoyne, “Long Docile, Haitian-Americans Turn Militant,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1990, 1.

⁵⁵⁵Rick Bragg, “Anger Rises among Miami Haitians,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, July 29, 1990, 1A.

The authors of these articles were right in concluding that the Haitian communities of New York and Miami had reached a critical juncture. Anger over the continued incarceration and deportation of Haitian refugees and the stigma Haitians had suffered from their association with AIDS reached a tipping point in 1990. The articles concluded correctly that the historic actions in the spring of that year were pieces of a larger community mobilization that had reached the current unprecedented heights.

What LeMoyne and Bragg got wrong, however, was the process by which the Haitians in the United States had reached this important point. Rather than a sudden and complete about-face from “docile” and “passive” to “angry” and “militant,” the evolution toward a more mobilized and activist community had been occurring for some time. Indeed, as demonstrated in earlier chapters, the Haitian communities of New York and Miami had in earlier periods exhibited a great deal of militancy and were, at certain points in the early 1980s and especially in the previous four years, highly mobilized. Furthermore, the unprecedented level of mobilization that Haitians achieved in 1990 and 1991 was not solely a reaction to mistreatment by American authorities. It was also the result of their link with the popular movement in Haiti that was reaching its pinnacle in exactly the same period.

From January 1990 to October 1991, Haitians of New York and Miami were engaged in a wide range of campaigns that focused on issues both in the United States and in Haiti. This unprecedented mobilization thrust the community into struggles for fair treatment for Haitian workers and consumers, for change in immigration policy and an end to abuse and imprisonment of Haitian refugees, and for an end to police brutality and to biased federal policies that encouraged anti-Haitian discrimination. Along with their unparalleled level of involvement in a wide range of US-based campaigns, Haitians in New York and Miami continued their solidarity

campaign in partnership with those struggling for democracy and popular empowerment in Haiti. In fact, because the popular struggles in the United States and in Haiti were so closely joined, they fed one another. When the popular movement reached a pinnacle in Haiti, it also peaked in the United States, allowing Haitians in New York and Miami to engage in a level and a range of popular mobilization hitherto unseen.

From Haiti to Brooklyn, Struggles Old and New

In the first month of 1990, General Prosper Avril, the military leader who had come to power in the soldiers' revolt that ousted Lt. Gen. Henri Namphy, intensified his crackdown on political opponents, which he had renewed two months earlier. "To protect democratic accomplishments against terrorism," General Avril announced, he was placing the country in a state of siege. A new wave of arrests and violence swept the country; Avril targeted independent radio stations and forced leading members of the opposition into exile.⁵⁵⁶

The Haitian community of Miami, which had last come out in force in November to protest the arrest and torture of the opposition leaders Paul, Mesyeaux, and Marino, met the news of continued repression in Haiti with another series of mobilizations. On January 13, five thousand people participated in a march to protest the Avril regime and the support it received from the United States. This was the largest demonstration by the South Florida Haitian community since more than ten thousand people had protested the election massacre in November 1987.⁵⁵⁷ Smaller protests continued in the days and weeks that followed, including

⁵⁵⁶Michael Norton, "Military Declares State of Siege, Arrests Political Opponents," *Associated Press*, Jan. 20, 1990, AM cycle; Michael Norton, "Police Raids on Independent Radio Stations Stop Newscasts," *Associated Press*, Jan. 22, 1990, AM cycle; Michael Norton, "Major Civic Leader Expelled, Raising Fears of Military Dictatorship," *Associated Press*, Jan. 21, 1990, AM cycle.

⁵⁵⁷"Miami: la communaute chauffée a blanc," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 17-23, 1990, 8.

one action marking the day that Louis Roy and Hubert de Ronceray, two opponents whom Avril had forced out of the country, arrived in Miami.⁵⁵⁸

In New York, too, Haitians met reports of the wave of repression in Haiti with a renewed mobilization, though on a smaller scale than that of their counterparts in Miami. On January 20 the “Followers of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church of Brooklyn” mobilized its members for a picket line that drew approximately fifty people.⁵⁵⁹ On January 27 more than one thousand people rallied in front of the United Nations and then marched to the Haitian consulate in New York. The group put forth three demands: the departure of Avril, the end of Avril’s state of siege, and the annulment of the Haitian government’s new policy of requiring an entry visa of Haitians returning to the country from abroad, which was seen by many in the exile community as a way to monitor and target returning refugees and political opponents.⁵⁶⁰

The actions by those in the diaspora were just one source of pressure that was building on the Avril regime. Internationally, human rights organizations were intensifying their criticism of the Haitian government as were Haiti’s key allies and supporters.⁵⁶¹ Days into the crackdown, ambassadors from the United States, Canada, and France met with Avril to urge him to end the violence and to lift the siege. France also announced it was suspending aid to Haiti.⁵⁶² Leaders of the grassroots resistance in Haiti, too, protested the renewed repression by the Avril-led

⁵⁵⁸Kim S. Martin, “Opposition Leaders Expelled from Haiti Welcomed to Miami,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 21, 1990, AM cycle.

⁵⁵⁹“New York: des Haitiens protestant contre les mesures dictatoriales,” *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 24-30, 1990, 9.

⁵⁶⁰“New York: la communaute manifeste contre la derniere vague de repression,” *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 31 – Feb. 6, 1990, 8-9, 17.

⁵⁶¹“Haiti: Caribbean Human Rights Group Denounces ‘Reign of Terror’,” *Inter Press Service*, Jan. 22, 1990.

⁵⁶²“Governments Demand Haiti Lift State of Siege,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Jan. 24, 1990, 17A; “Haiti: U.S. Calls Haiti Actions ‘Outrageous, Indefensible’,” *Inter Press Service*, Jan. 24, 1990; Roosevelt Jean-Francois, “France Suspends Economic Aid to Haiti,” *United Press International*, Jan. 26, 1990, BC cycle.

government. Appearing on the Catholic-run Radio Soleil, Bishop Willy Romelus denounced Avril's tactics. "They have made rubbish of the constitution," the bishop declared. Nine other Haitian bishops soon joined Romelus in a statement they made asking Avril to end his campaign of repression.⁵⁶³

Finally, on Monday January 29, Avril both ended the state of siege that he had initiated nine days earlier and announced that he would no longer require visas for returning Haitians. Opposition groups maintained their campaign of resistance, however, in both Haiti and the United States. On February 7, the day marking the fourth anniversary of Duvalier's departure, five thousand people marched, as they had on January 13, in opposition to Avril and in support of democracy in Haiti. On the same day, the Haitian government released eight political prisoners, including Evans Paul, Jean-Auguste Mesyeux, and Etienne Marino, the three men whose detention and beatings had sparked the widespread protests in November.⁵⁶⁴

General Avril's efforts to crush his opponents before the scheduled October elections had failed miserably. In fact, throughout the month of February, Avril's opponents gained strength in a series of maneuvers meant to isolate the general and ultimately to force his resignation. On February 14, Bishop Willy Romelus publicly charged that in the existing political situation, elections were impossible and Avril needed to step down. By the end of the month, most political parties, labor unions, and members of the opposition had pledged to boycott any election held while Avril was in office. Additional human rights reports highly critical of the Avril regime contributed to the pressure, and an increasingly rebellious population insisted on his

⁵⁶³Michael Norton, "Church Leader Denounces Military Government's Exile of Opponents," *Associated Press*, Jan. 22, 1990, PM cycle; Michael Norton, "Haitian Bishops Ask End to Repression," *Associated Press*, Jan. 27, 1990, AM cycle.

⁵⁶⁴"Miami: des milliers de compatriots se mobilisent a nouveau contre Avril," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 14 – 20, 1990, 10.

departure.⁵⁶⁵ Finally, on March 12, Prosper Avril stepped down and left Haiti aboard a US C-141 transport plane, which took the general and his family to an Air Force base in Homestead, Florida.⁵⁶⁶

Not sure what might be next for Haiti, Haitians in the United States were excited but also anxious about Avril's departure. When they heard that Avril was heading to the United States and that he might be establishing himself in Boca Raton, Florida, an uneasy crowd of people gathered outside the Haitian Refugee Center. "Everybody is happy, but we are still watching," said thirty-year-old Pierre Joseph. Another group gathered outside the US attorney's office in Miami to protest the US-granted exile and to urge Avril's indictment. A third congregation gathered outside the front gates of the Homestead military base. "We're here to tell him he's not welcome in this society, in this country," proclaimed one of the protesters. "We want him to be tried and imprisoned and even executed like Ceausescu in Romania."⁵⁶⁷

Haitians in Miami also took Avril's defeat as an opportunity to try to topple the Haitian government's closest representative in Miami. On the same day that Avril left Haiti, between fifty and one hundred people climbed the walls of the Haitian consulate in Miami and broke into the building. As in the past, this location, which represented the Haitian government locally, became the site of the Miami community's demands on their government back home. Those occupying the consulate demanded the resignation of Avril's consul to Miami and the

⁵⁶⁵Michael Norton, "Labor Unions Oppose Elections Under Avril," *Associated Press*, Feb. 17, 1990, PM cycle; Michael Norton, "Major Coalition to Boycott Haitian Vote," *Associated Press*, Feb. 28, 1990, AM cycle; "OAS Resolution on Haiti Expresses Concern over Human Rights," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Feb. 27, 1990; "U.S. Backs Proposed Rights Probe in Haiti," *Associated Press*, Feb. 27, 1990, AM cycle; Michael Norton, "Thousands Protest Army Killing of Schoolgirl," *Associated Press*, Mar. 6, 1990, AM cycle; Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 70.

⁵⁶⁶Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 70-71; Christopher Connell, "Bush Ordered Plane to Fly Haitian Leader to United States," *Associated Press*, Mar. 12, 1990, PM Cycle.

⁵⁶⁷Dan Sewell, "Haitian Exiles Cheer U.S.-Aided Change, Jeer Avril," *Associated Press*, Mar. 12, 1990, AM cycle.

appointment of one of the members of the Haitian diaspora as the new representative from Haiti to the city. The group put forth Pastor Jean Renelus, a leader in the occupation of the consulate, as their choice. After approximately four hours, FBI agents and representatives of the State Department persuaded the demonstrators to leave the building. But before they left, members of the group were able to collect stacks of documents listing opponents to the Avril government and individuals on the Avril regime's payroll.⁵⁶⁸

Two days later, members of the New York community followed the example of their counterparts in Miami and took over the Haitian consulate in New York. For ten hours supporters held a picket line outside the building while the occupation took place. According to Antoine Brutus and Wilson Desir, leaders of the New York community, the Haitians inside the building negotiated with the State Department the closing of the consulate for twenty-four hours until a replacement for the current consul could be arranged.⁵⁶⁹

In Haiti, power had passed to a provisional government; Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, a supreme court justice, had been named provisional president. Trouillot and the new government promised to prepare the way for elections, a claim Haitians at home and abroad viewed with a mixture of skepticism and cautious optimism.⁵⁷⁰

The struggle over the future of Haiti was not the only thing occupying the Haitian community of New York in the winter and spring of 1990. That January, while some members

⁵⁶⁸“Haitian Protesters Take Control of Consulate,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 10, 1990, AM cycle; “Haitians Enter Consulate in Miami,” *United Press International*, Mar. 10, 1990, BC cycle; “Miami: de nombreux compatriotes occupent le consulat,” *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 14-20, 1990, 10.

⁵⁶⁹“New York: des manifestants ferment le consulat haitien,” *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 14-20, 1990, 9.

⁵⁷⁰Pierre-Yves Glass, “Deposed Ruler Leaves Haiti, Judge Chosen First Woman President,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 12, 1990, AM cycle; Pierre-Yves Glass, “New President Promises to 'Clean Face' of Haiti,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 13, 1990, AM cycle.

of the community were mobilizing against repression in Haiti, others were mobilizing to defend themselves from abuse in their new home. At 6 a.m. on Tuesday January 30, workers at the Domsey Trading Company of Brooklyn walked off the job, an action that began one of the most memorable and bitter labor struggles in the history of Haitian New York.

The Domsey Trading Company specialized in salvaging used clothing and either reselling it in a neighborhood thrift store or exporting it, often to developing countries. The company had been founded in 1950 by the Salm family, working-class Jewish immigrants from Germany. By the late 1980s Peter Salm had taken over the family business, operating a company that had evolved from a modest operation in which his grandparents had “look[ed] for old clothes to take off the zippers and buttons and resell them” to a company that made multiple millions in annual profits. In January 1990 when the strike began, Domsey employed a mostly immigrant workforce of over two hundred workers, a workforce that was approximately 85 percent Haitian with the remaining workers from Latin America (particularly Honduras and other Central American countries) along with some African Americans.⁵⁷¹

The workers, who spent their workday sorting, grading, repairing, pressing and re-packaging the used clothing, were required to wear a large number pinned to their chest so that managers could easily identify workers. A union organizer assigned to Domsey recalled, “Believe it or not, the bosses call the workers by their numbers, not their names, and if you don't wear your number, they send you home, and you lose a day's pay.” Badinal Brice, one of the Haitian workers at Domsey, was number 347. Brice remembered hearing, “347, 347 hey, let's go, let's go, man.” Sometimes instead of being sent home, workers without their numbers were

⁵⁷¹“Brooklyn Workers -- Mostly Haitian Immigrants – Strike at Clothing Factory,” *PR Newswire*, Jan. 30, 1990; Deborah Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty to Workers; Insults, Dismissals and a 4-Year Wait for Pay They Won,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1997, B2.

fined. "If you do not attach the card to your pocket, you pay five dollars," reported Brice. This was a hefty fine for workers that received between three and four dollars an hour. "Six times I paid the five dollars," he recalled.⁵⁷²

The indignity of the number system and the low pay and frequent fines were not the only grievances the Domsey workers had. Though they routinely worked ten-hour days, the workers received no overtime pay; some reported receiving only eight hours pay for ten or more hours of work. When the workers complained, reported a Haitian worker, the bosses pointed out "that in Haiti we would make three dollars per day, whereas today, in the U.S., we are paid \$3.35 per hour," but, the bosses observed, "we are still not satisfied." If the workers were not happy, they should leave, argued management. In addition, the Domsey workforce received no time off for public holidays, few health benefits, and no retirement benefits. Safety and health were also serious concerns at Domsey. Workers reported that fire exits in the Brooklyn facility were intentionally blocked and that they had to breathe in dusty, dirty air without protective masks. Workers who needed to use the bathroom had to find one of the few bathroom passes that were circulating among the hundreds of workers in the warehouse, a task that was sometimes so difficult workers would have to relieve themselves at their work stations. "We are compelled to a full slavery," lamented Jean Leon, another Haitian worker at Domsey.⁵⁷³

To remedy the situation, workers approached the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in 1989, asking that the union represent them at Domsey. Although the workplace already had a union, it was considered by all to be a company union, which only

⁵⁷²"Brooklyn Workers – Mostly Haitian Immigrants – Strike at Clothing Factory;" "Greve dans une factorie de Brooklyn: les travailleurs parlent," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 7-13, 1990, 9.

⁵⁷³"Greve dans une factorie de Brooklyn: les travailleurs parlent," Sontag, "U.S. Victory Is Empty to Workers;" Brooklyn Workers -- Mostly Haitian Immigrants – Strike at Clothing Factory."

existed, as one worker put it, “to the advantage of management.” “It works against our interests. We do not want this yellow union,” declared Gilman Joseph. It was a “bogus union,” in the words of another worker. Needing new representation, the workers went to the ILGWU. But upon catching the scent of a union-organizing drive, Domsey managers ratcheted up their practice of interrogations, threats, intimidation, and surveillance. Jean Leon felt surrounded by spies at work and claimed management and its agents carried tape recorders to catch the words of disloyal workers.⁵⁷⁴

In spite of Domsey’s efforts to suppress it, by late in the year the organizing campaign had built enough support among the workers that the union was able to hold its first open meeting, which was attended by about one hundred workers (a third of the workforce) in a Brooklyn church near the Domsey warehouse. The workers elected an organizing committee of six workers to represent them, and on December 1 the committee approached management with a petition signed by the majority of the workforce requesting that the company hold a vote to give the workers a choice whether to affiliate with the ILGWU. When they were presented with the petition, Domsey managers threw it to the ground and cursed the workers. Within half an hour, one of the members of the organizing committee named Giles Robinson, an African American and native of South Carolina who had worked at Domsey for twenty-seven years and who had watched the Salm brothers grow up, was fired. In the following month two other members of the committee, Lucien Henry and James Anthony Charles, were also dismissed.⁵⁷⁵

Domsey managers hoped that the firing of half of the organizing committee would squelch the union drive. Joe Blount, the lead organizer for the ILGWU at Domsey, believed that

⁵⁷⁴“Greve dans une factorie de Brooklyn: les travailleurs parlent.”

⁵⁷⁵Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty to Workers;” “Greve dans une factorie de Brooklyn: les travailleurs parlent.”

“the idea was that the other [workers] would wake up and be scared. But it enraged them instead.” Many, like John Harris, one of the Haitian workers at Domsey, felt they had no choice but to fight back. As Harris explained, “We are not protected by a union that defends our interests. We do not enjoy any respect as Haitians.” As a result, “the Latin Americans and we have formed a ‘*tet ansanm*’ to begin this strike.” This *tet ansanm*, or coalition, walked off the job on January 30, 1990, taking approximately two-thirds of the Domsey workforce off the warehouse floor.⁵⁷⁶

Fighting partially for “respect as Haitians” and with strong support from their community in Brooklyn, many of the Haitian workers on strike saw the Domsey struggle as one for dignity both as workers and as Haitians. Jean Leon understood management’s actions as an attempt to silence the outspoken, mostly Haitian workforce. “The ‘crime’ imputed to our countrymen is that they demand their rights. Given this state of things, we decided to strike.”

The labor struggle quickly grew ugly. One day Peter Salm set up a folding table loaded with bananas in front of the picket line. “These are for you monkeys to eat,” said Salm, scratching himself under his arms. “Stupid niggers” and “lazy black boys” were other terms the Salms reserved for the strikers. The women on strike were often singled out for abuse. The female strikers were, according to management, “whores” and were the targets of other explicit sexual language. In another incident, a company security guard known as George or “Big Nose” produced a dildo to taunt the women on the picket line.⁵⁷⁷

The Domsey owners also gave the striking Haitian workers reason to understand the conflict as a struggle over their dignity as Haitians. According to a detailed report produced by

⁵⁷⁶Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty to Workers;” “Greve dans une factorie de Brooklyn: les travailleurs parlent.”

⁵⁷⁷Alan Finder, “More Employers Seen Using Dismissals to Fight Unions,” *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1991, 21; Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty To Workers.”

the National Labor Relations Board, Domsey owners told workers on the picket line that they smelled and should go back to Haiti. When one of the Salm brothers yelled, “Go back to Duvalier” at the strikers, they yelled back, “Go back to Hitler.” The owners found the strikers’ response completely outrageous, commenting soon after, “It is extremely ludicrous that any human being could think that we could sit down and negotiate with animals such as these.” On another occasion, agents of the company sprayed water from the roof of the Domsey warehouse down on the picket line, prompting Salm to announce that the water would help the Haitian workers “wash out their AIDS.”⁵⁷⁸

As the strike stretched on, management brought in a set of replacement workers it had secured from a prison work release program. Later management brought in a group of mostly Dominican workers to labor in place of the striking workers. Despite management’s efforts to break the strike, however, the workers held on, bolstered by a community mobilized in their support. In addition, the Domsey workers and the ILGWU filed multiple complaints of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board; as the battle in Brooklyn continued, these charges worked their way through the legal system. The Haitian community, which had mobilized in support of the workers since the beginning of the strike, held another support rally to mark the sixth month of the labor action. But it would take another year before any resolution to the conflict would come.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty to Workers.”

⁵⁷⁹Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty To Workers;” “New York: manifestation de support aux travailleurs de Domsey,” *Haiti Progres*, June 6-12, 1990, 9; “New York: nouvelle manifestation des travailleurs de ‘Dommsey’ en greve depuis six mois,” *Haiti Progres*, July 18-24, 1990, 8.

Blood and Boycotts

As the Domsey strike was unfolding and as the movement in support of the ongoing struggle in Haiti continued, a third campaign sprouted in the first months of 1990, demonstrating the greatly increased level of activity and mobilization among Haitians in the United States during this period. In February, a change in federal policy brought the issue of the AIDS stigma, which had previously been such a concern for the Haitian community, thundering back. A month and a half into the new year, the FDA announced that it was revising its rules applying to blood bank donations from Haitians. Previously donations from Haitians had been accepted as long as the donor had come to the United States before 1977 (the year the agency identified as the point of origin for AIDS in the United States). According to the new FDA policy, however, Haitian blood would no longer be accepted at US blood banks, no matter how long the donor had been in the United States. Acknowledging that “individuals from Haiti would be upset by this policy,” FDA spokesman Brad Stone insisted that this revision was “the only fairly reliable method we have to protect the blood supply.”⁵⁸⁰

For a community that continued to suffer the stigma of the earlier Centers for Disease Control action, the return to a federal policy that singled them out as disease carriers evoked fear and intense anger from the Haitian community. “Young people are going to be ashamed to say they're Haitian. What are they going to [do] with us if we let them say we're carriers? Put us in quarantine?” asked Theresa Voigt, a twenty-five-year Haitian resident of the United States⁵⁸¹ Others responded with righteous indignation, portraying the new FDA policy not only as the

⁵⁸⁰“Blood Drive Canceled Over Rejection of Haitian Donors,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 15, 1990, AM cycle; “Haitians: Blood Donation Policy is Racist,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 16, 1990, PM cycle.

⁵⁸¹Michael Warren, “Thousands Protest FDA's Ban on Haitian Blood Donations,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 7, 1990, AM cycle.

latest campaign of cruelty to be carried out against an oppressed people but also as a continuation of the injustice of colonialism. A cartoon in the Brooklyn-based weekly *Haiti Progres* featured a dark-skinned Jesus wearily carrying a cross labeled SIDA (the French acronym for AIDS). Standing behind the suffering man were two inhuman looking figures with faces covered by surgeons' masks, dressed in laboratory coats and gloves, with the French and the American flags prominently displayed on their chests.⁵⁸²

Haitians' fear about the impact of the FDA policy change was well founded. Soon after the announcement, Joseph Etienne of the Haitian Center's Council of Brooklyn reported that Haitian domestic workers had begun losing their jobs. Etienne also reported that "in a public high school in Brooklyn, after a 10-year-old Haitian girl used a telephone, they sprayed it." The situation in South Florida was much the same. Louis Germain, assistant director of the Haitian-American Community Association of Dade County, reported, "People have lost their jobs, and Haitian students are being stereotyped. Last week a teacher in a class on AIDS told the students if they don't want to get AIDS they have to remain free from drugs and homosexuality and stay away from Haitians." In Central Florida, Renald Bonnaire, a young Haitian father, despite testing negative for AIDS, was initially blocked from donating blood for his own daughter, Destiny, who needed a transfusion in order to have surgery. Chantal Thomas, executive director of the Haitian American Community Center in West Palm Beach, articulated the outrage felt by many Haitians: "It is insulting. How dare they do something like that?"⁵⁸³

⁵⁸²*Haiti Progres*, Mar. 21-27, 1990, 21.

⁵⁸³Warren, "Thousands Protest FDA's Ban on Haitian Blood Donations;" Bruce Lambert, "Now, No Haitians Can Donate Blood," *New York Times*, Mar. 14, 1990, A20; "Blood Bank Relents, Agrees to Accept Blood of Haitian Man," *United Press International*, Apr. 13, 1990; "Haitians: Blood Donation Policy Is Racist."

The new FDA policy was, in fact, rooted in the same understanding of AIDS and the Haitian community that had prompted the Centers for Disease Control earlier to include Haitians as one of the four H's (the high risk categories of hemophiliacs, homosexuals, heroine users, and Haitians). Like the CDC, the FDA argued that the best way to secure the blood supply was to consider *all* Haitians as potentially diseased. But when they were pressed to explain why all Haitians were being treated as a threat, a FDA spokesperson equivocated. "Haitians are not a higher risk group per se, but we don't have effective screening devices."⁵⁸⁴

Just as they had in the early 1980s, Haitians in the United States rejected the US government's rationale for placing their community in the at-risk category; they immediately began building a campaign to challenge the decision. Already highly mobilized through the ongoing struggle for democracy in Haiti, the campaign for the imprisoned refugees, and smaller campaigns like the Domsey strike, Haitians in New York, Miami, and Boston met the change in FDA policy with action. As Paul Farmer observes, unlike earlier campaigns against the AIDS stigma in which community response had been somewhat hampered by political and class divisions, "This time members of the diaspora community reacted with unanimity and in great numbers."⁵⁸⁵ In early March, a demonstration in front of the Miami office of the Food and Drug Administration drew eight thousand people. One of those at the protest, Rendell Jean, an eighteen-year-old Haitian immigrant who had recently signed up with the United States Army, said the FDA action had made him decide to leave the United States instead. "How can I join the army of a country that doesn't respect me for who I am? And they want to know why there are racial problems in this country. It's stupid acts like this that cause it," argued Jean. As Marliene

⁵⁸⁴Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 218.

⁵⁸⁵Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 218.

Bastien recalls, Haitian activists in South Florida protested the policy by blocking the road to the Miami International Airport for hours. Activists like Bastien, who had for years been organizing around refugee issues and working to support the grassroots resistance in Haiti with Father Gerard Jean-Juste, the Haitian Refugee Center, and *Veye Yo*, were now leading the AIDS protests in the South Florida community.⁵⁸⁶

In the northeastern United States, too, Haitians were resurrecting the anti-discrimination campaign they had built in the early 1980s. Following the demonstration in Miami in March, seven thousand Haitians demonstrated in Boston against the new blood ban. And in New York, just as in Miami, the activists who had been organizing to support the resistance in Haiti and to defend the Haitian refugees in the United States refocused on the AIDS issue. For example, members of the Haitian Information and Documentation Center, known to the New York community as SELA, one of the centers of political activism in New York throughout the 1980s, continued to organize around the AIDS issue in the period between the CDC about-face in 1985 and the FDA blood ban in February of 1990, even while they continued their support for democracy in Haiti and justice for the Haitian refugees.⁵⁸⁷

In late March and early April, the campaign continued to pick up steam. In New York, Haitian students demonstrated against the blood ban. From Washington, DC, the National Haitian American Health Commission issued a press release calling the new FDA policy “insensitive” and “lacking scientific rigor.” Building on the growing momentum, Haitians in New York, under the banner of the Haitian Enforcement Against Racism (HEAR) -- a coalition

⁵⁸⁶Marleine Bastien, interview; Warren, “Thousands Protest FDA's Ban on Haitian Blood Donations;” “Boston: 7000 Haitiens denoncent le racism officialise sur la question du SIDA,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 11-17, 1990, 10.

⁵⁸⁷Lionel Legros, Telephone interview with the author, Sept. 1, 2010.

of student, community, and church-based activists, called for a protest march to take place on April 20; Haitian radio stations and newspapers publicized the upcoming action for weeks.⁵⁸⁸

As demonstrators assembled for the April 20 march, scheduled to cross the Brooklyn Bridge and mass around City Hall in downtown Manhattan, it was difficult to determine how large the turnout would be. New York City police projections for the event ranged from two thousand to ten thousand while the organizers of the action projected that they would attract as many as thirty thousand participants. But by 12:30 p.m. the number of protesters waiting to march across the Brooklyn Bridge had already reached twenty thousand. By the time the march began, the number of protesters was so large that police were forced to completely halt vehicular traffic. Around City Hall, where the march concluded, more than fifty thousand people (one hundred thousand to one hundred fifty thousand was the estimate of march organizers and the Haitian press) massed for a five-hour rally that eventually coaxed Mayor David Dinkins to address the crowd. “The FDA is wrong. I predict they’re going to reverse themselves. I recognize that the Haitian community in particular has been discriminated against,” declared Dinkins to a cheering sea of blue and red, the colors of the Haitian flag.⁵⁸⁹

Although Mayor Dinkins’ predication was correct, the FDA reversal did not happen immediately. However, the two and a half months of mobilization and the surprisingly strong action in New York on April 20 did have an immediate impact. Just days after the New York City AIDS March, the FDA announced that it was planning to abandon its total exclusion of

⁵⁸⁸“New York: des etudiants haitiens manifestent aussi contre la FDA,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 11-17, 1990, 10; “Haitian Community Denounces FDA Discriminatory Regulations Regarding HIV Transmission,” *PR Newswire*, Apr. 19, 1990.

⁵⁸⁹Larry Neumeister, “50,000 March in NYC AIDS Protest, Police Caught Off-Guard by Turnout,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 20, 1990; Donatella Lorch, “Haitians’ Outrage Brings Solidarity,” *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 1990, 34; “New York: Une journee historique! La diaspora dit non a la discrimination,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 25-May 1, 1990.

Haitian blood donations. But as the summer came to a close and the fall began, the policy excluding Haitians stood, forcing the Haitian communities back into action. To keep the process moving and to force the FDA finally to reverse its policy, members of the Haitian community launched another large mobilization, this time with a demonstration in October in Washington, DC. Finally, in December of 1990, the FDA announced that it was dropping its exclusion of Haitian blood and that it would discontinue any further exclusion based solely on donors' ethnicity or national origins.⁵⁹⁰

As before, change at the federal level did not reverse the damage that had been done by a stigma-reinforcing policy. Still, the Haitian community viewed the FDA reversal as a major victory. In fact, many Haitians see the AIDS campaign in general and the historic April 20 AIDS march in particular as a historic moment in the political history of the Haitian community of New York.⁵⁹¹ “New York: an historic day! The diaspora says no to discrimination,” proclaimed a *Haiti Progres* headline above a photograph of the streets of lower Manhattan completely filled with Haitian marchers. The massive turnout on April 20 “gave the Haitian community legitimacy with the powers that be,” argues Haitian community and labor organizer Ray Laforest.⁵⁹² “That was a wakeup call. We had doctors, lawyers, maids, kids who left classes in school, all marching. It was wonderful,” remembers

⁵⁹⁰Philip J. Hilts, “F.D.A. Set to Reverse Blood Ban,” *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1990; Abid Aslam, “United States: Haitians Angered by Inaction on Blood Ban,” *Inter Press Service*, Oct. 13, 1990; Kate McKenna, “Nation's Haitians to Rally against Aids Ban on Blood Donations,” *States News Service*, Oct. 18, 1990; Janet Bass, “Haitian Demonstrators Protest FDA Blood-giving Ban,” *United Press International*, Oct. 19, 1990, BC cycle; “Washington: 10,000 Haitiens dissent non au racism,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 24-30, 1990, 12-13, 20; Rob Stein, “FDA Unveils New Blood Donation Guidelines,” *United Press International*, Dec. 5, 1990, BC cycle.

⁵⁹¹Cerat, interview; Laforest, interview; Legros, telephone interview; Ives, interview; “New York: Une journee historique! La diaspora dit non a la discrimination,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 25-May 1, 1990; “Haitians’ Outrage Brings Solidarity,” *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 1990, 34.

⁵⁹²Laforest, interview.

community activist Ninaj Raoul.⁵⁹³ Kim Ives even suggests that the power demonstrated by the New York City AIDS march might have had an impact in Haiti.

People saw that and they said, “Wow! We are strong! We really can rock things!” And to some extent the Lavalas movement may even have been spawned a little bit by that big April march . . . Having been in it, that would have been my feeling, that somehow that AIDS march would have had an effect on what happened in Haiti [with the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide] six months later.⁵⁹⁴

In fact, Aristide himself acknowledged the action’s significance as part of the trans-border movement when he called April 20 “part of the struggle of the forces of life against the forces of death, a struggle engaged not just in Haiti but around the world.” Though it is difficult to measure the impact of the AIDS march in Haiti, it is certain that Haitian activists in New York saw it as part of their ongoing campaign for justice and dignity in both Haiti and the United States.

A number of factors produced the surprisingly powerful action on April 20, 1990. One reason for the unprecedented outpouring of support by the Haitian community was that the AIDS issue was one that allowed community members to transcend traditional divisions. As Lionel Legros, a founding member of *L’Ayisyen* and SELA, recalls, the issue of discrimination and the AIDS stigma “drove Haitians of all classes together.”⁵⁹⁵ Lily Cerat agrees. The AIDS issue was one of the “issues that affected every Haitian young and old . . . The differences became secondary.”⁵⁹⁶ Paul Farmer also argues that “AIDS-related discrimination was an issue that could mobilize diaspora Haitians like no other.” According to Farmer, the secret to the power of

⁵⁹³Clem Richardson, “She’s Always Willing to Help; Activist Adds Some TLC to Haitian Community,” *Daily News (New York)*, July 23, 2001, 3.

⁵⁹⁴Ives, interview.

⁵⁹⁵Legros, telephone interview; “New York: Une journee historique! La diaspora dit non a la discrimination,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr.25-May 1, 1990.

⁵⁹⁶Cerat, interview.

April 20 lay in the large number of workers and students at the march, people, Farmer argues, that “had come to the United States to work and study . . . and AIDS-related discrimination compromised these activities more than any of the other forces that had demoralized these communities since their establishment.”⁵⁹⁷

It is surely true that the AIDS issue was unique in its capacity to bridge political, class, and generational divisions in the Haitian community, and Farmer may be correct that the AIDS stigma posed the greatest threat that Haitian students and workers had ever encountered to the opportunity they were seeking in the United States. But students and workers also represented a large portion of the smaller but significant numbers of people that had protested the Duvalier dictatorship, just as they had been a sizable proportion of the tens of thousands who had celebrated the Duvalier dictatorship’s collapse in February 1986.

As important as the uniqueness of the AIDS issue was in explaining the unprecedented outpouring of April 20, it is insufficient to explain what happened. The Haitian community responded to activists’ call on April 20 not only because everyone could identify with the threat of the AIDS stigma, but also because the anti-discrimination campaign was linked to and drew strength from, a wider, multifaceted Haitian movement that was mobilizing Haitians on a number of different fronts and around a number of different issues. Haitian radio stations like Radio Soleil and Radio Tropicale that did so much to mobilize the Haitian community for the march were also key conduits of information on happenings in Haiti and spaces for public discussion and debate of Haitian politics.⁵⁹⁸ Lily Cerat remembers that it was the “political-cultural activism,” the “community organizing machinery in place . . . [and] ready to come

⁵⁹⁷Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 220.

⁵⁹⁸Garry Pierre-Pierre, “For Haitian Immigrants, Radio Remains a Passion,” *New York Times*, Aug. 20, 1993.

together and to thrust on that day” that allowed the Haitian community to achieve what it did.⁵⁹⁹ Some of those political-cultural networks and the community organizing machinery had been constructed in the earlier phase of the AIDS fight. But much of it had also been built and energized in the other struggles of the period, including the movement for empowerment and democracy in Haiti, the struggle to defend and free Haitian refugees in South Florida, and the many fights for justice and fair treatment for Haitian workers and students throughout the diaspora.

Even those organizations whose origins lay directly in the fight against the blood ban included member groups and individuals that had been and would continue to be active in the broader Haitian popular movement. For example, Haitian Enforcement Against Racism (HEAR), a leading organization in the April 20 march composed of community, church-based, and student groups, was founded by student and community activists after authorities refused to accept blood donations from Haitians at a blood drive at Stonybrook College. Guy Victor, the president of HEAR, had, before taking on the AIDS campaign, been active in the campaign to support the grassroots movement in Haiti. Victor was also a close associate of the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste and a strong supporter of Jean-Bertrand Aristide; in fact, in the year following the April 20 march, Victor became one of the directors of the “10th Department” chapter in New York City (Aristide’s extension of Haitian government in the diaspora), and HEAR remained active in Haitian community struggles, including the campaigns against police brutality in the later 1990s.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹Cerat, interview.

⁶⁰⁰Elise Ackerman, “Perilous Journey: For More than Two Decades Miami’s Haitian Refugee Center Was a Beacon of Hope and a Force for Justice. Today Its Director, Guy Victor, Is Struggling Just to Keep It Afloat,” *Miami New Times*, Feb. 8, 1996; Barbara Sanon, “4.20.90: Proud of Our Blood,” *POZ Magazine online*, April, 2000, http://www.poz.com/articles/200_10471.shtml [accessed July 14, 2011].

The AIDS campaign happened at a moment when activists in Haiti and in the Haitian communities of the United States were achieving an unprecedented level of community mobilization.⁶⁰¹ The activists leading the community mobilization were linked by networks that were engaged in multiple, overlapping campaigns. And the different points in the multifaceted movement reinforced one another, a key factor in Haitians' unprecedented surge of power in the spring of 1990.

Although the most dramatic moment in the AIDS campaign occurred in New York, the energy unleashed throughout the diaspora by the anti-discrimination campaign also shaped an angry and sometimes violent spring and summer for Haitians in Miami. At the same time that they were organizing against the FDA policy, members of the South Florida community were escalating their campaign for imprisoned refugees, an effort that had taken on new urgency with the proliferation of reports that prisoners, many of whom had been imprisoned for years inside the Krome Avenue Detention Center, were being subjected to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse by guards in the facility. In April a *Miami Herald* editorial reported conversations in which former detainees told of a "guard beating a Haitian man until he vomited blood, another guard breaking a Latin detainee's arms and legs because he refused to pick up a dirty napkin . . . of yellow drinking water that caused diarrhea, and strip searches during which Bibles and cosmetics were confiscated."⁶⁰² Haitian women reported being threatened with deportation unless they had sex with guards. By May the Haitian Refugee Center had collected more than one hundred sworn affidavits from refugees charging harassment and abuse at Krome, and a

⁶⁰¹"Haitians; Pride and Prejudice," *Economist* (London), May 27, 1989, 29; James LeMoyné, "Long Docile, Haitian-Americans Turn Militant," *New York Times*, May 1, 1990, 1; Rick Bragg, "Anger Rises among Miami Haitians," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, July 29, 1990, 1A.

⁶⁰²Editorial, "Shameful Accusations," *Miami Herald*, Apr. 12, 1990, A26.

federal probe into the allegations was underway. Hoping to defuse a potentially explosive situation, INS spokesman Duke Austin claimed that there was no evidence to support such charges. Krome was “a good facility” that “meets all standards of detention,” Austin claimed.⁶⁰³

At a moment when Haitians in the United States were more mobilized than ever before, reports such as these added fuel to the fire that was already spreading rapidly. Just nine days after the massive New York City AIDS march, Miami became the site of another dramatic event. On Sunday April 29 more than one thousand protesters (as many as twenty-five hundred according to some sources) converged on the Krome Avenue facility to demand freedom for the refugees. Despite the presence of riot police that had been deployed in anticipation of the demonstration, the protesters stormed the front gate of the facility, tearing it down completely. The group then advanced to the next barrier, but it was stopped by police before they could advance. Explaining what drove the crowd to take such steps, the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste explained, "We want freedom and justice for the Haitian refugees and all the refugees detained. We must break down the walls of Krome, which remind us of Hitlerism."⁶⁰⁴ Observing the battle at Krome, the various actions in the AIDS campaign, and the general state of the Haitian diaspora, Jocelyn McCalla, director of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, identified “a

⁶⁰³Dan Sewell, “Justice Investigating Abuses at Detention Center,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 1, 1990, PM cycle; James LeMoyné, “Florida Center Holding Aliens Is Under Inquiry,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1990, A16; LeMoyné, “Long Docile, Haitian-Americans Turn Militant;” Barry Klein, “Anger Builds Behind Bars; Haitians Find Frustration, not Freedom,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, May 7, 1990, 1B.

⁶⁰⁴Sandra Walewski, “About 1,000 Haitian Protesters Tear Down Detention Center Fence,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 29, 1990, AM cycle; Klein, “Anger Builds behind Bars; Haitians Find Frustration, Not Freedom;” Jeanne DeQuine, “Haitians Abused, Protesters Say,” *USA Today*, June 11, 1990, 3A.

new awareness among Haitian-Americans.” The Reverend Jean-Juste echoed McCalla’s observation; “What we are now saying is ‘enough is enough’,” he stated.⁶⁰⁵

Later in the summer of 1990, the Haitian community of Miami was again at the center of an intense confrontation with local authorities, but this time the controversy also drew Miami’s black American and Cuban communities into the fray. As we have seen, in Miami’s complex history of racial and ethnic relations, black Americans and Haitians sometimes had come into conflict but at other times had found reason to unite over their common experience of anti-black exclusion and racism in the city of Miami. As the summer progressed, the energy of the highly mobilized Haitian community merged with the long-simmering anger and frustration of Miami’s African Americans to produce a tense standoff between the city’s temporarily unified black population and the largely Cuban city leadership.

Things began to heat up in mid-June, as Miami’s black population was excitedly preparing for the arrival of Nelson Mandela, who was scheduled to address a convention of labor unionists assembled for the annual meeting of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Black Miamians viewed Mandela as a hero for his leadership in the campaign to end apartheid in South Africa; they considered it a distinct honor to host this champion of black freedom, especially in a city where they felt the black population was too often abused, excluded, or simply ignored. Shortly before his arrival, however, an ABC News broadcast of Nelson Mandela’s expressing gratitude for the support of such international figures as Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Cuban leader Fidel Castro reached Miami city leaders. Mandela’s statement, in the words of Melanie Shell-Weiss, proved to be “infuriating [to] Cubans and Jews in Miami alike” and prompted the city to ignore Mandela’s visit, allowing the African

⁶⁰⁵Walewski, “About 1,000 Haitian Protesters Tear Down Detention Center Fence”; Klein, “Anger Builds Behind Bars; Haitians Find Frustration, Not Freedom.”

National Congress leader to come and go “with no official acknowledgement or greeting from the city’s political leaders whatsoever.” To an already frustrated and marginalized black community, this act was the ultimate insult. “To reject Mandela is to reject us,” declared a statement by the Miami NAACP.⁶⁰⁶

Another incident days later further enflamed the anger of the black residents of Miami. On Friday June 29 Abner Alezi, a Haitian immigrant, went into Rapid Transit Factory Outlet to have a pair of pants repaired. According to Alezi, his request for service turned into an altercation with the Cuban storeowner; after quarreling with the storeowner, he was beaten and arrested by Miami police. The storeowner claimed Alezi initiated the violence when the owner failed to give him immediate service. On Saturday morning following the incident, Haitians tuning into WKAT-AM, a Creole-language radio station, heard Alezi describe his beating and arrest. On WKAT and other Haitian radio stations, announcers urged members of the community to stand up to such treatment, connecting Alezi’s beating and arrest with the abuse of Haitian prisoners at the Krome Detention Center and the city’s snub of Nelson Mandela. “The terrible treatment of Haitians and blacks in general has gone way too far,” declared one Haitian radio commentator, calling Haitians to converge on the site where the incident had occurred. Haitian radio announcers also called on “blacks in Overtown, Liberty City, and Opa-Locka to join Haitians in the protest.”⁶⁰⁷

Over the next two days, approximately one thousand people protested in front of the Rapid Transit Factory Outlet, forcing the Cuban owner, Luis Reyes, to remain inside until

⁶⁰⁶Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 228.

⁶⁰⁷“Argument Grows into Black-Hispanic Protest,” *United Press International*, July 1, 1990; Laura Parker, “Haitian Tensions Surface; 58 Protesters Arrested at Cuban-Run Store,” *Washington Post*, July 7, 1990, A4; Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 70.

Miami police could finally sneak him out a back exit. After the Miami chief of police promised to convene talks with Haitian leaders, the protest appeared to be over. In fact, the conflict was intensifying.⁶⁰⁸

After the first two days of protest at Rapid Transit, it was the turn of Cuban radio commentators to weigh in on the situation, which they did by attacking Miami city officials for failing to take a tougher stand against the Haitian and African American protesters. On Monday July 2, Miriam Alonso, a Cuban-American city commissioner, contacted Miami City Manager Cesar Odio, wanting to know why the Miami police department refused to exercise “firm control” of the situation. When demonstrations resumed outside the store the following week, Miami police abandoned their initial conciliatory approach to the Haitian protesters. After a peaceful day of protest on the part of the demonstrators, a team of Miami police in full riot gear (160 strong according to one report) appeared in the early evening to disperse the crowd, quickly descending upon the demonstration, using shields and nightsticks against the protesters. Television news cameras broadcast the police tackling those trying to escape and beating people already on the ground. The incident sent twelve to the hospital and sixty-three to jail, thirty-four of whom could not demonstrate that they were legally in the country and were thus handed over to INS custody and transferred to the immigrant prison on Krome Avenue.⁶⁰⁹

The next day the Washington Office on Haiti, the Haitian human rights organization founded in 1984, issued a scathing critique of the police attack, condemning both “the

⁶⁰⁸“Argument Grows into Black-Hispanic Protest;” “Promise of Talks Ends Racial Confrontation,” *Washington (DC) Times*, July 2, 1990, A6.

⁶⁰⁹“Dozens Arrested as Haitians Demonstrate in Front of Store,” *Associated Press*, July 5, 1990; Parker, “Haitian Tensions Surface; 58 Protesters Arrested at Cuban-Run Store;” Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 70.

unnecessary use of force by the police” and “the pattern and history of violence directed at Haitians by Hispanic shopkeepers in our community.” Tying the two sources of violence together and referencing the factors that had led to four urban uprisings in Miami in the last decade, the statement observed, “Once more, systematic police brutality has struck the inhabitants of Miami. This time, it was started by a Cuban shop owner’s treatment of a Haitian customer and was then continued by Hispanic police mistreatment of Haitian bystanders.” The Washington Office on Haiti asked Haitians in Miami to boycott businesses where they “are not treated with respect and dignity,” a call that the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste and other leaders of the Miami Haitian community supported.⁶¹⁰

In the aftermath of the violence outside of the Rapid Transit Factory Outlet, the statements issued by different groups further revealed a starkly divided city. At a press conference that brought together the different segments of black Miami, a black American leader charged that Cubans would not have been treated the way “his brothers” had been treated.⁶¹¹ The NAACP and the Archdiocese of Miami called for an investigation into the incident by the US Justice Department. But the Miami chief of police, Perry Anderson, defended the department’s conduct, saying, faced with the same situation again, “I would have given the same warning to disperse . . . and the [same] arrest mode would have taken place.” While Haitians congregated at a community center in Little Haiti to listen to testimony of those injured in the incident, the president of the Latin Chamber of Commerce, Luis Sabines, presented a statement “applauding” the police operation. “The way the police acted occurred because the demonstrators

⁶¹⁰“Washington Office on Haiti Expresses Concern over Treatment of Haitian Demonstrators in Miami,” *PR Newswire*, July 6, 1990; Brian Murphy, “Haitians Stage Protest Near Site of Arrests,” *Associated Press*, July 7, 1990.

⁶¹¹Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 70-71.

didn't obey the law or the repeated warnings to stop their illegal activity," declared Sabines. The incident even revealed fissures in the Haitian community: more radical voices like Jean-Juste's supporting a boycott of selected Hispanic-owned stores while other leaders, such as Fritz Bazin, cousin of the Haitian politician Marc Bazin, denied even the slightest animosity between the Haitian and the Cuban communities. "There is absolutely no hostility between Cubans and Haitians . . . We have had good, warm relations for years," claimed Bazin, a chaplain for the Miami police department.⁶¹²

The confrontation between black and Hispanic communities of Miami continued to intensify later in July when leaders of the African American community announced that they were calling for a boycott of the city of Miami. City officials had gone too far when they had ignored Mandela and had arrested and beaten the protesting Haitians, they claimed. "The black community is declaring its independence," announced lawyer H.T. Smith, leader of Boycott Miami: Coalition for Progress. Unless area city officials apologized for snubbing Mandela, committed to increased business and employment opportunities for blacks in the city, investigated the July beatings of Haitians, and reviewed the biased immigration policies toward Haitians, black leaders promised to maintain a boycott that could cost the city millions of dollars.⁶¹³ Outside the Rapid Transit Factory Outlet, continuing protests linked the recent grievances of black Miamians as protesters chanted, "From South Africa to South Florida, apartheid must go."⁶¹⁴

⁶¹²Luis Feldstein Soto, Sandra Dibble, and Karen Branch, "Melee a Symbol of Our Plight, Haitians Say," *Miami Herald*, July 7, 1990, 1A.

⁶¹³Jeanne DeQuine, "Blacks Refusing to Convene in Miami," *USA Today*, Aug. 13, 1990; Tracy Fields, "Boycott Strikes at Heart of Miami Area's Economy," *Associated Press*, Dec. 19, 1990.

⁶¹⁴Murphy, "Haitians Stage Protest near Site of Arrests."

Although Miami city officials initially failed to take the boycott threat seriously, it soon became clear that black leaders would be able to carry out an effective and costly action. One month after the call to boycott, three groups announced they would be holding their annual conventions elsewhere, a potential loss of millions of dollars. Dr. Yvonnechris Veal, chairperson of the National Medical Association, explained that her organization had decided to move its 1992 convention from Miami to San Diego because “the racial climate is anti-black” in Miami. Likewise, Matthew Scott, spokesman for the black lawyers group, the National Bar Association, acknowledged that “blacks in Miami are not treated well socially, economically, or politically.” Like the National Medical Association, Scott’s organization was pulling its planned 1993 convention from the city, as were the National Association of Black Prosecutors, the National Organization of Women, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, and others. According to Melanie Shell-Weiss, the boycott, which lasted until 1993, “cost the city anywhere between \$10 million and \$50 million” and “demonstrated the ability of Miami’s black leaders to mobilize the community [and] amass a groundswell of support.” Along with the unprecedented actions at the Krome Detention Center and the Abner Alezi affair, the boycott demonstrated that the highly mobilized Haitian community of South Florida was playing an increasingly significant role in the political and social struggles in the city and the region.⁶¹⁵

In the spring and summer of 1990, activists New York and South Florida, many of whom were leaders in the earlier campaigns for democracy in Haiti and in defense of refugees in the United States, achieved an unprecedented level of community mobilization. Efforts to end the

⁶¹⁵DeQuine, “Blacks Refusing to Convene in Miami;” Fields, “Boycott Strikes at Heart of Miami Area’s Economy;” Laura Parker, “In Intransigent Miami, a Snub, a Boycott, and a Balk on Two Words,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 20, 1990, A10; Shell-Wiess, *Coming to Miami*, 228.

plight of Haitians imprisoned at Krome, protests against police violence, and especially the campaign against the AIDS stigma drew the support of a large number of Haitians; the degree of community support in these causes was the product of years of political education and organizing by political activists in each location.

Aristide and Lavalas in the Diaspora

As the tumultuous year wore on, the intertwined campaigns and the connections among Haitians in New York, in Miami, and in Haiti became more and more evident. Less than one month after the April 20 AIDS march in New York City and exactly one week after more than one thousand protesters tore down the front gate of the Krome Avenue Detention Center in Miami, another event created a surge of excitement and energy among Haitians in the United States. In the first week of May, readers of *Haiti Progres* opened the newspaper to find an advertisement for an upcoming event at the Church of Saint Theresa in Brooklyn. Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide was coming to New York.⁶¹⁶

On the afternoon of Sunday May 6, the man widely acknowledged as the most popular symbol of the popular movement in Haiti and its voice stood before an audience of approximately two thousand people in Brooklyn, New York. Employing the charisma and skillful wordplay that had helped propel him to great popularity among the common people of Haiti, Aristide attempted to evoke the same enthusiasm among Haitians of New York. In addition to his desire to win popular support, Aristide presented an argument that framed the struggle of the people in Haiti and the struggles of Haitians in the diaspora as one, common, and inseparable struggle. According to *Haiti Progres*, Aristide paid tribute “to the Haitians who, on

⁶¹⁶“Kote nou! Men nou Anfen! Pe Aristide nan Nouyok,” *Haiti Progres*, May 2-8, 1990, 10.

April 20, defied the FDA,” claiming “that April 20 was part of the struggle of the forces of life against the forces of death, a struggle engaged not just in Haiti but around the world.” Asking for continued support for the popular movement in Haiti, Aristide declared, “We need to continue in light of April 20 to affirm our solidarity with the Haitian people.”⁶¹⁷

Aristide also drew on an incident that nearly everyone in the audience that day would have been familiar with. Referencing the experience of David Aupont, a twelve-year-old Haitian boy who had recently come to New York and who had been assaulted and severely burned in Brooklyn, Aristide equated the young immigrant’s suffering with that of others who remained in Haiti. “That same fire that burns David at the age of 12 years had burned other people on September 11” in the massacre “at Saint Jean Bosco, and this same fire has burned more during the massacres of peasants,” Aristide declared. Staying with the theme of fire, Aristide characterized the situation in Haiti as a cigar, held by *macoutes* and foreign imperialists but dangerously burning on both ends. “Since April 20, it is lit at both ends, they cannot smoke as they want. And when we declare ourselves ready to die this proves it's true.” Aristide continued, “Blood for blood,” implicitly rejecting the FDA policy that treated Haitian blood as tainted by disease. “We who have the blood of freedom in our veins . . . stand with all the Haitians who have that blood in their veins to say [to] *Macoutes* and American imperialists: Americans, here is your cigar, FDA, here is your cigar, *Tontons Macoutes*, here is your cigar, criminals, here is your cigar. Haiti or death!” At the end of the evening event, organizers collected \$11,000 to support the work of Lefanmi Selavi, the community organization and shelter for street children that Aristide had founded in Port-au-Prince in 1986.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷“New York: le pere Aristide recu triomphalement,” *Haiti Progres*, May 9-15, 1990, 12-13, 22-23.

⁶¹⁸“New York: le pere Aristide recu triomphalement.”

Aristide claimed he was in the United States to facilitate dialogue between the movement in Haiti and that in the diaspora as well as to raise funds for Lefanmi Selavi. However, some Haitians wondered whether the visit might also have something to do with the promised elections approaching in Haiti. Did Aristide's appearance signal his intention to run for president? Was his visit to the largest community in the Haitian diaspora the first stage in his presidential campaign? According to Daniel Huttinot and Lionel Legros, co-founders of SELA and hosts of the popular New York Haitian radio show *L'Ayisyen*, "It was obvious to us that [Aristide] was campaigning." When, during the same May visit, Aristide appeared on the radio program, Huttinot and Legros remember that "we did ask him if he was going to be a presidential candidate, and he completely, categorically denied it." In fact, he said that "if he were to become a presidential candidate, the Haitian people should give him the '*pere lebrun*'" (the euphemism referring to a mode of execution whereby a group of people place a burning tire around a person's neck).⁶¹⁹

After his return to Haiti and throughout the summer, Aristide maintained that he did not intend to be a candidate in the upcoming elections, claiming, according to Alex Dupuy, to be "free of the disease of 'presidentialism' . . . that afflicts so many Haitian politicians." However, after the Provisional Electoral Council, encouraged by a pledge of international observers and international support for the upcoming elections, established that elections would take place on December 16, 1990, it seemed increasingly likely that the winner of the presidential contest would have unprecedented legitimacy. After Roger Lafontant, the former head of the *tontons macoute* and interior minister under Jean-Claude Duvalier, threw his hat into the ring as the candidate for the Union for National Reconciliation (URN), the neo-Duvalierist party, Aristide

⁶¹⁹Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

reversed himself and also officially declared his candidacy.⁶²⁰ Acknowledging his change of position, Aristide claimed that without a candidate that could unite the fragmented popular movement,

We would ultimately concede to the bourgeoisie a limited suffrage that they would not have dared to propose themselves, which would produce an administration without social perspectives, opaque to outside observers, and devoid of justice. Dark forces, relieved of their criminal component, would be able to regain control and perpetuate themselves . . . [And so] I announced my candidacy for the presidency of the republic on October 18.⁶²¹

Despite his immense popularity as the symbol and voice of the resistance to neo-Duvalierism in Haiti, Aristide's presidential candidacy was not universally supported within the popular movement, neither in Haiti nor in the diaspora. Whether to participate in the election itself was a complicated question, as Alex Dupuy observes, since in Haiti "some activists opposed the elections altogether and argued instead for the formation of a coalition government that would reflect the various sectors of the progressive popular movement." Even after Aristide had declared his candidacy, "two of the base organizations from Aristide's parish of Saint Jean Bosco," *Solidarite Ant Jen* (Solidarity Among Youth) and *Konbit Veye Yo* (Vigilance Committee), "joined with others like *Tet Kole pou Yon Mouvmman ti-Peyizn* (Solidarity with the Small Peasant Movement) to publicly criticize Aristide's decision to participate in the elections."⁶²²

In New York, Aristide's candidacy exposed the numerous political divisions in the community that occasionally were obscured by a sense of unity created by causes like the AIDS campaign. On the Left, Ben Dupuy's *Haiti Progres* endorsed Aristide while Raymond Joseph's

⁶²⁰Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 73-74, 83-84.

⁶²¹Aristide, *Autobiography*, 116-17, 121.

⁶²²Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 73-74, 87-88.

conservative *Haiti Observateur* supported the right-of-center Marc Bazin, a former World Bank economist with a reputation as a *kandida meriken* for the backing he received from Washington, and one of the favorites of the Haitian bourgeoisie.⁶²³

As the Haitian community in New York was divided, the Haitian Left in New York was also split regarding Aristide's presidential campaign. Lily Cerat recalls the tensions within the popular movement that resulted from their differing responses to Aristide's campaign. There was "a faction that did not support him, on the Left, because they believed that elections do not solve anything . . . There were these little tensions, you know, like, elections for what? We need a revolution."⁶²⁴ SELA was one of the most well-known organizations that declined to throw its support behind Aristide precisely because they thought an electoral strategy would be likely to short-circuit the people's movement in Haiti that otherwise had such revolutionary potential. "We were not too favorable . . . because we thought it was really putting all our eggs in one basket," remember SELA members Daniel Huttinot and Lionel Legros.⁶²⁵

Nonetheless, Jean-Bertrand Aristide's presidential campaign produced tremendous excitement both in Haiti and throughout the Haitian diaspora. Although officially running under the banner of the *Front National pour le Changement et la Democratie* (FNCD, National Front for Democracy and Change), Aristide soon created the organization that would have a more important bearing on and association with his presidential bid: *Operasyon Lavalas* (OL). Lavalas symbolized a cleansing torrent or, in Aristide's words, "a river with many sources, a flood that would sweep away all the dross, all the after-effects of a shameful past." The refrain

⁶²³"A New York la communaute a manifeste son rejet de Bazin, le candidat de Washington," *Haiti Progres*, June 27-July 3, 1990, 8; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 129.

⁶²⁴Cerat, interview.

⁶²⁵Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

of Aristide and Lavalas, “‘*Yon sel nou feb; ansanm nou fo; ansamn, ansanm nou se Lavalas,*’ (Alone we are weak; united we are strong; all together we are a cleansing torrent),” quickly became known throughout Haiti and the diaspora.⁶²⁶ In his campaign across Haiti, Aristide drew massive crowds. In Gonaives, Aristide’s visit on the anniversary of the November shootings of the student protesters, shootings that had triggered the protests that eventually brought down Baby Doc, as many as seventy thousand people turned out to support the candidate. A campaign rally in Cap-Haitien, the country’s second largest city, drew sixty thousand. And In the weeks and months following Aristide’s entering the presidential race, millions of people registered to vote, moving 92 percent of the population into the category of eligible voter, up from roughly one-third before October 1990.⁶²⁷

Aristide’s presidential campaign also infused the already activated diaspora with another surge of energy. As soon as Aristide became a presidential candidate, backers in New York formed the Committee to Support Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Soon after, campaigning and fundraising in the diaspora was officially taken over by the New York-based Central Committee of Operation Lavalas, headed by Wilson Desir, president of the Alliance for Haitian Émigrés, Ben Dupuy, founder of *Haiti Progres* and leader of the Committee Against Repression in Haiti and the APN in Haiti, and Rene Dejean, who was described in *Haiti Progres* as “an independent patriot.”⁶²⁸

⁶²⁶Aristide, *Autobiography*, 126; Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 89, 91.

⁶²⁷Michael Norton, “Priest Running for President in Haiti Draws Big Crowd,” *Associated Press*, Nov. 28, 1990, AM cycle; Michael Norton, “Priest With Messianic Appeal Leads Presidential Race in Haiti,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 3, 1990; Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 88.

⁶²⁸“New York: formation d’un comite de soutien a Jean Bertrand Aristide,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 24-30, 1990, 7; “New York: le comite central de l’Operation Lavalas mandate,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 31-Nov. 6, 1990, 7; “Operasyon Lavalas: La tournee du pere Aristide a Miami et a New York,” *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 7-13, 1990, 12-18.

Aristide's supporters in the diaspora represented a critically important part of his campaign, not only in terms of organizing support among their compatriots in places like New York, Miami, and Boston, but also in their ability to buttress the candidate's campaign in Haiti. In his study of Haitian border-crossing politics, Michel S. Laguerre argues that "it has become evident that any presidential candidate who does not enjoy the backing of a large segment of the diaspora will have enormous difficulty winning in the general elections." Part of this power, Laguerre argues, comes from the influence of diasporic newspapers, which "through their provocative political ideas – at times somewhat inflammatory – and their vast distribution network . . . have not only marginalized the local papers in Haiti, but also contributed to the shaping of the political discourse in Haiti."⁶²⁹ Through its enthusiastic support for Aristide as well as its attacks on opposing candidates like Marc Bazin, *Haiti Progres* shaped the political debate both in Haiti and in the diaspora. In this way, *Haiti Progres* -- an institution that had its origins in the anti-Duvalier movement in exile and that was founded by Benjamin Dupuy, a leading activist in Haitian New York who after 1986 became an important member of the Left in Haiti's blossoming grassroots movement -- contributed significantly to the ascendance and ultimate election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a landmark achievement of the grassroots movement in Haiti that was, as the case of Dupuy and *Haiti Progres* illustrates, also the achievement of activists with roots in the Haitian communities of the United States.

During the presidential campaign of 1990, Aristide's supporters in the United States also raised a large amount of money to support Aristide's campaign in Haiti. This financial support, Michel Laguerre argues, challenged Haiti's traditional political system by allowing candidates like Aristide "to displace, or at least compete with, the traditional elite's control over the political

⁶²⁹Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 166-67.

process.” In addition to financial support, Laguerre notes that members of the diaspora offered technical skills and other human resources to their candidates of choice; they also had a substantial influence on how family members and friends in Haiti voted, especially because so many in Haiti were dependent on the continuing flow of remittances from supporters abroad. In the election of 1990, some Aristide enthusiasts even returned to Haiti to work on his campaign, and some voters who had maintained their Haitian citizenship returned in December to cast their ballot for the popular candidate.⁶³⁰

One sign of the diaspora’s importance to Aristide’s presidential run was the candidate’s campaign stops in Miami and New York. On Saturday November 3, *Operasyon Lavalas* announced that it would be holding a campaign rally in Miami and then would move on to New York. In anticipation of the North American portion of his campaign tour, Aristide appeared on *Radio Tropicale* in an interview, reprinted in part by *Haiti Progres*, that reinforced the understanding of Haitians in the diaspora that they were full participants in the developments unfolding in Haiti. Asked how he intended to implement and fund the ambitious projects he pledged to complete once he became president, Aristide replied, "The biggest bank that the Haitian people own" is "the people itself, both in Haiti and in the Diaspora." This "human library" would give his administration the "knowledge, experience and expertise" necessary to transform the country. Just before Aristide’s appearances in Miami and New York, the message to Haitians in the diaspora was clear: if they would "invest heavily," they would have a prominent place in the new Haiti.⁶³¹

⁶³⁰Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 159-60.

⁶³¹“Aristide a Miami et New-York: Toute la diaspora s’apprete a recevoir le candidat du peuple,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 31-Nov. 6, 1990, 1, 18.

On November 2 Aristide arrived in Miami. In Little Haiti, Aristide's image was already everywhere, campaign posters plastered on lamp posts, store windows, and any other available space. The candidate himself appeared at the offices of *Veye Yo* for an afternoon press conference. With hundreds of people gathered outside, Aristide took questions from reporters. "What ideology do you follow?" asked a reporter from the *Miami Times*. The three points of Lavalas's program are "justice, participation, and transparency," Aristide replied. "Do you agree with the principles of non-violence of Martin Luther King?" asked another. "We continue to use the same non-violence," said Aristide, "but we call on an *active* non-violence." Linking Aristide's presence with the ongoing conflict in the city of Miami, a reporter from CBS Channel 6 informed the candidate that "some people today think you're going to bring another wave of problems to Miami . . . [to] make the community more activist than it already is." In a response aimed at both the Haitian and non-Haitian residents of Miami, Aristide commented that "Haitians know what they want. But the first thing we want when we are living in other countries is unity . . . Some Cubans have not been able to understand the methods used by the Haitians to make Florida a better place to live but [Haitians] are prepared to live with other people on the basis of mutual respect."⁶³²

From the press conference, Aristide and his supporters moved to the main event in his visit to Miami, a massive rally at the Miami stadium. Haitian cab drivers carried people, free of charge, to the stadium. Upon their arrival, rally goers found a festive scene, hosted by many musicians, including fifty Haitian *raras* wearing tee shirts printed with the title "Lavalas Band." Aristide, flanked on stage by Father Gerard Jean-Juste, Evans Paul, the singer and community activist Farah Juste, and other supporters and members of the FNCD, delivered a stirring address

⁶³²“Operasyon Lavalas,” 12-18.

to an enthusiastic crowd of twenty thousand people. Invited to support the campaign effort, throngs of people moved toward the collection bins located close to the stage, contributing \$30,000 to Operation Lavalas. At the conclusion of the rally, Aristide supporters launched a spontaneous celebration and march through the streets of Little Haiti, concluding with another informal rally at the headquarters of *Veye Yo*.⁶³³

Aristide's arrival in New York, *Haiti Progres* reported, engendered the same "joy" and "fervor" as it had in Miami, even if the northern Haitian community was "more reserved, more stable, and, dare we say, more gentrified." In Brooklyn, Aristide appeared before a jubilant crowd of fifteen thousand people. The candidate was joined onstage by the three directors of the Central Committee of Operation Lavalas in the diaspora (Desir, Dupuy, and Dejean), popular musicians like So Ann, and other community leaders and supporters, including members of the Haitian Enforcement Against Racism (HEAR), which had been the primary force behind the April 20 AIDS march. After another impassioned address by the candidate, Lavalas collected an additional \$18,000 to add to the campaign fund.⁶³⁴

Throughout Haitian communities in the United States, the substantial support for Jean-Bertrand Aristide's presidential bid was undeniable. Lily Cerat recalls some of the reasons for Aristide's popularity among Haitians in New York. "There were people who were, like, this guy symbolizes, embodies, everything I've ever wanted to see in a Haitian leader. We shared class, language . . . He communicated well, he was very charismatic . . . He was able to communicate with people in a language that they understood and communicate things that they had dreamed

⁶³³ "Operasyon Lavalas," 12-18.

⁶³⁴ "Operasyon Lavalas," 12-18.

of.”⁶³⁵ During his campaign visit to New York, Aristide returned to *L’Ayisyen* for another interview, despite the fact that SELA was one of the groups on the Haitian Left that refused to support his candidacy. As the radio show’s hosts recall, somebody called in and asked, “What’s going on? How come you formed a committee in New York and we don’t see any of the members of *L’Ayisyen*? We were expecting to see them as part of your committee. So Aristide said, ‘Well, I understand that they do not agree with the position I’m taking now so they are entitled to their opposition’.” Because of Aristide’s immense popularity, their opposition to Aristide’s candidacy cost popular organizations like SELA some status in the community. “We did pay some consequences for our position toward Aristide. When we did not support Aristide’s candidacy, SELA suffered,” they admit.⁶³⁶

As the December 16 election approached, excitement built throughout Haiti and the diaspora. But apprehension and fear also spread as people contemplated the possibility of another election day massacre like the one that had occurred in November 1987. Violence seemed increasingly likely after the neo-Duvalierist candidate Roger Lafontant refused to concede even though he had been declared ineligible for candidacy. That fear intensified when, on December 5, the electrical power in an area where an Aristide rally was taking place suddenly went out and a grenade exploded, killing seven and severely wounding more than fifty. Aristide’s supporters were undeterred, however, turning the funeral service for those killed in the incident into yet another opportunity to demonstrate their support for their candidate, *Pe Titid*. Father Gerard Jean-Juste, the longtime director of the Haitian Refugee Center and leader of *Veye*

⁶³⁵Cerat, interview.

⁶³⁶Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

Yo in Miami, having returned to Haiti to support Aristide's campaign, was one of the clergymen who presided over the funeral-turned-rally, which drew eight thousand people.⁶³⁷

On Sunday December 16, Haitians finally went to the polls and, despite long lines and many delays, cast their ballots at polling stations guarded by armed police and international observers. In the United States, Haitians anxiously awaited the results of the presidential election that they felt so invested in. In the Little Haiti neighborhood of Miami, a crowd of more than four thousand people rallied, dancing, singing and chanting their support for Aristide. To the north, Broward County Haitians also marked the election day with a festive rally and celebration at Snyder Park in Fort Lauderdale. At the Cabane Choucane restaurant, excited discussion of the elections filled the dining room along with the smell of *lambi* and *griot*, two specialties of Haitian cuisine. At a Haitian supermarket in Fort Lauderdale, Ansom Monestime, a Haitian father of two who had traveled to Florida by boat in 1979, expressed his belief in the potential of an Aristide victory for people like him who remained in Haiti: "This is a chance for change in Haiti. This is a chance for Haitians to stop getting in boats for here."⁶³⁸

Throughout the diaspora there was great relief once it appeared that there would be no replay of the election violence of 1987. And when reports of the election results began coming in, for many, relief turned to jubilation. Early on Monday December 17, with four of the nine departments reporting election returns, it looked like a landslide victory for Aristide; 70.6 percent favored the Lavalas candidate while only 12.6 percent voted for his closest challenger,

⁶³⁷Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 130; Debbie Sontag and Marjorie Valbrun, "Funeral Turns into Rally for Haitian Priest," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 14, 1990.

⁶³⁸Liese Klein, "Haitian Exiles on Verge of Joy on Election Eve, Aristide a Hero," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 16, 1990; Robert Glass, "Haiti Election Gets Under Way Peacefully But With Long Delays," *Associated Press*, Dec. 16, 1990, AM cycle; Dan Sewell, "Miami's Haitian Exiles Rally as Island Votes," *Associated Press*, Dec. 16, 1990, AM cycle.

Marc Bazin. The final result was just over 67percent for Jean-Bertrand Aristide, making the best known voice of the popular movement the next president of Haiti.⁶³⁹

When word got out that Aristide had won, Haitians once again took to the streets. A joyous celebration erupted in Port-au-Prince with thousands of people holding up pictures of Aristide and waving tree branches. In Miami the neighborhood of Little Haiti also exploded with joy and excitement at the news. There, too, thousands of people flowed into the streets, prompting Miami police to close off a four-block section of the neighborhood. All day long the community celebrated: dancing, singing, waving blue and red banners and tree branches, and even holding up live roosters, the *cok kalite*, or fighting cock, which had become the symbol of Aristide and his campaign. Likewise, in New York a spontaneous celebration erupted on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. In Manhattan, at the West Side restaurant of Soleil, as in other Haitian establishments throughout the city, it was party time. "This is a day for jubilation. We finally have hope and we have shown that democracy can exist in Haiti," exclaimed Frantz Fequiere, a thirty-six-year-old taxi driver and law school graduate from Haiti.⁶⁴⁰

Of course, not all Haitians were celebrating Aristide's victory, either in Haiti or in the United States. "Aristide is not the man here," commented one resident of the wealthy Port-au-Prince suburb of Petionville, an area in which most residents had backed Marc Bazin. In New York, Leo Joseph, brother of Ray Joseph and publisher of the newspaper *Haiti Observateur*,

⁶³⁹"Haiti: Aristide Headed for Landslide Victory," *Inter Press Service*, Dec. 17, 1990; Dupuy, *Prophet and Power*, 94.

⁶⁴⁰"Haiti: Aristide Headed for Landslide Victory," *Inter Press Service*, Dec. 17, 1990; "Jubilation in Streets over Apparent Victory by Priest of the Poor," *Associated Press*, Dec. 17, 1990, AM cycle; Jane Sutton, "Haitian Refugees Hail Aristide as Fighter, Savior," *United Press International*, Dec. 17, 1990, BC cycle. Dan Sewell, "Party Time Among Miami Haitians," *Associated Press*, Dec. 17, 1990, AM cycle; Rick Bragg, "In Little Haiti, a Joyous Vigil," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Dec. 18, 1990, 2A; Donatella Lorch, "In the U.S., Haitians Take Their Joy to the Streets," *New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1990, 12; "New York: un weekend fievreux pour la communaute," *Haiti Progres*, Dec. 19-24, 1990, 8.

reported that the newspaper staff had received threats for opposing Aristide. “We feel Aristide has a very violent language and he is a divisive influence in Haitian society. Promoting justice in his own camp may mean resorting to violence to settle certain scores,” Joseph cautioned.

Opposition to Haiti’s new president-elect also existed inside the US government. According to John Shattuck, an assistant secretary of state in the Clinton Administration, “Aristide was regarded by some elements of the Pentagon and CIA as an unstable political leader who risked plunging Haiti into more violence and instability.”⁶⁴¹ In spite of reservations like these, however, in the aftermath of Aristide’s triumph, many Haitians at home and abroad agreed with Joseph Saint Hilaire, an engineer for the New York City Transit Authority, when he called Aristide’s election “a second independence.”⁶⁴²

On New Year’s Day, the day Haitians also celebrate their national independence, the newly elected president sent a message to Haitians in the diaspora, appealing to them to continue the close relationship that had been built over several years. Now that Haiti had a democratically elected government, he urged them to return to Haiti to contribute to the project of remaking the country. Addressing the countries of the diaspora one by one, “Sisters and brothers who live in the United States . . . sisters and brothers who live in Guadeloupe . . . in Martinique, Guyana . . . Europe . . . Africa,” he explained that when they were added to the Haitian nation within the country’s territorial boundaries with its nine geographical departments or states, Haitians of the diaspora became the nation’s “10th Department.” As part of their mother country, these Haitians of the Tenth Department had a responsibility to their people and their nation. Despite the

⁶⁴¹John Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire: Human Rights Wars and America’s Response* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 79.

⁶⁴²“Jubilation in Streets over Apparent Victory by Priest of the Poor,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 17, 1990, AM cycle; Lorch, “In the U.S., Haitians Take Their Joy to the Streets.”

“humiliation” Haitians abroad had been forced to endure, said Aristide, despite the “miseries of the *bateyes* [sugar cane operations] of Santo Domingo, despite the tribulations in the Krome prison camp, despite the shock of humiliation caused by the AIDS hurricane . . . these problems have failed to destroy the Tenth Department.”⁶⁴³

It was time for Haitians of the diaspora to end their long, difficult period of exile and return home, Aristide announced. “The time has arrived. What time is it? Time to go home.” Although many might have concerns about returning to Haiti, the president-elect acknowledged, he worked to assuage their worries and fears. “There is no danger because we work to eliminate it . . . Thanks to our solidarity we were able to establish security.” Assuming there was no real threat to their safety, Aristide encouraged them, “You who have much experience, a lot of knowledge, come. Come with what you own . . . Come and create work, come to work.” Aristide declared, “The country needs you.” For those who wanted to contribute to the rebuilding of Haiti but were reluctant to completely uproot once again, Aristide offered a commitment to “make things easier for those who want to come here and who, when they want to leave can do so without difficulty. If you come for a few days, do it at ease. And even if you come for a few months. What we desire is that you can go home whenever you want and leave where you work just as freely.” Not all Haitians might be interested in returning to Haiti permanently, allowed Aristide, but he urged these members of the Tenth Department “not to forget your country.” Haiti was still home.⁶⁴⁴

Aristide’s New Year message to the Haitian diaspora also demonstrated his understanding of what had made the enormous victories of the previous year possible. “What is

⁶⁴³“Message d’Aristide a la diaspora,” *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 2-8, 1991, 1, 16.

⁶⁴⁴“Message d’Aristide a la diaspora.”

the most beautiful in the heart of our culture,” said Aristide, “is the *'tet Ansanm,'* solidarity. That is what we find in cities, in the hills, deep in the provinces where one always knows that *'yon sel dwet pa manje kalalou,'* or the pain of one is the suffering of the other.” The people of Haiti at home and abroad were family, held together naturally. Likewise, the popular movements in Haiti and in the diaspora were naturally connected, Aristide argued, linked by “the umbilical cord of Lavalas.” The “flesh of our culture,” the “*tet ansanm*” (“coalition” or “coming together”), the “solidarity” is the thing “which in 1990 led us to mobilize so that in the diaspora, as here, the entire world has seen the power of this *'tet ansanm'.*” Aristide urged Haitians to follow this natural connection back to their mother country. “At least come see, come take a peek . . . The door is open. We are waiting for you.”⁶⁴⁵

One week into the New Year and exactly one month before the new president was to be inaugurated, the deep fears harbored by many Haitians about the possibility of another coup were realized. Roger Lafontant, the Duvalierist who had vowed to block Aristide’s ascendance to leadership, attacked the new government, attempting to stage a coup even before the new administration had officially begun. On the night of January 6, forces led by Lafontant attacked the National Palace, forcing Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, the head of the Provisional Government, to step down and driving Aristide into hiding. Soon after, Lafontant appeared on radio and television to inform the Haitian people that he was assuming leadership of the country. Lafontant declared that the December elections were “a masquerade,” a “scathing insult” to the people of Haiti. Claiming the backing of the army and the police, Lafontant announced that he

⁶⁴⁵“Message d’Aristide a la diaspora.”

had taken action to save the country from the communist dictatorship that Aristide represented.⁶⁴⁶

News of Lafontant's coup attempt traveled like wildfire throughout Haiti. In the early morning hours of January 7, tens of thousands of Haitians took to the streets to protest the attempt, filling the streets in cities and towns throughout the country. In Port-au-Prince masses of people streamed toward the National Palace, armed with stones, sticks, machetes, and whatever makeshift weapons they could find, to try to defend Aristide and the Haitian government from yet another Duvalierist takeover. News of the coup attempt traveled with equal speed throughout the diaspora. At 3:00 a.m. a crowd began forming outside the Haitian supermarket on Sunrise Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale, and the streets of Little Haiti in Miami were filling with angry protesters. In Boston, at least five hundred Haitians (and as many as three thousand, according to one report) soon took to the streets. Another five thousand were preparing to mass outside the United Nations building in New York.⁶⁴⁷

Confronted by tens of thousands of armed people and receiving reports that the whole nation (including the Tenth Department) was rising up against the coup, the Haitian army faced a choice: it could support Lafontant and encourage the uprising or back the democratically elected president and avoid becoming the target of an enraged populace. Military leaders chose the safer route, meeting the people's demand that Lafontant be arrested and that the Provisional Government and Aristide as president-elect be restored. In Miami, a city where it often is

⁶⁴⁶Michael Norton, "Duvalierist Overthrows Caretaker Government a Month before Inauguration," *Associated Press*, Jan. 7, 1991, AM cycle; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 134.

⁶⁴⁷Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 134-35; "Boston: 3,000 Haitiens descendent dans la rue," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 9-15, 1991, 8; "New York: plus de 5,000 compatriotes face aux nations-Unies," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 9-15, 1991, 9; Dan Sewell, "Exile Haitians' Protest Turns to Celebration," *The Associated Press*, Jan. 8, 1991, AM cycle; Nancy San Martin and Marjorie Valbrun, "South Florida Haitians Turn Out, Joy Replaces Shock, Anger," *Miami Herald*, Jan. 8, 1991, 1A.

impossible to separate local and international politics, Mayor Xavier Suarez carried the news to the thousands of people gathered in the streets of Little Haiti, assuring the protesters that the State Department had confirmed that Lafontant was under arrest and that the coup had been aborted. A taped radio message from Aristide himself, played to crowds assembled in the American cities, confirmed the same outcome.⁶⁴⁸

The coup's failure transformed the mass protests into joyous celebrations, but the agitated protesters remained angry, which was manifested in the streets of Haiti as well as in Miami and elsewhere. In Port-au-Prince, the coup attempt provoked crowds into another mini *dechoukaj*, or uprooting, driving attacks on suspected macoutes as well as on the property of opponents to Aristide. In Little Haiti, angry people demonstrated their willingness to employ similar tactics. Carrying a tire above his head to symbolize the *pere lebrun*, or necklacing, Jean Cadet declared, "This is to put around Lafontant's neck. They arrested him in Haiti, but they should bring him to 54th Street so we can deal with him." When someone claimed to have heard nineteen-year-old Marie Joseph yell, "*Vive Lafontant, a bas Aristide*" (Long live Lafontant, down with Aristide), the young woman was attacked and pelted with bottles until she was finally rescued from the angry crowd by Miami police. Speaking to reporters later, Joseph admitted to her support for Lafontant and claimed that the coup "was something that had to happen, that should have happened." But while the failed coup attempt provoked intense anger among some Aristide supporters and revealed deep rifts among Haitians in the United States, it also inspired hope. "This is the final showdown between the people and the Macoutes," Mona Michel, director of the Haitian Refugee Center, optimistically forecast. "This was [Lafontant's] last card and he

⁶⁴⁸Dan Sewell, "Exile Haitians' Protest Turns to Celebration;" San Martin and Valbrun, "South Florida Haitians Turn Out;" Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 134-35.

played it out, and we now know democracy will triumph in Haiti," Lils Renoir, of the Haitian Democratic Foundation, agreed.⁶⁴⁹

With the newly elected Haitian government secured from attack, temporarily at least, Haitians at home and abroad returned to the business of preparing for the February seventh inaugural celebration. Some, like Father Gerard Jean-Juste, the longtime leader of the Haitian Refugee Center and *Veye Yo* in Miami, left the United States for what they expected to be a long-term or even permanent return to Haiti.⁶⁵⁰ Others intended to return only temporarily for the inaugural festivities. Whether they intended to remain in Haiti or not, Haitian activists coming from outside the country were welcomed back as partners in a movement that had elevated a grassroots activist to the presidency. Jean-Bertrand Aristide's inauguration on February 7, 1991, launched days of celebration in Haiti, one of which was dedicated to honoring members of the diaspora. On this "Diaspora Day," according to one participant, "everybody who was anybody from New York and Miami ended up in Port-au-Prince for that day."⁶⁵¹

In the first months of 1991, Aristide took steps to formalize the relationship between the Haitian government and its supporters in the diaspora. To do so, he appointed a central committee of leaders in the diaspora, made up of representatives of each of the various Haitian communities outside of Haiti.⁶⁵² Later, Aristide recalled,

⁶⁴⁹"Miami: une manifestation anti-macoute fort mouvementee," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 9-15, 1991, 8; Sewell, "Exile Haitians' Protest Turns to Celebration;" San Martin and Valbrun, "South Florida Haitians Turn Out," 1A.

⁶⁵⁰Tony Jean-Thenor, Interview with the author, Miami, FL, Apr. 22, 2008.

⁶⁵¹Ives, interview; "7 fevrier: ceremonie religieuse a New York," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 13-19, 1991, 8; "Miami: grandiose celebration de l'investiture du pere Jean-Bertrand Aristide," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 13-19, 1991, 8; "Paris: plus d'un millier de personnes vivent en image les ceremonies du 7 fevrier," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 13-19, 1991, 8; Dan Sewell, "Haitian-Americans Rejoice Over Aristide Inauguration," *The Associated Press*, Feb. 8, 1991, PM cycle.

⁶⁵²Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 162-63; Jean Geneus, "Le President rencontre le dixieme department," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 13-19, 1991, 7.

With Lavalas's rise to power, Haiti had grown greater, extending far beyond its 27,000 square kilometers and nine departments. Even before February 7, we had created a tenth department encompassing our compatriots outside, who had multiple roles. Without them, what would become of some of the families on the island?⁶⁵³

According to Kim Ives, however, the creation of the Tenth Department was not simply a matter of the new president's implementing an innovative way to channel resources and assistance from the diaspora to Haiti. "[Aristide] really had no choice" but to create the Tenth Department, argues Ives. "It was natural." Aristide's victory "was really the victory of everybody." The diaspora "was a huge part of his base. He was to some extent supported, funded, and reliant on that diaspora, which he knew had the cadre," Ives explains. "Most of his advisers . . . were *dyaspora*." As a result, Aristide's establishment of the Tenth Department was less of an innovation than it was the formal recognition of something that had been built and solidified over the previous few years. "The 10th department was really the consummation . . . like two people who have lived together for ten years getting married," explains Ives.⁶⁵⁴

Even if the creation of the Tenth Department formalized a relationship that already existed, it also created something new: an official structure for Aristide's supporters who remained in New York and Miami through which they could channel energy and resources in support of the popular movement in Haiti. During the spring and summer of 1991 in various American cities, committees of the Tenth Department met to establish themselves and to carry out one of the department's first major campaigns, a fundraising campaign called *Voye Ayiti Monte* (Help Haiti Go Forward), or VOAM.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵³ Aristide, *Autobiography*, 141.

⁶⁵⁴ Ives, interview.

⁶⁵⁵ Aristide, *Autobiography*, 141. Some participants in the VOAM campaign recall that a large sum of money was raised but say that it subsequently disappeared, representing one of the first of a string of disturbing practices by the Aristide government: Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview; "New York: grande reunion du

The great hope and excitement of the period, both in the potential of Aristide's administration and in the achievement of the diaspora, were symbolized by an image featured in the pro-Aristide *Haiti Progres*. The picture depicted two hands reaching for each other, closely resembling the outstretched hands of God and Adam in Michelangelo's painting, *The Creation of Adam*, in the Sistine Chapel. Almost touching, one hand is labeled "Haiti" and the other, "Diaspora." Behind the outstretched hands, a glowing sun rises over the edge of a mountain range. With Haiti and its diaspora united, it was a new day for Haitians, the image suggested.⁶⁵⁶

In the diaspora in the spring and summer of 1991, campaigns other than the fundraiser for Haiti were carried out as well. Though Aristide's election had produced a dramatic and sudden drop-off in the number of Haitians attempting to reach the United States by boat, the refugee crisis in South Florida continued for the many Haitians still imprisoned at Krome and other immigration detention centers.⁶⁵⁷

The strike at the Domsey factory in Brooklyn also continued, although it was carried out primarily in the courtroom rather than on the picket line. Strike supporters had succeeded in drawing sustained support from the Haitian community as well as from high profile supporters, including Jesse Jackson and US Congressman Major Owens. At the end of July, after nineteen months on strike, the workers, mostly Haitian, got the court ruling they were looking for. A

dixieme department," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 26-Mar. 6, 1991, 9; "New York: le dixieme department s'organise et se structure," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 6-12, 1991; "New York: 2000 compatriotes assistant a une reunion pour structuration du dixieme department," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 13-19, 1991, 10; "Le pere Gerard Jean-Juste ratifie officiellement la composition du comite proviso forme a New York," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 20-26, 1991, 11; "Structure du dixieme department arrondissement de New York," *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 27-Apr. 2, 1991, 11; "Mini-congres; le statut du dixieme define," *Haiti Progres*, July 24-30, 1991, 9.

⁶⁵⁶Marie Celie Agnant, "Tant et tant de mains unies," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 20-26, 1991, 21.

⁶⁵⁷Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 107; "Refugies haitiens: une action en justice intentee contre l'immigration de Miami," *Haiti Progres*, July 24-30, 1991, 11; "Miami: une jeune compatriote s'eleve contre les mauvais traitements des refugies haitiens," *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 14-20, 1991, 10; "Miami: greve de la faim a Krome," *Haiti Progres*, Sept. 4-10, 1991, 10.

federal judge in Brooklyn ordered the owners of Domsey Trading Company to rehire the 208 workers out on strike and to compensate them with back pay amounting to \$2 million. At a time when Haitians had seen solidarity and community mobilization lead to a thrilling victory in Haiti, this triumph in the Tenth Department of New York seemed one more sign that the tide had turned. But when the Salm brothers delayed reinstating the strikers and refused altogether to rehire 10 workers, 6 of whom represented the original strike committee, it began to seem that victory was not right at hand after all.⁶⁵⁸

As members of the Tenth Department continued their work, at the end of September Aristide returned to the United States, where he was again received with great warmth and enthusiasm by the Haitian communities of New York and Miami. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Aristide made sure to highlight not only those concerns facing people in Haiti, but also those confronted by the diaspora as well. The status and treatment of Haitians at the Krome Avenue Detention Center in Miami and the mistreatment and unjust deportation of Haitian cane cutters in the Dominican Republic received special mention from Aristide. In addition to speaking at the UN, Aristide was the honored guest at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, a function attended by ten thousand people at which Aristide was awarded the key to the city by Mayor David Dinkins.⁶⁵⁹

On his way back to Haiti, Aristide stopped to visit the Haitian community of Miami, the other critical point in his US support network. The central event of his visit was an energizing

⁶⁵⁸“New York: enfin une victoire pour les travailleurs de Domsey,” *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 7-13, 1991, 8; “New York: les employes de Domsey reprennent le travail,” *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 21-27, 1991, 8; Alan Finder, “More Employers Seen Using Dismissals to Fight Unions,” *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1991, 21; Sontag, “U.S. Victory Is Empty to Workers.”

⁶⁵⁹Sam Dillon, “Aristide Urges Status Review of Krome Haitians,” *Miami Herald*, Sept. 26, 1991, A13; Jerry Gray, “Haitian's Visit to New York Is a Celebration,” *New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1991, 6.

rally in the Miami arena, which gave Aristide and the Haitian community of South Florida ample opportunity to congratulate one another on their successful partnership. The event also featured a celebration of the increasingly strong relationship between Haitians and black Americans in the city of Miami. Demonstrating how close the two elements of the black community of Miami had become during the intense conflicts of the previous year, H.T. Smith, spokesman for the black community's boycott of the city, called Aristide's visit "a great day for all the people of Miami." Smith declared, "African Americans are here tonight to proclaim to the whole world that the struggle of the Haitian people is not just a Haitian struggle. It is the struggle of people of African descent around the world." Contributing to the bountiful good will between the sometimes feuding black American and Haitian communities, Aristide affirmed that his presidential victory was "a victory for us all, for black Americans and Haitians." After his successful debut at the United Nations and an enthusiastic reception by residents of New York and Miami, Haitian and non-Haitian alike, it appeared that things could scarcely be better for Aristide and the people of Lavalas.⁶⁶⁰

Three days later, however, the president's residence came under attack by members of the Haitian army, forcing Aristide to flee to the National Palace. There he was arrested and taken to the head of the Haitian army, Brigadier General Raoul Cedras, who informed Aristide that he was being removed from office. Narrowly escaping execution, Aristide was placed on a plane to Caracas, Venezuela. Aristide's quick removal and the army's willingness to use deadly force against any potential mobilization ensured that this attempt would be different from the failed coup of January, which had been reversed by the spontaneous action of the Haitian people.

⁶⁶⁰Tracy Fields, "Haiti's First Freely-Elected President Visits Miami Exile Community," *The Associated Press*, Sept. 26, 1991, AM cycle; Marjorie Valbrun and Sharony Andrews, "Aristide Saw Haitians, U.S. Blacks as One," *Miami Herald*, Sept. 28, 1991, 1B.

Haitians who dared challenge the army by venturing onto the street were met with violence; hundreds of people lost their lives in the days following the removal of Aristide.⁶⁶¹

As before, reports of Aristide's removal and the conflict in Haiti quickly translated into turmoil on the streets of American cities. The shock and anger among US Haitians took its most extreme form on the streets of Miami. Hours after Aristide's arrest and forced exile, as people in Haiti were being cut down on the streets of Port-au-Prince, more than one thousand people gathered in shock and bewilderment in Little Haiti. These confused gatherings grew into a full-scale insurrection the following morning. Through a cloud of tear gas, angry Haitians blocked city streets with flaming barricades and battled Miami police in riot gear. Insurgents torched a police car and looted the stores of suspected *macoutes*.⁶⁶² In New York, several thousand Haitian protesters massed outside the United Nations building on the east side of Manhattan, raising their voices against the UN Security Council's failure to convene an emergency meeting to address the crisis in Haiti. Smaller actions in other parts of the Haitian diaspora also sprang up. In Boston, more than two thousand people protested the attack on democracy in Haiti. In Montreal and in Tampa, Haitians turned out to protest the removal of Aristide. In Elizabeth, New Jersey, thirty-three Haitians were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for banging trash cans and blocking the streets in protest.⁶⁶³

⁶⁶¹Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 152-54.

⁶⁶²Tracy Fields, "Local Haitians Wait, Worry While Watching Events At Home," *The Associated Press*, Sept. 30, 1991, AM cycle; "Haitians Loot Store in Miami after Aristide Arrest," *Agence France Press*, Oct. 1, 1991; Tracy Fields, "Disturbances in Miami's Little Haiti after Aristide Arrest," *The Associated Press*, Oct. 1, 1991, AM cycle.

⁶⁶³Peter James Spielmann, "Haitians Rally Outside UN, Demand UN Action," *The Associated Press*, Oct. 1, 1991, AM cycle; Tracy Fields, "Haitians Riot in Miami After Coup in Homeland," *The Associated Press*, Oct. 1, 1991, PM cycle; "'The Hardest Blow': Montreal's Haitians Declare Their Support for Aristide," *Gazette (Montreal)*, Oct. 1, 1991, A6; Kathryn Marchocki, "Haitians in Hub Protest Ouster," *Boston Herald*, Oct. 2, 1991, 3; "Haitians Protest in Tampa," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Oct. 2, 1991, 6B.

Day after day the protests continued. On Tuesday, two days after the coup, violence subsided in Miami, but thousands marched through the streets of the city, calling for Aristide's return. On the same day, six hundred marched in Montreal. On day three of the coup, as repression against Aristide supporters mounted in Haiti, more than twenty thousand people demonstrated in Miami's Bicentennial Park. In New York, the thousands who maintained a daily presence outside the United Nations building were there to add their voices to Aristide's own when he arrived on Thursday to address the UN Security Council and deliver his appeal for international support. On the following day, another protest of eight thousand people massed in Miami, and in Boston Haitians gathered for a rally at City Hall. "It is up to us to show the world that we want the return of President Aristide," said Wilson Desir. One week into the crisis in Haiti, members of the Haitian diaspora were in a state of constant mobilization.⁶⁶⁴

The coup of September 29, 1991, abruptly extinguished the euphoria that had accompanied the string of victories and the expanding community power that Haitians had achieved in the previous year and a half, making the period from 1990 to 1991 the pinnacle moment for the linked popular movements in New York, Miami, and Haiti. Engaged in a wide range of campaigns, both local and international, Haitian activists in each location had achieved an unprecedented level of mobilization and channeled the popular movement that they had been steadily building and stubbornly defending into real victories. The local struggles in this period,

⁶⁶⁴Tracy Fields, "March Draws Thousands in Show of Solidarity with Aristide," *The Associated Press*, Oct. 2, 1991, AM cycle; Donatella Lorch, "Adulation Turns to Anger as U.S. Haitians Grieve," *New York Times*, Oct. 2, 1991, A12; C.M. Guererro, "In South Florida, Thousands Rally for Aristide," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 3, 1991, A1; "600 Haitians Go on March in Montreal," *Toronto Star*, Oct. 3, 1991, A16; William M. Reilly, "New York Haitians Continue Vigil for Deposed President," *United Press International*, BC cycle; Harold Maass, "'We're Not Going to Stop,' Haitians Cry in 6th Protest," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 6, 1991, B1; Helen Kennedy, "City Hall Rally Calls for Aristide to Return," *Boston Herald*, Oct. 7, 1991, 4.

the struggles for union recognition and workplace justice in Brooklyn, against discrimination and abuse in Miami, and against the reemergence of the damaging AIDS stigma in Haitian communities across the United States, were stronger and more successful because they were tied together by activists that were rooted in and actively sustaining the transnational movement. In addition, Jean-Bertrand Aristide's electoral campaign in the Haitian diaspora and his relationship with Haitian activists in the United States during his first term in office was the formalization of the border-crossing politics that had been developing in the preceding years. The movement that elevated Aristide to the presidency of Haiti, like the other groundbreaking campaigns of the period, was the product of the linked popular movement that had its roots in the struggle against the Duvalier dictatorship and that sprouted and blossomed from 1986 to 1991. But in the wake of the coup, activists in Haiti, New York, and Miami were back on the defensive, forced for the next several years to devote all of the energy they had generated and all of the organizational structures they had built in the previous five years to the task of pushing for Aristide's return to Haiti, calling for an end to the repression and violence that raged on in Haiti, and defending the enormous new wave of refugees that the coup and its repression produced.

Chapter 6

Defending Democracy: Fighting to Reverse the Coup and Protect the Refugees, 1991-1994

The coup years, which stretched from September 1991 to October 1994, were incredibly difficult years for Haitians in both Haiti and the United States. Many who remained in Haiti were subjected to unspeakable acts of violence and terror. In the United States, though guarded from the direct violence of the coup, Haitians watched in horror as death squads systematically hunted down members of the popular movement and as refugees who had been able to escape the violence were first imprisoned and then returned to Haiti. The three-year coup period were even more difficult for Haitian activists both in Haiti and abroad because the coup was a direct attack on their project of popular empowerment that stretched back to the anti-Duvalier resistance and that truly blossomed from 1986 to 1991. The intense and urgent mobilization of the coup years was concerned with defending those in Haiti from repression and violence as well as defending democracy in Haiti. For those in the diaspora, all of the hard work they had done constructing organizations and networks, educating and organizing their communities, and building alliances with American organizations and movements became an essential foundation from which to wage the struggle to reverse the coup and defend the Haitian refugees.

Repression and Resistance

In the days and weeks following the September 30 coup, hundreds and perhaps thousands of people were killed in Haiti. Ten days after Aristide was forced from office and placed on a plane to Venezuela, Amnesty International reported that hundreds had been killed; many more had been injured, arrested, and tortured by the *machin enfenal* (hellish machine) that had taken

hold of Haiti.⁶⁶⁵ The *Washington Post* estimated the death toll in the first eight days after the coup to be from 250 to 600 or more. Other sources put the death count in the first days of the coup much higher. Bishop Willy Romelus, a Haitian priest based in the southern town of Jeremie and longtime supporter of the popular movement in Haiti, stated, “There are reports that in the first few days after the coup more than 1,500 people were killed. Yet no one could find all the bodies so a report got out that these figures had been exaggerated. Not at all,” said Romelus. After the slaughter, Romelus claimed, the army “loaded the bodies on trucks and hauled them away. After unloading the bodies, they drove back, loaded more bodies. They repeated this time after time until all the bodies had been removed.” And those who survived initial attacks and made it to the hospital for treatment were still not safe; soldiers were reported entering hospitals, threatening doctors, and executing those they had failed to kill in their first attempt.⁶⁶⁶

Some of the violence that engulfed Haiti after the coup was carried out by the Haitian Army under the direction of Raoul Cedras, the general at the head of the coup regime. However, Col. Joseph Michel Francois was the military leader more intimately involved in the campaign of repression. Civilian death squads, one of the most notorious of which was known as FRAPH (*Front pour l'Avancement et le Progrès Haitien*), worked in tandem with the military and were responsible for some of the most horrendous acts of violence. According to Beverly Bell, FRAPH members collected “trophy photographs” of their victims; they would commonly “slice off the faces of their victims before depositing them in open-field garbage dumps in Cite Soleil.”⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁵“Hundreds of Executions in Haiti: Amnesty,” Agence France Presse, Oct. 10, 1991; Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 13.

⁶⁶⁶Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 153-55.

⁶⁶⁷Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 153-55; Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 13.

Together the Haitian military and paramilitary groups like FRAPH carried out a campaign of violence and repression that was not entirely arbitrary; it targeted individuals and organizations that were part of the popular movement. When a protest against the coup erupted in the impoverished Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Cite Soleil, soldiers opened fire on those calling for Aristide's return, killing thirty. Aristide supporters and members of the Lavalas Party were driven underground when soldiers and members of the paramilitaries attacked their homes and businesses. In the days following the coup, Evans Paul, leading Lavalas member and mayor of Port-au-Prince, was arrested and beaten. Manno Charlemagne, the people's troubadour, was also arrested. Astrel Charles, a pro-Aristide member of the Chamber of Deputies, was gunned down while leaving a church service. Jacques Caraibe, director of Radio-Caraibe, too was executed. Gerard Jean-Juste, the longtime director of the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami who had returned to Haiti to participate in the Aristide government, was driven underground, hunted by the military and death squads.⁶⁶⁸

Women were a particular target of the violence following the coup; in fact, sexual violence became one of the hallmarks of the military and paramilitary campaign against the popular movement. Even before Duvalier's departure, but especially in the years since 1986, Haitian women had emerged as a central component of the popular movement, a role their opponents attempted to curtail through the use of gendered violence. Women's organizations and human rights groups reported that rapes increased dramatically in the period after the coup. Beverly Bell observes, "During the 1991-1994 coup period, women's bodies became domains

⁶⁶⁸Kevin Noblet, "Aristide's Backers Go Underground, Fearful and Demoralized," *The Associated Press*, Oct. 14, 1991, AM cycle; J. P. Slavin, "Gunmen Hunt Miami Activist in Haiti," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 19, 1991, A32; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 164.

for the regime to assert its power and authority with rape regularly used as a weapon of war.”⁶⁶⁹

“The institutionalized impunity that exists in Haiti creates a situation in which soldiers and their associates can do what they want to women and get away with it,” lamented Clorinda Zepher, a women’s activist attempting to document and publicize the sexual violence. “We are talking about the sexual violation of women from 12 to 64 years old. It’s an outrage. It’s part of the repression that the people in this country have been living under.”⁶⁷⁰

As effective as sexual assault was in terrifying female members of the popular movement, it also had the effect of discouraging political activism among its victims, an effect that the women’s attackers may have recognized. Venante Duplan described the isolation and debilitating shame that often accompanied rape by the *zenglendo* (terror squads):

When Aristide left Haiti, the *zenglendo* overtook the area. They shot everything they saw. The *zenglendo* came into my house, they beat me, they slapped me. Four of them raped me, martyred me, vanquished me, sliced through me . . . After the rape, I suffered so much shame. The people where I was living abandoned me . . . People make fun of me. “This is a *zenglendo*’s mistress.”⁶⁷¹

Details of the ongoing violence and repression were published in a report by a trio of human rights organizations, the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, Americas Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights. The report added details to the emerging picture of post-coup violence and repression. Entitled “Return to the Darkest Days,” the report argued that Haiti after the coup had been thrown back into conditions like those during Duvalier’s dictatorship. In addition to large numbers of deaths and injuries, the post-coup violence had displaced 250,000

⁶⁶⁹Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 21.

⁶⁷⁰Diego Ribadeneira, “Soldiers Prey on Haitian Women,” *Calgary (Alberta, Canada) Herald*, Nov. 1, 1993, A5.

⁶⁷¹Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 55.

people, the report noted. At a press conference coinciding with the release of the document, the journalist and author Amy Wilentz reported,

Throughout the country no one is safe who has ever participated in any kind of democratic organization. Hundreds of small community groups have been under attack, houses have been burned down, the leaders of these groups are hunted down and even the members are hunted. These are not just peasant groups and labor unions, which come traditionally under threat whenever the right wing is in the ascendancy in Haiti, but also church groups throughout the country.

As in earlier times of repression, the independent media was especially targeted, prompting Wilentz to claim that “the voice of Haiti's young democracy is being silenced.” Wilentz also noted that in the first days after the coup, many prisoners were released from Haiti’s National Penitentiary, “among them, notorious criminals from the Duvalier days, torturers, murders, and masterminds of terror,” who on their release joined the campaign of violence.⁶⁷² Considering the scale of violence and terror in the post-coup period, it is little wonder that people like Martine Fourcand felt a powerlessness she described as “virtually annihilating.” She explained, “Anyone could be shut up in a house and in the middle of the night hear the cries of someone being killed less than fifty meters away, and not be able to do anything. That powerlessness is conducive to destroying people.”⁶⁷³

Despite this feeling of powerlessness and the threat of violence, members of the popular movement resisted the coup. Some like Martine Fourcand maintained individual acts of resistance and survival. “Painting was what allowed me to hold on. Painting was a way to try to limit the effects of the destroyers on my individual life, on my capacity to reflect, on my capacity

⁶⁷²News Conference with Americas Watch, the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, and Physicians for Human Rights, *Federal News Service*, Dec. 30, 1991.

⁶⁷³Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 90.

to react,” remembered Fourcand.⁶⁷⁴ Others published and distributed underground newspapers and tracts denouncing the coup regime and demanding Aristide’s return. Students stayed out of school, and even when they were in school, they held protests against the coup.⁶⁷⁵ Despite the extreme risk of such acts, there were cautious pro-Aristide demonstrations in Haiti. On October 14, grassroots organizations transmitted a call for a general strike from a radio station in the Dominican Republic. The following week a group of ninety Catholic priests issued a unified statement calling for Aristide’s return.⁶⁷⁶ Even in the bloody first months after the coup, individual and collective acts of resistance occurred.

As part of this ongoing campaign of resistance, women played a central role. Though a particular target by death squads and agents of the coup, Haitian women were able to build unique networks and modes of resistance, exploiting gendered social space to facilitate their campaign. While collecting water or washing clothes in the river, for example, rural women shared information and discussed strategy. For their communication and planning, the *machann*, or market women, utilized the marketplace, a communal space in Haitian cities and towns for all people. As a site of resistance, the marketplace often became the site of violence. As Alerte Belance recalled, “FRAPH always used to come through the marketplace and trample it, because they said that this group is a *lavalas* group.”⁶⁷⁷ But even though it was dangerous, women continued to use the marketplace as a hub in the underground communication network. According to Beverly Bell, market women would “pass clandestine messages back and forth on

⁶⁷⁴Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 90.

⁶⁷⁵Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 164.

⁶⁷⁶“Haitian Opposition Calls for General Strike,” *Xinhua General News Service*, Oct. 14, 1991; “Haiti: Priests Demand Aristide’s Return,” *Inter Press Service*, Oct. 21, 1991; “Haitians Demonstrate in Support of OAS Embargo, Aristide’s Return,” *Agence France Presse*, Nov. 7, 1991.

⁶⁷⁷ Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 105.

notes scribbled on the ragged orange gourde bills they exchanged for goods.”⁶⁷⁸ Women also supported each other by smuggling food and supplies to those in hiding and taking care of the children left behind.⁶⁷⁹

Perhaps the most critical act of resistance during the coup years was the dangerous effort to collect and disseminate evidence of violence and human rights abuses inside Haiti. Haitian activists took great risks to communicate with each other and to get information to journalists and human rights organizations outside the country. Beverly Bell describes activists’ “faxing in the dark of night from a different secure location each week.” When death squads threatened her life, Marlene Larose moved her family to the rooftop of their residence; from there, they documented the activities of the death squads, sending photographs and other information to human rights organizations in the United States. In the coup years, the underground resistance in Haiti maintained contact with its allies outside the country. Indeed, in the campaign to educate the world about what was happening in Haiti, the lines of communication and the partnership between activists inside and outside Haiti proved vital. Much as it had done during the Duvalier years, the internal resistance provided information about the situation in Haiti and received information about what was happening outside the country from its international supporters.⁶⁸⁰ This crucial exchange of information between journalists and activists was possible because of the courage of people like Larose and Lelenne Gilles, who was part of the complex underground information network. “There were almost no radio stations left functioning at that time, because the army had destroyed most of them . . . However, there were Haitian radio stations in the

⁶⁷⁸Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 97-98.

⁶⁷⁹Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 147-48.

⁶⁸⁰Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 160.

diaspora. When they needed information, they called journalists in Haiti. I used to give the news to Miami, to New York, and sometimes to Canada, the Netherlands, and Martinique,” remembered Gilles. “I didn’t have a mike in my hands but I had a telephone. They would call me. I would lie under my bed and broadcast news by the phone.”⁶⁸¹

Haitians’ ability to resist and to ultimately reverse the coup was contingent not only upon the actions of those in Haiti. As it had been during the Duvalier years and in the tumultuous period from 1986 to 1991, the relationship between the resistance inside and that outside the country was of critical importance, perhaps at this moment more than ever before. As previously noted, large protests in New York, Miami, and other American cities had begun as soon as Haitians in the United States learned of the coup. Another began on the morning of October 11, 1991, when tens of thousands of Haitians massed in Brooklyn on Grand Army Plaza. Haitian cab drivers circled the area with pictures of Aristide taped to the grills of their cars. As the protest marchers set out, they retraced the route of the historic April 20 demonstration across the Brooklyn Bridge toward lower Manhattan. Marchers wore white stickers reading “Democracy or Death.” Many held pictures of Aristide, blue and red Haitian flags, and signs that proclaimed, “No Aristide, No Peace,” a slogan that also echoed from the chanting crowd. Once across the bridge, the march twisted its way past the historic Customs House at Bowling Green and paused for a spontaneous rally at Federal Hall where Wilson Desir, the director of the Alliance of Haitian Immigrants, leapt up on the steps and addressed the cheering crowd. Passing by Wall Street, young militants climbed on the iconic Wall Street bull statue to wave the Haitian flag, producing a thunderous roar from the crowd. The marchers then moved on toward the southern tip of the island, leaving the Wall Street icon covered with pro-Aristide stickers and posters.

⁶⁸¹Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 14, 23-24, 70.

When the march poured into Battery Park, the number of participants numbered anywhere from 60,000 (the NYPD estimate) to 150,000 to 200,000 (the *Haiti Progres* estimate), surpassing the turnout of the historic April 20 AIDS march the previous year. At the culminating rally in Battery Park, the platform of speakers included many who had long been involved in community organizing, including a leader of the Haitian Enforcement Against Racism (HEAR), Lionel Legros from SELA, and *Haiti Progres*' Ben Dupuy (now ambassador at large for the Aristide administration). New York Mayor David Dinkins also addressed the crowd, declaring, "This coup poses a threat not simply to the democratic aspirations of Haitians, but to democracy everywhere."⁶⁸²

The largest ever single-day mobilization in the history of Haitians in the United States, the October 11 march and demonstration illustrates the depth of opposition to the coup in the Haitian diaspora. While Haitians who joined the protest represented no single class background or political orientation, and while the tens of thousands of Haitian demonstrators must have had varying degrees of identification with Aristide and the activists he chose to represent him in the Tenth Department, the substantial turnout suggests that for many Haitians, opposition to the coup trumped class and political divisions.⁶⁸³ In fact, the same thing can be said for the three-year campaign to return Aristide to Haiti. As we will see, not all Haitians in the United States opposed the coup or joined the call for Aristide's restoration. But the majority of Haitians in the United States did support the restoration of democracy in Haiti and favored Aristide's return. Even those on the Left, like the members of SELA, who had opposed Aristide's presidential run,

⁶⁸²Dan Jacobson, "Haitians Demand Return of Aristide," *United Press International*, Oct. 11, 1991, BC Cycle; "Le grande manif de l'honneur et de la dignite," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 16-22, 1991, 14-18; Seth Faison, "Thousands of Haitians Protest Coup," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1991, 31; Basch et al., *Nations Unbound*, 145-46.

⁶⁸³Basch et al., *Nations Unbound*, 147.

threw themselves into the campaign, as one SELA member put it, to “defend that Aristide democracy.” Lionel Legros, co-founder of SELA and *L’Ayisyen*, explains, “When Aristide was elected, he was elected . . . so we condemned the military, the coup d’etat. We supported the return of Aristide . . . [and] we organized and brought people into the street to oppose that coup.”⁶⁸⁴ After the October 11 demonstration, the New York community remained mobilized, staging an action in Brooklyn on October 26 and another demonstration at Wall Street in Manhattan on November 4, each demonstration drawing several thousand participants.⁶⁸⁵

Haitians in Miami were equally involved in the effort to roll back the coup, though as had become the pattern, the South Florida community’s level of mobilization took on a more spontaneous and continuous character than the well-organized and coordinated actions of Haitian New York. The New York community from its origin had a range of political leaders and formal political organizations. To carry out a coordinated campaign by such a diverse range of organizations and interests required careful planning and negotiation. In Miami, on the other hand, rather than being spread out over a range of organizations and leadership, Haitian activism centered primarily in the Haitian Refugee Center and *Veye Yo*, all under the leadership of Father Gerard Jean-Juste. “Miami was more like Haiti in a sense,” Kim Ives recalls. “You had this charismatic priest [Jean-Juste] in the center of it who would say, ‘OK, tomorrow we’re going to go out and march!’ and the people would all go out, and it would be more like the spontaneous Lavalas demonstrations in Haiti, which had very little structure [or] planning.”⁶⁸⁶ In the eight

⁶⁸⁴Huttinot, Legros and another member of SELA, interview.

⁶⁸⁵“Brooklyn: toujours le meme cri de guerre ‘We Want Aristide’,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 30-Nov. 5, 1991, 9; “New York: la communaute haitienne investit le quartier de Wall Street,” *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 6-12, 1991, 7.

⁶⁸⁶Ives, interview.

weeks following the coup, activists in Miami staged four separate marches of five thousand.⁶⁸⁷ In addition, *Veye Yo* held daily and nightly protests on Northeast 54th Street in the heart of Little Haiti for months after Aristide's forced exile.⁶⁸⁸ Tony Jean-Thenore, one of the young people that took over leadership of *Veye Yo* when Father Gerard Jean-Juste returned to Haiti to join the Aristide government, recalls the constant mobilization of the coup years. "We fought against the coup d'etat from day one," remembers Jean-Thenore. "It took place on Saturday, September 29, 1991. Until October 15, 1994, we were on the street daily making demonstrations here in Miami, [going to] New York, Washington, DC, protesting against the coup d'etat. It was tough. It was tough."⁶⁸⁹

As Jean-Thenore's statement suggests, Haitians organizing against the coup in their own cities coordinated actions in Washington, DC, as well, just as they had done during the Duvalier years and from 1986 to 1991. On Friday October 18, one week after the massive march and demonstration in New York City, ten thousand to fifteen thousand people from New York, Miami, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and other locations around the country, and from Canada gathered in DC for a march from the Capitol to the White House to urge the Bush administration to commit to the restoration of the Aristide government. Marching to the sounds of Haitian *rara* bands, demonstrators drew attention to the violence in Haiti with signs that read "Stop the

⁶⁸⁷ Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 193.

⁶⁸⁸ Harold Maass, "Haitians' Ire Works Miracle on 54th St.," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 23, 1991;

⁶⁸⁹ Jean-Thenore, interview.

massacre” and “Stop the Haitian holocaust” and “Democracy or death,” the common chant from the previous week’s action.⁶⁹⁰

The purpose of these mass demonstrations against the coup was to apply political pressure on officials in Washington, to focus the spotlight of the international community on Haiti, and to show solidarity with the resistance inside the country, all central elements of the campaign to defend Haitian democracy and to reverse the coup. Activists also closely monitored and reacted to the media’s portrayal of the situation in Haiti. In the days and weeks after the coup, some American publications began running stories that suggested that Aristide was partly responsible for the coup and implied that the attack on the Haitian government was a justifiable response to what they saw as Aristide’s reckless and divisive leadership. The most persistent media critic of Aristide with the highest profile was the *New York Times*’ correspondent in Haiti, Howard W. French.⁶⁹¹ On October 22, the *Times* ran a piece by French entitled “Ex-Backers of Ousted Haitian Say He Alienated His Allies;” the piece characterized Aristide as a recalcitrant, potentially dictatorial leader who encouraged violence. Conversely, French portrayed the army as the savior that had relieved Haiti of “a heavy handed president.”⁶⁹² The day following the publication of French’s piece, approximately eight hundred protesters gathered outside the *New York Times*’ midtown offices. According to the *Times*’ own coverage of the demonstration, “the

⁶⁹⁰Teresa Simons Robinson, “Thousands of Haitians Protest in Washington,” *United Press International*, Oct. 18, 1991, BC cycle; “Un seul refrain de new York a Washington: Democratie pour Haiti!” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 23-29, 1991, 16-19.

⁶⁹¹Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 158, 160.

⁶⁹²Howard W. French, “Ex-Backers of Ousted Haitian Say He Alienated His Allies,” *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1991, A10.

crowd was particularly incensed” by French’s article “that said some supporters now believe President Aristide contributed to his downfall through his insular style of leadership.”⁶⁹³

Going hand-in-hand with media portrayals of Aristide as a polarizing and violent figure were increasingly common claims that Aristide had initiated a period of increased human rights violations in Haiti. In fact, there is little evidence to support this charge. According to a study conducted by The Washington Office on Haiti, which analyzed the human rights situation in the country from June 1989 to June 1991, a period covering not only the Aristide presidency but also the preceding Trouillot and Avril administrations, documented human rights violations did not increase but in fact fell sharply in the period after Aristide’s inauguration.⁶⁹⁴

Despite little evidence, however, stories continued to circulate that suggested that the coup was justifiable and that the Aristide government need not be restored, prompting pro-Aristide activists to continue their campaign to defend the Haitian president. After the *Washington Post* published an editorial that charged Aristide with intimidating political opponents and destructively polarizing Haitian society, Ben Dupuy responded with a letter defending Aristide. “This argument, which the *Post* readily accepts, is being advanced only by the Cedras regime and the unscrupulous politicians lurking behind this bloody coup d’etat,” Dupuy stated. “Despite constant pressure from a desperate and massive constituency to go beyond legal methods, President Aristide has meticulously respected the often quirky constitutional limits imposed on his ability to propel urgently needed reforms. He has repeatedly encouraged his followers to do the same.” Dupuy concluded by urging the *Post* and US policymakers “to listen more closely to the Haitian people themselves. This will help in the

⁶⁹³“800 Marchers Protest *Times*' Haiti Coverage,” *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1991, B2.

⁶⁹⁴“Washington Office on Haiti Completes Analysis of Human Rights Violations,” *PR Newswire*, Oct. 15, 1991.

future to avoid the human rights certification of dictators like Jean-Claude Duvalier and Henri Namphy and exonerate the record of outstanding democrats like Father Aristide.”⁶⁹⁵

As much popular support as there was for reversing the coup and restoring the Aristide presidency among Haitians in the United States and in Haiti, there were those that supported the coup and opposed Aristide’s return. In Haiti, Aristide’s opponents shared much the same opinion of the exiled president as his detractors in the American press. A congressional report documents these anti-Aristide arguments; interviews with anti-Aristide Haitians cited the exiled president’s “actions to appeal directly to the masses, to place his supporters in positions in the military, the government, and the courts, and to move forward with a reform program” as evidence of Aristide’s attempt to “consolidate power in violation of the constitution.” Aristide’s opponents also claimed that he endorsed “the use of violence and, in particular, the practice of killing individuals by igniting gasoline-filled tires around the victim’s neck.”⁶⁹⁶

Aristide’s opponents in the United States shared this view of the exiled president. Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick found middle-class Haitians in South Florida especially likely to regard Aristide as a danger to more privileged Haitians. Portes and Stepick report,

One middle-class woman interviewed shortly after the coup asserted that Aristide intended to “kill” all the better-off Haitians. The owner of a major import-export business claimed that Aristide had used the shantytown mobs to silence the middle class and anyone who opposed him. These groups rallied too, carrying placards supporting the coup and arguing that Haiti could be saved only if Aristide was kept out.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁵“President Aristide: Outstanding Democrat,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 13, 1991, C6.

⁶⁹⁶*Haitian Democracy and Refugees: Problems and Prospects*. A Staff report prepared for the use of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs of the Committee on the Judiciary. Senate, 102nd Congress, Second Session, Feb. 27, 1992, 17.

⁶⁹⁷Portes and Stepick, *City on the Edge*, 194.

On December 1, 1991, one such demonstration took place far from Little Haiti in suburban Kendall, where approximately thirty Haitians demonstrated against efforts to return Aristide to Haiti.⁶⁹⁸

In New York, too, a small minority of the Haitian community supported the coup and opposed Aristide. "When [Aristide] became president, he just started pointing fingers. He was more angry at the rich than trying to do anything for the poor," argued Sandra David, a twenty-four-year-old college student in New York.⁶⁹⁹ A more influential voice in the anti-Aristide camp was Ray Joseph, founder and editor of the conservative *Haiti Observateur*. Using the platform of his own newspaper as well as his regular contributions to the *Wall Street Journal's* "Americas Column," Ray Joseph became the most prominent Haitian opponent of Aristide in the United States. Well-positioned in the Haitian and American media, during the coup years Joseph remained an influential player in the public relations battle between those who opposed Jean-Bertrand Aristide and those who supported him.

A New Refugee Crisis

As much as activists focused on mobilizing against the coup, another issue – the defense of refugees, would soon take on equal weight for Haitians in the United States. As had happened in the 1970s and 1980s, the asylum campaign for Haitian refugees became fused with the campaign for democracy and popular empowerment in Haiti. However, in the first weeks after the coup, it was not certain what US policy would be toward those fleeing post-coup violence. In fact, it looked as if the US government might finally revise its position, which historically had

⁶⁹⁸Marjorie Valbrun, "Little Haiti Meets Suburbia: Aristide Foes Hit Dadeland," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 1, 1991, B1.

⁶⁹⁹Bruce Frankel, "Haitians Fret over Clinton, His Promises," *USA Today*, Jan. 13, 1993, 2A.

refused to classify Haitians seeking shelter on American shores as bona fide political refugees, a position that now seemed untenable considering the coup and the violence in Haiti.

In the weeks following the coup, immigration officials appeared uncertain how to deal with the undocumented Haitians already in the United States. Officials in South Florida announced in late October that they were temporarily suspending the deportation of Haitians. In response to the move by Florida officials, Duke Austin, a spokesman for the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service, insisted that "there is no blanket suspension of deportation." However, Austin added, "We will be circumspect and cautious about returning anyone at this time." One month after Aristide's removal, US policy toward those escaping post-coup violence appeared somewhat undefined.⁷⁰⁰

Soon, however, a dramatic increase in the number of refugees seeking asylum in the United States drove the Bush administration to clarify and harden its stance toward the Haitian refugees. In the first weeks of November, hundreds of Haitians took to the sea to escape the crisis in Haiti, the first of tens of thousands that would attempt to reach the United States in the following months. As the numbers of refugees increased, so did the pressure on the Bush administration, which had condemned the coup and supported the Organization of American States' sanctions against Haiti's coup regime. To forcibly return the Haitians would expose the administration to substantial domestic and international criticism while, on the other hand, the president and the administration's officials were reluctant to open American doors to the enormous throng of refugees waiting to escape Haiti. Facing a serious political quandary with an election year approaching, the Bush administration searched everywhere for a way out of the Haitian refugee crisis.

⁷⁰⁰“Deportation of Haitians Suspended; Immigration Officials Cautious after Coup,” *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, Oct. 24, 1991, 15A.

For the time being, American officials did not immediately repatriate the refugees, but they also refused to admit them to the United States, which meant that officials had to determine what to do with the rapidly expanding population of Haitians interdicted at sea. By mid-November, about half of the refugees captured at sea were being held aboard US Coast Guard vessels, some housed in tents erected on decks of the ships while others were sent to a newly created refugee camp at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.⁷⁰¹ However, with the exodus showing no signs of abatement, the Bush administration searched for a more lasting solution. As the number of Haitians captured at sea neared one thousand, American officials sought to discourage more refugees from leaving Haiti, broadcasting in Creole a message through the *Voice of America* that told Haitians that “with very few exceptions, Haitians picked up on the high seas will not be brought to the United States.” The government transmission asserted, “The United States government urgently advises Haitians that risking their lives in small boats is not the answer to their situation.”⁷⁰² The Bush administration also appealed to Belize, Suriname, and other Caribbean and Latin American countries to accept the Haitians in what the *Miami Herald* called a “high-seas US gambit to avert [the refugee] influx to South Florida.”⁷⁰³

The Bush administration’s refusal to allow the captured Haitians to enter the United States and the fear that authorities might soon move to repatriate the refugees reinvigorated the asylum campaign that had grown strong in the preceding decade. Ray Fauntroy, a longtime leader of refugee support activity in South Florida, declared that the Southern Christian

⁷⁰¹“Haitian Refugees Jailed on American Ships,” *Washington (DC) Times*, Nov. 11, 1991, A2.

⁷⁰²George Gedda, “As Exodus Increases, U.S. Tells Haitians to Stay Home,” *The Associated Press*, Nov. 15, 1991, PM Cycle.

⁷⁰³Christopher Marquis, “U.S. Seeks to Divert Influx of Haitians,” *Miami Herald*, Nov. 9, 1991, A18.

Leadership Conference (SCLC) was preparing to mount its own aerial search for boats containing Haitian refugees; if the Coast Guard continued to block them from entering the United States, the SCLC announced that it would “get vessels and rescue these people ourselves.”⁷⁰⁴ On November 17, with nearly 1,800 Haitians now interdicted en route to the United States, five thousand people marched in Miami demanding that the United States grant asylum to the refugees and that it back the restoration of the Aristide government.⁷⁰⁵

Refugees and their supporters soon learned that their fear that officials were preparing to repatriate the refugees was well founded. On November 18, the US State Department announced that it would begin returning to Haiti the nearly two thousand refugees intercepted since the beginning of the month. For those who had worried that the surge in Haitian refugees portended the beginning of a massive influx of Haitians to the United States, the Bush administration’s new policy of forcible return was welcome news. The decision of whether to accept the Haitians “boils down to an economic decision on what Florida taxpayers can withstand,” argued Nancy Roman, press secretary for Florida Republican Congressman E. Clay Shaw Jr. “It seems hard-line and dispassionate, but sometimes you have to act with your mind and not your heart,” claimed Roman in defense of the Bush administration decision.⁷⁰⁶ Daniel A. Stein, executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a Washington-based organization established to limit immigration and promote a tougher stance toward the undocumented, also applauded the Bush administration’s decision. “As compassionate as it might seem to offer ‘temporary’ asylum to Haitians, the consequences of such an act could prove disastrous,” Stein

⁷⁰⁴Melissa Conti, “Detainment Policy Prompts Rescue Plan by Miami Haitians, Rights Leaders,” *The Associated Press*, Nov. 11, 1991, AM cycle.

⁷⁰⁵“Haitian Exiles Protest Treatment of Boat People,” *United Press International*, Nov. 16, 1991, BC cycle.

⁷⁰⁶Jerry Septer, “Haitian Influx Feared in Strapped Florida,” *Washington (DC) Times*, Nov. 22, 1991, A1.

wrote in a *Palm Beach Post* editorial entitled “Can We Survive a Haitian Exodus?” Stein argued, “The Bush administration correctly concluded that granting the first wave of boat people asylum would trigger a wholesale exodus.”⁷⁰⁷

However, the repatriation policy also provoked a firestorm of criticism. Addressing a rally of two thousand people in the Miami neighborhood of Little Haiti, Jesse Jackson denounced the Bush administration’s “racist” stance as “David Duke foreign policy,” a reference to the former Ku Klux Klan leader and presidential candidate from Louisiana. “We can’t be against the coup and then send terrified people back into the arms of the terrorists,”⁷⁰⁸ Jackson declared. Representatives from the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami pledged to challenge the legality of the new policy in court. Writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Bill Frelick, a representative of the US Committee for Refugees, characterized the Bush administration’s policy as hypocritical:

Over the years, the United States and other rich industrial countries, removed from refugee hot spots, have maintained pressure on potential first-asylum countries not to turn back refugees. Our government has pressured third-world countries, for example, telling Thailand not to push back Laotians and Cambodians, and Malaysia not to prevent Vietnamese boat people from landing. Our government has noted that the international system of burden-sharing can’t function if refugees are not given immediate, temporary protection at the point of escape. Now the US finds itself positioned as a country of first asylum. Haitians are fleeing the clamp-down in the aftermath of the overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by boarding rickety boats and taking their chances on dangerous seas. Given the close proximity of Haiti to Florida, rescuing them should be a simple matter.⁷⁰⁹

However, “rather than acting in accord with the international legal consensus for refugee protection, the US government looks for dumping grounds among regimes that have shown little

⁷⁰⁷Daniel A. Stein, “Can We Survive a Haitian Exodus?” *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, Nov. 30, 1991, 22A.

⁷⁰⁸Beth Duff-Brown, “Jesse Jackson Leads Haitian Rally in Miami, Calls U.S. Policy Racist,” *The Associated Press*, Nov. 26, 1991, AM cycle.

⁷⁰⁹Bill Frelick, “The Haitian Boat People,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 20, 1991, 18.

regard for refugees in the past,” Frelick argued. “Let us do the decent thing, the simple thing as the true country of first asylum, and offer temporary protection to the people who have appealed to our humanity,” he concluded.⁷¹⁰ Even the majority of registered voters in Florida disagreed with the administration’s repatriation policy, despite the potential economic impact on the state of a large influx of refugees. According to a Mason-Dixon Opinion Research poll, 57 percent of Florida voters believed that Haitians should be able to stay in the United States temporarily or until it was safe for them to return to Haiti.⁷¹¹

With his administration’s new policy under such scrutiny, President Bush sought to defend his position. “Let me assure you, [the Haitian policy] is not based on some race or double standard,” the president maintained in an interview with a reporter from WTVJ, Miami. “It’s a fair policy” and one that “does make a distinction between economic and political refugees.” The president also reasserted US support for Aristide’s restoration, though he sounded somewhat ambivalent about it. “We’re trying to work with the OAS to restore democracy, even though Aristide is -- there’s a little controversy surrounding him. But he was elected. He ought to be restored. And we are supporting sanctions in the OAS to get him restored.” Even so, the president insisted, opposition to the coup did not mean the United States needed to change its policy toward Haitian refugees. “If it’s political persecution by some of these bullies that threw out Aristide, those people can seek asylum. But if you have just the whole country turning out for economic reasons, and the economy of Haiti is a disaster, we just can’t handle that. So that’s the moral underpinning of this policy,” Bush concluded.⁷¹²

⁷¹⁰Frelick, “The Haitian Boat People.”

⁷¹¹Elizabeth Grudzinski, “Bush, Florida Split on Haitians,” *Miami Herald*, Dec. 13, 1991, A1.

⁷¹²“Interviews with NBC Owned and Operated Television Stations,” Nov. 20, 1991. Public Papers of President George Bush. Accessed online: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?submit=Search&search=haiti.

In addition to the public debate over refugee policy, the Bush administration's efforts to interdict and repatriate Haitians seeking refuge in the United States triggered a new phase in the legal battle over Haitian refugees. On November 19, one day after the announcement of the new policy, Federal District Court Judge Donald Graham ruled on an emergency appeal made by the Haitian Refugee Center, issuing an injunction against the Bush administration's repatriation program. According to Judge Graham, the government's repatriation policy violated US law on refugees, which banned the deportation of people who face political persecution in their countries of origin. The injunction brought the Bush administration's efforts to return the refugees to Haiti to a temporary halt, but not before 538 refugees had already been forcibly returned to Haiti.⁷¹³ The Justice Department then appealed the ruling, but its appeal was rejected by the Eleventh Court of Appeals, which sent the case back to the district court of Judge C. Clyde Atkins, a justice that had in the past made some significant rulings in favor of Haitian refugees. On December 3, Judge Atkins extended the prohibition on repatriation, issuing another temporary injunction that gave the US Justice Department seven days to appeal the decision or to come up with a plan to provide a fairer system for legitimate political refugees.⁷¹⁴

At this moment in early December, just one month after the surge of refugees had started, 6,372 people had been intercepted at sea, 538 had been returned to Haiti, 550 were at refugee camps in Honduras and Venezuela, and 2, 247 were on Coast Guard vessels. The majority of the refugees (3,090), however, occupied a growing refugee camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. And just as the Krome Avenue Detention Center had in earlier periods become a particularly

⁷¹³“Florida Judge Orders Halt to Forced Return of Haitians,” *CBS Evening News*, CBS News Transcripts, Nov. 19, 1991; “United States: Repatriation of Haitians Temporarily Halted,” *Inter Press Service*, Nov. 19, 1991; “Administration Struggles with Refugee Dilemma,” *United Press International*, Nov. 20, 1991, BC cycle.

⁷¹⁴“Haitian Repatriation Issue to Return to Court,” *United Press International*, Dec. 1, 1991, BC cycle; “Judge Issues New Injunction on Haitians Refugees,” *United Press International*, Dec. 3, 1991, BC cycle.

important site of struggle for the asylum campaign, so the camp at Guantanamo became a significant location in the complex battle over Haiti, the Aristide government, and the proper policy toward the refugees. By mid-November, lawyers and advocates from the Haitian Refugee Center were traveling to the refugee camp in Cuba to observe immigration interviews and to carry messages back to family and friends in the Haitian communities of the United States. Visits by American leaders in the asylum campaign, like New York Congressman Charles Rangel and Jesse Jackson, also heightened the profile of the Guantanamo camp.⁷¹⁵ And the actions of the refugees themselves contributed to the growing notoriety of the camp. On December 12, as the boredom, tension, and fear of repatriation grew for the 5,513 refugees that occupied the camp, a rumor that Fidel Castro wanted them off the island and intended to kill them if they were not gone in five days sent the refugees into panicked action. Marching, chanting, tearing down the tents that housed them, and trying to break through the concertina wire that surrounded the camp, the Haitians called for their freedom and a release from the limbo of life in Guantanamo. Although brief, this rebellion was to be the first of many acts of resistance by the Haitians at Guantanamo over their prolonged incarceration.⁷¹⁶

Because of the growing crisis at Guantanamo and the fierce political and legal battle being waged between the Bush administration and the refugees and their supporters, by December 1991 the popular movement in the United States was just as focused on defending the

⁷¹⁵Michael Warren, "Haitian Advocates to Monitor Immigration Interviews," *The Associated Press*, Nov. 23, 1991, AM cycle; "Haitians Refugee Lawyers Go to Guantanamo," *United Press International*, Nov. 30, 1991, BC Cycle; Lizette Alvarez, "Jesse Jackson, Miamians Take Aid, Hope to Tent City," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 8, 1991, A1; "Priest Returns from Cuba with Notes from Detained Haitians," *The Associated Press*, Dec. 31, 1991, AM cycle.

⁷¹⁶Beth Duff-Brown, "Tension and Boredom Mount at Tent City as Migrants Await Ruling," *The Associated Press*, Dec. 13, 1991, AM cycle; "Death Rumor Sparks Protest by Haitians Held at U.S. Base," *Toronto Star*, Dec. 13, 1991, A24; Robert Burns, "Hundreds of Haitians Revolt in U.S. Military Camp in Cuba," *The Associated Press*, Dec. 16, 1991, AM cycle.

refugees seeking asylum in the United States as it was in pressing for the return of Aristide. However, as already noted, for most activists by this point the two issues were utterly inseparable. As in earlier years, movement activists who were motivated by the urgent need to pressure American officials to grant their compatriots asylum also recognized that if they achieved asylum for the refugees, it would mean that they had succeeded in distancing the US government from the regime in Haiti and in increasing American pressure on the coup regime back home. For this reason, the campaign to restore democracy to Haiti and the effort to defend the refugees from forcible return were, for the activists involved, part of a single movement.

As 1991 came to a close and the new year began, the wave of Haitians seeking refuge in the United States still showed no signs of abating. On January 24, 1992, the US Coast Guard intercepted 1,072 refugees fleeing Haiti by boat, the largest number in a single day since the interdiction program had begun eleven years earlier. Just days later, 1,305 refugees were captured in another record-breaking day.⁷¹⁷ The unparalleled exodus coincided with the release of a report by the human rights organization, Amnesty International; the report documented that there were at least 1,500 murders in the three and a half months since the coup and that members of church, labor, and other grassroots organizations were being tortured, disappeared, and massacred by the military regime that had removed the Aristide government.⁷¹⁸

The ever growing refugee crisis made the ongoing political and legal battles over the Bush administration's refugee policy all the more urgent for both sides. Supporters of the Haitian refugees in the US Congress were attempting to push a bill through the House of Representatives that would grant temporary protected status to Haitian refugees until democracy

⁷¹⁷“Record Number of Haitians Intercepted,” *United Press International*, Jan. 24, 1992, BC cycle; “Military Violence Blamed for Haitian Refugee Surge,” *United Press International*, Jan. 28, 1992, BC cycle.

⁷¹⁸“‘1,500 Killed’ as Haiti Tries to Crush Dissent,” *Independent* (London), Jan. 23, 1992, 12.

was restored in Haiti. The legal tug-of-war continued as well. On December 17, 1991, a federal appeals court ruled that the government could proceed with the repatriation of Haitian refugees. According to the court, the Haitians being held on Coast Guard vessels and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were not protected by the 1967 United Nations Protocol on Refugees because they had never actually reached American soil. Cheryl Little, attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center, called the ruling “devastating” and warned that “many of the Haitians, if returned, will face life-threatening situations.”⁷¹⁹ Hours after the federal appeal court’s ruling, Federal District Court Judge C. Clyde Atkins issued another injunction temporarily blocking the refugees’ return.⁷²⁰ Then, after the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals again overturned Judge Atkins’ ruling, the Haitian Refugee Center made a last-ditch effort to stop the forced return of the refugees by claiming that the refugees had a right to meet with legal counsel before repatriation, an argument that Judge Atkins agreed with, leading to yet another temporary halt of the repatriation process.⁷²¹

Frustrated by the legal challenges to its effort to return the Haitian refugees, the Bush administration attempted to apply political pressure on the court. As the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals considered the latest injunction barring the repatriation of the Haitians, Bush administration officials submitted affidavits to the court claiming that twenty thousand Haitians were massing in preparation for departure to the United States. Only the initiation of repatriation proceedings could stem this massive exodus, the administration argued.⁷²²

⁷¹⁹Tom Saladino, “Appeals Court Says U.S. Can Send Detained Haitians Home,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 17, 1991, AM cycle.

⁷²⁰Joan Thompson, “Judge Issues Order Blocking Return of Haitians,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 18, 1991, PM cycle.

⁷²¹“Haitians Get a Reprieve on Returning Home,” *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1991, 6.

⁷²²“Government: 20,000 Haitians Set to Head to U.S.” *Associated Press*, Jan. 30, 1992, PM cycle.

More effective than political pressure, however, was the Bush administration's effort to circumvent the Eleventh Circuit Court altogether. On January 31, the United States Supreme Court granted the Justice Department's request for a stay on the federal court injunction that blocked the refugees' return, opening the way for repatriation even before the appeals court ruled on the legality of the action.⁷²³ Immigration officials moved swiftly, beginning the forced return of the Haitians held by the US Coast Guard as well as the 12,500 refugees detained at Guantanamo Bay. Federal officials also took the endorsement of the nation's highest court as an opportunity to begin deporting Haitians held in American detention centers.⁷²⁴

As the United States began returning the refugees to Haiti, protests erupted in Miami and New York. Attending a protest rally outside the offices of the Haitian Refugee Center in Little Haiti, Wilson Antoine, a twenty-four-year-old Haitian allowed to enter the United States to pursue political asylum, lamented, "Upon returning to Haiti, [the refugees] will be killed." Picket signs at the Miami protest read "Justice for Black People," "Fight Racism," and "If You Don't Want Us, Let Haiti be Free."⁷²⁵ In New York, Haitians gathered in Times Square to advance the twin demands for Aristide's return and for asylum for Haitian refugees. Joseph Pierre, a New York cab driver, expressed the interconnectedness of the two demands that many felt. "You know what we have to say to Bush?" Pierre asked. "Aristide must come back before he send[s] the people back."⁷²⁶

⁷²³James Rowley, "Supreme Court Clears Way for Return of Haitians," *Associated Press*, Jan. 31, 1992, AM cycle.

⁷²⁴Anne-Marie O'Connor, "Haitian Camp Nearly Doubles in 1 Month; 12,500 Refugees Pack Guantanamo," *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, Jan. 30, 1992, 3A; Lizette Alvarez, "INS Again Deporting Haitians Now in US Detention Centers," *Miami Herald*, Feb. 14, 1992, A5.

⁷²⁵Beth Duff-Brown, "Haitians in Miami Denounce Repatriation Efforts," *Associated Press*, Feb. 1, 1992, AM cycle; Anne-Marie O'Connor, "Protests Erupt in Miami as U.S. Starts Sending Haitians Home," *Atlanta (GA) Journal and Constitution*, Feb. 2, 1992, A3.

⁷²⁶"Refugees, Aristide and Bush Are Talk of the Town among Haitians," *Associated Press*, Feb. 6, 1992, AM cycle.

The Bush administration's policy of forcibly returning Haitian refugees reinvigorated an already large asylum campaign in the United States that included many American organizations, particularly those rooted in the African American community. Even before the action by the Bush government, the AFL-CIO had on at least two occasions expressed its strong support for asylum for the refugees.⁷²⁷ The National Council of Churches, an organization that had been advocating for Haitian refugees since the early 1970s, was also a strong proponent of asylum.⁷²⁸ Civil rights organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (black congresspersons in particular) were deeply involved in the asylum campaign well before the government resumed repatriation.⁷²⁹

After the Supreme Court ruling that authorized the repatriation of Haitian refugees and the Bush administration's resumption of their forced return to Haiti, those already active in the campaign stepped up their involvement as newcomers, both organizations and individuals, were drawn into the movement. The widespread engagement of old and new organizations placed the experience of Haitian refugees and the asylum campaign in a national and international spotlight stronger than any before. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, admonished the United States for its move, stating that she "regrets the decision of the government of the United States to resume the return of Haitian asylum seekers" and "fears that those being returned may, in fact, be exposed to danger upon their return."⁷³⁰ The NAACP issued a statement that called the forced return of Haitian refugees "unconscionable." It reiterated

⁷²⁷"AFL-CIO Issues Statement on Haitian Refugees," *PR Newswire*, Nov. 25, 1991; "AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland Issues Statement on Haitian Refugees," *PR Newswire*, Dec. 20, 1991.

⁷²⁸"Church Group Urges Support for Haitian Refugees," *Associated Press*, Dec. 23, 1991, AM cycle.

⁷²⁹Karen Branch, "Religious Leaders Rally with Haitians," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 9, 1991, B1; "SCLC President Boycotts Martin Luther King Reception," *Associated Press*, Jan. 14, 1992, AM cycle.

⁷³⁰"U.N. Protests Forced Return of Haitians," *United Press International*, Feb. 3, 1992, BC cycle.

its support for temporary protected status for Haitians fleeing the post-coup violence.⁷³¹

Renowned African American dancer and artist, Katherine Dunham launched a well-publicized hunger strike to protest the Bush administration's treatment of Haitian refugees. Her action was soon supported publicly by comedian Dick Gregory, another well-known member of the black American community who for many years had been active in work that supported Haiti.⁷³² On March 16, 1992, the Quixote Center/Quest for Peace took out a full page ad in the *New York Times* that featured 3,500 individuals and organizations calling for the United States and the Organization of American States to "restore democracy to Haiti" and to "welcome Haitian refugees."⁷³³ *Haiti Progres* reported on the *New York Times*' statement as a remarkable expression of solidarity with Haiti and a sign of the rising tide of support among Americans for the Aristide government and Haitian refugees.⁷³⁴

Just months after the refugee crisis had begun in earnest, the asylum movement had made some notable achievements. Due in part to its diversity, a result of its gaining the backing of many American organizations, the movement was as large as it had ever been, giving it an unprecedented profile and power. At the end of February 1992, the US House of Representatives voted 217 to 165 to suspend the forced return of Haitian refugees from the Guantanamo Bay camp. Though the action in the House alone did little to protect the refugees

⁷³¹"NAACP Calls on President to Halt Repatriation of Haitian Refugees," *PR Newswire*, Feb. 4, 1992.

⁷³²Charles Bosworth Jr., "Activist Joins Fast by Dunham," *St. Louis (MO) Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 12, 1992, 12A; Roy Malone, "Gregory, 2 Others Arrested in Protest at U.S. Courthouse; Dunham Vows to Keep Fasting," *St. Louis (MO) Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 20, 1992, 3A.

⁷³³"Restore Democracy to Haiti," [Display Ad 12], *New York Times*, Mar. 16, 1992, A11.

⁷³⁴"Solidarite avec Haiti: 3.5000 organisations et individus allerten l'opinion publique Americaine," *Haiti Progres* Mar. 18-24, 1992, 1, 20.

facing repatriation, it was a substantial rejection of Bush administration policy and a strong indicator of the breadth of backing the asylum movement had cultivated.⁷³⁵

In the courtroom, too, refugee advocates continued to partially obstruct the Bush administration's efforts. On March 27, 1992, US District Court Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. issued another temporary restraining order, again blocking the repatriation of the approximately 3,000 refugees remaining in the Guantanamo Bay refugee camp.⁷³⁶ The political and legal campaign in defense of the Haitian refugees even managed to pry the door open wide enough for nearly 6,000 Haitians to be granted permission to enter the United States and apply for asylum, a remarkable victory when compared to the nearly complete denial of asylum granted to Haitian refugees for all of the Duvalier years as well as the subsequent period of "Duvalierism without Duvalier." Nonetheless, the fact remained that by mid-March 1992 more than 9,400 refugees had been forcibly returned to Haiti.⁷³⁷ Despite their achievements, the Haitian refugees and the refugee movement remained embattled.

A Presidential Campaign and the Politics of Refuge

In Haiti, February 7, 1992, passed without incident. In the days and weeks leading up to the national holiday, which marked the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier and the first anniversary of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's inauguration, pro-Aristide protesters had

⁷³⁵Paul Anderson, "House Rises to Defense of Haitians," *Miami Herald*, Feb. 28, 1992, A1.

⁷³⁶"Judge Blocks 'Cruel' Haitian Repatriation," *Associated Press*, Mar. 28, 1992, 1A.

⁷³⁷"Little Haiti & the Quest for Asylum," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, Mar. 10, 1992; David Beard, "Massive Repatriation Effort Ending, Guantanamo Dismantling Tent Camp," *Associated Press*, Mar. 17, 1992, PM cycle.

staged what one report called sporadic, “lightning-quick protests in which demonstrators avoid clashing with police.” On February 7 a group of approximately one hundred people attended a “protest mass” to highlight the anniversary of Aristide’s becoming president and to call for his return. Broadcasting over the radio from his place of exile in Venezuela, Aristide took the anniversary of his inauguration as an opportunity to exhort Haitians to “raise the flag of resistance even higher.” But as much defiance as there was among the Haitian population, the mood was cautious, even fearful. Father Antoine Adrien, who had been one of the leading voices of anti-Duvalier exiles during his period of exile in New York, took the occasion to express what was needed to bring democracy back to Haiti. Haitians would have to rely on themselves, not the international community, Adrien insisted. “We know it is our own strength, our own courage, our own determination that will bring [democracy] back,” he said.⁷³⁸

Adrien was correct that the ability of the Haitian people to resist the coup was a critical piece of the effort to restore democracy to Haiti, but his statement overlooked how dependent the internal resistance movement was on the support of the international movement during the coup years. In fact, the protest movement of Haitians and their supporters abroad, particularly in North American cities like New York and Miami, was more important than ever in determining the survival and the success of the popular movement in Haiti. The interconnectedness of the internal and external resistance movements and the external support that the internal resistance received were the critical factors in the eventual restoration of democracy in Haiti.

Part of the strength of the international campaign to restore democracy to Haiti came from Jean-Bertrand Aristide himself. After initially being forced into exile in Venezuela, Aristide moved to Washington, DC, where he established his operational base for the rest of his

⁷³⁸Kevin Noblet, “Aristide Calls for More Resistance on Anniversary of Inauguration,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 7, 1992, AM cycle.

period in exile. During that time, with cooperation from the US government, Aristide skillfully exploited his residency in the United States and his placement in the international community. Because the US government had condemned the coup and had refused to recognize the coup leaders as the legitimate government of Haiti, in the eyes of the State Department Aristide remained president and Jean Casimir, Aristide's ambassador to the United States, continued to function as the official representative of the Haitian government in Washington. And since the United States continued to recognize Aristide and his cabinet as the official government of Haiti, Aristide was able to represent himself as the head of Haiti's government to American and United Nations officials during his period in exile. Aristide and the US government cooperated in other ways as well. After the September coup, President George Bush had frozen Haitian government assets, but after Aristide constituted his government in exile, the US State Department gave Aristide access to those funds. Although these Haitian government funds were controlled by the Treasury Department, it was required to release them to Aristide when so ordered by State Department. Access to these resources enabled Aristide to support his staff, to employ former Maryland Congressman Michael Barnes to advise him and represent him to the American government and people, and to finance the many trips he made throughout the United States and around the world to cultivate support for his return to Haiti. Other members of the Aristide administration also traveled extensively to build the campaign. Myrto Celestin Saurel, minister of education and later minister of social affairs for the Aristide government, recalled that during the coup years, "I attended human rights and labor conferences all over the world. Everywhere we went, we raised the Haitian flag high and asked that the impunity of human rights abuse no longer be tolerated."⁷³⁹

⁷³⁹"Deposed Haitian President Lives Modestly in Exile," *Associated Press*, July 9, 1993, AM cycle; "Exiled Haitian Leader Draws Millions from Accounts in U.S.," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Nov. 24, 1993, 12A; Bell, *Walking on*

Having the head of the democratically elected government and the symbol of the popular movement among Haitian and American activists in the United States gave great strength and energy to the US-based resistance campaign. When Aristide appeared at a rally in the Miami arena in mid-March, the event provided a surge of energy to the already mobilized community, drawing more than fifteen thousand people to the packed arena with many more turned away at the door.⁷⁴⁰ In New York in April Aristide's presence at a massive rally in Central Park drew more than twenty-five thousand people (and perhaps as many as one hundred thousand). The president-in-exile also cultivated support in more intimate settings; in the same New York trip he met with two hundred members of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Greater New York and Vicinity, several thousand Haitian students at Brooklyn College, and leaders of the Tenth Department.⁷⁴¹

But the US-based movement for democracy in Haiti owed its vigor and sustained mobilization to more than Aristide's presence in the United States and to his skilled campaigning. Their strength in mobilization that the Haitian communities of the United States exhibited from September 1991 to October 1994 was also very much the result of the earlier seeds of organization and coalition building planted by activists and community members during the Duvalier years and grown from 1986 to 1991. The political education that Haitian activists in New York and Miami had received and their experience with mass mobilization first during

Fire, 225.

⁷⁴⁰“Aristide Rally Draws 15,000,” *Palm Beach(FL) Post*, Mar. 22, 1992, 22A; “Miami: la communauté haitienne toujours aussi pleinement ouverte de Titid,” *Haiti Progres*, Mar. 25-31, 1992, 9.

⁷⁴¹“Haitian Rally Expected to Draw Up to 100,000,” *United Press International*, Apr. 25, 1992, BC cycle; “25,000 Join Central Park Rally to Back Ousted Haitian Leader,” *New York Times*, Apr. 27, 1992, A3; “100,000 personnes accueillent le président Aristide à New York,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 28-May 5, 1992, 1, 10-11; Joseph B. Treaster, “Fight with Us' against Military, Ousted Haitian Urges Americans,” *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1992, A10; “New York: le dixième partage un dîner historique avec Titid,” *Haiti Progres*, Apr. 28-May 5, 1992, 10; “Chaleureux accueil du dixième au président Aristide,” *Haiti Progres*, May 13-19, 1992, 12-16.

the Duvalier years and then from 1986 to 1991 proved essential to their ability to build and sustain an international campaign against the coup from 1991 to 1994. Leaders like Antoine Adrien and Gerard Jean-Juste, who had been leading figures in the earlier exile resistance to Duvalier and in campaigns to support the Haitian refugees maintained connections with movement activists from inside Haiti. Just as important as the leaders were rank and file activists, affiliated with organizations like *Veye Yo* in Miami and SELA in New York, who had organized and demonstrated against repression in Haiti, the US government's jailing and deportation of Haitian refugees, and the CDC and FDA's labeling of Haitians as AIDS carriers, and who now led the campaign to overthrow the coup regime and to return Aristide to Haiti. As Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc correctly observe, "Their positioning within the United States has enabled transmigrants to gain access to U.S. media, to lobby in the halls of Congress, and demonstrate in the streets."⁷⁴² But it was more than position within the United States that gave Haitian activists in New York and Miami such strength and resilience in the early 1990s. It was their history and experience with an intertwined and multifaceted international movement that enabled them to effectively resist and ultimately roll back the coup.

Activists in the United States recognized that if they were to succeed in their joint campaign to return Aristide to Haiti and to protect the Haitian refugees fleeing the coup regime, they would need to keep the international spotlight on these twin issues. In this effort, they were greatly aided by the US presidential election of 1992. During the period of campaigning leading up to the election, both the incumbent, President George H.W. Bush, and his Democratic challenger, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, were forced to define their position regarding policy

⁷⁴²Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 214.

toward Haiti and the Haitian refugees. In addition, supporters of Aristide and the Haitian refugees were able to exploit developments along the campaign trail to elevate their own campaign for asylum for Haitian refugees and the restoration of Haitian democracy.

In May 1992, just six months before he would stand for reelection, President Bush's political quandary centering upon the refugee crisis intensified when thousands of Haitians once again took to the sea in an effort to reach the United States. On May 15 nearly 1,000 refugees were intercepted by the US Coast Guard, the largest number captured in a single day since the previous January. Several hundred more were brought aboard US vessels and transferred to Guantanamo Bay the next day, bringing the number of Haitians at the US-operated refugee camp in Cuba to almost 10,000 and the total number of Haitians captured at sea since the coup to 29,261.⁷⁴³

One week later, as the flow continued, packing the Guantanamo camp with more than twelve thousand Haitians, the Bush administration unveiled its policy governing those fleeing Haiti. The US Coast Guard would no longer pick up all Haitian refugees at sea and transfer them to Guantanamo Bay. Instead, those "in no imminent danger" would be encouraged to return to Haiti or take their chances at sea. Only those in sinking vessels would be rescued. Refugee advocates condemned the new policy and the Bush administration's continued unwillingness to grant asylum to the Haitian refugees. But the Guantanamo camp was at maximum capacity, American officials countered. In the words of Navy Commander Greg Hartung, "There is no room at the inn." Although the policy was intended to act as a deterrent to those Haitians preparing to attempt the voyage to the United States, refugees at the Guantanamo camp argued

⁷⁴³“Nearly 1,000 Haitian Refugees Intercepted by Coast Guard,” *Agence France Presse*, May 15, 1992; David Beard, “New Surge of Refugees Crowding Guantanamo a Second Time,” *Associated Press*, May 16, 1992, PM cycle.

that the policy shift would not stop the exodus. “This new decision makes no difference. As long as things stay bad in Haiti people will risk it all to come here,” argued Etude Erne, a twenty-eight-year-old mother of two.⁷⁴⁴

Perhaps sharing the refugees’ view that the new policy would not do enough to discourage Haitians’ attempt to reach the United States, Bush soon articulated yet another change in the policy governing the refugees. On May 24, from his summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, President Bush issued Executive Order 12,807, which directed the US Coast Guard to stop transferring Haitians captured at sea to Guantanamo Bay for interviews and processing; instead the Coast Guard was to return them directly to Haiti. The Kennebunkport order carried the US government’s practice of interdiction, initiated by Reagan, one step further. It not only stopped Haitian refugees before they could reach American shores, but it also returned them to Haiti without any sort of screening or interview process. A May 24, 1992, “White House Statement on Haitian Migrants” aimed to clarify the reasons for the policy change. The “executive order which will permit the U.S. Coast Guard to begin returning Haitians picked up at sea directly to Haiti . . . follows a large surge in Haitian boat people seeking to enter the United States and is necessary to protect the lives of the Haitians, whose boats are not equipped for the 600-mile sea journey,” it claimed. But the refugees’ safety at sea was not the only concern, the White House explained. “The large number of Haitian migrants has led to a dangerous and unmanageable situation. Both the temporary processing facility at the U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo and the Coast Guard cutters on patrol are filled to capacity. The President's action

⁷⁴⁴“Groups Protest U.S. Policy on Haitian Refugees,” *Agence France Presse*, May 22, 1992; Clifford Krauss, “U.S., in New Policy, Will Not Pick Up All Haiti Refugees,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1992, A1; Eric Schmitt, “Haitians at Guantanamo Base Say Nothing Will Stop Flight,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1992, 2.

will also allow continued orderly processing of more than 12,000 Haitians presently at Guantanamo . . . Under current circumstances, the safety of Haitians is best assured by remaining in their country.”⁷⁴⁵

Advocates for the Haitian refugees reacted to the Kennebunkport order with outrage. Cheryl Little, attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center of Miami, called the directive “horrendous.” Little claimed, “It’s going to be impossible now for the Haitians to be fairly processed.” Ira Kurzban, longtime attorney and advocate for Haitians in Miami, argued that the Kennebunkport order “shows the failure of the Bush administration to deal with the underlying problem, which is restoration of democracy” in Haiti.⁷⁴⁶ In addition to criticism, the Kennebunkport order drew legal challenges from refugee and civil rights organizations and a group of law students working through Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic of Yale Law School.⁷⁴⁷ Amnesty International joined those opposed to the new policy, declaring that President Bush’s policy toward the refugees would cause a “Caribbean curtain” to descend between the United States and its poor southern neighbors, locking out those seeking freedom from violence and fear. William O’neill, a specialist on Haiti with the New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (LCHR), called the Bush administration’s action a “gross violation of international law.” Bill Frelick of the US Committee on Refugees agreed. “From now on, other countries throughout Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America will be able to point to

⁷⁴⁵“White House Statement on Haitian Migrants,” May 24, 1992. *Public Papers of President George Bush*. Accessed online: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?submit=Search&search=haiti

⁷⁴⁶Terence Hunt, “Executive Order for Turnback of Refugees,” *Associated Press*, May 24, 1992, AM cycle; Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 83; Stepick, *Pride against Prejudice*, 108; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 225.

⁷⁴⁷“Bush Admin. under Fire about Haitian Policy,” *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, May 25, 1992; “Opponents of Bush’s Haitian Policy File Court Suit,” *United Press International*, May 28, 1992, BC cycle.

the U.S. example and say, 'If the world's richest country says it has no room for refugees, we cannot be expected to accommodate them' .”⁷⁴⁸

President Bush got a chance to respond to his critics at a question and answer session with the Mount Paran Christian School community in Marietta, Georgia, three days after he had issued the executive order. In response to one comment that the new policy “seems to run contrary to what America has stood for over the past couple hundred years,” President Bush reiterated the long-standing policy of the US government that held that most Haitians were not legitimate refugees. “Yes, the Statue of Liberty still stands, and we still open our arms to people that are politically oppressed,” the president stated. But “we cannot and, as long as the laws are on the book, I will not, because I've sworn to uphold the Constitution, open the doors to economic refugees all over the world. We can't do that.” Bush administration officials had repeatedly insisted that Haitians who needed to escape political violence could still file for asylum at the US embassy in Port-au-Prince. However, the president also made clear that he believed most Haitians would be ineligible for asylum. To the same questioner at the Georgia school, Bush insisted, “I am convinced that the people in Haiti are not being physically oppressed. We've got all kinds of ways to monitor that situation there.” Bush assured his audience, “A returnee, for example, a guy that's taken from Guantanamo and sent back . . . I would not want on my conscience that that person having fled oppression, anyone that was fleeing oppression, would be victimized upon return.”⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁸Deborah Sharpe, “Anger Rises in Miami's Little Haiti,” *USA Today*, May 26, 1992, 4A; “Haiti: Refugee Rights Groups Pound New U.S. Policy,” *Inter Press Service*, May 27, 1992.

⁷⁴⁹“Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with the Mount Paran Christian School Community in Marietta,” May 27, 1992. *Public Papers of President George Bush*. Accessed online: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?submit=Search&search=haiti; Terence Hunt, “Executive Order for Turnback of Refugees,” *Associated Press*, May 24, 1992, AM cycle.

Arkansas governor and Democratic candidate for president, Bill Clinton embraced the opportunity to attack his Republican rival over Bush's new Haitian policy. Voting in his home state's presidential primary, Clinton told reporters that America needed to do more to restore democracy in Haiti, and until that happened, it should let Haitian refugees stay in the United States.⁷⁵⁰ Two days later, adding to the growing chorus of protest over the Kennebunkport order, Clinton issued a formal statement in which he claimed to be "appalled by the decision of the Bush administration to pick up fleeing Haitians on the high seas and forcibly return them to Haiti before considering their claim to political asylum." The Clinton campaign insisted, "This policy must not stand." Explaining why the policy must not stand, Clinton stated, "It is a blow to the principle of first asylum and to America's moral authority in defending the rights of refugees around the world." Taking the Bush administration to task for its overall policy toward Haiti, Clinton called the Kennebunkport order "another sad example of the administration's callous response to a terrible human tragedy" that "will not be resolved until Washington addresses more firmly and coherently the question of restoring democracy to Haiti." Finally, Clinton declared, "As I have said before, if I were president, I would -- in the absence of clear and compelling evidence that they weren't political refugees -- give [Haitians] temporary asylum until we restored the elected government of Haiti."⁷⁵¹ Although Haiti and the Haitian refugees already had been a focus in the campaign, the Kennebunkport order and the political furor it provoked ensured they would remain an important issue defining the two candidates in the national presidential election of 1992.

⁷⁵⁰"Clinton Criticizes Bush's Hardline on Haitian Refugees," *CBS Evening News*, CBS News Transcript, May 25, 1992.

⁷⁵¹"Statement by Gov. Clinton on Haitian Refugees," *U.S. Newswire*, May 27, 1992.

The Bush administration's policy change toward the Haitian refugees also influenced the political maneuvering of Aristide as well as that of his opponents. On one of his many speaking tours, Aristide told a crowd of supporters in Minnesota that Bush could not solve the refugee crisis without returning him to Haiti. "Once democracy is back in Haiti, people will stay in Haiti," Aristide assured his audience.⁷⁵² Ray Joseph used the refugee crisis not to attack the coup regime but to attempt to relieve the pressure the international embargo was exerting on the coup regime in Haiti. Joseph criticized the embargo, and despite the fact that he had so often in the past used the pages of his newspaper, *Haiti Observateur*, to attack those who insisted on classifying Haitians as economic migrants rather than political refugees, Joseph declared that "these are economic refugees created by the (embargo) of the United States and its allies." They were not fleeing political violence but were "seeking economic opportunity because conditions have worsened," Joseph claimed. Accept the refugees or lift the embargo on Haiti, Joseph demanded.⁷⁵³

The coup regime in Haiti, too, recognized the political saliency of the refugee crisis and became more proactive in attempting to stem the exodus, a move it hoped would undercut the political necessity of Aristide's return in the eyes of American lawmakers. Later that summer, Haitian officials began arresting organizers of refugee boats. (The *Miami Herald* speculated that this was an attempt to appease the US government.) The Immigration Police Unit of the Haitian government acknowledged that it was stepping up its campaign to punish the organizers of refugee expeditions who too often went free after being repatriated to Haiti. One of the targets of

⁷⁵² "Aristide Says Junta Ouster Will Reverse Flood of Haitian Refugees," *United Press International*, June 2, 1992, BC cycle.

⁷⁵³ Milton G. Allimadi, "Exiled Haitians Charge That Embargo Has Been Too Leaky to Be Effective," *Journal of Commerce*, Mar. 4, 1993, 3A.

this campaign was Father Gerard Jean-Juste, still in hiding in Haiti, who sent word that the coup regime was particularly set on his “extermination” because it believed he was encouraging Haitians to flee and seek refuge in Miami.⁷⁵⁴

A legal battle paralleled the political battle over the treatment of Haitian refugees. In early June, US District Court Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. issued a ruling on the legal challenge to President Bush’s Kennebunkport order. “This court is astonished that the United States would return Haitian refugees to the jaws of political persecution, terror, death and uncertainty,” the ruling stated, calling the government’s actions “particularly hypocritical given its condemnation of other countries who have refused to abide by the principle of (repatriation).” Nonetheless, Judge Sterling reluctantly acknowledged that he could find no legal grounds to block the president’s executive order.⁷⁵⁵ The following month a US Court of Appeals disagreed with Judge Johnson’s assessment of the order’s legality, however, ruling against the US government and overturning the Kennebunkport order. The Clinton campaign, ever eager to highlight its differences with the Bush administration on Haiti and the refugees, praised the appeals court action, which had overturned Bush’s “cruel policy of returning Haitian refugees to a brutal dictatorship without an asylum hearing,” and reasserted its position that “we respect the right of refugees from other parts of the world to apply for political asylum, and Haitians should not be treated differently.”⁷⁵⁶ However, the victory for the refugees was short-lived; the US Supreme

⁷⁵⁴Marjorie Valbrun, “Activist Priest: Haiti Regime Is Out to Kill Me,” *Miami Herald*, June 17, 1992, A14; J. P. Slavin, “Haitian Authorities Arresting Organizers of Refugee Boats,” *Miami Herald*, Aug. 26, 1992, A9.

⁷⁵⁵“Judge Upholds Bush's Policy on Haitian Repatriations,” *United Press International*, June 5, 1992, BC cycle.

⁷⁵⁶“Clinton Statement on Appeals Court Ruling on Haitian Repatriation,” *U.S. Newswire*, July 29, 1992.

Court immediately stayed the appeals court ruling, allowing the Bush administration's repatriation without asylum hearings to continue.⁷⁵⁷

Without legal obstructions to their effort to return the Haitian refugees, immigration officials carried out a rapid repatriation campaign. By the end of June 1992, only 1,570 refugees remained at the Guantanamo camp, which only one month earlier had been packed with more than 12,000. At this point, approximately 37,000 Haitians had been intercepted trying to reach the United States since the coup at the end of September 1991. Although nearly 11,000 were allowed to pursue applications for political asylum, 27,048 had been repatriated to Haiti. These numbers indicate that while American officials recognized the crisis in Haiti as more serious than the crises that preceded it, prompting them to approve an unprecedented number of Haitians to enter the asylum process, they still rejected the legitimacy of a majority of Haitian refugee claims, sending more than two-thirds of the would-be refugees back to Haiti.⁷⁵⁸

The US government's hopes to finish the process of repatriation and finally close the refugee camp at Guantanamo was frustrated, however, by a legal predicament posed by the presence of 233 Haitian refugees infected with HIV, the virus causing AIDS. These refugees, their advocates claimed, were being held "in a cruel limbo" because immigration officials had ruled that they had the right to pursue asylum claims in the United States but had barred them from entering the country due to a law excluding immigrants with infectious diseases.⁷⁵⁹ The plight of the remaining refugees at Guantanamo received more publicity after news of a series of protests by the refugees over mistreatment and their prolonged detention began reaching activists

⁷⁵⁷Jeff Gerth, "High Court Says Haitians Can Be Sent Home," *New York Times*, Aug. 2, 1992, 21.

⁷⁵⁸Michael Norton, "Coast Guard Returns Last Haitian Refugees," *The Associated Press*, June 24, 1992, AM cycle.

⁷⁵⁹"Haitians with AIDS Await Court Ruling," *United Press International*, July 27, 1992, BC cycle.

and supporters in the United States. Interpreters and civilian workers at the refugee camp reported that the Haitian refugees suffered atrocious treatment and conditions. One claimed to have seen “three Haitian men handcuffed, penned inside a tight circle of razor-wire” and left in the direct sun. Another reported witnessing “two men hogtied after they refused to lie face down on the ground following a recent protest.” A fifteen-year-old Haitian boy was put in detention after he was found with a carton of milk, a violation of a rule prohibiting food in the tents, a policy intended perhaps to discourage the invasion of the “rats as big as cats” that were rumored to live among the refugees in their tent city.⁷⁶⁰ Yolande Jean, one of the remaining 233 refugees, reported on life in the camp:

We had been asking them to remove the barbed wire; the children were playing near it, they were falling and injuring themselves. The food they were serving us, including canned chicken, had maggots in it. And yet they insisted that we eat it. Because you’ve got no choice. And it was for these reasons that we started holding demonstrations.⁷⁶¹

The conflict between refugees and camp authorities escalated over the summer of 1992. According to those refugees involved in the protests, their demonstrations earned them intimidation, threats, beatings, and placement in isolation. After twenty of the leaders of the protest movement were separated from the rest of the group as punishment for the protests, another fifty led a demonstration that ended with the refugees’ torching the temporary structures that made up their makeshift housing at the Guantanamo camp.⁷⁶²

In the summer and fall of 1992, the plight of the Haitians at Guantanamo and the overall Haitian crisis continued to draw supporters into the movement to defend the refugees and to

⁷⁶⁰“Crush of Refugees Tests Humanity of Guantanamo Forces; Clashes between Haitians and U.S. Servicemen Create Tension and Fear,” *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, Sept. 19, 1992, 1A.

⁷⁶¹Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 229.

⁷⁶²“Haitian Refugees Set Fire to Structures at Guantanamo,” *Associated Press*, Aug. 31, 1992, PM cycle; “Haitians in Cuba Protest,” *Miami Herald*, Sept. 1, 1992, A33; “Guantanamo: protestations des refugies haitiens atteints du SIDA,” *Haiti Progres*, Sept. 2-8, 1992, 7; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 231.

restore democracy to Haiti. The involvement of African Americans in particular continued to grow. In June, TransAfrica, an organization that had previously been active in the campaign to maintain sanctions against South Africa's apartheid government, announced that it was joining the campaign for the Haitian refugees.⁷⁶³ The following month the NAACP announced that it would be cosponsoring a demonstration with TransAfrica on the upcoming September 9. A statement from the directors and board members of TransAfrica and the NAACP described the Bush administration's policy toward Haitian refugees as "tainted with racism" and called African Americans to join an act of civil disobedience in front of the White House as a "statement of conscience" and "solidarity with our Haitian brothers and sisters who are fleeing Haiti for freedom."⁷⁶⁴ Although the purpose of the September 9 demonstration seems intended more to conduct a high profile act of civil disobedience than to mobilize significant numbers, the protest did draw several hundred participants, of whom ninety-five were arrested, including the tennis player and civil rights activist Arthur Ashe.⁷⁶⁵

Black members of Congress too continued to promote the cause of the Haitian refugees and to push for a stronger US effort to support Aristide's return to Haiti. They did so because they identified a connection between the injustices that poor, black people suffered in Haiti and the injustices that black people suffered in the United States. In a congressional hearing on US policy toward Haitian Refugees, Charles Rangel, representative from New York and member of the Congressional Black Caucus, tried to explain how a whole segment of the Haitian population

⁷⁶³Laurence Jolidon, "Haitian Refugees' Cause Gets New Voice," *USA Today*, June 8, 1992, 5A.

⁷⁶⁴"NAACP to Protest Treatment of Haitians," *PR Newswire*, July 31, 1992; Barbara Crossette, "2 Groups Plan Protest against Haitian Policy," *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1992, 19.

⁷⁶⁵Harry Smith, "Ninety-five Arrested in Protest outside White House Yesterday," *CBS Evening News*, CBS News Transcripts, Sept. 10, 1992; "Grande solidarite haitiano-americaine a Washington," *Haiti Progres*, Sept. 9-15, 1992, 9, 19.

was vulnerable to political persecution by equating their situation with that of African Americans. “The only criteria to feel the strength of the army is to be poor, is to be unarmed, is to seek democracy . . . to be a supporter of Aristide,” Rangel argued. “People in this country” might believe “that if you are poor and black you cannot be a political refugee,” Rangel continued, “but you can go to Louisiana and look where the people live, you can look at the color of their skin and determine who voted for [David] Duke and who didn’t vote for Duke and certainly you can see in Haiti who supported Aristide and who did not support him.”⁷⁶⁶ Donald M. Payne, another member of the Congressional Black Caucus, also equated the injustice experienced by Haitians with that of African Americans:

It is a time when the images of the injustice of the Rodney King case and the ensuing violence in Los Angeles are still in the minds and hearts of many Americans, in particular Americans of African descent. For the Bush administration to violate the accepted agreement by preventing access to first asylum protection for the Haitian refugees is in the poorest taste and demonstrates a complete lack of sensitivity to the problem of urban Americans.⁷⁶⁷

As the national election neared, supporters of Aristide and the refugees continue to take advantage of the dueling presidential campaigns to draw attention to their own campaign. Haitian activists and their supporters staged demonstrations timed to coincide with many of the state primary elections. On the eve of the New York presidential primary, a protest in Times Square organized by the Haitian Enforcement against Racism (HEAR), one of the leading organizations responsible for the April 20 AIDS march of 1990, drew thousands. Movement activists also staged large demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention, where they

⁷⁶⁶*U.S. Policy toward Haitian Refugees*: Joint Hearing on H. R. 5360 and Markup before the Subcommittees on Western Hemisphere Affairs and International Operations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 102nd Congress, Second Session, June 11 and 17, 1992.

⁷⁶⁷*U.S. Policy toward Haitian Refugees*, 16-17.

urged the party's nominee for president to support stronger actions to protect the Haitian refugees and to restore democracy in Haiti.⁷⁶⁸

On November 3, 1992, Bill Clinton defeated incumbent President George Bush and independent candidate Ross Perot to become the forty-second president of the United States. In his first press conference after his electoral victory, Clinton announced that he would reverse the Bush administration's policy of forcible repatriation of Haitian refugees and institute a system that would guarantee asylum hearings. Though in these first statements as president-elect Clinton stopped short of his earlier campaign promise to grant temporary asylum to all Haitian refugees, his support for a policy change was encouraging to those in the movement.⁷⁶⁹ On the streets of Little Haiti in Miami, one could see the hope that some had harnessed to the Clinton election. Images of Aristide on one side of tee shirts worn by some in the Haitian community and the image of Clinton on the other symbolized the assistance and support they expected the newly elected US president to provide to the elected president of Haiti. Steven Forester, attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center, observed that Haitians at home and abroad were "hoping to hear . . . that top on Clinton's foreign policy agenda is the restoration of Aristide."⁷⁷⁰

But while Clinton's election and the promise of greater support for the Haitian refugees encouraged many, it distressed others. Florida Congressman E. Clay Shaw Jr. warned that a policy that opened the door to Haitians would have "a potentially disastrous effect on South Florida that could exceed Hurricane Andrew," the storm that had devastated the state earlier that

⁷⁶⁸Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, 215; "Haitian-Americans Demonstrate in Times Square," *New York Times*, Apr. 7, 1992, B6; "Convention democrate et mobilization du 10e," *Haiti Progres*, July 22-28, 1992, 9.

⁷⁶⁹"United States: Clinton to Adopt New Policy on Refugees," *Inter Press Service*, Nov. 12, 1992.

⁷⁷⁰Deborah Sharp, "Haitian Refugees See Hope with a New Administration," *USA Today*, Nov. 27, 1992, 3A.

year. “Should thousands of Haitians feeling that denial of access has ended seek entry into Florida, the impact on the state and the entire country could be catastrophic,” insisted Florida Governor Lawton Chiles in a letter addressed to Clinton. Some critics of the president-elect claimed that aerial photos showed that in the wake of Clinton’s election, nearly seven hundred boats were being prepared in Haiti for departure to the United States. The Federation for Immigration Reform, an organization calling for a moratorium on immigration to the United States and stronger enforcement of immigration codes, sponsored commercials in South Florida that urged people to contact Clinton and to demand that he continue the Bush administration’s policy of direct return of Haitian refugees.⁷⁷¹ Feeling the pressure, perhaps, one week after the press conference in which he announced his upcoming policy change, Bill Clinton told reporters that he was not “going to articulate a policy that would promote mass migration without question.”⁷⁷² Like the Bush administration before it, the Clinton administration would have to contend with the thorny political questions of how to deal with the Haitian crisis and how to treat the Haitian refugees.

Confronting Clinton

The year 1993 began with another bid by Haitian refugees at Guantanamo to gain their freedom. However, this campaign originated not in Guantanamo, where more than two hundred HIV-positive Haitians remained in limbo, but back in the Krome Avenue Detention Center in Miami. The new phase of the campaign was sparked by the refugees’ anger over an incident that clarified the American government’s differential treatment of Haitians and Cubans seeking

⁷⁷¹ David Dahl, “Haiti Policy Worries Fla. Politicians,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Nov. 21, 1992, 4A; Jane Sutton, “Refugees Die on Voyage; Ads Put Pressure on Clinton,” *United Press International*, Dec. 7, 1992, BC cycle.

⁷⁷²“Clinton Warns Haitians against Emigrating,” *Agence France Presse*, Nov. 19, 1992.

asylum in the United States. On December 29, a group of Cubans hijacked a commercial flight and flew it to Miami, where they applied for political asylum. Immigration officials detained the Cubans for one day and then released them to their friends and families in South Florida. Angered by the lax treatment of the Cubans, Haitians in the Krome Avenue facility argued that had the plane been filled with Haitians, the hijackers would never have received such lenient treatment. In fact, some recalled that in 1989 when two Haitian soldiers commandeered a missionary plane in an attempt to escape the military regime ruling Haiti at the time, they were arrested and ultimately received life sentences in federal prison. To protest the continuing inequality in the treatment of Haitians and Cubans, 150 Haitian refugees at the Krome Avenue facility launched a hunger strike, promising to die unless they were all released at the same time, and given water and access to telephones and the media. As had happened so often in the past, the action inside Krome soon was supported by angry protests outside the institution's gates; it also prompted members of the Dade County NAACP and others to stage their own hunger strikes in solidarity.⁷⁷³

If refugees and their advocates were discouraged by the persistence of differential treatment of Haitians and Cubans, they soon had to confront an even more distressing reality. On January 14, 1993, President Clinton announced that despite his many statements of support for the Haitian refugees, his multiple criticisms of the Bush administration's treatment of Haitians, and his promises to overturn his predecessor's policy of direct repatriation, the practice

⁷⁷³John Zarrella, "Haitians Protest U.S. Refugee Double Standard," *CNN*, Jan. 1, 1993; "Miami: manif de solidarite avec les grevistas de la faim," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 13-19, 1993, 9; Patrick Reyna, "Haitian Hunger Strikers Say They Will Die if Not Released," *Associated Press*, Jan. 4, 1993, AM cycle; Eric Hermelee, "Demonstrators Call for Release of Detainees, Hunger Strikers," *Associated Press*, Jan. 9, 1993, AM cycle; "NAACP Hunger Strikers Remain in Good Spirits," *Miami Herald*, Jan. 17, 1993, B2.

of interdiction and direct return would continue. The president explained his about-face in a February 10, 1993, town hall meeting in Detroit, Michigan:

I did what I did because of the evidence that people in Haiti were taking the wood off the roofs of their houses to make boats that were of questionable safety, to pour in thousands of numbers to come to this country, when we knew for sure hundreds of them would die on the high seas coming here in a human tragedy of monumental proportions; and that if they came here, they would all come to south Florida, where the unemployment rate is high . . . and the Federal Government has constantly broken their commitment to the people of south Florida to help them deal with the immigrant problem. I decided that the better course was to launch an aggressive effort to restore democracy to Haiti and to launch an aggressive effort to protect people who want to apply to be political refugees in this country, in Haiti, and to process their applications all over the island, which is what we are doing now.⁷⁷⁴

To ensure that none of the thousands of Haitians that were rumored to be readying to flee Haiti succeeded in their endeavor, Clinton ordered twenty-two Coast Guard cutters and patrol boats to block the would-be refugees' path to the United States.⁷⁷⁵ Haitians reacted to Clinton's reversal with shock and outrage. At Guantanamo, refugees launched hunger strikes, which were met again with violent retribution by camp authorities. The lesson of this betrayal, Marlene Doufeuille declared, was that "Haitians should count on themselves first, and then see what other people can do."⁷⁷⁶

Clinton's reversal on the refugee issue seemed to confirm what some had long been arguing: the popular movement in Haiti and in the United States should not pin its hopes on support from Washington or the rest of the international community. Instead, Haitians at home

⁷⁷⁴Remarks at a Town Meeting in Detroit," Feb. 10, 1993. *Public Papers of President Bill Clinton*, book 01, 84-85. Accessed online: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=PPP&browsePath=president-58%2F1993&isCollapsed=false&leafLevelBrowse=false&ycord=0>

⁷⁷⁵Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 172-73; Dupuy, *Haiti in New World Order*, 140; David Beard, "Haitians React Bitterly to News Clinton Will Keep Tough Policy," *Associated Press*, Jan. 14, 1993, AM cycle; Eric Hermelee, "U.S. Naval Barricade Nets First Boatloads of Haitian Refugees," *Associated Press*, Jan. 16, 1993, PM cycle.

⁷⁷⁶Beard, "Haitians React Bitterly to News Clinton Will Keep Tough Policy;" "Des refugies sur les mers malgre la volte-face de Clinton," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 20-26, 1993, 8; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 233.

and abroad should be focused on building and supporting direct, armed resistance to the coup regime. Peter Hallward notes, “Some people on the left of the movement, including Ben Dupuy’s APN (later PPN), urged Haiti’s president to abandon his diplomatic dependence on the U.S. and to sanction an armed liberation struggle.”⁷⁷⁷ Kim Ives concurs, observing that Dupuy and some of those identifying with “the *Haiti Progres*, Marxist-Leninist [current] began immediately to plan revolutionary responses and tried to convince Aristide that this was the best way.” By contrast, Ives argues, the “social democratic current said we have to go through the Democrats . . . Aristide more or less went with that [latter] current but was trying to do his own agenda.” Daniel Huttinot of *L’Ayisyen* and SELA remembers that the coup aroused a nascent, armed rebellion throughout Haiti; he offers an explanation for Aristide’s failure to support it. “The resistance movement inside Haiti was willing to confront the military” but “Aristide did not support them because . . . [he] want[ed] to be in control of everything, and if that armed struggle was developing inside Haiti, Aristide would not have any control.”⁷⁷⁸ These disagreements over the proper strategy of resistance, present from the beginning of the coup, intensified as new proposals for Aristide’s return emerged.

Eschewing direct confrontation with the coup regime, the movement to restore Aristide continued to focus on pressuring the United States and the international community to support the return of Haiti’s elected leader. Jesse Jackson told a crowd of thousands of protesters in Miami that the movement needed “to keep the pressure on Clinton” to restore Aristide. In New York a large demonstration outside the United Nations attempted to apply the same pressure to world leaders. In Washington, DC, in April 1993, thousands of people marched from the Capitol

⁷⁷⁷Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 45.

⁷⁷⁸Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview; Ives, interview.

to the White House. One of the marchers held a placard that read, “President Clinton, the Haitians are watching you.”⁷⁷⁹

To placate some of his critics, Clinton announced that he intended to drop the exclusion of HIV-positive immigrants from the United States, a move that would finally allow the Haitians languishing at the Guantanamo camp to make it into the country. But the refugees, in the midst of an ongoing hunger strike to protest their prolonged detention, were not impressed by Clinton’s promise. “All this talk about Clinton lifting the ban is just talk,” declared Fifi Pierre, who had been a prisoner at Guantanamo for one year. Members of the US Senate also were not impressed by Clinton’s pledge; they voted seventy-six to twenty-three to pass a law that would maintain the ban on immigrants carrying diseases like AIDS, though the Senate’s efforts to write the barrier – currently just an immigration policy regulation -- into law later died in the House of Representatives.⁷⁸⁰

In June 1993 despite deep disappointment with the Clinton administration and the seemingly endless crisis in Haiti, there were signs of hope. The previous March, the case of the refugees stuck in the Guantanamo Bay camp had come before a federal court and in June they received their ruling. Calling the US government’s treatment of the HIV-positive refugees “outrageous, callous, reprehensible,” Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. ordered the Haitians’ immediate release and entrance to the United States. News of the ruling sparked an outburst of celebratory singing and dancing, and cries of “Long live freedom” at the Guantanamo refugee camp.

⁷⁷⁹Patrick Reyna, “Jesse Jackson Urges Haitians to Keep Pressure on Clinton,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 7, 1993, AM cycle; Lydia Martin, “Marchers Demand Justice for Haitians,” *Miami Herald*, Feb. 8, 1993, A1; Gary Tuchman, “Haitians Demonstrate in New York,” *CNN*, Feb. 6, 1993.

⁷⁸⁰Richard Cole, “Haitian Hunger Strikers Not Impressed by Clinton’s Promises,” *Associated Press*, Feb. 10, 1993, AM cycle; Clifford Krauss, “HIV Immigration Ban Endorsed; Senate’s Vote to Write Measure into Law Seen as Rebuff to Clinton,” *Dallas (TX) Morning News*, Feb. 19, 1993, 1A; “Fasting Haitians Determined to Die, Doctor Says,” *United Press International*, Feb. 11, 1993, BC cycle.

“Finally, some justice,” proclaimed Rolande Durancy, director of the Haitian Refugee Center of Miami.⁷⁸¹

Developments in Haiti also gave some reason for cautious hope. In response to the complete intransigence of the coup regime, the United States and the United Nations introduced tougher sanctions against Haiti, imposing an oil and arms embargo and freezing the internationally held assets of the coup leaders. Haitians in the United States were also somewhat heartened by the resignation of the acting prime minister for the coup regime, Marc Bazin, and by reports that the tighter sanctions had forced Haitian officials to come to the bargaining table with Aristide and the international community. Mediated negotiations between President Aristide and General Raoul Cedras, initially set to take place at UN offices on Manhattan’s East Side, took place instead on Governor’s Island just off the southern tip of New York City. Officials explained that the relocation was prompted by “security concerns in light of anticipated demonstrations by exiled Haitians opposed to military rule in their homeland.”⁷⁸²

The Governor’s Island Accord, as the agreement between Aristide and Cedras came to be known, included provisions requiring that General Cedras and the other leaders of the coup regime step down. In return, they would be granted blanket amnesty. Aristide would be empowered to name a new government and would return to Haiti on October 30, 1993. In addition, the United Nations would send a team of “military experts” to Haiti to prepare the way for Aristide and to oversee the reformation of the nation’s armed forces. Despite serious

⁷⁸¹“Guantanamo Haitian Case Being Heard in Federal Court,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, Mar. 7, 1993; Catherine Crocker, “Judge: Free Guantanamo Bay Haitians,” *Associated Press*, June 8, 1993, AM cycle; “Little Haiti Celebrates Court Ruling,” *United Press International*, June 9, 1993, BC cycle; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 234-35.

⁷⁸²Garry Pierre-Pierre, “Emigres Are Holding Off on Their Hopes for Haiti,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1993, B3; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 175-176; “Safety Concerns Move Haiti Talks,” *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, June 26, 1993, 10A.

reservations about the terms of the agreement and under intense pressure from the United States and the UN as well as the pressure from a worsening situation in Haiti, Aristide agreed.⁷⁸³

The Governor's Island Accord not only received reluctant backing from Aristide, but it also drew a lukewarm reaction from Haitians in the United States. In Miami and New York, Haitians expressed skepticism about whether the agreement would actually return Aristide to Haiti. "I'll believe it when I see it. These Haitians can come up with all kinds of ways to surprise you," said Brooklyn resident Jacques Larose. Others expressed outrage at both the terms of the agreement and the nature of the negotiations themselves. The United States "is asking Aristide to negotiate with a killer," declared New York radio host Ricot Dupuy. Still, "amnesty is a sour pill we will have to swallow," Dupuy allowed.⁷⁸⁴ Others were not so accommodating. In response to Aristide's agreement to allow the United Nations Security Council to send a "peacekeeping force" to Haiti, *Haiti Progres* founder Ben Dupuy resigned from his position as Aristide's ambassador at large, declaring that the exiled president had surrendered Haiti to "international tutorship."⁷⁸⁵

Despite some of his supporters' opposition to an international military force in Haiti, Aristide affirmed his support for this provision of the agreement later that month, sending a formal request to the United Nations for a one-thousand-member multinational force to be sent to Haiti.⁷⁸⁶ Ray Joseph, co-founder of *Haiti Observateur* and fierce opponent of Aristide, took the

⁷⁸³Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 176-77; Dupuy, *Haiti in New World Order*, 145.

⁷⁸⁴V. Pascale Eeheart and Patrick May, "Dade Haitian Exiles Remain Skeptical of U.N. Peace Plan," *Miami Herald*, July 3, 1993, A24; Garry Pierre-Pierre, "In Brooklyn, Guarded Optimism," *New York Times*, July 3, 1993, 2; Reka Koerner, "Haiti: New York Haitians Harbor Doubts about Aristide's Return," *Inter Press Service*, July 12, 1993.

⁷⁸⁵Howard W. French, "The Media Business; In Haiti, a War of the Printed Word," *New York Times*, July 12, 1993, D8.

⁷⁸⁶"Aristide Calls on U.N. to Deploy 1,000 Troops in Haiti," *Agence France Presse*, July 27, 1993.

exiled president to task for advocating an armed intervention of Haiti. In an editorial entitled “Look Who is Cheering U.S. Imperialism,” Joseph observed that on the seventy-third anniversary of the United States’ occupation of Haiti, Aristide had stood before his parishioners in Saint-Jean Boscoe and had issued a withering attack on US imperialism. But “that was 1988,” Joseph wrote. Today, “his words haunt him.” Always eager to find a new angle to assert his opposition to Aristide, Joseph used the apparent inconsistency in Aristide’s new stance to argue once again for the international community to abandon its support for the democratically elected leader. “Restoring Mr. Aristide to power must not be construed as a restoration of democracy in Haiti,” claimed Joseph.⁷⁸⁷

As the October deadline for General Cedras’ resignation and the appointed date for Aristide’s return approached, those who opposed US participation in the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti became more vocal. The capture and killing of American soldiers participating in a UN action in Somalia and the images of US troops being dragged through the streets of the Somalian capital of Mogadishu convinced some members of Congress that the cost of American participation in such campaigns might outweigh the benefits. But members of the Congressional Black Caucus, which had pushed hard for the Clinton administration to take a tougher stand with the coup regime in Haiti, insisted that American support of and contribution to a UN force was necessary. Haiti and Somalia “are not parallel situations,” argued Representative Kweisi Mfume, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. “Unlike Somalia, we have the democratically elected and recognized government of President Aristide to work with.”⁷⁸⁸

Clinton administration officials too tried to corral support for the UN effort in Haiti by playing

⁷⁸⁷Raymond A. Joseph, “Look Who Is Cheering U.S. Imperialism,” *Washington (DC) Times*, Oct. 18, 1993, A19.

⁷⁸⁸“Some Lawmakers Question U.S. Peacekeeping Policy,” *CNN*, Oct. 10, 1993; Sonya Ross, “Black Leaders Reject Comparisons between Haiti and Somalia,” *Associated Press*, Oct. 14, 1993, PM cycle.

the ever reliable refugee card. If the international effort to return Aristide to Haiti failed, warned Secretary of State Warren Christopher on NBC's *Meet the Press*, "We're likely to have a flood of immigration creating a very serious problem in this country."⁷⁸⁹

In spite of their stated support for the UN peacekeeping mission, when the time came to carry out the mission, the stern resolve of the Clinton officials collapsed in the face of widespread fear that Haiti could become another Somalia. On October 12, the USS *Harlan County* attempted to deliver the first American soldiers to Haiti. The ship was met by hundreds of armed supporters of the coup regime, demonstrating on shore and menacing American diplomats and officials that had come to greet the American forces. Instead of confronting the two to three hundred demonstrators, the ship retreated, prompting cheers by the relatively small group of soldiers and attaches that had come out to protest.⁷⁹⁰ The ship's retreat shocked and angered those who had hoped an international presence would be the beginning of the end for the coup regime. In Cite Soleil, a poor neighborhood and Aristide stronghold in Port-au-Prince, Almones Louisme argued that the retreat of the USS *Harlan County* proved that "the Americans are full of just words." Father Gerard Jean-Juste, still in hiding in Haiti, expressed the feeling of many Haitians at home and abroad. The spectacle of "The United Nations, the Organization of American States, [and] the Clinton administration plunge[ing] their noses into dust in front of a few hundred thugs" was "unbelievable!" declared Jean-Juste. From his perspective inside the Clinton administration, Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck was less surprised by the retreat than he was that the mission had been attempted at all. "After eighteen U.S. Army

⁷⁸⁹Michael Norton, "U.S. Fear of Refugee Flood Pushes Involvement in Haiti," *Associated Press Worldstream*, Oct. 11, 1993.

⁷⁹⁰Ed McCullough, "Army-Backed Haitians Cheer U.S. Warship's Retreat; Aristide Plan in Trouble," *Associated Press*, Oct. 12, 1993, AM cycle; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 180-81.

Rangers had been killed in Mogadishu and the Clinton administration had been pilloried in the Congress for allowing the United States to participate in the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, it is remarkable that the *Harlan County* was sent to Haiti at all,” Shattuck argued.⁷⁹¹

The Clinton administration’s failure to follow through had consequences far beyond the deep disappointment that it engendered. When Alerte Belance, pro-Aristide activist and neighborhood leader, heard that there was an agreement that would finally bring Aristide back to Haiti, she prepared once again to confront the forces that had terrorized the people after the coup.

At the last minute when Titid and the other big chiefs signed an accord at Governors Island in New York to say that the president was to return on October 30, 1993, they began carrying out the lion’s share of the massacres. The big thugs with their gangs of bastards went out to break us all, to stop the return from happening. Still, we believed the foreigners; when they signed the Governors Island Accord and said that the president would return, we believed it. So I came out of hiding. That’s how the bastards got me, when they were attacking so many mothers and fathers of children to keep our president from coming home. That’s why they came to kill me at Titanyen. They came for me on October 15, several days after I’d returned from hiding.⁷⁹²

Belance was captured, mutilated, and left to die. Though Belance managed to survive the attack, others lost their lives in the violence following the retreat of the USS *Harlan County*. The same day that the death squads came for Belance, Haitian Justice Minister Guy Malary was gunned down in broad daylight.⁷⁹³

The campaign of violence and terror carried out by anti-Aristide forces in Haiti extended to the United States as well. The acts of retribution against Aristide supporters had been forecast by the delivery of death lists to prominent members of the popular movement in both Haiti and

⁷⁹¹Michael Norton, “Aristide Backers Question International Will to Restore Him to Power,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, Dec. 6, 1993; Ogoro Francis, “Haiti: Brooklyn’s Haitians Worry over U.N. Efforts,” *Inter Press Service*, Oct. 14, 1993; Susan Benesch, “American Pullout Riles Many Haitians,” *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Oct. 14, 1993, 3A; Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, 89.

⁷⁹²Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 104-9.

⁷⁹³“Haiti: Clinton Sends Destroyers,” *Inter Press Service*, Oct. 15, 1993.

the Haitian communities of the United States. Rolande Durancy, director of the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, received one of the death lists. Next to her name was a notation that read, “Urgent, to be killed before October 30,” the day Aristide was scheduled to return to Haiti. On October 25, Dona St. Plite, a pro-Aristide radio host, was shot to death in Miami while leaving a benefit event for the family of Fritz Dor, another pro-Aristide radio commentator that had been murdered in 1991. St. Plite was the third pro-Aristide radio host to be murdered since 1991. Gerard Jean-Juste, also prominently featured on many of the death lists, urged Miami officials from his hiding place in Haiti “to do their best in finding the assassin now. We want justice.” Three other members of the pro-Aristide organization *Veye Yo* also were targeted in what members of the Haitian community of Miami believed was a growing wave of political violence spilling over from Haiti to South Florida.⁷⁹⁴

The deadline mandating the resignation of General Cedras came and went as did the date scheduled for Aristide’s return to Haiti. On the first day of November, Cedras remained at the head of the coup regime and Aristide remained in the United States. Though Clinton pledged a renewed effort to pressure the coup regime through another arms and petroleum embargo and a new round of economic sanctions, many observers thought they saw a flagging commitment from the United States. In the wake of the collapse of the Governor’s Island Accords, the National Popular Assembly (APN) urged Aristide to withdraw completely from UN-sanctioned negotiations with Cedras and the Haitian military. The failure of the Governor’s Island agreement also prompted opponents of the coup regime to initiate new campaigns of armed

⁷⁹⁴Richard Cole, “Exiles: Slain Haitian Broadcaster Was on Hit List,” *Associated Press*, Oct. 25, 1993, AM cycle; Derek Reveron, “Haitian Community in Miami Suffer Intimidation Tactics,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, Oct. 26, 1993; Alexandra Marks, “Haiti’s Culture of Violence Extends to Miami,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Oct. 27, 1993, 3; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 182.

resistance in Haiti.⁷⁹⁵ And reminiscent of the Duvalier years, Haitians in Montreal began building support for an expedition of armed exiles that would return to Haiti so that they could topple the coup regime themselves.⁷⁹⁶

Faith in the international community's commitment to restore Aristide eroded even further at the beginning of November when reports circulated that key players in the coup regime, including General Raoul Cedras, had been on the CIA payroll for many years and had received support from the CIA right up until the coup of September 1991. As more information emerged, it also became clear that Emanuel "Toto" Constant, another recipient of CIA funding, had used agency resources and intelligence to launch FRAPH, one of the death squads responsible for some of the most horrendous acts of violence and terror against Aristide supporters in Haiti.⁷⁹⁷ It was this knowledge, no doubt, that caused a coalition of fourteen popular organizations in Haiti to issue a statement the following summer declaring that "the major author of the coup is the US Embassy, the CIA, the Pentagon and the Bush Administration. Having conceived, planned, and directed the coup, these same US institutions are today seeking to consolidate the coup d'état under the Clinton administration," continuing to "covertly support and guide the coup."⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁵Michael Norton, "Aristide Backers Question International Will to Restore Him to Power," *Associated Press Worldstream*, Dec. 6, 1993.

⁷⁹⁶"Haitian Exiles: Let Us Invade," *The Associated Press*, Nov. 6, 1993, AM cycle.

⁷⁹⁷Ian Fisher, "Haitians Living in New York Are Digesting New Letdown," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1993, B2; "Officials: Haiti Opposition Leaders Were on CIA Payroll," *Associated Press*, Nov. 1, 1993, BC cycle; "The CIA and Haiti," *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 2, 1993, 18; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 183-84; *Position of the Popular Organizations on the Country's Crisis* (Port-au-Prince: Fourteen Popular Organizations, July 1994), 236-38, extract from a press release from July 1994 in Libete, 233-36.

⁷⁹⁸Tim Weiner, "Key Haiti Leaders Said to Have Been in the C.I.A.'s Pay," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1993, A1; "Reports: CIA Tried to Fund Anti-Aristide Candidates, Paid Current Leaders," *Associated Press*, Nov. 1, 1993; "CIA Reportedly Bankrolled Opponents of Aristide," *CBS Evening News*, CBS News Transcript, Nov. 1, 1993; "Position of the Popular Organisations on the Country's Crisis," Fourteen popular organisations, Port-au-Prince, July

In response to what appeared to be the international community's diminishing commitment to the restoration of democracy in Haiti, Aristide made a new effort to pressure Clinton, playing the refugee card more aggressively than ever before. In February 1994 the Haitian president-in-exile informed the US government that he was preparing to abrogate his country's agreement with the United States that authorized American authorities to intercept and return Haitian refugees, an action that would go into effect in six months. Jocelyn McCalla, director of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, observed that Aristide's tactic was a bold and risky move. "He's playing hardball," McCalla commented. The move could "make him or break him." Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights recognized the utility of Aristide's tactic, arguing that "Aristide will never go back to Haiti as long as the United States believes it will not face a (Haitian) refugee problem."⁷⁹⁹

In the winter and spring of 1994, many other groups were also mobilizing to pressure the Clinton administration to fulfill its stated goal of returning Aristide to Haiti. From the Haitian communities of the United States as well as from Haiti came appeals for Clinton to act decisively to end the coup and return Aristide to power. The National Coalition for Haitian Refugees called for "concerned Americans to flood the White House switchboard with calls denouncing U.S. policy toward Haitian refugees."⁸⁰⁰ From Haiti, a group of people's organizations sent a letter to President Clinton in which they denounced his "silence about the horrors (being committed) in

1994, excerpted in *Libete: A Haiti Anthology*, edited by Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Weiner, 1999), 237-38.

⁷⁹⁹"Haiti: Refugee Advocates Say Aristide Has Taken Major Step," *Inter Press Service*, Feb. 9, 1994; "Refugies: Aristide pourrait denoncer l'accord avec les Etats-Unis," *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 16-22, 1994, 5, 18; George Gedda, "Aristide, Citing Violations, Scraps Refugee Agreement with U.S." *Associated Press*, Apr. 6, 1994, AM cycle.

⁸⁰⁰"Groups Join Haitian Policy Protest," *United Press International*, Apr. 12, 1994, BC cycle.

Haiti;” they reminded him “that Americans of Haitian origin voted for you because they were convinced that your presence in the White House would inaugurate a new era for Haiti.”⁸⁰¹

The Congressional Black Caucus continued its pressure on Clinton as well, announcing that it was backing a hunger strike by TransAfrica’s Randall Robinson to protest US policy toward Haiti and the Haitian refugees.⁸⁰² According to Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck, the pressure from the CBC and from Robinson’s hunger strike had a sizable influence on Clinton. He observed, “Clinton knew Robinson and admired what he had done on apartheid.” When “the press began reporting that the White House wanted to stop the erosion of black leadership support by changing its Haiti policy,” Shattuck continued, the president felt even more pressure.⁸⁰³ In addition, an increasing number of Democratic members of Congress sharpened their criticism of the Clinton administration, arguing that the president was forcing Aristide to make too many concessions and to compromise too much with the coup regime as a condition for American backing of his return. Senator Tom Harkin called the United States’ Haiti policy “embarrassing and shameful.” Referring to the failed attempt to send American soldiers to Haiti following the Governor’s Island Accord, Harkin lamented that the United States had been intimidated by “a ragtag collection of no more than 100 drug peddlers and murderers,” while “all the pressure is being put on President Aristide as if he’s the bad guy.”⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰¹“Pro-Aristide groups reproach President Clinton for ‘indifference’,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Feb. 28, 1994.

⁸⁰²George Gedda, “Leader of TransAfrica Plans Fast to Protest US Policy on Haiti,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, Apr. 11, 1994; George Gedda, “Activist Launches Hunger Strike to Protest Haiti Policy,” *Associated Press*, Apr. 12, 1994, AM cycle.

⁸⁰³Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, 97.

⁸⁰⁴Michael Norton, “Aristide Supporters: U.S. Should Pressure Coup Backers, Not Aristide,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 1, 1994, AM cycle; David Briscoe, “Democrats Assail Clinton over Haiti Policy,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, Mar. 8, 1994.

The American labor movement also joined the campaign. In February 1994 the New York-based National Labor Committee criticized the embargo on Haitian goods that was intended to squeeze the coup government until it stepped down, calling the embargo “a joke.” Low-wage assembly firms in Haiti continued to operate, sending millions of dollars of cheap goods to the United States, the organization claimed. *Haiti Progres* also noted the “booming” US trade with Haiti and reported on the National Labor Committee’s campaign to spotlight particular corporations, like Sears, that were, despite the embargo, profiting from sweatshop labor in Haiti. In April, twenty-four presidents of the largest labor unions in the United States called on Clinton to plug the leaky embargo, their goal being to end the “savage” repression in Haiti. The union presidents also urged the administration to halt its policy of “interdiction and forced repatriation of Haitians fleeing their country.”⁸⁰⁵ Opposing labor’s efforts to plug the holes in the commercial embargo, seventy American companies launched their own campaign to pressure the US government to extend the exemption that enabled them to operate in Haiti.⁸⁰⁶

The profile of the refugee campaign continued to develop as new members and new tactics drew attention to the situation in Haiti and the experience of Haitian refugees. A group calling itself Artists for Democracy in Haiti, which included entertainers and celebrities like Spike Lee, Susan Sarandon, Robin Williams, Robert Deniro, and Harry Belafonte, began sponsoring television and print media ads calling for fair treatment of Haitian refugees and a restoration of democracy in

⁸⁰⁵Linda Diebel, “Haitian Embargo Slammed as 'Joke.' U.S. Allows Firms to Import Cheap Goods, Group Says,” *Toronto Star*, Feb. 11, 1994, A2. “It’s Official: US-Haiti Trade Booming,” *Haiti Progres*, Feb. 23-Mar. 1, 1994, 9; “Groups Join Haitian Policy Protest,” *United Press International*, Apr. 12, 1994, BC cycle.

⁸⁰⁶Tim Shorrock, “Unions Call for Boycott of Haitian Products,” *Journal of Commerce*, May 4, 1994, 3A.

Haiti. When Sarandon and Belafonte appeared on a “Celebs for Haiti” episode of the television show *Donahue*, Sarandon brandished a sweatshop-produced baseball that had made its way to the United States through the porous embargo.⁸⁰⁷ In mid-April six members of Congress were arrested in an act of civil disobedience outside the White House. Later in the month another protest against the administration’s Haiti policy drew thousands and, according to one source, “boiled to the brink of violence outside the White House” before it subsided.⁸⁰⁸ “Things are heating up all over the place,” exclaimed the Academy Award winning director, Jonathan Demme, another active member of the movement. The *Washington Post* observed “a rising tide of activism on Haiti” in which “a growing chorus of ordinary people, celebrities, and lawmakers [were] protesting the US policy of forced repatriation of immigrants from Haiti.”⁸⁰⁹ US policy toward Haiti and Haitian refugees was “becoming more and more a civil rights issue, and as it does, the traditional civil rights coalition is again falling into place,” observed Henry Berger, chairman of Americans for Democratic Action.⁸¹⁰

Lest they be drowned out by the growing chorus of the pro-Aristide movement, anti-Aristide forces in the United States also became more vocal in April and May of 1994. In his *Wall Street Journal* column, Raymond Joseph reasserted his belief that Aristide’s return would not bring democracy to Haiti; he lambasted the embargo on Haiti, which he claimed was taking a terrible toll on the country. “Barring an all-out military invasion, does the ‘international

⁸⁰⁷Groups Join Haitian Policy Protest,” *United Press International*, Apr. 12, 1994, BC cycle; “Celebs Make Pitch on TV for Haitians,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, Apr. 15, 1994, 13.

⁸⁰⁸Kenneth R. Bazinet, “Congressmen Arrested outside White House,” *United Press International*, Apr. 21, 1994, BC cycle; Chase Squires, “Demonstration Teeters on the Brink, Then Subsides,” *States News Service*, Apr. 30, 1994.

⁸⁰⁹“Celebs Make Pitch on TV for Haitians;” DeNeen L. Brown, “A Rising Tide of Activism on Haiti; Hunger Strike Helps Bring Issue into Focus for Some Who Might Not Have Protested,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 30, 1994, B1.

⁸¹⁰Paul West, “Haiti Replaces S. Africa as Liberal Cause,” *Baltimore (MD) Sun*, June 13, 1994.

community' intend to continue the senseless destruction of Haiti in order to see Mr. Aristide reinstated as President and his vision of a new Haiti put in place?" Joseph asked. And while Aristide and his supporters were claiming that the only way to stem the flood of Haitian refugees to the United States was to restore democracy to Haiti, Joseph made the opposite argument. If Clinton insisted on returning Aristide to Haiti, the situation in the country would grow so bleak that "the United States might as well prepare for the thousands, even millions, of refugees who could undoubtedly be considered both 'political' and 'economic' refugees as the widespread repression we see today in Haiti multiplies and requires a new round of international sanctions,"⁸¹¹ Joseph argued. Adding his voice to those attempting to counter the expanding pro-Aristide movement, Clinton's predecessor, President George H.W. Bush called on the Clinton administration to abandon its support for Aristide. Aristide had been "unwilling to compromise," Bush argued, "and in attacking President Clinton's policies he is attacking those who have been trying hard to help him." The United States must separate "backing democracy" from "backing Aristide," Bush declared.⁸¹²

The intensifying pressure on the Clinton administration to resolve the crisis in Haiti in the spring of 1994 came not only from an ever growing campaign in the United States, but also from a rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti. In February the United Nations Human Rights Commission published a report that documented a massive surge in violence since the collapse of the Governor's Island Accord the previous October. Paramilitaries and soldiers were operating with total impunity, targeting "members and leaders of popular and human rights

⁸¹¹Raymond A. Joseph, "Haitian Death Chamber Could Only Worsen with Aristide," *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 1, 1994, A9; Raymond A. Joseph, "Troubled Island/Would the Return of Its Exiled President Restore Democracy to Haiti or Plunge It Even Deeper into Repression? What's the Best Course for Haiti? Aristide Would Bring Chaos," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), Apr. 8, 1994.

⁸¹²"Bush Calls for New Haiti Policy, Dropping Aristide," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 4, 1994, 9.

organizations, peasants, trade unionists, students, journalists, clergy, and anyone suspected of supporting the return of President Aristide,” even children, the report stated. The commission’s report also presented evidence that refugees returned to Haiti by the United States had been arrested and imprisoned. At least three thousand people had been killed since the coup, many after having been abducted in nighttime raids on pro-Aristide neighborhoods.⁸¹³ Other sources, too, demonstrated a spike in terror tactics in the spring of 1994, particularly by the FRAPH death squad, founded by Emmanuel “Toto” Constant. One FRAPH incursion into the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Cite Soleil killed at least seventy people. In April FRAPH was responsible for a massacre of Lavalas supporters in the Raboteau area of Gonaives on the northwestern coast of Haiti.⁸¹⁴ Another report of human rights violations in March and April of 1994 stated that in one neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, “corpses lay in the streets for many days and sometimes were eaten by pigs . . . many bodies have not been identified.”⁸¹⁵

In the spring of 1994 the violence in Haiti continued to spill over into the Haitian communities in the United States. There was disturbing new evidence that the very same organizations terrorizing people in Haiti were orchestrating violence in the United States. On March 9 three board members of *Veye Yo* were attacked, and thirty-one-year-old Daniel Buron was shot and killed in Miami, making Buron the fourth Aristide backer since 1991 to be killed on the streets of that Florida city. Local authorities, the *Miami Herald* insisted, needed to “call in

⁸¹³“Report: 3,000 Killed since 1991 Coup,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, Feb. 22, 1994.

⁸¹⁴Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 42-43.

⁸¹⁵Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organisations, *Resistance and Democracy* (Port-au-Prince: Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organisations, 1994) 76-78, extracts from a partial list of human rights violations in March and early April 1994, in *Libete*, 76.

the FBI.”⁸¹⁶ The Haitian death squad FRAPH opened branches in Miami, New York, and Boston and, according to one source, began “using conference calls to keep in constant contact with Haiti.” Beverly Bell, an American backer of Aristide, called FRAPH “transnational terrorists.” The *New York Times* observed, “To supporters of Haiti's ousted President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the shooting of Mr. Buron, and the official reaction to it here, are frightening proof that the Haitian military's enforcers can act with impunity anywhere, even in a major American city.”⁸¹⁷ The following July, Lionel Louis, a community activist and Aristide supporter, was shot dead in New York. After the newspaper *Haiti Progres* published a list of alleged FRAPH agents working as interpreters at the refugee camp in Guantanamo Bay, it also began receiving threats. One telephone call warned, “The fire of the gun will get you in Haiti or here. You cannot escape.”⁸¹⁸ “I know my life is still in danger,” acknowledged Alerte Balance, the grassroots organizer who had been nearly killed by anti-Aristide death squads the previous October and who was now filing a \$30 million lawsuit against FRAPH in a US court. “But surely God will not let FRAPH do any more damage to me.”⁸¹⁹

The renewed violence in the spring of 1994 produced yet another major surge in refugees attempting to reach American shores. In response, the Clinton administration announced at the beginning of May that it was modifying its policy toward Haitian refugees. The United States

⁸¹⁶“Gunmen Fire on Haitian Activists; One Killed,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 10, 1994, AM cycle; Andres Viglucci and Gail Epstein, “Fear Stalks Little Haiti after Latest Murder,” *Miami Herald*, Mar. 11, 1994; “Call in the FBI,” *Miami Herald*, Mar. 12, 1994, A30.

⁸¹⁷“Haitian Extremists Moving to Boston,” *United Press International*, June 10, 1994, BC cycle; Larry Rohter, “In Miami's Little Haiti, Fears of Assassination,” *New York Times*, Mar. 20, 1994, 22.

⁸¹⁸Farhan Haq, “U.S./Social Issues: FRAPH Lashes out at Aristide’s U.S. Supporters,” *Inter Press Service*, May 6, 1994; Peter Arnett, “Tonton Macoutes Terrorizes Haitians in the U.S.” *CNN*, Sept. 20, 1994.

⁸¹⁹Arnett, “Tonton Macoutes Terrorizes Haitians in the U.S;” “Haitian Paramilitaries Sued in NYC,” *United Press International*, June 2, 1994, BC cycle.

would again allow asylum screening to take place aboard American ships for some of those intercepted en route to the United States. Others would be transported to “third countries” that it called “safe havens” where they would be housed until their asylum eligibility was determined. At the same time, the Clinton administration made plans to reopen Guantanamo Bay as a major destination for the refugees.⁸²⁰

The response to the Clinton administration’s planned change in its refugee policy was largely negative, although some of those active in the Haitian campaign celebrated the policy shift. For example, following the administration’s announcement, Randall Robinson called off his twenty-seven-day hunger strike.⁸²¹ Others, however, were skeptical. “Most of us are going to take a wait-and-see attitude” after the “emotional roller coaster” and “various flip-flops” of the last couple of years, one commentator said. Ricot Dupuy, manager of the New York City radio station *Radio Soleil*, said Haitians were “sad, mad, bitter about Clinton sending refugees all over.”⁸²² The *Christian Science Monitor* pointed out that “simply processing refugees at sea will by itself make no difference in the numbers of Haitians eligible for admittance to the U.S.” Many continued to worry “that shipboard screening will be a hasty process with little regard for nuance and not right of appeal.”⁸²³ *Haiti Progres* observed that despite the Clinton administration’s supposedly softer stance toward Haitian refugees, 768 people had been returned to Haiti between May 13 and 17, which gave May the “highest monthly total in eighteen

⁸²⁰Michael Norton, “U.S. Returns Haitian Refugees as Number of Boat People Surges,” *Associated Press*, Mar. 2, 1994, AM cycle; Jim Abrams, “Clinton Announces New Policy toward Haitian Refugees,” *Associated Press*, May 8, 1994, AM cycle; “U.S. Considers Reopening Center at Guantanamo,” *Miami Herald*, June 29, 1994, A12.

⁸²¹Brent Sadler, “Haitians Encouraged by New Refugee Return Policy,” CNN, May 8, 1994; Randall Pinkston, “Activist Randall Robinson Announces End of His Hunger Strike,” CBS News Transcripts, May 8, 1994.

⁸²²Sadler, “Haitians Encouraged by New Refugee Return Policy;” Francis X. Clines, “On Sunday; On the Radio, A Lifeline for Haitians,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1994, 21.

⁸²³Peter Grier, “New Haiti Refugee Policy Draws Fire from Activists,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 16, 1994, 6.

months.” In addition, the administration’s policy was another obstacle for refugees; sending refugees to “third countries” gave advocates and lawyers less access to the refugees and placed them outside the jurisdiction of US law.⁸²⁴

The differing responses to Clinton’s policy opened a rift among advocates in the Haitian refugee campaign. While the National Coalition of Haitian Refugees was somewhat approving of the US government’s proposal to send refugees to “safe havens,” the Brooklyn-based Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees condemned the policy, demanding “an end to the Guantanamo detention camp and the blatantly racist policy forbidding Haitians to be treated equally as other refugees who are permitted to enter the U.S.”⁸²⁵

A Looming Invasion

In May of 1994, as the crisis in Haiti and the corresponding refugee exodus continued, talk of a US-led invasion of the island nation as the only solution to the stalemate became more widespread. The possibility of an invasion drew mixed reactions from Haitians, though the majority, it seems, was opposed to military intervention in Haiti. A *National Public Radio* report stated that while most Haitians were skeptical that tightened sanctions would be effective in displacing the coup regime, “Haitians all across the political spectrum . . . also oppose the idea of U.S. troops descending on Haiti.”⁸²⁶ The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* concurred, observing that

⁸²⁴“Refugee Exodus Hits Peak,” *Haiti Progres*, May 18-24, 1994, 9; Refugees: Clinton Continue a Bluffer,” *Haiti Progres*, May 18-24, 1994, 9; “New Refugee Policy, Safe Havens Blasted,” *Haiti Progres*, May 25-31, 1994, 9.

⁸²⁵“US Locks up Refugee Leaders,” *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 3-9, 1994, 9.

⁸²⁶David Welna, “Few Haitians Support U.S. Military Intervention,” National Public Radio, May 7, 1994.

“while most Americans favor a multinational invasion of Haiti (54 percent according to the latest *USA Today*-CNN-Gallup Poll) Haitian Americans generally do not.”⁸²⁷

In Haiti, while some supported the deployment of the American military, there was also substantial opposition to a military invasion, and not just among supporters of the coup regime. At the end of July, *Haiti Progres* published a statement from a coalition of popular organizations, including Ben Dupuy’s National Popular Assembly (APN), *Tet Kole*, *Solidarity Ant Jen* (SAJ), *Veye Yo*, and nine other organizations, that opposed an invasion. Antoine Adrien, one of the Haitian Fathers who had been a leader of the Haitian community in Brooklyn and who was now “the man considered closest to [Aristide] Haiti,” stated, “I do not think [an invasion] is necessary, and I do not think it’s a good thing.” Many Haitians like Gilbert LaGuerre worried that a US-led invasion to restore Aristide would usher in a “second 1915,” the year US Marines landed in Haiti to begin a nineteen-year military occupation of the country. But others like Rodrigue Fequiere, who believed that nothing short of military action would oust the coup leaders, insisted, “We need an invasion.”⁸²⁸

Among pro-Aristide, non-Haitian Americans, there was a similar division, though unlike the majority of Haitians in the United States, they tended to support the idea of an invasion. Randall Robinson, one of the most prominent American members of the movement to defend the refugees and to restore democracy in Haiti, supported a US-led invasion of Haiti.⁸²⁹ In mid-July the *Philadelphia Enquirer* found the forty members of the Congressional Black Caucus “sharply

⁸²⁷Steve Berg, “Life on Hold in Little Haiti; Emigres in Miami Wait and Worry,” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), July 24, 1994, 1A.

⁸²⁸ Le Camp populaire dit: Non a l’intervention etrangere!” *Haiti Progres*, July 20-26, 1994, 1, 17; “Popular Groups Unite Against Invasion,” *Haiti Progres*, July 20-26, 1994, 9; Welna, “Few Haitians Support U.S. Military Intervention;” “Haitians Express Mixed Feelings Over Prospect of U.S. Intervention,” *Associated Press*, May 11, 1994, AM cycle.

⁸²⁹George Gedda, “Robinson Blasts Haiti Policy, Urges Invasion,” *Associated Press*, May 24, 1994, PM cycle.

divided on the wisdom of using armed force” in Haiti. While Senator Carol Moseley-Braun argued that “the time for intervention has not arrived and I hope it never will,” Representative Carrie Meek claimed, “We don’t have any other options,” and asserted, “Haitians want an invasion but they don’t want an occupation.” *Haiti Progres*, itself fiercely opposed to the invasion, heard among statements by members of the Congressional Black Caucus and some liberal Democrats, “strident demands for a military invasion.” The newspaper interpreted the motives of those backing an invasion, not as a desire to help Haitians and Haiti, but as a desire to stem the flow of refugees; it argued that “Democrat Bob Graham and Republican Connie Mack, the two Senators from Florida” supported an invasion of Haiti because their “racist hatred of Haitian refugees is greater than their hatred for President Aristide.”⁸³⁰

In mid-July, as 2,860 Marines waited in warships off the coast of Haiti, Haitians heard a radio broadcast by Jean-Bertrand Aristide that further stimulated anxious discussion of a potential US invasion. “I am returning to reinstate security for all Haitians to live in peace . . . The day of my return is not far off,” Aristide said.⁸³¹ Then, on July 29 Aristide sent a letter to the United Nations Security Council requesting a US-led multinational force to take “swift and determined action” to enforce the Governor’s Island Accord. “Aristide Takes the Plunge, Backs U.S. Invasion,” lamented a *Haiti Progres* headline. The newspaper also took the occasion to renew its criticism of Aristide’s strategy, arguing that “since he headed to Washington shortly after the Sept. 1991 coup d’etat his exiled government has sought to exorcise the demon with the devil. Instead of mobilizing popular resistance – armed or unarmed – to the Haitian military, the

⁸³⁰Vanessa Gallman, “Black Caucus in Tough Spot over Haiti / It’s Been a Major Influence on U.S. Policy. But Talk of Invasion Leaves Members Divided,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 17, 1994, C01; “US Invasion Rattle Begins Again,” *Haiti Progres*, May 4-10, 1994, 9.

⁸³¹ Andrew Selsky, “Aristide Speech Broadcast to Haiti as Psychological War Intensifies,” Associated Press, July 15, 1994, AM cycle.

exiled government has favored using the countervailing power of the U.S. state to remove the coup leaders.” Days later the UN Security Council voted to authorize a US-led invasion of Haiti.⁸³²

Following Aristide’s endorsement of a military invasion of the country and the UN’s vote to authorize such a force, it seems more Haitians shifted their position toward supporting the action, though with serious reservations. “I support a military intervention if it uproots the military system we’ve got now. Haiti doesn’t need a military occupation, but ever since we won our independence we’ve never been free,” stated Jean-Claude, a bus driver in Port-au-Prince.⁸³³ In the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, Jean Wesnel expressed a similar sentiment. “No one hopes that there would be an intervention in Haiti but we have reached a crossroads. The military has caused too much suffering” argued Wesnel. Mary Jacque, a refugee who had fled Haiti one year earlier, expressed a similar sentiment. “So many of my friends have disappeared, many people appear dead on the streets everyday. They have to get those criminals out,” she insisted.⁸³⁴

For some opponents of military intervention, Aristide’s consent and the United Nation’s approval of a US-led invasion led them to resist the prospect even more vehemently. On the anniversary of the 1915 US invasion of Haiti, the Haitian communities of New York and Miami hosted lively events featuring popular performers like Manno Charlemagne and Myriam Dorisme. Their purpose was to link the history of American imperialism and the looming US

⁸³²“Aristide Takes the Plunge, Backs US Invasion,” *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 3-9, 1994, 9; Ana Acle Chasko, “U.N. Move Catches Little Haiti off Guard,” *Miami Herald*, Aug. 1, 1994, 6.

⁸³³Jeffrey Ulbrich, “Haitians Welcome, Fear Prospect of Invasion,” *Associated Press*, July 31, 1994, AM cycle.

⁸³⁴Garry Pierre-Pierre, “New York Haitians Split Over Use of Force,” *New York Times*, Aug. 2, 1994, A3; Lisa Sandberg, “Haiti/United States: Haitians in New York Disagree on Invasion,” *Inter Press Service*, Aug. 3, 1994.

intervention.⁸³⁵ *Haiti Progres* reported that “a growing number of grassroots organizations both in Haiti and in the United States are coming out in opposition to military intervention, arguing that it will strengthen the Haitian military and be aimed at crippling the popular movement.” The Haitian Conference of Religious People, a group of 1,400 Catholic Priests and Nuns in Haiti, issued a statement that argued that “this intervention will be against the people of Haiti, since it arises from the same logic as the coup d’etat which simply means to ‘legitimize’ under international cover, its principal achievement: the total erasure of the Haitian people from the political scene of its own country.” In Boston a coalition of thirty-six organizations formed the Haitian Anti-Intervention Network.⁸³⁶ Asked whether he supported the invasion, one Brooklyn resident declared, “Never! The United States kills my people here. They kill my people there. They jailed me here. We never trust the United States.”⁸³⁷ Guy Etienne, another opponent of the invasion, agreed. “No one who controls you has your best interest in mind,” he stated.⁸³⁸ For those opposed to an American invasion of Haiti, the specter of renewed American imperialism was as great a threat to the people as the military regime currently in power in Haiti. “Latin America is very concerned about being invaded by the U.S.,” explained Nydia Velasquez, a Puerto Rican native and a US representative to Congress from New York City. Despite the substantial opposition to a US invasion, however, there were people like Una Clarke, a Jamaican-American city councilperson with a large Haitian constituency, who counted themselves as allies of the Haitian community but who insisted that military intervention was

⁸³⁵“1915 Invasion, Jean-Rabel Massacre Remembered,” *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 3-9, 1994, 9; “29 Juillet: Non a une nouvelle occupation d’Haiti,” *Haiti Progres*, Aug. 3-9, 1994, 10-11.

⁸³⁶“Movement to Block Intervention Growing,” *Haiti Progres*, July 27-Aug. 2, 1994, 9.

⁸³⁷Sandberg, “Haiti/United States: Haitians in New York Disagree on Invasion.”

⁸³⁸Pierre-Pierre, “New York Haitians Split Over Use of Force.”

necessary. Clarke argued that “an invasion is the only way to restore democracy and end the suffering of the people.”⁸³⁹

On September 15, 1994, President Bill Clinton delivered a televised address in which he issued an ultimatum to the regime in Haiti that it must release its hold on the country or be removed by force. To Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck, who had been arguing in favor of a tougher stance toward the coup regime, this was a proud moment in which the president finally took the steps necessary to restore democracy and to end the bloodshed in Haiti.⁸⁴⁰ In the wake of the president’s speech, *CBS News* reported that a poll by a Miami radio station revealed that Haitians overwhelmingly supported an American invasion. But according to a National Public Radio report, although in general American support for an invasion of Haiti “rose after the President’s speech,” it evoked only “mixed reaction” in “Miami’s large Haitian community.” Some who supported the invasion continued to do so only grudgingly. “Sometimes you have to take the very bitter medicine . . . you have to go through painful surgery in order to remove the cancer and then hope for life to continue,” observed Claude Deux, a chiropractor and Aristide supporter in South Florida.⁸⁴¹

Days later, when news reached Haitians in the United States that a special delegation consisting of President Jimmy Carter, General Colin Powell, and Senator Sam Nunn had reached an eleventh-hour deal with the coup government that would prevent a violent confrontation and potentially even avert a US invasion, there was much relief and spontaneous celebration. But Haitians were also cautious over the unfulfilled promises of the previous years and angry that

⁸³⁹Ron Scherer, “Haitian Americans Divided Over a US Invasion,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 6, 1994, 3.

⁸⁴⁰Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, 101-7.

⁸⁴¹Derek Reveron, “Many Miami Haitians Do Not Support the Idea of Invasion,” *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, Sept. 16, 1994.

Cedras was to be granted amnesty and be allowed to stay in the country.⁸⁴² After the announcement of the deal, furious protesters took to the streets of Little Haiti, chanting, “Carter hypocrite! Cedras must go!” In New York at a demonstration outside the United Nations building, anti-invasion protesters also expressed their anger over the amnesty granted Cedras.⁸⁴³ However, it soon became clear that the deal between the Cedras regime and the United States would not in fact avert a US military invasion. By September 19, 1994, more than three thousand American troops were on the ground in Haiti, preparing the way for Aristide’s return.⁸⁴⁴

Scholars have offered conflicting interpretations of Haitians’ perspective on the military invasion of 1994. Peter Hallward suggests that ordinary Haitians were virtually unanimous in their support of the invasion, dismissing opponents as out-of-touch elites; he even characterizes grassroots opposition to a US invasion as a figment of journalistic imagination. “Though some leftwing intellectuals who had supported Lavalas in 1991 were dismayed to see Aristide return in the company of US troops, journalists who bothered to consult his supporters in the slums

⁸⁴²Nicole Winfield, “Haitians In U.S. Skeptical of Agreement,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 19, 1994, AM cycle; Anthony Mason, “Haitians Living in New York, Miami and Other US Areas Greet News of Accord with Mixed Reviews,” *CBS Evening News*, CBS News Transcript, Sept. 19, 1994; Derek Reveron, “Haitians in U.S. Say Deal for Cedras Was Too Soft,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, Sept. 19, 1994; Jay Croft and John Fernandez, “Florida Haitians Split on Pact but Insist ‘Cedras Must Go,’” *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, Sept. 19, 1994, 5A; Jose Antonio Puertas, “Exiled Haitian Community Rejects Haiti Agreement,” *Agence France Presse*, Sept. 20, 1994; Nicole Winfield, “Miami’s Haitians Disappointed with Concessions to Cedras,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 20, 1994, PM cycle; Ron Scherer, “Haitian Americans in New York Divided Over Pact,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 20, 1994, 3.

⁸⁴³Pamela Constable, “Hundreds In Miami Protest Deal,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 19, 1994, A20; Ron Scherer, “Long Isolated, Haitians in the US May Enter Local, National Politics,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 22, 1994, 2.

⁸⁴⁴“Emotions Run High in Miami’s Burgeoning Haitian Community,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 15, 1994, AM cycle; Terence Samuel, “Haitians in Brooklyn React with Happiness, Anger, Hope / Immigrants’ Ideas Varied Wildly. Debate Was Intense,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 20, 1994, A12.

received a different reaction,” Hallward writes.⁸⁴⁵ In fact, there is abundant evidence that people in Haiti, like Haitians in the United States, were more divided over the prospect of an American invasion than Hallward claims. Even those who supported Aristide’s return under a US military escort did so with more than a little ambivalence. As Beverly Bell points out,

Among the population, opposition to the intervention and the subsequent occupation ran high. Still the circumstances surrounding the president’s return were viewed with a mixture of pragmatism and shrewd exploitation of opportunity. Repeatedly citizens expressed deep awareness of the high price for Aristide’s plane ride home. Then they shrugged and expressed a variant of the following: “If the foreign presence can help provide security so we can start organizing and mobilizing, we’ll use that.”⁸⁴⁶

Aristide’s Return and the Coup’s Aftermath

As American troops continued to arrive in Haiti, the debate over the invasion and the appropriate treatment of those responsible for the coup raged on in the Haitian communities of the United States. On October 10, five days before Aristide’s scheduled return to Haiti, a ceremony in Port-au-Prince marked the resignation of Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras, a development that brought jubilation to many in Haiti. However, some Haitian activists in the United States were less sanguine about Cedras’ resignation and the news that he would be leaving the country. “Cedras’ leaving does nothing. Now Cedras is gone but the U.S. remains. It is a changing of the guard, but the U.S. is still in charge,” argued Ernest Banatt, a New York activist and member of SELA.⁸⁴⁷ Michel Vilsaint, former president of the Haitian refugees of Guantanamo Bay, agreed. “I don’t think this is true justice,” declared Vilsaint. The editors of *Haiti Progres* were equally

⁸⁴⁵Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 53.

⁸⁴⁶Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 15.

⁸⁴⁷Lawrence Van Gelder, “Mission to Haiti: Expatriates; Among Haitians in Exile, A Mood of Unbridled Joy,” *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1994, A14.

unimpressed by the event, particularly because it occurred in the presence of thousands of American troops. “In fact it is precisely to avoid true justice – and all the pursuant revelations and anger -- that the US is spiriting the coup leaders out of Haiti to an exile which will likely be golden, like those of previous Haitian dictators who have serviced US interests,” *Haiti Progres* observed. The amnesty law that accompanied the departure of Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras and Brig. Gen. Philippe Biamby was, according to *Haiti Progres*, also about maintaining American interests and power in Haiti. Although Aristide would finally return, “the US government wants to leave most of the Haitian army intact and for this it needs an ‘amnesty’.”⁸⁴⁸ Just days before Aristide’s return to Haiti, Cedras and Biamby were escorted to Panama while twenty-three “relatives and associates” of the exiled military leaders were allowed to take refuge in Miami.⁸⁴⁹

For many Haitian refugees, Aristide’s anticipated return brought anxiety as well as excitement. Soon after the American troops had landed in Haiti, international news reports showed scenes of violence in which Haitian soldiers and police attacked civilians while US soldiers stood idly by. Images like these deepened fears of those tentatively considering returning to Haiti. Many others seeking asylum in the United States worried that Aristide’s return would undercut their case and would mean quick deportation. Those facing a return to Haiti grappled with the question of whether the American presence in the country was really

⁸⁴⁸“US Pushes Amnesty in, Cedras out, and Aristide Around,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 12-18, 1994, 9.

⁸⁴⁹Eddie Dominguez, “Family and Friends of Exiled Haitian Generals Arrive in Miami,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, Oct. 13, 1994.

designed to protect the Haitian population from those who had been attacking it during the entire coup period. Would it be safe to return Haiti, even with Aristide restored, they wondered.⁸⁵⁰

Despite the fears of the refugees and the skepticism of certain activists, many other Haitians looked toward Aristide's return with a sense of eager anticipation. Just as they had done after the collapse of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 and after Aristide's election in 1991, scores of Haitians took to the streets, sweeping, cleaning, and painting. A team of workers set off to rebuild the president's house, which had been destroyed during the coup. New colors burst forth on the streets of Port-au-Prince. Walls that had once featured murals celebrating Aristide's election and that had been destroyed during the coup were reclaimed and once again became space for artists celebrating the democracy in Haiti.⁸⁵¹ Francois Menot, a forty-year-old resident of the Carrefour-Feuille neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, flaunted a small picture of Aristide. "I've been hiding this in my mattress for three years now. They searched my house many times and never found it. Now I'm at ease carrying it around again. In my area, we haven't slept for three days. We've been cleaning up for his arrival. For the first time, we sit and joke around, talk, late at night." The buoyant attitude of thirty-four-year-old Extra Hubert Auguste also exemplifies how very high were the hopes for Aristide's return. "When Aristide comes back, he will make them sell food at a decent price. Now so many people won't die from hunger. Everything will be good now. My children will not be so hungry," Auguste declared.⁸⁵²

⁸⁵⁰Ed Timms, "Developments Put Haitian Refugees in Quandary: Scenes of Violence Make Scores Question Whether They Want to Go Home," *Dallas (TX) Morning News*, Sept. 22, 1994, 20A; Leslie Casimir, "In Little Haiti, Joy, Uneasiness," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 11, 1994, A10.

⁸⁵¹David Adams, "Residents Sweep, Scrub, Paint in Anticipation of Aristide," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Oct. 14, 1994, 8A.

⁸⁵²"Haitian Voices on Eve of Aristide's Return," *Associated Press*, Oct. 15, 1994, PM cycle.

Aristide's ultimate return to Haiti was a triumphant moment for Haitians at home and abroad. On the eve of Aristide's return, people from across Haiti as well as the United States traveled to Port-au-Prince to be in the capital city for the historic homecoming. On October 15, Aristide arrived. Tens of thousands of people crowded into the area around the National Palace to see the event while many more were fixed to their radios and televisions. As the president walked from the US military helicopter to the speaker's podium, many finally witnessed what they had waited more than three years to see. To a jubilant crowd, Aristide released a white dove and declared, "Today is the day that the sun of democracy rises, never to set. Today is the day that the eyes of justice open, never to close again. Today is the day that security takes over morning, noon and night."⁸⁵³ In the northern city of Cap Haitien, Ilmeus Petit patted his heart, saying, "It's ready to explode. I love my country so much. It's like having a first child." In Little Haiti and Brooklyn, too, thousands crowded the streets to celebrate Aristide's return. Haitians both in Haiti and in the United States considered the restoration of Aristide's presidency and the defeat of the coup forces their signal achievement. "Since the beginning we fought, and with the international community we are happy it has ended well," said Wilson Desir in Brooklyn. "After Mandela, this is the greatest day for people of African descent," declared Una Clarke, New York City councilperson. The hopes of many Haitians at home and abroad could hardly have been higher. "Today is another independence [day] in Haitian history," declared Lavarice Gaudin, a leading activist with the group *Veye Yo* in Miami. "A new life can begin!" echoed Marie-Helene Sterilus amid the celebration in Port-au-Prince.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵³David Beard, "On American Wings, Aristide Triumphant Returns Home," *Associated Press*, Oct. 15, 1994, AM cycle; Patrick McDowell, "Not Only Aristide Returning from America," *Associated Press*, Oct. 15, 1994, AM cycle.

⁸⁵⁴Eddie Dominguez, "Exiled Haitians Jubilant Over Aristide's Return," *Associated Press*, Oct. 15, 1994, AM cycle; Patrick McDowell, "Haitians Glued to Radio, Television, for Aristide Arrival; Then Party Begins," *Associated*

As much joy as there was to see Aristide returned and democracy restored to Haiti, there was also persistent skepticism and concern about the circumstances of his return. As part of the Paris Plan that was negotiated in August 1994 and that laid out the terms for his return, Aristide was to promote “reconciliation” between his base of supporters and those who had orchestrated and supported the coup. To reestablish the flow of foreign aid to Haiti, the Paris Plan also required “market friendly reforms,” such as the privatization of state-owned enterprises and the placement of Haiti under what Alex Dupuy calls “the trusteeship of the international regulatory and aid organizations.” While many might have considered these conditions acceptable compromises in exchange for international backing of the restoration of democracy and the reestablishment of international aid to Haiti, others argued that the plan forced Haiti to surrender its economic autonomy. Some critics of the conditions of Aristide’s return also saw his acceptance of the neoliberal model for Haiti prescribed by the Paris Plan as part of the larger transformation of Aristide from radical champion of the poor to establishment figure. “Henceforth, Aristide would no longer speak of the Lavalas Revolution to which the bourgeoisie had to accommodate itself,” Alex Dupuy argues. “Rather, one would hear Aristide and members of his government in exile talk about the need to return to a government of laws and the necessity for ‘reconciliation,’ ‘stability,’ ‘sound macroeconomic policies,’ and ‘a vibrant private sector with an open foreign investment policy’.”⁸⁵⁵

Like the divergent views on the US military mission to Haiti, Aristide’s acceptance of the Paris Plan as the condition for his return widened the rift between activists and community

Press, Oct. 15, 1994, AM cycle; “Miami’s Little Haiti Jubilant about Aristide’s Return,” *CNN*, Oct. 15, 1994; “Haitians in Florida flood the streets celebrating Aristide return,” *Agence France Presse*, Oct. 16, 1994.

⁸⁵⁵Dupuy, *Haiti in New World Order*, 150-51; Noam Chomsky, “The ‘Noble Phase’ and ‘Saintly Glow of US Foreign Policy” in *Getting Haiti Right This Time: The U.S. and the Coup* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004), 6; Flore Zephir, *The Haitian Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 55.

members who considered such conditions acceptable and those who did not. Although *Haiti Progres* continued to support Aristide, the newspaper also became an outlet for criticism of the president and the terms under which he returned to Haiti. In a piece entitled “Aristide Back in Haiti, But Still in US Hands” *Haiti Progres* editors pointed out that the United States had promised hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Haitian government but in return demanded a program of “privatization and austerity.” These conditions placed upon the delivery of much needed assistance and the continued presence of American troops in Haiti ensured that “Aristide can at best be . . . a dissenting prisoner, in which role he would not survive for long. At the very worst he will become a willing collaborator in US strategies to ‘restructure’ the Haitian economy with neo-liberal reforms and to indenture Haiti’s political future to elections which are bought, rigged, and rubber-stamped by the United States in concert with the United Nations and ‘international community,’”⁸⁵⁶ concluded the editors of *Haiti Progres*. Some of those who considered Aristide partly responsible for the neoliberal economic model introduced in Haiti after his return began to view the president somewhat differently, recalls community activist and labor organizer Ray Laforest. Aristide’s acceptance of the neoliberal program “kind of discredited what he stood for,” observes LaForest. “And when his government was saying that ‘privatization is modernization,’ that also disconnected [Aristide from those] who were saying the opposite . . . So that kind of division got reflected here [in New York]. Attacks against Aristide were also expressed here, so the movement started being divided.”⁸⁵⁷

The challenge of economic restructuring and the division that it sowed among activists was not Haiti’s only challenge after Aristide’s return. The country confronted a host of serious

⁸⁵⁶“Aristide Back in Haiti but Still in US Hands,” *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 19-25, 1994, 9.

⁸⁵⁷LaForest, interview.

challenges, not least the complex task of administering justice for crimes committed during the dark years of the coup. When Pascal Hilaire, an alleged member of a death squad that had terrorized the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Delmas, was arrested and arraigned in court, those thirsting for justice hoped his would be just the first of many such arrests and prosecutions.⁸⁵⁸ The creation of a Commission for Truth and Justice seemed another hopeful sign that the country was, however slowly, moving down the path toward justice and reconciliation. To the editors of *Haiti Progres*, however, who observed Aristide's calling on his supporters to respect the law "while U.S. troops guard law-breaking putchists," the American occupation and the conditions placed on Aristide's restoration made the achievement of real justice an unlikely prospect.⁸⁵⁹

In Miami, too, there was an effort to bring the perpetrators of violence during the coup years to justice. In November 1994 Billy Alexander, the son of Haitian immigrants, was arrested for being the trigger man in the contract killings of Jean-Claude Olivier and Fritz Dor, two of the pro-Aristide radio hosts murdered in Miami after Aristide's election. Alexander's arrest brought relief to many in the South Florida community, but, as in Haiti, many insisted that the arrest be just the first step in punishing those who ordered the violent act. "Now we are waiting to see the police arrest the master with the money," declared Lavarice Gaudin of *Veye Yo*, calling for the investigation to continue until the parties responsible for hiring Alexander were also brought to justice.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁸David Adams, "Making Examples of Haitian Attaches," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, Oct. 21, 1994, 1A.

⁸⁵⁹Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 34; "Aristide Calls for Respect of the Law . . . While U.S. Troops Guard Law-Breaking Putchists," *Haiti Progres*, Oct. 26 – Nov. 1, 1994, 9; "Grand Goave Demands Justice for Coup Criminals," *Haiti Progres*, Nov. 2-8, 1994, 9.

⁸⁶⁰Karen Testa, "Man Charged with Murder in Slaying of Pro-Democracy Broadcasters," *Associated Press*, Nov. 18, 1994, AM cycle.

For Haitians that expected Aristide's return to usher in a bright new day marking a rapid improvement of conditions in Haiti, the last months of 1994 were a time of deepening disappointment. One report in December 1994 found "increasing disillusionment among slum residents and social activists over Aristide's cautious approach to the country's problems." Many in the Haitian communities of the United States too were frustrated with Aristide's approach once he was back in Haiti, particularly for his acceptance of the neoliberal economic model, which critics called the "death plan for Haiti."⁸⁶¹

In spite of their unease over Aristide's choices, many of those in Haiti who despaired over the continuing hardship of life even after Aristide's return also maintained hope. "I said that when Titid came back to Haiti maybe I would be better off, but it seems like I've gotten worse. Now, a little can of rice sells for six gourdes (U.S. \$.40) . . . Some people are discouraged. They see that the president came back and that he didn't do anything for us," said Lovly Josaphat.⁸⁶² "Life is still expensive but, like old people say, *Piti piti zwazo fe nich li*. Bit by bit a bird builds her nest. The country was crushed under the three years of the coup, but now bit by bit it will be fixed. Every time someone does a little work, it will get better."⁸⁶³ Josette Perard relates a story that demonstrates not only the ongoing hope that many Haitians held to after Aristide's return, but also their view that Aristide would continue to be a central part of the ongoing popular movement. An American visitor asked a member of a grassroots women's organization, "I don't see that your situation has improved. Why are you still supporting Titid?" One of them answered,

⁸⁶¹"Aristide's Cautious Approach Dismays Many Supporters," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 9, 1994, A29; LaForest, interview.

⁸⁶²Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 47, 49.

⁸⁶³Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 49.

Foreigner . . . I'll tell you. Had it not been for Titid, you wouldn't be sitting here talking with us, poor women who can't read and write, who have dirty feet, about what we think about the political situation in Haiti . . . Titid made this possible. Titid came back to make changes. He can't give me food and I don't expect him to, because it's up to me to work and feed myself.⁸⁶⁴

Even as some Haitians were questioning Aristide's commitment or his ability to improve the situation of ordinary Haitians, others continued to see the president as the best hope for a new Haiti.

Looking back on the coup years, Haitian activists saw both achievement and defeat. From 1991 to 1994, the partnership between the resistance outside Haiti and the resistance inside the country became critically important. As Ray LaForest observes, "What brought Aristide back was two things . . . the Haitian people refused to cooperate with the coup" and "what happened abroad, because of organizing, [also ensured] that this movement was so successful." He explains that "bigger and bigger demonstration[s], bigger and bigger support of politicians," and "support from all these non-Haitian organizations" showed that "support for Aristide was getting to be uncontrollable. The US had to respond to that."⁸⁶⁵ Members of SELA, another key participant in the movement to defend Aristide, also saw the pressure mobilized by the external movement -- particularly on the United States and the United Nations -- as critical to Aristide's eventual return. According to Lionel Legros, the coup failed because "the pressure that we were putting on [the United Nations' headquarters at] 42nd Street where we blocked the street, even during the weekdays, was too strong."⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶⁴Bell, *Walking on Fire*, 190.

⁸⁶⁵LaForest, interview.

⁸⁶⁶Huttinot, Legros, and another member of SELA, interview.

But the immense effort required to combat coup forces and to bring Aristide back to Haiti also took a major toll on the Haitian communities of New York and Miami. The coup occurred just as the linked popular movements in Haiti and in the United States were experiencing a tremendous crescendo of popular mobilization. As Lily Cerat describes,

One of the things we blame on the Aristide ouster, his years in exile, is the fact that much energy from the community was . . . poured into that, demonstrating for his return, meeting with him, pressuring, dealing with the Guantanamo issue, the refugees . . . And during that time, the course has been the disbanding of that community where you had strong political-cultural activism, you had strong organization. I mean to have realized the April 20 [AIDS march] across the bridge, it was because there were organizations ready to come together, to work together, and to thrust that day! [But] from April 1990 all the machinery in place, the community organizing machinery, the community activism that was able to grow on April 20 kind of went in one direction after Aristide became ousted in 1991.⁸⁶⁷

The strength and resilience of the campaign to restore Aristide was possible because of the grassroots networks and relationships that had been planted in the anti-Duvalier struggle and grown from 1986 to 1991. In addition, the new refugee crisis that emerged in the coup years reignited the refugee campaign and brought in many new members, giving the refugees' cause unprecedented national and international exposure. At the same time, however, the coup years had a disastrous effect on the popular movement, derailing it from the course it had been on at its height in 1990 and early 1991 and leaving it battered and divided.

⁸⁶⁷Cerat, interview.

Conclusion

In the summer of 1997, Marcus Garcia was preparing to return to Haiti. Garcia had been in the United States since November 1980, when as one of the dissident journalists arrested and imprisoned by Haitian authorities, he had been expelled from Haiti and sent into exile in the United States. One of the victims of the Duvalier dictatorship's crackdown that followed Ronald Reagan's election, Garcia found that that political change of tides had landed him in Miami, where he soon used his journalistic experience to become a resource and advocate for Haitian refugees. With his partner, Elsie Etheart, Garcia launched a radio program for the Haitian community called *Chita Tande* (Sit Down and Listen), providing Miami Haitians with news from Haiti as well as assistance and information for all those attempting to survive the maelstrom that was Miami in the early 1980s. Four years later Garcia founded *Haiti en Marche*, the third major Haitian weekly to be published in the United States. In addition to providing critical information about both Haiti and the United States, Garcia turned each of his radio and print projects into political tools, committed to "the refugee cause," as he says, as well as to democracy in Haiti, during the coup years using *Haiti en Marche* to defend the Aristide administration and to provide information to the resistance inside Haiti. But three years after Aristide's return to Haiti, Garcia too was preparing to return. "The community is populated by people who don't need us as they did before," he argued. And in Haiti "There is so much you can do."⁸⁶⁸

The story of Marcus Garcia represents one current in the history of US-based Haitian activists after 1994. Unlike Garcia, however, other activists chose to stay in the United States and build upon political projects they had created during the coup years. One organization created in Brooklyn in 1992 grew directly out of the refugee crisis of the coup years. Marie Lily

⁸⁶⁸Elise Ackerman, "Cause for Return; Haitian Radio Host Marcus Garcia's Work in Miami Is Done. It's Time for Him to Go Home," *Miami (FL) New Times*, Sept. 10, 1997.

Cerat, a long-time political and cultural activist in New York met Ninaj Raoul at the Guantanamo Bay refugee camp where they provided translation for the thousands of Haitians detained there during the coup. After they returned to Brooklyn, they continued to assist the new refugees; together they formed Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, an organization that began by meeting basic immigration, language, and other needs of new immigrants. In subsequent years Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees grew into a more wide-reaching grassroots advocacy organization, organizing the community around labor issues and issues of police brutality, and partnering with those seeking to defend Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic.⁸⁶⁹

Another activist that chose to stay in the United States and continue the political work she had started as a member of the Haitian Refugee Center in the early 1980s was Marleine Bastien. In 1991 Bastien founded an organization whose influence would be felt in the community well into the post-coup years. *Famn Ayisyen nan Miami* (Haitian Women of Miami) was dedicated, according to one report, to “women's rights” and to “social, political, and economic empowerment of all women and girls, especially Haitian.”⁸⁷⁰ Bastien founded *Famn* to fill a void in community resources and services since the Haitian Refugee Center of Miami was focused primarily on immigration matters. Although the organization was particularly oriented around women’s issues, it was meant to serve the broader community as well. “I realized that when we called the organization “*Famn*,” it wasn’t that we were only going to help *famn*, because when we help the *famn* – the women – we help everybody,”⁸⁷¹ Bastien explains. Under

⁸⁶⁹Albor Ruiz, “Group Seeks Basic Rights for Haitians,” *Daily News* (New York), Apr. 8, 1999, 4; Clem Richardson, “She’s Always Willing to Help; Activist Adds Some TLC to Haitian Community,” *Daily News* (New York), Sept. 23, 2001, 3; “A Tribute to Marie Lily Cerat” -- Edolphus Towns- (Extensions of Remarks - March 21, 2010).

⁸⁷⁰Kathy Glasgow, “The Catalyst; Marleine Bastien -- Activist, Social Worker, Songwriter, Mother -- Is Helping to Lead the Resurgence of South Florida's Haitian Political Agenda,” *Miami (FL) New Times*, Nov. 5, 1998.

⁸⁷¹Bastien, interview.

the banner of *Famn Ayisyen nan Miami*, individuals like Bastien and her frequent partner Gepsie Metellus emerged in the wake of the coup as community leaders for a new generation of Haitian activists in South Florida.⁸⁷²

Other activists who continued their political work in the United States after Aristide's return concluded that Haitians in the United States needed to seek political power in a more traditional sense. In the spring of 1994, Haitians in New York created the Haitian American Political Action Group, which set voter registration and citizenship drives as its first task in the community. According to Garry Pierre-Pierre, the *New York Times* correspondent reporting on the new organization, "While [the founders of the Haitian American Political Action Group] support the return to Haiti of the ousted President, the Rev. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, they say they are angry with elected leaders who simply support Father Aristide while ignoring Haitian needs locally." New forms of political action like the Haitian American Political Action Group point to a growing interest in American electoral politics among Haitians. One interpretation of this development suggests a move away from the Haiti-focused politics that had predominated through the mid-1990s. But Michel Laguerre reads the creation of the new organization differently, interpreting the founding of the Haitian American Political Action Group as, in part, a reflection of Haitians' ongoing concern over the situation in Haiti. The founders of the new organization have "realized that if there is to be any change in Haiti, it is likely to come from the United States," Laguerre argues.⁸⁷³

Throughout the remainder of the 1990s, new groups like *Famn Ayisyen* and Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees as well as organizations that were founded in the earlier period of

⁸⁷²Glasgow, "The Catalyst; Marleine Bastien. "

⁸⁷³Garry Pierre-Pierre, "Neighborhood Report: Flatbush; Haitians Seek New Influence in Local Politics," *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1994, 13.

struggle continued to mobilize their communities around political issues that affected Haitians. When in August 1997 Haitian immigrant Abner Louima was arrested in Brooklyn, beaten, and sodomized with the handle of a toilet plunger by New York City police officers, Haitian activists mobilized a shocked and outraged community around the problem of discrimination and police brutality. The organizing that followed the Louima incident was carried out by organizations that pre-dated the coup as well as those that were formed after 1994. The largest demonstration against police brutality in the wake of the Louima incident attempted to recreate the success of the April 20, 1990, AIDS march by staging another march across Brooklyn Bridge. The march, which drew thousands but failed to match the level of community mobilization of the earlier AIDS march, was co-organized by the Haitian American Alliance, an organization of young community organizers and activists, and the Haitian Enforcement against Racism (HEAR), the group responsible for the April 20 AIDS march.⁸⁷⁴

In addition to community protest, campaigns for legislation intended to protect Haitian refugees in the United States continued into the post-coup period. In October 1998 after an extensive lobbying effort by Haitian groups and their supporters, including the Congressional Black Caucus, the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act became law. The new law allowed the approximately fifty thousand Haitian refugees who had been in the country since December 1995 an expedited path to permanent residence in the United States, an initiative intended especially to accommodate those who had fled Haiti during the coup years of 1991 to 1994. The

⁸⁷⁴Zenon Zawada, Muguel Garcilazo, and Anne E. Kornblut, "Abuse Not New in This Nabe, Haitians Say," *Daily News* (New York), Aug. 15, 1997, 5; Cynthia Tornquist and Jeanne Meserve, "Members of the Haitian Community Protest in New York," *CNN Early Prime* 17:00 pm ET, Aug. 16, 1997; Garry Pierre-Pierre, "Charges of Brutality: The Club; Solidarity at Arrest Site a Week Later," *New York Times*, Aug. 17, 1997, 41; Garry Pierre-Pierre, "New York Haitians Sensing Betrayal in a Land of Refuge," *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 1997, A1; Antonio Mora and Peter Jennings, *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, ABC News, Aug. 20, 1997; Garry Pierre-Pierre, "Haitians Expect Thousands to March against Brutality," *New York Times*, Aug. 28, 1997, B4; "Thousands March in New York to Protest Haitian Immigrant's Brutalization," *Agence France Presse*, Aug. 29, 1997.

Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act, which extended to Haitians the same opportunity offered to Nicaraguan and Cuban refugees in an earlier piece of legislation, appeared to be a major political victory for the refugees and their supporters. However, like some earlier legislative and legal victories that did not end up benefiting the Haitian community as much as expected, the new legislation was implemented in a way that stymied the hopes of many of those who were eligible to take advantage of it. Although the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act was signed in the fall of 1998, the Immigration and Naturalization Service delayed publishing the final version of regulations under the law until the spring of 2000. When the agency did release the final version of the law's regulations, it gave those eligible to apply for permanent residency only one week to apply for benefits. For Haitian refugees and their supporters, the struggle for fair treatment and security in the United States would continue.⁸⁷⁵

This history of political activism among Haitians in the United States from 1957 to 1994 and the trans-regional and transnational movement that they built and maintained in this period and beyond, expand our understanding of the role of migration and immigrants in our national and international histories. One important conclusion that has a bearing on our understanding of these histories is the finding that Haitian activists were able to reject an exclusive commitment to either the politics of the old country or those of the new. Instead, they found an issue in their new country -- asylum for Haitian refugees – that allowed them to maintain a simultaneous commitment to political change in Haiti and to a defense of their communities in the United States. This challenges the view of immigrant political activity that treats homeward looking politics and US-based politics as mutually exclusive. The experience of Haitian activists in this

⁸⁷⁵Mirta Ojito, "The Budget Deal: Immigration Agency Gains in Deal; Haitians Do So, Too," *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1998, A 25; Meg Richards, "New Rules Published for Haitian, Nicaraguan and Cuban Immigrants," *Associated Press*, Mar. 23, 2000, BC cycle; "Give Haitians More Time," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, 10A.

study shows that engagement with political issues in the United States and utilization of the American political and legal systems did not necessarily require a lessening of their commitment to the home country or the abandonment of a homeward-looking orientation.

The experience of Haitian activists in the United States during the Duvalier years and the sizable role of the United States in Haiti under each successive presidential administration from Kennedy to Clinton illustrate another important conclusion: Haitian activists recognized that even slight shifts in policy and orientation by the United States had major repercussions in a peripheral country like Haiti. With this understanding, the activists devoted a substantial amount of effort attempting to mobilize pressure on the US government to adopt policies that would help them shape the change they wanted to see in their home country. In addition, as residents and, in some cases, citizens of the United States with the ability to build coalitions with American allies (as Haitian activists did with religious, labor, and civil rights organizations), immigrant activists in the United States were in a advantageous position to exert pressure on the American government, one of the most powerful steps they could take to support their allies working for political change back in their home country. This conclusion adds to our understanding of the way migration to the United States had the potential to transform a sending country. Migrants to the United States were in a position to contribute much more than remittances to those in the home country, and they were more than simply the first link in a chain of migration that could bring a family or a whole community to the United States. As this history shows, activist members of a particular immigrant community could also use their position in the United States and status as residents or citizens of the United States to push for political change in their home countries.

This finding also contributes to our understanding of the dynamic of migration from former colonies like Haiti on the periphery of powerful empires to core countries like the United States that continued to maintain an imperial presence over less powerful neighbors. Just as America's military and economic presence in the Dominican Republic created the context for migration from Santo Domingo to New York City (as shown by Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof),⁸⁷⁶ so did America's economic, political, and military presence in Haiti throughout the twentieth century establish the chain of migration and strengthen the links between Haiti and the Haitian communities of New York and Miami. While the uneven balance of power between the United States and Haiti often led to what Haitian activists perceived to be manipulation and even exploitation of Haiti by the United States, it also facilitated the creation of the transnational political movement that would challenge both the Haitian and the American governments to respond to their call for democracy in Haiti and fair treatment for Haitian refugees. And working from the core of the empire, Haitian activists in the United States were able to advance their movement in ways that those who remained in Haiti could not.

In addition, these findings make a contribution to the project of internationalizing our national histories, a task with which a growing number of American historians are currently engaged. There has been much discussion among historians about how to go about this task and what these global histories should look like. Speaking on a panel entitled "Writing Global Histories" at the 2012 American Historical Association conference, Charles C. Bright observed that historians seem to be employing different and potentially contradictory conceptions of what he called "globality." While there are those whose work is international in the sense that it features networks of transnational and trans-local people and institutions operating across

⁸⁷⁶ Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

borders and often largely outside the realm of state control, there are also global histories which feature territorializing and imperial models, top-down in approach and concerned with powerful hierarchical institutions that tower above and across borders. In this latter conception of internationalism, states, though by no means the only historical agent, play a more prominent role than in the former network model of global history. Neither of these models by itself is sufficient, Bright argued, a conclusion that this dissertation also supports.⁸⁷⁷

In this dissertation, we have seen the power of ordinary people to build movements that at certain moments successfully challenged the authority of states that were seeking to constrain and suppress them. As important as these trans-regional and transnational networks were, however, state power remains a key part of the story. In this history of Haitian activists in New York, Miami, and Haiti, we see a dialogue between the grassroots networks and state authority; the international migration of Haitians and the activism of these migrants emerge as important elements shaping foreign and domestic policy and politics in both the United States and Haiti. These conclusions affirm Julie Greene's conclusion that "not only does the crossing of boundaries make history . . . but the interaction between nation-states and transnational forces also emerges as a central causal agent."⁸⁷⁸

Furthermore, the findings of the dissertation not only advance our historical understanding; they also have implications for contemporary political and social movements, and particularly for immigrant activists and their supporters engaged in networks that span region

⁸⁷⁷Kevin Kenny also makes the case for an approach that both transcends the nation state and maintains it as an important unit of analysis. Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Comparison: The Irish as a Case Study." *Journal of American History* 90 (June 2003): 134-62.

⁸⁷⁸Julie Greene, "Historians of the World: Transnational Forces, Nation-States, and the Practice of U.S. History," in *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, edited by Leon Fink (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

and border. First, the Haitian activists in this history were most successful when they combined legal and legislative approaches with the tactic of community protest and mobilization. As a grassroots movement, they always recognized the power of protest, but they also worked within the political and legal systems when they thought it could advance their cause. Second, with the right tools -- a deep commitment to their home country, lines of communication and information networks drawing the disparate communities together, political organizations that reached across region and border, and, especially after 1986, the ability to travel back and forth between the United States and Haiti, Haitian activists were able to transcend the barriers of distance and international boundary to create political networks that simultaneously mobilized around issues as seemingly distant as repression in Port-au-Prince, refugee imprisonment in Miami, and the impact of the AIDS stigma in New York. This history provides an important lesson for contemporary immigrant activists: the value and potential strength of trans-regional and transnational networks and movements. Indeed, the final chapter of this dissertation finds that in moments of crisis, such as the coup which removed Aristide and attacked the grassroots movement, international networks and political allies forged in the many years of persistent organizing and building prior to the coup provided an essential source of strength. Haitian activists in the United States from 1957 to 1994 found an international approach both to their international and their local issues to be indispensable, a lesson that may benefit contemporary activists engaged in international solidarity campaigns or organizing around immigrant and refugee rights.

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