

What 9/11 Means to Haiti

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Lavalas Braves Climate of Terror to March and Demand for Aristide's Return

September 11th is a date well-fixed in the consciousness of progressive Haitians. It marks the anniversary of a brutal massacre in Aristide's former parish of St Jean Bosco in 1988 as well as the anniversary of the slaying of Lavalas supporter Antoine Izmerly in 1993. To honor the victims and demand the restoration of democracy to Haiti, thousands of Lavalas activists took the streets this September 11th and braved the climate of terror that has gripped the country.

As expected, not a single journalist from the corporate media turned up to cover the event despite the huge turnout. Michael Ottey of the Miami Herald would have done well to show up and see that his contacts in Haiti have been feeding him disinformation. On Aug. 29th Ottey wrote in the Miami Herald, "In Port-au-Prince neighborhoods such as Cité Soleil and Bel Aire — both Aristide strongholds — weapons abound. At times brandishing weapons, Aristide loyalists have recently launched demonstrations from there, demanding his return." Mr. Ottey would do well to take note that at the September 11th demonstration demanding Aristide's return there was not a single weapon present among the marchers. In fact, during the last five demonstrations HIP has covered extensively there was never a single weapon, "brandished." There was however one violent incident on September 11th when shots rang out towards the peaceful march from behind the walls of the Office of Assurance National on Delmas 17. Units of the Haitian National Police responded with force and the march was allowed to continue in peace. Marchers immediately took up the chant, "Down with the former military. Long Live CIMO!!" Mr. Ottey would know this if he ever took the time to come to Haiti instead of relying upon phone calls to

unreliable observers.

The peaceful march started at St. Jean Bosco church and then moved up Delmas and crossed over to Avenue John Brown to protest in front of the United Nations Operations Headquarters. Demonstrators then massed in front of a heavily armed contingent of Brazilian soldiers protecting the facility and began chanting, "Lula, return President Aristide today!!". The expression on the faces of the Brazilians showed that they were totally caught off guard by the demand. Signs proliferating the demonstration included, "Down with terrorist George Bush," and "Long Live Kerry," representing the sentiment that Bush was responsible for kidnapping President Aristide on February 29th of this year.

The march then headed over to Jean Paul 2nd Avenue and stopped in front of the church yard where Father Jan-Marie Vincent is buried. In front of the grave they chanted, "Justice for Jan-Marie Vincent!!," This was in clear reference to the acquittal of Jackson Joanis for the murder of Antoine Izmery. Joanis is also accused of murdering Father Vincent. From there the march headed down to the front of Sacre Coeur church and the monument honoring Antoine and George Izmery who were both murdered by opponents to Lavalas. A speech was given by a representative of Lavalas calling upon the defacto regime of Gerard Latortue to, "have the decency to maintain justice," and condemning the U.S.-installed regime for, "freeing murderers and thugs.," When the marchers finally arrived in front of the national palace their access was blocked by large numbers of heavily armed Brazilian soldiers. Marchers rancled at the image of an occupied Haiti where the current government is more loyal to the dictates of the U.S. and the so-called international community than it is to the democratic will of its own people.

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