

**Malign Neglect or Imperialism?**

**Nikolas Barry-Shaw,**

**Thursday November 3, 2005**

**Analyses | Impérialisme**

**CMAQ, Canada**

What is happening right now in Haiti is probably Canada's worst foreign policy crime in the last 50 years. The Canadian government helped plan and carry out the destabilization of Haiti's elected government, culminating in the February 2004 coup d'état/kidnapping of President Jean Bertrand Aristide by U.S. Marines and Canada's Joint Task Force 2. Since then, the coup-installed government and its death squad allies have waged an all-out war against Aristide's Lavalas movement and its supporters with the full and enthusiastic backing of Paul Martin's Liberal government.

Canadian police lead the UN police mission (UNPOL) responsible for training, vetting and overseeing the new Haitian National Police (HNP). Under their watch, hundreds of former Haitian Army (FAd'H) officers, death squad members and individuals who "have been involved in drug rackets, kidnappings, extra judicial killings or other illegal activities," have been integrated into the HNP, according to the Catholic Institute for International Relations. The result has been massacres, violent and indiscriminate raids on poor neighborhoods, summary executions, attacks on journalists and peaceful demonstrators and arbitrary mass arrests. Thousands have been killed and thousands more have gone into hiding or taken exile in another country. When asked about reports of these abuses by human rights groups and mainstream news agencies, Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew has scornfully dismissed all evidence as "propaganda which is absolutely not interesting."

Canada is also deeply involved in the functioning of Haiti's justice system. Deputy Justice Minister Philippe Vixamar is a direct employee of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and was assigned to his position by the Agency. In an interview, Vixamar revealed that the U.S. and Canadian governments play key roles in the criminal justice system, including paying high-level government officials. The prison system is massively overcrowded with hundreds if not thousands of political prisoners, including Lavalas presidential candidate and Amnesty International "prisoner of conscience" Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Meanwhile, death squad leaders such as Louis Jodel Chamblain are acquitted in sham trials. Special Advisor to the PM on Haiti Denis Coderre has been exceptionally duplicitous on the matter, claiming, without apparent irony, "Canada would not get involved in Haiti's justice system."

Repression is the only means of holding power available to an illegitimate government pushing through an anti-popular program, as the installed regime of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has amply demonstrated. Canada helped craft the neoliberal plan for post-coup Haiti and has played a crucial part in propping up the corrupt cabal of technocrats and supporters of the former Duvalier dictatorship that forms the interim government. As part of this plan, subsidies for Haiti's impoverished farmers have been slashed, the minimum wage has been reduced and an extremely successful adult literacy program has been dismantled by the Latortue regime, while large businesses have been given a three-year tax holiday and ex-FAd'H soldiers have been paid the outrageous sum of \$30 million in "back wages".

The ground is also being prepared for the privatization of Haiti's state enterprises, a policy vigorously opposed by the Haitian people. The Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF), a document outlining the priorities of the "transitional government" and the donor countries, touts "private sector participation" in state enterprises and makes clear the anti-democratic nature of these reforms: "The transition period . . . provide[s] a window of opportunity for implementing economic governance reforms . . . that may be hard for a future government to undo." Canada helped draft the ICF and has donated \$147 million in support of it.

Straightforward graft is flourishing under the installed government. Early on, the Office of the Prime Minister was rocked by a corruption scandal that involved diverting 15,000 bags of rice destined for the poor of Port-au-Prince, resulting in the suspension of two high-level officials close to Gerard Latortue. Youri Latortue, nephew of the Prime Minister and security chief of the National Palace, has been dubbed "Mister 30 Percent" by the French press for the cut he takes on favours, and is reportedly involved with smuggling drugs and guns. Recently, the Haitian news service Agence Haitien de Presse revealed that the government had been writing monthly checks for 6,000 police officers, despite there being only 4,000 officers in the HNP.

Despite (or perhaps because of) this atrocious record, the Canadian government has used every diplomatic means available in an effort to provide legitimacy to the installed government. High-level Canadian officials, such as Paul Martin, Pierre Pettigrew and Denis Coderre have made numerous visits to Haiti since the coup to "underline Canada's support of the interim government and [their] intention to remain involved for the long term." Canada has also organized and hosted international conferences with the Latortue government and chided other nations to disburse their aid more quickly. Paul Martin has even chastised CARICOM (the group of Caribbean countries) leaders for their refusal to recognize the installed government and their continued calls for an independent investigation into the removal of President Aristide. CARICOM is not alone in its opposition to the coup: Venezuela and the 53 nations of the African Union have also withheld recognition of the Latortue regime, and the ANC, South Africa's governing party, has launched a campaign calling for the return of democracy to Haiti.

It hardly comes as a surprise that Canadian government officials and their PR flaks to have sought to deceive the public while carrying out their nefarious dealings in Haiti. Yet the government has received help in this endeavour from some unlikely sources: various self-denoted "left" or "progressive" NGOs have misrepresented the causes of the human rights disaster in Haiti and ignored Canada's intervention almost completely, thus becoming complicit, wittingly or not, in the government's "perception management" operations. Pierre Beaudet's Rabble.ca piece "Haiti: Where should the left stand?" defending his organization Alternatives' position on Haiti is but the most recent example. While his distortions of Haiti's history since 1995 (especially concerning the 2000 elections and after) are significant, it is Beaudet's assessment of the present that we will look at here.

Beaudet seriously minimizes the ruthless violence of the interim government and its Canadian-trained police force, devoting all of one sentence to the repression of Lavalas and voicing only tepid opposition to it. Moreover, Beaudet prefaces his trite reference to the anti-Lavalas witch hunt with the discredited notion of Aristide using "hard nosed gangs" to "create havoc", implicitly laying the blame on the victims. Indeed, the Lavalas movement is portrayed as little more than a gang of criminals and drug runners in Beaudet's article. Yet the depth of support Lavalas continues to enjoy belies such

characterizations. First of all, the large majority of Lavalas' base is located in the countryside, where at least 65% of the population lives. Rural Haiti is not exactly the preserve of ganglords and drug dealers, as Dr. Paul Farmer, renowned for his work against AIDS, malaria and TB in the Central Plateau and other parts of Haiti, explains: "I personally, in all my years in Haiti, have never once seen a peasant with a gun. And almost all of the ones around these parts are members of Fammi Lavalas (Aristide's party). Now I've tended to many gunshot wounds, but they've been inflicted by former soldiers, police, or people who have cars to drive - not peasants." In the cities, Lavalas has mobilized tens of thousands of people for demonstrations many times since the coup, despite the (frequently realized) threat of police using gunfire to break up protests. Even observers as hostile as the American and Canadian embassies have acknowledged that Lavalas is still the most popular political movement in Haiti.

While rhetorically opposing imperialism, Beudet's actual critique of the foreign powers' current involvement in Haiti boils down to an accusation of malign neglect: Canada has not been "generous" enough with its aid policies and the international community have failed to "clean the mess" in Haiti as promised. Yet UN troops have been trying to "clean the mess" by carrying out frequent raids into pro-Lavalas slums, with deadly consequences for the population, and contrary to Beudet's belief, Canada has been extremely generous to the de facto Haitian government it helped install. What is Beudet's criticism of Gerard Latortue's government, an exceedingly corrupt and undemocratic administration that is repressing its political opponents on a massive scale and reordering Haiti's economy along neoliberal lines? Merely that it has been "ineffective".

The hypocrisy (and serviceability to power) of this stance is worth noting: Aristide was accused of having these very same flaws (undemocratic, corrupt, neoliberal) and received unrelenting condemnation from NGOs such as Alternatives, yet no such opprobrium is forthcoming from Beudet when it comes to the U.S./Canada puppet regime. Indeed, Beudet seems more interested in talking about "the crimes that everyone knew Aristide had committed," than about the serious and ongoing crimes of Canada and the interim government, crimes for which we, as Canadian citizens, hold far more responsibility.

In short, Aristide is not the issue; Canada's role as a junior partner to U.S. imperialism is the issue.  
[www.outofhaiti.ca](http://www.outofhaiti.ca)

**Dominican Catholic bishops ask for international help to cope with illegal migration**  
**November 04, 2005**  
**The Universe Newsroom, Britain and Ireland Catholic Newspaper**

The Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of the Dominican Republic has asked for help coping with illegal migration from neighbouring Haiti. Fleeing the violence and economic hardship that followed the February 2004 ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, increasing numbers of poor Haitians have crossed the border that separates the two countries. As many as 1 million French Creole-speaking Haitians live in the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic. Many are illegal residents. Others, who have papers or Dominican citizenship, are discriminated against and sometimes deported. "Our nation has a limited capacity to absorb excessive immigration," the 12 Catholic bishops said, in a joint statement. Dominican human rights advocates estimate some 55,000 Haitians have crossed the border illegally this year. In May, the Dominican government deported at least 2,000 Haitians following the killing of a Dominican woman. The Catholic bishops repudiated the mass expulsion of undocumented Haitians, saying it was a human rights violation and that each case should be dealt with individually.

**Thousands march in Haiti to support Preval**  
**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
**Seattle Post-Intelligencer**  
**Thursday, November 3, 2005**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Demonstrators marched out of two Haitian slums and across the capital Thursday in support of former President Rene Preval's bid to regain the presidency in elections scheduled for next month.

Preval, who was president from 1995 to 2000 and is a one-time ally of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, is running as an independent without the backing of Aristide's party, Lavalas.

Marchers chanted Preval's name and called for the release of political prisoners and the return from exile of Aristide, who was forced out of the country in February 2004 after a violent rebellion.

The elections, which have been postponed twice as Haiti struggles to organize the balloting, are tentatively scheduled for mid-December. The country will choose a new president and legislators to replace the interim government imposed following Aristide's ouster.

**Haiti: Aristide stole millions**

**Haiti's interim government filed suit against former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Miami federal court, accusing him of stealing millions from the Haitian people.**

**By JACQUELINE CHARLES**

[jcharles@herald.com](mailto:jcharles@herald.com)

**Miami Herald**

**Posted on Thu, Nov. 03, 2005**

Haiti's interim government has brought its accusations against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Miami federal court, accusing him of stealing "tens of millions of dollars" from the Haitian treasury and state-owned telephone company.

"Aristide abused his power and deceived and betrayed the Haitian people by directing and participating in ongoing and fraudulent schemes," the 74-page civil lawsuit filed by several law firms hired by the government alleges.

Since his ouster from office last year in the face of an armed rebellion, Aristide, who now lives in South Africa, has become the target of several probes. A Miami federal grand jury is investigating whether he pocketed millions of dollars from drug traffickers who moved tons of cocaine through his poor nation.

Haitian investigators have sent two corruption reports to an investigative judge as the first step toward seeking criminal prosecution of the ousted president. They accuse Aristide of illegally pumping millions of dollars in public funds into shell companies and into his private charities that promoted his popularity among the poor.

The federal lawsuit is based on evidence gathered by Haiti's government.

"The misappropriated funds were frequently diverted and laundered through fictitious companies, established for this purpose by Aristide and his accomplices, both in Haiti and the United States," the lawsuit said. "Aristide and his accomplices stole tens of millions of dollars from the public treasury and transferred a portion of those funds to the United States."

Miami attorney Ira Kurzban, who represents Aristide, could not be reached for comment. He has previously denied any wrongdoing by the exiled president.

In addition to Aristide, the lawsuit names eight other defendants including his brother-in-law, Lesley Lavelanet; former finance minister, Faubert Gustave; the former general manager of a government-owned commercial bank, Rodnee Deschineau; and Fred Beliard, a Broward businessman.

Beliard is accused of helping Aristide and his associates receive kickbacks in exchange for providing favorable rates to certain U.S. and Canadian telecommunications firms doing business in Haiti. He, along with Lavelanet and Jean Rene Duperval -- another defendant and the former director of international relations for Teleco, Haiti's state-owned telephone company -- live in Florida.

In filing the lawsuit in Miami, lawyers accuse Aristide and his associates of breaking U.S. law, alleging transactions were done through wire transfers to Miami banks and U.S. companies.

For instance, the suit alleges that \$1.7 million in public funds from an account held by a "fictitious company," VJLS at a government-owned commercial bank, BPH, was sent to an account at HSBC Bank in Miami held by Haffey Corporation, a front company.

In another instance, the lawsuit alleges that Lavelanet, received \$92,500 in wired stolen public funds as the CEO of a company called Digitek.

In addition to the government, Teleco is accusing Aristide, Beliard and others of "knowingly and intentionally participating in an ongoing and fraudulent scheme to steal revenues rightfully belonging to Teleco."

Among companies mentioned in the lawsuit is New Jersey-based IDT, which is the focus of another lawsuit filed last year by former employee and Palm Beach resident Michael Jewett.

In his wrongful dismissal lawsuit, Jewett alleges that his bosses at IDT agreed to make payments to a "private bank account" held by Aristide in the Turks and Caicos Islands in exchange for favorable rates in Haiti. He has accused Beliard of working on behalf of Aristide. Beliard, who could not be reached for comment, has previously denied any wrongdoing.

Herald staff writer Jay Weaver contributed to this report.

## **Haiti's interim government files suit against Aristide**

**By JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**jcharles@herald.com**

**Posted on Wed, Nov. 02, 2005**

Haiti's interim government filed suit against former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Miami federal court, accusing him of stealing millions from the Haitian people.

Haiti's interim government has brought its accusations against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Miami federal court, accusing him of stealing "tens of millions of dollars" from the Haitian treasury and state-owned telephone company.

"Aristide abused his power and deceived and betrayed the Haitian people by directing and participating in ongoing and fraudulent schemes," the 74-page civil lawsuit filed by several law firms hired by the government alleges.

Since his ouster from office last year in the face of an armed rebellion, Aristide, who now lives in South Africa, has become the target of several probes. A Miami federal grand jury is investigating whether he pocketed millions of dollars from drug traffickers who moved tons of cocaine through his poor nation.

Haitian investigators have sent two corruption reports to an investigative judge as the first step toward seeking criminal prosecution of the ousted president. They accuse Aristide of illegally pumping millions of dollars in public funds into shell companies and into his private charities that promoted his popularity among the poor.

The federal lawsuit is based on evidence gathered by Haiti's government.

"The misappropriated funds were frequently diverted and laundered through fictitious companies, established for this purpose by Aristide and his accomplices, both in Haiti and the United States," the lawsuit said. "Aristide and his accomplices stole tens of millions of dollars from the public treasury and transferred a portion of those funds to the United States."

Miami attorney Ira Kurzban, who represents Aristide, could not be reached for comment. He has denied any wrongdoing by the exiled president in the past.

In addition to Aristide, the lawsuit names eight other defendants including his brother-in-law, Lesley Lavelanet; former finance minister, Faubert Gustave; the former general manager of a government-owned commercial bank, Rodnee Deschineau; and Fred Beliard, a Broward businessman.

Beliard is accused of helping Aristide and his associates receive kickbacks in exchange for providing favorable rates to certain U.S. and Canadian telecommunications firms doing business in Haiti. He, along with Lavelanet and Jean Rene Duperval, another defendant and the former director of international relations for Haiti Teleco, the state-owned telephone company, live in Florida.

In filling the lawsuit in Miami, lawyers accuse Aristide and his associates of breaking U.S. law, pointing out that transactions were done through wire transfers to Miami banks and U.S. companies.

For instance, the suit alleges that \$1.7 million in public funds from an account held by a "fictitious company," VJLS at a government-owned commercial bank, BPH, was sent to an account at HSBC Bank in Miami held by Haffey Corporation, a front company.

In another instance, the lawsuit alleges that Lavelanet, received \$92,500 in wired stolen public funds as the CEO of a company called Digitek. On another occasion, Digitek received \$239,500 in public funds for the purchase of "equipment" that it never delivered, the suit alleged.

In addition to the government, Haiti's state-owned telephone company, Teleco, is accusing Aristide, Beliard and others of "knowingly and intentionally participating in an ongoing and fraudulent scheme to steal revenues rightfully belonging to Teleco."

Among the companies mentioned in the lawsuit is New Jersey-based IDT, which is the focus of another lawsuit filed last year by former employee and Palm Beach resident Michael Jewett.

In his wrongful dismissal lawsuit, Jewett alleges that his bosses at IDT agreed to make payments to a private bank account held by Aristide in the Turks and Caicos Islands in exchange for favorable rates in Haiti. He has accused Beliard of working on behalf of Aristide. Beliard, who could not be reached for comment, has previously denied any wrongdoing.

## **US businessman ignores deadline to prove Haitian citizenship**

**AP**

**Jamaica Observer**

**Wednesday, November 02, 2005**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A US businessman seeking to run for president of his native Haiti said he ignored Monday's deadline to prove his citizenship to a new commission established by the country's interim government.

Dumarsais Simeus, who rose from poverty in Haiti to become owner of a large food services company in Texas, said he was not among the dozens of candidates to submit paperwork to the commission - which the government said was a requirement to stay in the race.

Haitian electoral officials had said the businessman could not run for president because the constitution bars candidates who have dual nationality and have not lived in the country for the previous five years.

The Supreme Court then ruled that electoral officials had failed to prove that Simeus had given up his Haitian citizenship - prompting the interim government to create the new commission.

Simeus said he does not consider the commission legitimate.

"They have no right to ask me for anything," he told The Associated Press. "The Supreme Court has ruled I could run, and I will be running, period."

The elections, tentatively scheduled for mid-December, will replace the interim government imposed after a rebellion forced the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Michel Brunache, a member of the newly formed commission, declined to specify who had submitted paperwork to the nationality commission.

"Any candidate who has not filed his forms with us has now de facto quit the race," said Brunache, who is also the presidential chief of staff.

Some three dozen candidates are on the presidential ballot for elections, which have been postponed twice.

Haiti's electoral commission, which has been struggling to register voters and organise the balloting, held a lottery Monday to decide where each candidate will appear on the ballot. Rene Preval, a former president and one-time ally of Aristide, drew the number one spot - a key position in largely illiterate Haiti. Simeus received number 36.

**Lawyer: Miami lawsuit alleging Aristide stole millions 'baseless'**  
**The Associated Press**  
**The Gainesville Sun, FL**  
**November 03, 2005**

The lawsuit filed by Haiti's interim government accusing former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of stealing millions of dollars is "baseless," his lawyer said Thursday.

The 74-page lawsuit, filed Wednesday in U.S. federal court by several law firms representing the Haitian government, alleges that Aristide and eight co-defendants broke U.S. law with wire transfers made with stolen public funds and revenues from the Haitian treasury and Haiti Teleco, the state-owned telephone company.

"The lawsuit is based on a fraudulent report issued by the unelected officials who are temporarily running the Haitian government and has no credibility," said Ira Kurzban, Aristide's Miami attorney. The lawsuit was based on evidence gathered by Haiti's government.

Kurzban said this was part of the continuing "misinformation" campaign against Aristide since his ouster in February 2004 in an armed rebellion.

"The misappropriated funds were frequently diverted and laundered through fictitious companies, established for this purpose by Aristide and his accomplices, both in Haiti and the United States," the lawsuit alleged.

Aristide has been living in South Africa since his ouster.

**Abducted Haitian children rescued**  
**PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti**  
**UPI**  
**Nov. 1, 2005**

-- Authorities in Haiti have rescued three children who were kidnapped earlier in the week by men posing as police officers.

The children, ages 3 to 7, were nabbed when men stopped the car driven by their mother, Haitian radio reported Tuesday.

The two siblings and the 7-year-old Haitian foster child were returned to their parents -- missionaries from the United States -- unharmed after authorities raided the Port-au-Prince apartment of one of the suspected captors.

Kidnappings have been on the rise in Haiti amid continuing violence prompted by last year's departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Elections are scheduled for this year, though they may be delayed until 2006 due to the ongoing clashes between Aristide supporters and U.N. forces.

## **Haiti, up close and personal**

**By DAVID ADAMS, Times Latin America Correspondent**

**St. Petersburg Times**

**November 3, 2005**

Madame Dread: A Tale of Love, Vodou, and Civil Strife in Haiti, By Kathie Klarreich

The St. Petersburg Times

November 3, 2005

In 1988, a politically naive, middle class Jewish girl from Cleveland set out from San Francisco to explore the handicrafts market in Haiti.

The Caribbean island had just thrown off decades of one of the most notorious dictatorships in the region. By her own admission, Kathie Klarreich was ill-prepared for the political turmoil she encountered there. Others might have turned right around and gone home. Instead, Klarreich threw herself into the sometimes inspiring but often traumatic events she witnessed over the next decade. In the process, she learned far more than most foreign white women about Haitian culture and politics, becoming what she amusingly calls a "Vodou Jew."

Madame Dread is her engrossing personal account of this self-discovery.

With the exception of the occasional cliché and some stilted dialogue, Klarreich succeeds in pulling the reader along with her on this bumpy journey, thanks largely to her self-effacing honesty. Haiti, says Klarreich, provided her with "a chance to re-examine myself and my place in the world." She describes herself as a child thrust in the middle of a playing field, "ignorant of the rules or even which game was being played."

For all its chaos, Haiti has a habit of casting a spell on foreigners. Klarreich attends a voodoo ceremony and finds herself uncontrollably dancing to the drums and writhing on the ground. "I was in an altered state, but not from alcohol or drugs," she writes. "No feelings any rabbi evoked through any sermon I'd ever heard came close to reaching this kind of religious experience."

As Haiti lurches from one coup to another, Klarreich realizes that there isn't much future in handicrafts. After the first coup, her mother calls from the States and advises her to "get involved or get out." She does neither.

Instead, she falls in love with a Haitian musician and reinvents herself as a freelance journalist. The children in the street nickname her "Madame Dread," after the dreadlocks of her husband, Jean Raymond, a drummer steeped in the African rhythms of Haitian folk music.

Despite her marriage, she remains an outsider looking in, able to observe with a degree of objectivity that is often lacking in writings about Haiti.

The late 1980s are a fascinating time to be in Haiti, as the country struggles with the political transition from the brutal Duvalier family dictatorship to the emergence of a young priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and his "Lavalas" movement.

Some of her leftist friends adopt Aristide as a flag-bearer for democracy, but Klarreich sticks to her newfound matrix as an objective reporter. She is able to see through Haitian politics, what she calls the "merry-go-round of power-hungry leaders," where "everyone, no matter what class they came from, was after money."

Before Aristide becomes president, she meets him at the orphanage he runs. In a bizarre interview, he treats her with disdain and in a violent mood swing fires off a tirade, accusing her of being CIA. Klarreich is reduced to tears. Aristide later apologizes to her (after he is ousted in a coup and exiled in the United States) at a political rally in Oakland, Calif., where Klarreich is invited to speak alongside actor Danny Glover and poet Maya Angelou, both pro-Aristide activists.

Juggling her professional career and her personal life isn't easy.

Jean Raymond, who likes fried spaghetti for breakfast, is uncomfortable on their trips back to the United States. Klarreich masters her husband's native Creole tongue, but he struggles to learn English. Pregnant with their son, Klarreich has to deal with a host of local superstitions regarding childbirth. This includes not telling her parents she is expecting "because if I did the lougawou (werewolf) would suck the blood of the fetus." She opts to give birth in the States.

Getting Jean Raymond out of Haiti is easier than getting Haiti out of Jean Raymond. Klarreich accepts that but wishes he would be a little more curious and accepting of her own culture.

On the day she goes into labor, the Haitian generals seize power again, kicking out Aristide in a bloody coup. By the time Aristide returns three years later on the back of a U.S. military intervention, Klarreich's political education is almost complete. Back in power, Aristide proves a big disappointment. Haiti is fast losing its allure for her. She's a mother now and worries for her son. As Haiti descends into anarchy, Klarreich decides to leave with him. Jean Raymond stays behind. "Whereas I had grown," she concludes, "Haiti had regressed."

- David Adams is the Times' Latin America correspondent, based in Miami. He can be contacted at [dadams@sptimes.com](mailto:dadams@sptimes.com)

"Madame Dread: A Tale of Love, Vodou, and Civil Strife in Haiti," by Kathie Klarreich, Nation Books, \$15.95, 368 pages.

[Last modified November 2, 2005, 10:43:03]

**Rasin da Roof**  
**By Greg Baker**  
**The Miami New Times**  
**Thursday, November 3, 2005**

Who / What:

The 12th annual Rasin Festival

Details:

takes place from 2:00 p.m. to midnight Saturday, November 5, at Bayfront Park Amphitheater, 301 Biscayne Blvd, Miami. Call 305-757-9555, or visit [www.rasinfest.com](http://www.rasinfest.com).

When considering things Haitian, the first lesson is that spelling doesn't count for much. Consider Rasin Festival, the annual blowout celebrating the island nation's culture. It takes its name from a term for roots music. But rasin is also musique racine or simply racine. Sometimes it's spelled raisinn. And actually the pure roots music of Haiti is called rara, from which racine, or rasin, evolved by incorporating more socially charged and vodou-related influences. And it's also known as mizik ginen. Whatever you call it, it's potent stuff, as rhythm-driven and charged with energy as its famous cousin konpa (often spelled compas). Marked by drum-heavy African beats, rara/rasin/racine emerged, like konpa, back in the Fifties. It gained prominence during the late Eighties and early Nineties, when Haiti was politically on fire after the demise of Papa Doc and before the U.S.-led reinstatement of Lavalas and Aristide. A pioneering rasin band of that era, Koudjay has a history of lively carnivals and should delight the thousands who attend Rasin Festival this year. (Tens of thousands of people turn out at Carnivals in Haiti to hear bands that traditionally debut new material for the occasion.)

Koudjay founder (and one of its lead singers) "Kessie" Lubin has been accused of hiding (in Homestead we hear) for fear of reprisals from anti-Aristide forces in Haiti, but he scoffs at such claims. Lubin has always presented himself as a patriot first, and his music certainly speaks to the class division between urbanites and country folk in Haitian society. Koudjay's sonic argument insists that those Haitians who look down on their rural countrymen are denying their own roots — at their peril. And while Koudjay's music, like most rasin, sips from the kanari of Haiti's main religion, Lubin doesn't want listeners to drown in that idiomatic aspect. In any case, Koudjay is the middle ground between the spiritual and secular elements of roots music.

On the spiritual side of the genre, Azor is much more closely tied to vodou. Drums and vocals create hypnotic rhythms possessed of both a steely pulse and jumping peaks and valleys. And Chandel goes the other way, tackling social issues like the island's grotesque unemployment and then piling on with verbal attacks against U.S. interference in Haitian politics.

The promoters of Rasin don't want the audience to spend the entire day wrapped in the seriousness of roots music, so there will be plenty of konpa mixed in. Other bands slated for the show are Djakout Mizik, Nu Look, T-Vice, and two reggae groups, Jahnesta and Top Adlerman — all considered premier acts. There will be many other diversions in downtown Miami's now hurricane-torn bayside showplace. It's a don't-miss blast no matter how you spell it.

**Candidate numbers allotted, but doubts remain over elections in Haiti**  
**by Vario Sérant**  
**Caribbean Net News Haiti Correspondent**  
**Friday, November 4, 2005**

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti: The Provisional Electoral Council (PEC) in Haiti allotted numeric digital codes on Monday to 43 political parties running in the upcoming elections and one independent presidential candidate, Charles Henri Baker

This stage was reached after heated and seemingly interminable discussions between the political organizations and the PEC.

Another drawing of lots will take place soon, this time to allocate a number to the independent candidates at the other levels (legislatives and local elections).

The presidential candidates left this first test with divergent opinions. If satisfaction were read on the faces of some of them, others expressed their frustration according to irregularities allegedly characterising the electoral process and called for the constitutional date of February 7, 2006, set for the investiture of the President to be respected.

Well before the drawing of lots, the atmosphere was favorable for controversy. Whereas several political parties were flexible about the timing of this numbering, others made the point that this stage should be preceded by the publication of the final list of the candidates approved to take part in the next elections.

Among those holding the latter position is the Party "Tèt Ansanm Appears", under the banner of which the prominent businessman Dumarsais Siméus is running for the presidency. Ousted (from the electoral race) by the PEC, for false statements, he was replaced in the electoral battle by the Haitian Supreme Court.

The final list of the candidates which the PEC has to publish will be a simple formality, considering that a governmental commission will still have to rule on the candidates eligible to remain in the race on the basis of their nationality.

After the drawing of lots on Monday, the PEC could be congratulated on a small victory considering the allotted numbers were not the object of dispute. But the hubbub in which this allocation proceeded is not likely to improve the image of the Electoral Council. For certain candidates, an obvious lack of planning characterising the drawing of lots testifies to the incapacity of the PEC to organize good elections, within the desired times.

The president of the Provisional Electoral Council refuted these arguments, reaffirming Monday the determination of the PEC to organize credible and democratic elections at the end of the year. But some consider that such statements on behalf of the PEC will have credibility only when the electoral institution is capable of revealing an official electoral calendar.

According to the Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, the first turn of the presidential and legislative elections, initially envisaged on November 20, will be held between December 11 and 18. "These dates are simple wishes," underlined an electoral adviser.

## **Fusion Software Goes to Haiti to Give a Dose of “Batch” to Sage MAS 200**

**PR.com**

**November 3, 2005**

New development delivers much needed batching process to Sage MAS 90 and 200 with Fusion’s WMS.

Dallas, TX, November 03, 2005 --(PR.COM)-- Fusion Software, a developer and integrator in the POS and WMS arenas and Southeast Computer Solutions, Sage Software’s President’s Circle of Excellence reseller, announced today that they signed a new contract with Caribbean Canadian Chemical Company (4C). The contract provides for both Point of Sale and Warehouse Management solutions. This is a significant milestone since Fusion will now develop an Accounting System Integration WMS batch process for Sage MAS 200.

As a leading manufacturer and distributor of pharmaceutical and grocery store items throughout Haiti, Caribbean Canadian required that each of their stores, manufacturing plants and distribution centers remain active independent of Internet or wireless connectivity to the main corporate headquarters (wherein MAS 200 resides). Caribbean Canadian needed a batch solution to handle its Point of Sales and Warehouse Management transactions, which could not be provided via Sage MAS 200 alone. The solution came in the form of a new batch process interface between Fusion WMS and Sage MAS 200. With this new interface, transactions will be processed independently in each facility and then downloaded as an ‘end-of-day’ routine to synchronize with the MAS 200 database in the corporate headquarters. With Fusion’s WMS Suite Caribbean Canadian will be able to optimize its resources and people in each of their warehouses.

“Partnering with Fusion allowed us to solve Caribbean Canadian’s mission critical requirement, and thus was essential to winning this contract,” said Sonia Ferrera-Levitz, President of Southeast Computer Solutions. “After much research, it was clear that Fusion was the only solution capable of addressing all of Caribbean Canadian’s needs.”

The Fusion Point of Sales solution struck another win with Caribbean Canadian. Its rich feature set and security manager were the ideal fit for Caribbean Canadian’s business model. By developing a special process of posting sales transactions to portable devices, Fusion POS allowed Caribbean Canadian to update their sales transactions daily (from each of their nine stores) even if Internet connectivity is not available.

“We are happy to be able to accommodate their special communication and POS needs.” said John Mikalauskas, CEO and owner of Fusion Software. “We started off in 1992 as a custom software firm developing integrated solutions and that legacy of customization continues to today. We are committed to providing not only the finest off-the-shelf solutions but also customizing them to address the core pain points of the customer.”

### **About Fusion Software**

Fusion Software published by Mik & Associates, Inc. is a leader in the POS and WMS market segments. For 13 years Fusion has specialized in providing tools to “know the pulse of your business”. With Fusion Retail Solution, Fusion Warehouse Management Solution and Fusion Custom Solution,

businesses operate as a single integrated unit and not as separate units. This facilitates efficiency, optimizes resources and increases bottom-lines. Fusion meets the ever-changing demands of clients, with a team dedicated to software customization, professional services, consulting services, installation and training. Fusion's solutions seamlessly integrates with accounting systems such as Sage MAS 90/200, Sage MAS 500 and Sage PFW, SAP Business One, Microsoft, Epicor, and Macola accounting systems. Visit Fusion Software on the web at [www.mik-sw.com](http://www.mik-sw.com) or call 469-568-4100 for more information.

#### About Southeast Computers

Southeast Computer Solutions provides accounting software, CRM software, and business management solutions for companies through the southeastern United States and Latin America.

For over 20 years, Southeast Computer Solutions has worked to exceed the expectations of our demanding clientele by offering superior service and world-class products. We pride ourselves on our broad technical expertise, real-world business experience, and by our spirit of true partnership with our clients. We understand the complexities of today's global business market and realize that companies need practical, productive tools to capitalize on the opportunities this market has to offer. Visit Southeast Computer Solutions on the web at [www.southeastcomputers.com](http://www.southeastcomputers.com) or call 305-556-4697 for more information.

#### Contact Information

Fusion Software

Media Contact

469-568-4100

[press@mik-sw.com](mailto:press@mik-sw.com)

[www.mik-sw.com](http://www.mik-sw.com)

Southeast Computers Media

305-556-4697

**A human rights organization finds that the human rights situation in Haiti has deteriorated**  
**Port-au-Prince,**  
**November 2, 2005**  
**(AHP)**

The Haitian human rights organization AUMOHD (Association of University Students Motivated for a Haiti with Rights) reported Wednesday that the situation of human rights has worsened in Haiti since the sudden departure of President Aristide on February 29, 2004.

One year and eight months after the forced departure of President Aristide into exile and the installation as president of the Chief Justice of the country's supreme court, Boniface ALEXANDRE, human rights expectations are far from being realized, the organization observed, emphasizing that fundamental rights such as individual liberty, the right to life, the right to health care, the right to security as well as all social rights are violated with a degree of complicity from the new government, which has the obligation to guarantee, protect and promote human rights in this country.

AUMOHD indicated that it has been its experience that over the past 20 months the interim authorities have turned a deaf ear to the concerns and needs of the population and have plunged headlong into arbitrary conduct.

"Arrests are carried out without a warrant and outside of any justification that they are based on offenders caught in the act of committing a crime, and are followed by abusive, prolonged detentions, summary executions, disappearances, cases of torture and massacres perpetrated in the populist districts of the capital including Bel -Air, Cite Soleil, Solino, Fort National and Gran Ravin", AUMOHD writes, citing a series of cases including that of Féquière MATHURIN, arrested July 25 by the Haitian National Police, very severely burned in the police transport vehicle, and now kept in isolation at the DCPJ (Central Directorate of the Judicial Police) despite his injuries.

AUMOHD also describes the case of Fedna St Fleur, a 19 year-old woman who said she was tortured by police officers stationed at the Delmas 33 police station, who are then said to have transferred her to the DDO of Port au Prince.

The organization also expressed profound concern at the fact that no clear explanation has been provided regarding what it calls the arranged escape at the National Penitentiary, as well as the massacre on November 23, 2004 at Fort National where more than 13 youths were killed under circumstances that remain clouded.

AUMOHD is calling for an explanation of the deaths of innocent people during the intervention by MINUSTAH soldiers and Haitian police on July 6 in Cité Soleil

AUMOHD is also calling on the authorities to shed light on the tragedy of August 20 and 21st, 2005 in Grand'Ravine (Martissant) where residents were attacked by police and individuals armed with machetes and firearms as they were attending a soccer match that drew more than 6,000 spectators.

The human rights organization published a list of several names of individuals who were killed or injured and affirms that based on testimony it has collected, more than 30 people were killed in the massacre.

AUMOHD is seeking justice and reparations for all the victims of this massacre, for the Haitian State to provide ongoing assistance to the families, and that all those responsible for the massacre be brought to justice, including the authors, co-authors and accomplices.

The organization is also seeking protection and security for the families and witnesses of this odious crime, along with the release of all the political prisoners and an end to all forms of persecution.

**NewSong Community Church to host Haiti art exhibit**  
**The Westford Eagle, MA**  
**Thursday, November 3, 2005**

NewSong Community Church will begin hosting Laurae Richards' "The Children of Haiti" art exhibition for three-weeks beginning Sunday, Nov. 6.

Richards, a Westford resident, has been a strong and consistent advocate of aiding the poor and needy citizens of Haiti, of which there are many.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Her work includes raising awareness and support through her paintings for an orphanage in Haiti that is trying to meet the needs of hundreds and hundreds of abandoned children.

Immediately following morning services, NewSong will convert their cafeteria into an art gallery and conduct a special "meet and greet the artist" event from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For information, contact Craig Kevghas (978-392-8990 or kevghas@aol.com) or visit [www.newsongs.org](http://www.newsongs.org).

## **Brazil's Mission to Haiti Captured on Film**

**By Angus MacSwan**

**Reuters**

**November 2, 2005**

SAO PAULO, Brazil (Reuters) - It is not often that a soccer team get driven to a match in armored cars with an escort of soldiers. Or that the supporters of their opponents surround them in a delirious outpouring of joy and affection.

Those were the scenes in Haiti's decrepit capital Port-au-Prince on August 18 last year when Brazil's soccer team, complete with Ronaldo and Ronaldinho, showed up to play a special "Peace Game" against the Haitian national side.

That extraordinary day, when for a brief time Haitians were united, has been captured on a documentary called "O Dia em que o Brasil Esteve Aqui" ("The Day Brazil Was Here") by two Brazilian film-makers and is showing at the Sao Paulo International Film Festival.

The idea for the film came when Joao Dornelas read in a newspaper article that the world champions were going to Haiti, where the Brazilian army was leading a United Nations peacekeeping force in the violent aftermath of the overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Dornelas and co-director Caito Ortiz headed to the Caribbean nation with cameraman Fabio Altman.

"We spent 15 days there, so we were able to capture this collective mood that went on. Also we stayed there a week after the game which gave a good sense of emptiness, of 'what now'," Ortiz, 34, told Reuters.

Brazil's role in the U.N. mission was part of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's plan to project Brazil as a regional power.

As Bolivar, a community leader in a Port-au-Prince slum, says in the film: "Brazil came to Haiti with its most powerful weapon -- football."

The film was shot with hand-held digital cameras which get right up close to the action. There is no narrated commentary but a wonderful soundtrack of Haitian music.

The scenes barely need explanation anyway.

Brazil's soccer teams, many of whose players are, like the Haitians, of African descent, had long held a special place in the hearts of the impoverished nation.

"The people are very poor in every sense," said Dornelas, aged 30. "They don't have idols. They don't have anything they can root for so when they see a black guy like them who came out of the favela who can make money, who can be famous, they can look at it like a mirror."

An early scene shows Brazilian soldiers handing out postcards of Ronaldo and his team mates which are seized like religious icons. A distribution of yellow T-shirts almost causes a riot. When tickets for the game go on sale, there is pandemonium.

The cameras accompany the Brazilian players off the plane which flew them in from the Dominican Republic for the day. The most amazing scenes follow as the players are driven to the stadium in the peacekeepers' white armored cars. Thousands of Haitians in a fever of excitement line the streets, run alongside the convoy and scream out to players.

Real Madrid's Ronaldo looks a little nervous. Barcelona's Ronaldinho appears to be having a whale of a time.

There are touching scenes too: the Haitian players contemplating the honor of playing against their idols while at the same time feeling proud to represent their own country; and Brazil's coach Carlos Alberto Parreira telling his players in the dressing-room that the event was one of the greatest of his life and was something they would remember for the rest of their lives.

The political background of Aristide's flight, the militia violence and Haiti's tortured history of bloodshed and misrule, is largely ignored by the film makers.

"That's totally on purpose. We started out trying to outline the how and when and pretty soon it was obvious to us that it didn't matter," Ortiz said.

"It could be Aristide, it could be Baby Doc or it could be Papa Doc. That's kind of how they play politics in Haiti, so we focused more on the game."

## THRILLING DISPLAY

Brazil trounced Haiti 6-0 with a thrilling display of their skills and the team flew out the same night. The euphoria of the event did not last long.

"The population seemed to believe that game would solve most of their problems. Somehow they chose to believe everything would be fine from here on," Ortiz said. Continued ...

And at the end of the day, when the game was over and they flew away, people were not happy."

Indeed things have gone from bad to worse in Haiti. The peacekeepers have taken the offensive against gangs in the slums, killing many Haitians and taking casualties themselves.

Elections are due to be held by the year's end with every sign that it will be a difficult and bloody event.

But just for one day, when Brazil was there, soccer lived up to its billing as the beautiful game.

Ortiz, whose film on Sao Paulo's motorcycle dispatch riders "Motoboys Vida Loca," won the best documentary at the 2003 Sao Paulo festival, and Dornelas are negotiating to get the film distributed in Brazilian cinemas by the end of the year.

They are also talking to TV France, NHK of Japan and HBO in the United States for television deals so it will hit screens before the start of the World Cup in Germany next June.

**Haiti kidnap children freed alive**  
**BBC News**  
**November 1, 2005**

Three children snatched in a Haiti shanty town at the weekend have been freed in a rescue operation. The son and daughter of a US missionary were kidnapped along with their Haitian foster sister by a gang dressed in police uniforms.

They were rescued by genuine police officers 24 hours later in the Delmas area of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince.

Much of Haiti is enduring a breakdown of law and order, including a wave of kidnappings and violent gun crime.

Hannah Lloyd, aged three, and her elder brother David, five, had been picked up from school by their mother when they were intercepted by a group of men driving a van.

It's been a pretty rough year, but we feel this is where God wants us to be, and we will stay with our mission

David Lloyd  
US missionary  
Foster sister Miriam Meinvil, aged seven, was also in the car.

Wielding guns, the men grabbed the children from their car and fled.

Haitian police quickly traced the children's captors, raiding a residential apartment a day after the children were seized.

No-one was harmed during the raid, police said, and seven suspected gang members were arrested.

One of those held was reported to be a former police officer.

Staying on

The children's father, David Lloyd, said he received phone calls demanding ransom payments during the 24 hours the three children were held.

One unidentified caller asked for a payment of \$350,000 (£198,000), Mr Lloyd told the Associated Press.

Mr Lloyd, an evangelical minister from Claremore, Oklahoma, runs a charity that cares for 21 Haitian foster children.

He plans to stay in Haiti with his wife, Alicia, who helps run the charity, Mr Lloyd told AP.

"It's been a pretty rough year, but we feel this is where God wants us to be, and we will stay with our mission."

Elections due

Violence linked to poverty and the lack of a strong central government has mushroomed in Haiti since the ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

More than 800 people have died in violence during 2005 despite the presence of 7,000 United Nations troops in the country.

Journalists and foreigners have become targets, with a rash of killings and kidnappings turning much of the capital into a no-go area.

Democratic elections are scheduled for December, but there are fears that flawed polls could prompt fresh violence.

**Haitian Police Free Oklahoma Couple's Kidnapped Children**  
**WISC, Channel3000.com**  
**November 1, 2005**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Police in Haiti said they rescued unharmed two kidnapped children and a foster child of a U.S. missionary couple during a raid on an apartment in Haiti's capital.

Police say 3-year-old Hannah Lloyd, her 5-year-old brother David and their 7-year-old foster sister Miriam are the children of Pentecostal minister David Lloyd and his wife, Alicia, of Claremore, Okla.

The children were abducted after they left school on Friday and were rescued the next day.

Lloyd and his wife run "Missions in Haiti," which helps raise 21 Haitian foster children.

Lloyd said he's relieved to have his three children back home after they were kidnapped in Haiti by seven men sporting police uniforms.

He said someone phoned him asking for a \$350,000 ransom for the children's release, but said he couldn't be sure it was the kidnappers.

One of the captors has been identified as a former Haitian policeman. Authorities are still investigating whether the other six men are former or current officers.

David Lloyd and his wife Alicia said they're happy their own children were found unharmed and won't leave Haiti because of the kidnapping. They say they feel they're where God wants them to be.

Lloyd said, "It's been a pretty rough year, but we feel this is where God wants us to be, and we will stay with our mission."

**Haiti's police force to be scrubbed clean**  
**Radio Jamaica**  
**Wed Nov 2, 2005**

Wednesday Haiti's Police Chief, Mario Andresol, announced plans to clean up the police force amid allegations of corruption, drug trafficking and other criminal activities.

Mr. Andresol says he would apply zero tolerance against all police officers involved in criminal activities such as drug trafficking, kidnapping and murder.

More than 20 police officers have been arrested and placed under investigation for possible involvement in drug trafficking, kidnapping and massacres in slum strongholds of supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Authorities there say the police cleanup is necessary in establishing the credibility of the institution.

The police have been accused of killing and jailing supporters of the ousted president, but the US-backed interim administration has repeatedly rejected these accusations.

**Still hellish in Haiti**  
**Inside Bay Area**  
**Daily Review Online**  
**Op-Ed**  
**November 1, 2005**

HAITI, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, is a failed state. Its history is replete with corruption and violence. Haitian governments espousing the loftiest principles have repeatedly embraced brutality and almost indescribable thievery, ever since the nation declared its independence from France, in 1804.

Emblematic of the country is its capital, Port-au-Prince. In its streets rise mountains of garbage, far exceeding the governments capacity to remove it and seriously threatening the peoples health. Haitis government is broke. Last year, Haiti operated on a budget of \$330 million — about what Providence, R.I., spends on its school system. Among many of the consequences is that much of the countryside is controlled by gangs.

If Haitis coming election is, as feared, inconclusive, it may set the countrys governmental development back even further. So the balloting first scheduled for October — with some 30 people running for president and candidates for the 129-seat legislature — has been postponed, till December. Yet even preparations made during this added time may prove insufficient to achieve a conclusive election.

## **U.S. businessman seeking to be Haiti's president skips deadline**

**ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU**

**Associated Press**

**Mon, Oct. 31, 2005**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - A U.S. businessman seeking to run for president of his native Haiti said he ignored Monday's deadline to prove his citizenship to a new commission established by the country's interim government.

Dumarsais Simeus, who rose from poverty in Haiti to become owner of a large food services company in Mansfield, Texas, said he was not among the dozens of candidates to submit paperwork to the commission - which the government said was a requirement to stay in the race.

Haitian electoral officials had said the businessman could not run for president because the constitution bars candidates who have dual nationality and haven't lived in the country for the previous five years.

The Supreme Court then ruled that electoral officials had failed to prove that Simeus had given up his Haitian citizenship - prompting the interim government to create the new commission.

Simeus said he does not consider the commission legitimate.

"They have no right to ask me for anything," he told The Associated Press. "The Supreme Court has ruled I could run, and I will be running, period."

The elections, tentatively scheduled for mid-December, will replace the interim government imposed after a rebellion forced the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Michel Brunache, a member of the newly formed commission, declined to specify who had submitted paperwork to the nationality commission.

"Any candidate who has not filed his forms with us has now de facto quit the race," said Brunache, who is also the presidential chief of staff.

Some three dozen candidates are on the presidential ballot for elections, which have been postponed twice.

Haiti's electoral commission, which has been struggling to register voters and organize the balloting, held a lottery Monday to decide where each candidate will appear on the ballot. Rene Preval, a former president and one-time ally of Aristide, drew the number one spot - a key position in largely illiterate Haiti. Simeus received number 36.

Simeus declared his candidacy three months ago, joining 33 others in the race. Critics challenged his candidacy, saying it violated Haiti's constitution, which requires candidates to have citizenship.

Simeus, 66, has said he never renounced his Haitian citizenship when he moved to the United States more than 40 years ago, and he is a dual citizen.

In 1996, with \$55 million financing, Simeus bought Portion-Trol Foods from Flagstar Corp., the former parent company of Denny's restaurants. He renamed it Simeus Foods International Inc. and the food processing business south of Fort Worth now generates \$155 million a year.

**Haiti in uproar over American candidate for presidency**  
**by Clarens Renois**  
**Caribbean Net News**  
**Wednesday, November 2, 2005**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): The prospect of a candidate for the Haitian presidency holding a US passport has caused an uproar in the troubled, impoverished Caribbean nation as it heads for landmark elections.

Dumarsais Simeus is campaigning to become head of state despite the opposition of the interim government and receiving threats as he seeks votes from the public.

The "affaire Simeus", as it has become known, has dominated the campaign for December election, the first election since President Jean Bertrand Aristide fled Haiti in February 2004.

Simeus, who has spent more than 40 years in the United States and made his fortune with a grocery chain in Texas, is one of 35 candidates in the race but his name is the most mentioned because of the controversy over his passport.

Haiti's electoral council banned Simeus from taking part in the election, saying candidates could not have dual nationality. But the supreme court overturned the decision.

Interim prime minister Gerard Latortue highlighted during a visit last month by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Haiti's law states that "foreigners" could not hold an elected office. Boniface Alexandre, the interim president, has also vowed to make sure that foreign nationals do not stand in the election.

Since the supreme court rebuff, the government has set up a commission to examine the nationalities of all the candidates.

Simeus, 66, has campaigned on the promise of reviving the country's finances and providing a meal every day for every Haitian -- an attractive slogan in a country where poverty is endemic.

He admits that he has an American passport but insists his Haitian roots are just as important. "My grand-parents and parents were born in Haiti," he said. "I am, and I will die Haitian."

Simeus told AFP in an interview that had the supreme court ruled against him he would have withdrawn. But he also said that the action against him by the government was "anti-constitutional".

His presence in the campaign has divided the country however. Some of Simeus' rivals have said they will not take part in the election if Simeus does.

"There is no question of accepting Simeus in the contest," said Guy Philippe, head of the former soldiers who led the rebellion that forced Aristide to flee into exile.

Judie Roy, the only woman in the battle, said that letting Simeus stand would be "anti-constitutional".

Myrlande Manigat, a constitutional expert who is standing for Haiti's senate in the series of elections, has called on Simeus to withdraw and warned "he could be overthrown if he wins the election".

While the government agonises over what many consider to be a crisis, Simeus is pursuing his campaign.

"I have a certain expertise which I have proved. I have an expertise in managing businesses and creating jobs. I have some good ideas to open the door to foreign companies," he said.

"But above all I want everyone involved. I don't want to exclude anyone. I want to offer opportunities to each person in this country."

Simeus has toured Port-au-Prince promising to create jobs and provide meals but his car was pelted with stones when he went to the Bel Air shanty town that remains a stronghold for ousted leader Aristide.

During her visit, the US secretary of state said that anyone who wants to stand should be allowed to, though she did not mention the name of the businessman with a US passport.

**System Reportedly in Place for Holding 2005 Elections in Haiti**  
**Organization of American States' Insulza lauds successful voter registration**  
**By Eric Green**  
**Washington File Staff Writer**  
**US State Department**  
**31 October 2005**

Washington -- Haiti's "great success" in conducting a voter-registration campaign means that a system is now in place for the country to hold presidential and legislative elections during the first week of December, says José Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Insulza said the campaign has led to the registration of some 3.4 million eligible voters in Haiti as of October 26.

"This means that we now have a system in place with which to carry out the elections," Insulza said in an October 26 statement. However, he expressed concern over certain remaining organizational and logistical difficulties. Such difficulties caused a previous postponement of the elections.

As an OAS spokesman explained, the elections in Haiti were originally scheduled for October and November, but the schedule was pushed back due to the complexity of organizing the vote. However, the plans to hand over power to a new democratically elected government on February 7, 2006, have not changed.

The elections will be the first in Haiti since the country's former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, resigned his office and left the country in February 2004 in the wake of armed violence and political upheaval.

In his statement, Insulza said, "The concern of the international community has been to ensure that the election takes place when it is supposed to take place -- that is, the first week of December."

The United States is providing \$15 million to support Haiti's 2005 elections; in 2004, it provided \$8.7 million to support Haiti's electoral process. (See related article.)

Insulza's remarks follow those of U.S. State Department official Patrick Duddy, who has described Haiti's registration process as the "most comprehensive, transparent, and fraud-free ever conducted" in the history of the Caribbean nation.

Duddy, deputy assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, said at an October 20-21 international donors' conference for Haiti that the over 3 million Haitians who have registered to vote will set the stage for broad participation in the elections. Duddy led the U.S. delegation to the donors' conference, held in Brussels, Belgium. (See related article.)

The OAS's Insulza said his organization's support for Haiti's voter-registration campaign is designed to provide a "peaceful transfer of power [so] that we can begin a new stage in the history of Haiti."

He emphasized the need for the OAS and the international community to remain in Haiti after the elections, in order to support future democracy-building efforts.

"The democracy that we're trying to bring to Haiti, the political stability and the security that we want to bring, is important for the rest" of the Western Hemisphere, said Insulza.

**Bill to Aid Haiti Hailed by Prelate**  
**Zenit News Agency**  
**November 1, 2005**

WASHINGTON, D.C., NOV. 1, 2005 (Zenit.org).- Senate legislation aimed at granting preferential trade treatment to Haiti could help stimulate the economic recovery of the poorest nation in the hemisphere, says a U.S. bishop.

Bishop John Ricard, chairman of the U.S. episcopate's International Policy Committee, thanked the measure's sponsor, Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio, for his "consistent support for the human and economic development of the people of Haiti."

The Haiti Economic Recovery Opportunity Act was introduced Thursday.

Specifically, the bill would grant duty-free status to apparel made in Haiti. DeWine sponsored similar legislation last year, but Congress adjourned before completing action on it.

"Not only could this bill, once enacted, create many new jobs in that depressed economy," Bishop Ricard of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Florida, said in a letter to DeWine, "but equally importantly, it could stand as a beacon of hope to the people of Haiti, signaling the intention of the United States to follow through with essential economic assistance."

**A lament for Haiti**  
**Franklin W. Knight**  
**Jamaica Observer**  
**Wednesday, November 02, 2005**

Franklin W. Knight

Haiti has enormous symbolic significance for every Caribbean person. After the United States of America, Haiti was the second free country anywhere in the Americas. It was the first independent Caribbean state. It was the first Caribbean state to defy the world successfully and the first state to abolish slavery in the history of the world. It was also the first state to try to reconcile the spirit and the letter of the law by establishing universal principles of human rights.

The first Haitian constitution declared all people equal regardless of race, colour, creed, condition or occupation.

Those mighty ideals strongly challenged the prevailing political thought in the powerful states of the 19th century world, and Haiti paid dearly throughout the following centuries for its audacity. Haiti, however, deserves better, especially from the neighbouring Caribbean people who owe a lot to early Haitian initiatives.

The good news is that Haiti is at present establishing a procedure for implementing national elections in late 2005.

The United States ushered out the last elected head of state two years ago and the country has not had general elections in five years. The unwarranted presumption on the part of the United Nations and the Organisation of American States is that new elections will now produce a battery of elected and appointed leaders who will usher in an era of democracy.

The idea of using general elections as a sort of litmus test of democracy is a peculiarly North American misconception. Almost all countries hold elections of some sort. Only a handful can be considered to be genuinely democratic.

Nevertheless in Washington supreme confidence exists that holding elections represents the best milestone-marking movement on the road to democracy. In the case of Haiti, the interim government of designated prime minister Gerard Latortue has been haemorrhaging public confidence like a decapitated chicken on the run. Elections driven more by political desperation than intelligent design are not, however, the panacea for Haiti.

The problems of Haiti are threefold. It is poor and economically undeveloped. It lacks a strong civil society. And its political culture is virtually non-existent. All three problems are intimately connected and that is the bad news.

Haiti is dismally poor, with about 80 per cent of its people living below the poverty line. With a population of almost eight million, Haiti has more than three times the population of Jamaica. Its area of 10, 714 square miles makes it more than two and one-half times the size of Jamaica. In all the basic indices that measure social and economic well-being Haiti falls far behind Jamaica.

The Gross Domestic Product per capita in Haiti amounts to merely US\$1,600, or about one-third the figure for Jamaica. The unemployment rate exceeds 65 per cent of the labour force. The country

exported a mere US\$321 million worth of products in 2003, about one-seventh of the exports of Jamaica. Haiti also imported far more goods proportional to the value of its exports than its neighbouring island. Jamaica has about 6,000 more motor vehicles than Haiti and more than 18,700 miles of road compared to Haiti's 4,160 miles for a far larger geographical area.

Other statistics on Haiti are equally dismal. The illiteracy rate hovers around 50 per cent compared with Jamaica's 15 per cent. Haiti has roughly four television sets per thousand people compared with 306 in Jamaica, and 80,000 legal internet users versus more than 600,000 in Jamaica. The life expectancy in Haiti is 50 years and 73 years for Jamaica.

Political stability has continually evaded Haiti since 1804 when it became a free state. At present, there is a deep thirst for political expression reflected in the large number of active political parties. These include Fanmi Lavalas (Lavalas Family) the party founded by ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the National Front for Change and Democracy, the National Congress of Democratic Movements, the Movement for the Installation of Democracy in Haiti, the Haitian Christian Democratic Party, and the National Progressive Revolutionary Party. These parties, however, all lack broad popular support and, given Haiti's tragic political history, any track record of open political participation. In any case, political legitimacy is hard to establish without common allegiance to the rule of law, and that is manifestly absent in Haiti today.

Holding elections in Haiti will be no easy accomplishment. Early in 2005 the Organisation of American States proposed spending more than US\$22 million to support the Haitian electoral council. The goal was to set up hundreds of voter registration stations around the country. Voter registration was hampered, however, by the fact that some 40 per cent of Haitians have no birth certificates. Moreover, the plan to use American-made electronic voter machines disregarded the scarce and unreliable supply of electricity in most communities.

Can Haiti then be saved? Of course it can. More important, it should. The international agencies, led by the Caribbean states, are vital to any permanent change in Haiti, but they should have their priorities straightened out. Elections should not be the top priority. Building a sound economic and social base should be. The foremost Haitian needs are in education, the police force, and poverty relief. The money devoted to elections should be directed to building schools, health centres and roads as well as training a police force.

Those are the basic needs. The country should be entirely disarmed, a task that would require boosting the United Nations armed forces and possibly supplementing that with recruits from the Caribbean states. That would be a signal effort in good neighbourliness.

Haitian exile communities in North America and Europe can provide the basis for civilian reconstruction, not just for employment in the political process. Just as Cubans are helping out with medical personnel, the Caricom states should help train Haitian teachers, bureaucrats and the police. Haiti should be as much a regional responsibility as an international one. Helping to rebuild Haiti is a long-term engagement. But it would be worth it in the long run, not just for Haitians but for the entire Caribbean. After all, the success of Haiti should be important for all Caribbean states.

**UTSA group hosts Nov. 1 screening of film on Haiti human rights abuse**  
**By Adi Pavlovic**  
**Student Writer, College of Liberal and Fine Arts**  
**October 31, 2005**

(Oct. 31, 2005)--The Progressive Student Organization, a UTSA student organization, and the Haiti Action Committee will host the screening of Kevin Pina's new documentary, "Haiti: The Untold Story," at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov.1 in Main Building Room 0.106 at the 1604 Campus. The screening is free and open to the public.

The film chronicles human rights abuses by the Haitian police and the July 6, 2005, massacre by United Nations forces of civilians in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil. The documentary has been described as "53 minutes of human rights hell in Haiti."

**Today's headlines**

**UTSA hosts Nov. 4 plays, workshop on arts curricula**

**UTSA Today**

**October 31, 2005**

-----  
Kevin Pina, an independent journalist and filmmaker, is associate editor of The Black Commentator and Haiti special correspondent for Flashpoints. He is founder of Haiti Information Project (HIP) and currently resides in Haiti.

Pina's film work includes "El Salvador: In the Name of Democracy" (1985), "Berkeley in the Sixties" (1990), "Amazonia: Voices from the Rainforest" (1990) and "Haiti: Harvest of Hope" (1997).

HIP is a nonprofit alternative news service providing coverage and analysis of breaking developments in Haiti. The organization has shown the Haiti documentary across the United States and Canada with the goal of sparking debate and interest in the Haitian crisis that is stirring.

Since the ouster of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, thousands of followers of Lavalas Family political party, which promotes democratic reform, have been killed or exiled by the United States-installed government of Gerard Latortue. U.N. services have occupied the country, relieving United States, French and Canadian forces in order to stabilize the situation.

For more information, contact Nancy Ayon at (210) 843-6726.

## **Short-term mission teams needed for radio outreach in Haiti, no experience needed**

**October 31, 2005**

### **Mission Network News**

Haiti (MNN) -- The country of Haiti is the poorest nation in its hemisphere. It's been affected by political unrest, famine, flooding and more. Their need is desperate. But, so is their need for God's Word. And, that's why your help is needed.

Men for Missions, the layman's voice of OMS International, is appealing to you to join them on a short-term mission trip to Haiti. Men for Missions' Wayne King says you can help in various ways. "One is to distribute the little solar powered radios to the various people in towns and remote areas where they have no electricity. (They) have virtually no ability to read or write, so the Gospel over the radio gives them the opportunity to hear what they cannot read through the Scriptures."

The radios broadcast radio 4VEH all around Haiti. However, the trips aren't just limited to radio distribution. There are also construction needs.

Short-termers can also have a hand at evangelism. "They will be able to go out with a Haitian co-worker. And, while the co-worker is using methods such as Evangelism Explosion or the little evangelism cube (EvangeCube) that is used to share the Gospel, they will be able to interact with the Haitians, give their testimony, have it interpreted and very likely see many people come to the Lord."

King says this outreach is very effective. "Each trip that we take we see multitudes make a profession of faith."

Men for Missions is looking for individuals or church groups to go. Go to our Short-term Mission Database (STMDB.org) and do a search for Men for Missions to find a trip that suits you.

Organizations featured in this article:

Men for Missions International

P.O. Box A

Greenwood IN

46142-6599

Phone: (317) 881-6752

FAX: (317) 865-1076

Email: [mfmi@omsinternational.org](mailto:mfmi@omsinternational.org)

URL: <http://www.sonnysolar.com>

**Bel Air interview with Rosean Baptiste**  
**by Lyn Duff**  
**San Francisco Bayview**  
**Interview with Haitian Militant Under Occupation**  
**Thursday, November 03 2005**

Since U.S.-funded death squads and "rebels" overthrew Haiti's popular democracy in February 2004, media reports have been filled with the voices of those with power, influence and money in Haiti. What's been missing are the voices of ordinary Haitians, members of the pro-democracy movement, who overwhelmingly oppose the new regime of Florida businessman turned prime minister, Gerald Latortue.

'We won't be peaceful and let them kill us any longer'

Since U.S.-funded death squads and "rebels" overthrew Haiti's popular democracy in February 2004, media reports have been filled with the voices of those with power, influence and money in Haiti. What's been missing are the voices of ordinary Haitians, members of the pro-democracy movement, who overwhelmingly oppose the new regime of Florida businessman turned prime minister, Gerald Latortue.

SF Bay View correspondent Lyn Duff spoke with Rosean Baptiste, a resident of Bel Air in Port-au-Prince, whose neighborhood has been targeted since 2004 for mass arrests and killings by both the United Nations and the Haitian National Police.

Lyn Duff: Last time we spoke, the situation in Bel Air was transforming for the first time since the invasion of Haiti by U.S. troops last year. For the first time since then, the people rose up and resisted the atrocities, the crimes being committed against them by the paramilitary death squads, the polices and the foreign military. What exactly happened?

Rosean Baptiste: We, the residents of Bel Air, took over our neighborhood. We erected barriers at the crossroads to prevent the police and the white ("white" is translated from the Kreyol "blan" which can also mean "foreign") military from entering our area. We also set up a special watch to warn the residents of attack from both the official forces and from the paramilitary groups, the reconstituted death squads. This rebellion in Bel Air continued for several months before it was quashed by the United Nations soldiers last December.

The situation in our neighborhood is grave, but we are hopeful because we know that we have taken matters into our own hands. We aren't sitting by peacefully watching while military snipers execute us one by one. We aren't sitting on our hands while each and every nonviolent manifestation (or demonstration) is met with murderous force on the part of the police.

Lyn Duff: How would you describe the movement in your neighborhood? Are you trying to seize power?

Rosean Baptiste: No, not at this time. We would like to build for a time when we could seize power, but we are not prepared yet for that and we don't have the resources or arms to launch a civil or a revolutionary war at this very moment.

Lyn Duff: When you say "we," you're talking about ...

Rosean Baptiste: We are the poor majority. We are the ordinary Haitians, the 95 percent of the country that lives in the poorest conditions. We are the people who have no jobs or just have a little work to maybe buy a small amount of food to keep from starving each day.

We are the people who cannot pay for a doctor when we are sick. We are the people who cannot pay the 200 gourdes a year to send our children to school (17 gourdes equal one U.S. dollar). We are the people who live in houses made of sheets of hammered tin or concrete blocks or scraps of cardboard and trash.

Our movement at this point is a movement of resistance. We are abandoning the position of the moderates who tell us to be peaceful and work within the system while we starve and the interim government kills us. While we don't have the weapons to go seeking out battles, we have decided as a community that enough is enough.

When the white military comes in here with the police or the paramilitary death squads, we won't be peaceful and let them kill us any longer. We won't be peaceful and let them kidnap and disappear our children.

No, since the murderers fired on our protest march on Sept. 30, 2004, we have changed our strategy, and today we say, "If you come in here to shoot us, we will resist. If you come in here to arrest us illegally, we will fight you off with stones and bottles and whatever weapons we can find or create."

Lyn Duff: How would you describe to me the conditions that made your resistance necessary?

Rosean Baptiste: Last year, on Feb. 29, 2004, the United States and France strangled our democracy. The members of the disbanded military who came together to overthrow President Aristide admit the CIA funded them.

Even the U.S. government acknowledges that they trained these men and that some participated in so-called "democracy enhancement" programs in the Dominican Republic which were paid for the U.S. government and were essentially a training and organizing workshop for the people who staged the coup.

I should say, this coup caused many deaths initially. Some say thousands were killed in the weeks that the reorganized death squads came across from the D.R. and began to take control over the countryside in the North. But since then, since the U.S. ambassador (Foley) put Latortue in place, since then many people have died.

Lyn Duff: If a person gets their news from the New York Times, they're going to be left with the impression that few people have been killed and those that have died in Haiti have primarily been killed by what they call the "pro-Aristide gangs."

Rosean Baptiste: And that is so ridiculous to us when we hear those kinds of reports. Do I look like a gang member to you? I am just a regular person, a woman who is tired of all this garbage. I don't hang out on the streets drinking and gambling all day.

By saying we are "gang members" or "chimères," the press are trying to discredit our demands for justice because the journalists think: Who cares about giving justice to those criminal gang members who just sell drugs and misbehave?

But our demands do have point and we should be listened to, but it is also because of this dynamic that that poor are ignored, that we have chosen not just to make peaceful demands but also to take actions to defend ourselves and promote our cause. Besides, if fighting back against the horrors of this government and the foreign governments that oppress us is criminal, well then I am proud to commit this crime.

By the way, we also wouldn't call ourselves "pro-Aristide" because even though most people in our neighborhood voted for Aristide - just like the majority of the country did - we do not limit ourselves to simply calling for his return. We have different opinions about this amongst ourselves.

Some here are Lavalas every moment of the day and in every kind of way, and for them this struggle will end when Titid returns to the National Palace. But for more and more of us, this is not just about Titid's return. It is about a real and lasting change that we are demanding, and if he returns to the National Palace then the conditions would need to change so that he could improve our lives.

Lyn Duff: And what is that change?

Rosean Baptiste: Well, some people say this is unrealistic for the poor to dream this, but we would like to be respected, to have human dignity. We would like to be able to work, to have food for our children.

There is a great distance from where we, the poor, are and where the rich are. We demand that that distance be closed and that the rich come closer to us and that they experience our lives, they experience hunger.

They need to come down from the mountains to the sea. (Areas where the wealthier people in Port au Prince live are all in the foothills or mountain suburbs such as Petion-ville and Kenscoff. The slums are most in the low-lying area, and in particular there are a number of slums that directly border the sea, such as Cite Soleil and La Saline. Bel Air, however, is actually on top of a hill and nowhere close to the water, but I think that she was speaking more metaphorically.) And we want to come closer to where they are and to have the same opportunities for education and for life that the rich already have.

You see that it is very difficult to be poor in Haiti because when you are poor you have nothing to rely on. If you have many children and you cannot feed them all you have to choose: Which one will I not

feed this meal? This is a difficult choice that no mother should have to make. And it is not something that I would wish on a rich mother as revenge for how she treats me.

Lyn Duff: So let's back up a minute and return to the here and now. You've said you're afraid of what the HNP, the death squads or the foreign military would do to you if they heard you speaking out this way.

Rosean Baptiste: No, I am not afraid. I am realistic. You have to understand what is happening in our area every day to understand the reality that we face.

Even someone like you who knows what is going on, who is a friend of the Haitian people, who speaks Kreyol, even you do not feel the full weight of the basket we carry on our heads, because you can return to your home with your foreign passport and you will be safe. But we have no security.

Lyn Duff: Why don't you detail then the reality that you face, the horrors that daily life in Haiti under the new regime brings. What's going on right now that people all over the world who care about changing this horrible situation of exploitation, this malevolence, should know about?

Rosean Baptiste: Since Sept. 30, 2004, when we began to have an organized resistance to the Latortue regime, there has been a growing oppression of the poor in all areas of the country against all types of people - market women, students, residents of poor neighborhoods like ours, street children, pastors and priests - who tell the truth about what is happening. The oppression is widespread and systematic. When you speak the truth, you risk being murdered.

There have been many other incidents as well. Pastors and priests have been illegally arrested, assassinated or disappeared. Students have been dragged from their classes and beaten by other students who are part of a pro-occupation student organization funded by USAID. Police, foreign military and death squads have murdered women at the market.

The former military are armed with sophisticated weaponry, and they set up their own roadblocks, search people's cars and the tap-taps (communal taxis or buses) and arrest people. Those arrested just disappear. Sometimes their bodies are found in a few days or a few weeks dumped in a ravine. The hands are tied together and sometimes the heads are cut off or they are covered with burns on their backs.

Lyn Duff: Are all of these crimes that you have mentioned been committed by the members of the disbanded Haitian military that are now reformed into their own death squads?

Rosean Baptiste: No, the Haitian National Police have committed unbelievable atrocities. Since the coup, the HNP has hired and integrated into the police force many former soldiers who were part of the army that was disbanded after the last coup.

And let me remind you that the army was disbanded because they committed so many crimes against the people, like raping women and little girls, the massacre of peasants in the North and murdering people for sport. These rapists and murderers were hired into the police force even though most of

them were part of the armed groups that took over the country earlier this year and then set lose to wreak havoc on the population.

We know the conditions of violent repression are very bad. I think now the Latortue regime is exposing its true colors and that now is the time for people everywhere in the world who oppose this kind of system and these horrors to stand up and resist.

Email Lyn at [athenadk@aol.com](mailto:athenadk@aol.com).

**U.S. health group receives world's largest humanitarian prize**  
**October 31, 2005**  
**Boston Globe**

GENEVA --A Boston-based health organization received the world's largest humanitarian prize Monday for its innovative efforts to provide medical services to the poor.

The \$1.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize will allow Partners In Health to "bring more people on board to provide decent health care to everyone in need," said Paul Farmer, director of the prize-winning group.

Partners In Health, created in 1987 by a group of physicians, set up its first community-based health care project in Cange, a small impoverished settlement in Haiti.

The group now provides help to about 1 million Haitians every year. Partners In Health trains local people to deliver basic health care, such as providing antiretroviral drugs to HIV/AIDS patients, health care to pregnant mothers or treating illnesses such as malaria. The group now also works in Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, Russia, Rwanda and inner-city Boston.

"I am grateful for the chance to turn this into a movement," said Farmer. "I am inspired to be part of a growing movement to eliminate poverty."

Steven Hilton, who heads the Hilton Foundation, lauded Partners In Health for its "extraordinary contribution in alleviating human suffering" and for its role in furthering "ideas of social justice and challenging the conventional wisdom of public health care funding."

Partners In Health was selected from among some 200 nominations. After creating a shortlist, members of the Hilton Foundation visit the organizations and an independent international jury then chooses the winner.

This is the 10th time the award has been presented. Earlier prizes have gone to SOS Children's Villages and Medecins Sans Frontieres, or Doctors Without Borders.

The Hilton Foundation was created in 1944 by hotel entrepreneur and business leader Conrad N. Hilton, who left his fortune to the foundation and instructed it to help the most disadvantaged and vulnerable throughout the world.

© Copyright 2005 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

## **Predatory lenders targeting Haitians**

**BY TIM HENDERSON**

**The Miami Herald**

**thenderson@herald.com**

**Posted on Sun, Oct. 30, 2005**

**Vulnerable Haitian-American homeowners in North Miami have been targeted by predatory lenders who ingratiate themselves by using Creole-speaking agents, stealing home equity with inflated fees and other payouts.**

A Haitian-American mother was proud to own a North Miami home despite relatively low income from a healthcare job.

But predatory lenders, gaining her trust with Creole-speaking agents who promised to fix up the house, put her further into debt with exorbitant fees and other payouts.

Her mortgage payments skyrocketed from less than \$600 to \$1,400 a month. Adding to the pain, an agent called after closing and demanded another \$9,000 check.

"They target the people who can least afford it," said Esther Blynn, a North Miami attorney who spoke at a meeting on predatory lending and cited the above victim as an example. Blynn said she was able to get some of the money back, but the client is still locked into years of high payments.

'Part of the pitch is, `Trust us. We're one of you,' " Blynn said.

While the lenders themselves may not be Haitian-Americans, they target that community with Creole ads and Creole-speaking agents, officials and investigators said.

Blynn would not reveal the name of the firm that refinanced her client's house until they reach a settlement.

"They get a couple of Haitians to do their dirty work," said North Miami council member Jacques Despinosse, who arranged a recent meeting to publicize the problem. The Central Homeowners Association held another meeting after the Despinosse meeting on the issue.

Warning signs of predatory lending: door-to-door sales; high pressure to close without close attention to paperwork; lenders combined with home-renovation firms; and lack of interest in the homeowner's income.

Predatory lenders are looking for a big cash payout at closing, in the form of inflated fees or up-front payments to renovation firms, and don't care if the owner can afford the loan.

North Miami's property values have risen by \$800 million in recent years, said North Miami council member Michael Blynn, who is married to Esther Blynn and is also a real estate attorney.

There are remedies for those who have been ripped off: state law allows a civil judge to declare a mortgage interest-free if it violates the Florida Fair Lending Act.

But predatory lenders muddy the waters by pressuring homeowners into signing away their rights.

"There's nothing to keep you from making a high interest-rate loan if you disclose it properly," said Charlie Johns, a state financial examiner.

Neptime Dieujuste, who conducts a Haitian outreach program for the state Department of Financial Regulation, said he's looking into several cases in North Miami.

"They take advantage of people who don't speak English," Dieujuste said. ``Until recently they had nowhere to go. We're here to help."