

AoW 1.19.10

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading on the page.
3. Write a one-page reflection in your WN

This week's AoW has a collection of thoughts regarding the disastrous earthquake in Haiti.

Tens of thousands are feared dead in the aftermath of Haiti's worst earthquake in more than two centuries. Relief workers warn that the devastation from the quake, which measured 7.0 on the Richter scale, could rank with the 2004 tsunami as one of the world's worst natural disasters in living memory. Bodies lay everywhere; the capital city, Port-au-Prince, is in ruins — the presidential palace, Catholic cathedral, parliament building, schools, hospitals, and countless homes have collapsed. And rescue workers — both Haitian and those streaming in from abroad — are having difficulty reaching those trapped in the rubble because of blocked and ruined streets. Is the U.S. doing enough to help Haiti?

The U.S. must take the lead: "Not even a developed country could completely withstand such a powerful temblor so close to the Earth's surface and city center," say the editors of the Los Angeles Times. "Yet the full extent of Haiti's devastation is a result of its broken state, where 80% live below the poverty line." The only way to limit the unimaginable suffering that has and will come from this earthquake is for the U.S. to show leadership during the rescue and rebuilding to come.

We must act now: "The world has had sufficient experience with earthquake relief to know that the first 72 hours are critical," say the editors of The Wall Street Journal. We know that while natural calamities don't discriminate between rich and poor nations, it is the poor ones that always suffer most, because they lack the resources to respond quickly when disaster strikes. In the long term, Haiti needs the political and economic progress that will get "people out of the slums and shanties that easily become death traps. For now, however, we wish godspeed to the armies of relief headed for Haiti's desperate shore."

Rescue and relief work is just the beginning: "The United States has a special responsibility to help its neighbor," say the editors of The New York Times. "This is an opportunity for President Obama to demonstrate how the United States shoulders its responsibilities and mobilizes other countries to do their full part as well." Obama promised swift aid "through the coordinated efforts of the military, civilian aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations," but helping Haiti recover and rise out of the mire created by generations of misrule is "a commitment of years."

To really help, listen to what Haitians say they need: "There will be a major rescue operation; experts will argue and debate how to remake Haiti again," says Joel Dreyfuss in The Root. "Consultants will collect large fees. Bill Clinton, who has been serving as the pied piper for Haitian development, will bring investors on another trip to look for opportunity - construction companies will surely join the delegation this time. My hope is that all the experts will listen carefully to the Haitian people and help them rebuild what they need to change Haiti's future."

Source: http://www.theweek.com/article/index/105068/Earthquake_Saving_Haiti

Turn this page over to read an editorial from the Los Angeles Times. Remember, editorials are not simply a re-telling of the news; they include opinion and often conclude with a call to action.

Helping Haiti Help Itself

Devastated by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake, the country will need emergency aid -- and then help to build an actual, functioning state.

Haitians have long been prey to hurricanes and coups, their nation ravaged by erosion and corruption, mudslides and marauders, poverty and violence. Now the few economic and political gains made over five years of relative stability have been buried along with thousands of corpses in the rubble of a magnitude 7.0 earthquake. The presidential palace, parliament, government ministries and hospitals -- indeed most of the capital of Port-au-Prince -- are in ruins. An already dysfunctional state now lacks even the edifices of government. Gone too are some of the buttresses: the archbishop and his cathedral; the head of the United Nations mission and some of his top aides, who died when their headquarters collapsed.

Not even a developed country could completely withstand such a powerful temblor so close to the Earth's surface and city center. Yet the full extent of Haiti's devastation is a result of its broken state, where 80% live below the poverty line. Port-au-Prince quadrupled to nearly 3 million people in the last 25 years as Haitians fled a denuded countryside in search of food and work. They built shanties out of watered-down concrete on precarious hillsides. They didn't have water and electricity, let alone zoning and inspectors to insist on safety. The international community has made some headway in building a civilian police force to provide security, but not as much in bolstering a civilian government to provide for its people. A school to train magistrates was to reopen this month; parliamentary elections were to be held in March and a presidential election in December. Tentative investments were trickling in to tourism and industry. All of that came to a screeching halt in seconds.

Of course the United States and the international community must respond to the terrible emergency first. They must tend to the wounded, provide shelter for tens of thousands of homeless and bury the dead. But they also must plan now for rebuilding the capital and, even harder still, creating a functioning state. Yes, that's nation-building. It is the urban planning that never took place. It means working with the government to build adequate housing and schools. It requires job creation -- and not necessarily in the capital. This is an agricultural country that must be able to farm and feed itself.

For decades, the United States has turned its attention to Haiti only sporadically, only in times of crisis, when too many boatloads of hungry Haitians washed onto Florida shores or when a government was about to fall -- but then lost interest to another crisis. If the U.S. has the will and resources to build up governments in Afghanistan, Iraq, even Yemen, surely it can show leadership in building a functioning country on an island just a few hundred miles from the coast of Florida. Enough is enough for this failed state.

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 2010

Possible reflection questions for your WN:

- Does the U.S. have a responsibility to help the Haitians? Why? Why not?
- How can you, specifically, help the people who are suffering in Haiti?
- How prepared is your family to cope with a large earthquake?
- Do you agree with the editorial? Why? Why not?