

LESSON 5**POVERTY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE****Activity 2**

What role has the United States played in political and social changes in Haiti?

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE

The student will compare conflicting points of view about U.S. involvement in Haiti.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Handout 5.8 "Historical Timeline of Haiti"
- Handout 5.9 "Human Rights in Haiti: A Case Study"
- SCIS Videotape *Latin America in Transition*, Part 5, "Poverty, Human Rights and Social Change"
- SCIS Background Reading *Latin America in Transition*, Lesson 5, "Poverty, Human Rights and Social Change"

STRATEGIES

In September 1994, former President Jimmy Carter, retired General Colin Powell, and Senator Sam Nunn (Democrat-Georgia) went to Haiti to negotiate with the leaders. This mission caused much controversy in the United States. Questions were raised about the propriety of a former president infringing on the current president's role in foreign policy. To help students put this event into a historical perspective, provide students with the information in Handout 5.8 "Historical Timeline of Haiti." The teacher should make one copy of the handout and cut it into strips and give a different piece of the timeline to each student in the class. Allow students time to read the description of the event and get clarification if needed. Give students an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper and ask them to write on it in large print a key word or phrase which summarizes their timeline entry. Call students to the front of the classroom in the order that the events occurred. Have students make a human timeline by sharing their information with the class and then remaining in the front of the room holding the signs. Next, have students read Handout 5.9 "Human Rights in Haiti: A Case Study," so that they will have a broad picture of the current situation in Haiti. After all the events have been shared, ask students to explain why, in their opinion, the United States intervened in Haiti's affairs in 1994.

Next, show the discussion of the former Secretaries of State in the SCIS Videotape Part 5, "Poverty, Human Rights and Social Change" and then lead a class discussion of the following questions.

- How would you summarize the response of the former Secretaries of State to the U.S. presence in Haiti?
- Would former Secretaries of State who served for Democratic presidents have expressed a different point of view? Why or why not?
- What does Alexander Haig mean by saying that “Haiti was a ‘social engineering problem’”?
- Do you agree or disagree that former President Carter’s mission to Haiti diminished President Clinton’s credibility? Defend your answer.
- What evidence does James Baker cite to support the statement “Going into Haiti is a piece of cake. It’s getting out [that is the problem].”
- Do you agree or disagree with Baker’s statement? What evidence can you give of events since the U.S. entry into Haiti to support your position?

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF HAITI

1492 Christopher Columbus arrives at the island of Hispaniola. One of the ships, Santa Maria, runs aground on Christmas Day. Columbus' crew uses wood from the ship to build the first fort at Cap-Haitien.

1530 The Spanish treat the Arawak Indians so harshly that only a few hundred Indians are still alive. The settlers bring people from Africa to work as slaves.

1697 By this time most of the Spanish have left to find more prosperous settlements in Peru and Mexico. The French, English, and Dutch begin to settle. Many of them are buccaneers who attack Spanish ships. Spain recognizes French control of the Western third of the island and the French name it Saint Dominique.

1794 Toussaint L'Ouverture, an ex-slave, leads the first Latin American revolution, and drives the French from the island of Hispaniola.

1799 Napoleon I sends an army to restore colonial rule. L'Ouverture is captured and imprisoned in France. Many of the French soldiers contract yellow fever.

1804 General Jean Jacques Dessalines, leader of the rebels, defeats the weakened French Army and proclaims the colony independent. The country is named Haiti, and Dessalines becomes the first President. It is the first black republic in the world.

1806 Dessalines is killed and two generals, Alexander Petion and Henri Christophe, struggle for power. Petion takes control of southern Haiti and Christophe takes the north.

1818 Jean-Pierre Boyer replaces Petion and reunites the country after Christophe commits suicide. Haiti dominates the Spanish-controlled eastern part of the island.

1844 Revolt in the east. Between 1844 and 1914, 32 different men rule Haiti. Unrest is prevalent.

1915 U.S. President Woodrow Wilson sends Marines to restore order. The U.S. contends that other nations might attempt to take over Haiti if unrest continues (Monroe Doctrine). The U.S. collects money to force Haiti to pay her foreign debts. Haiti strongly resents U.S. intervention even though during the occupation the U.S. strengthens the government, builds highways, schools, hospitals, and sets up a sanitation program which eliminates yellow fever.

1934 U.S. forces withdraw from Haiti. The Haitian government encourages foreign investment, but the upper class mulattos gain the most from these investments. Political unrest continues.

1946, 1949, 1956 Unrest is so severe the army has to take control of the government.

1957 Francois Duvalier, a country doctor, is elected President of Haiti.

1967 Duvalier, "Papa Doc" as he is called, declares himself President for Life. He rules as a ruthless dictator.

1971 Haiti's Constitution is amended to allow a President to appoint his successor. When Francois dies in April, his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, then only 19, succeeds him as President for Life. "Baby Doc" continues his father's policies of using the secret police to enforce the government's policies. Because of the violence used by these groups, the people refer to them as Tonton Macoutes (bogeymen). They are in actuality the private militia of the Duvalier family.

1973 Large numbers of Haitians begin leaving because of poor economic conditions and severe treatment by the secret police.

1986 Haitians revolt against "Baby Doc," who flees Haiti. Today he lives in the French Riviera. Lieutenant General Henri Namphy, commander of Haiti's military, becomes head of the government. Namphy attempts to disband the Tonton Macoutes, but is unsuccessful.

1987 Haitian voters adopt a new constitution which provides for a government headed by a president and a national assembly. The government tries to shift control from a civilian election council to the military. Violence breaks out.

November 29, 1987 The day of the elections, terrorists attack voters at the polling places and kill more than 30 people. The election is canceled.

January 1988 New elections are held. A civilian president, Leslie F. Manigat, is elected.

June 1988 Namphy overthrows the government and seizes power.

September 1988 Officers of Haiti's presidential guard seize power from Namphy. Lieutenant General Prosper Avril declares himself president and soon takes over as dictator.

March 1990 Avril resigns after protests against his rule. Supreme Court Justice Ertha Pascal-Trouillot becomes temporary president.

December 1990 The Haitian people elect a former Catholic priest, Jean Bertrand-Aristide, (not the candidate supported by the U.S. government) as president. A new parliament is also elected. The Carter Center, established by former

President Jimmy Carter, and many other international organizations observe the elections and determine they are fair.

September 1991 A group led by Tonton Macoutes cause a revolt. Riots leave 70 people dead in the streets. Aristide is arrested and forced into exile. Lt. General Raoul Cedras takes control of the government.

1991-1992 Over 35,000 Haitian refugees are intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard as they try to enter the United States. Most are returned to Haiti despite protests by U.S. human rights and legal organizations. The United States and other members of the Organization of American States evoke economic sanctions against Haiti.

October 1993 Negotiations lead to an agreement for the stepping down of the military government and a reinstatement of Aristide. But as the time approaches, the military refuses and threatens violence if Aristide should return. Sanctions are strengthened. U.S. Navy guards Haiti to enforce the embargo.

September 15, 1994 President Bill Clinton addresses the American people to inform them of the inevitable invasion of Haiti to restore Aristide to power.

September 17-18, 1994 A U.S. negotiating team consisting of former President Jimmy Carter, Senator Sam Nunn and Retired General Colin Powell begin making progress toward peace. By 8:00 p.m. on the 18th, Carter calls Clinton and confirms that the military leaders have agreed to an October 18 date to leave Haiti.

October 17, 1994 Aristide arrives back in Haiti to restore democracy.

March 31, 1995 President Bill Clinton visits Haiti to claim success for U.S. military intervention and to hand peacekeeping duties to a multinational United Nations force.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN HAITI: A CASE STUDY

Few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have a more tragic history of human rights abuse than Haiti. At its independence in 1804, Haiti was a proud country, the first state in the region to gain its independence, the first black republic in the world, and the jewel of the Caribbean economy.

Today, the country is the poorest in the hemisphere. Haiti has virtually no industry while its countryside is denuded of forests and soil. The border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Haiti's neighbor on the other side of the island of Hispaniola, is clearly visible, with a line where the lush green mountains of the Dominican Republic end and the bald mountains of Haiti begin, stripped of their trees by people dependent on wood for fuel and cleared land for farming.

Haiti's population has been oppressed and exploited for generations. In recent decades, this repression has been carried out, first, in the brutal rule of Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, next by Duvalier's son Jean Claude "Baby Doc," and most lately by General Raoul Cedras. Each was supported by the Tonton Macoutes, a much feared paramilitary group. Brutality under Cedras reached such a level that during a five-month period in early 1994 alone, the U.S. State Department's 1994 Human Rights Report recorded 340 political murders, 131 "disappearances," and extensive torture and rape of political detainees. Actual numbers were probably higher.

In all respects, the quality of life in Haiti has been abysmal. Life expectancy at birth is fifty-six years, compared with seventy-six in Costa Rica and the United States. Fifteen percent of Haiti's children die before they are five years old. Half the population cannot read or write. In the mid-1990s, three-quarters of the Haitian population lived in absolute poverty, half lacked access to health services, sixty percent had no safe drinking water, and three-quarters were without sanitation.

In the 1990s, the brutality and the appalling economic conditions led thousands of Haitians to try to escape the island, risking their lives in flimsy boats. Many made it to the United States, the Bahamas, or other islands in the Caribbean. But many died at sea, uncounted victims of the horror that Haiti had become.

What happened? How did Haiti get that way? How did the jewel of the Caribbean become such a brutal place?

The Haitian Revolutionary War (1791-1804) left the country impoverished from ruined plantations and indemnities paid to France for independence. Built as a slave economy, independent Haiti lacked coercible labor and an indigenous economic class able and willing to risk its wealth to raise productivity. It also lacked any experience in self governance and suffered from the deaths of some of its most promising leaders during the revolutionary struggle.

For most of its first century of independence, what wealth there was in Haiti was controlled by foreigners. For example, in 1910, as few as two hundred German nationals controlled eighty percent of Haiti's international trade, all of its major utilities, and its only railroad line. And when U.S. Marines landed in 1915 to restore order, thereby beginning a lengthy occupation of the country, one of their first missions was to transport all of the deposits in Haiti's central bank to New York to assure payment of Haiti's foreign debts.

When the U.S. Marines finally left Haiti in 1934, mulatto elites who comprised less than five percent of the total population took control of the government. They retained power until "Papa Doc" Duvalier brought a black government to power in 1957. Duvalier, and later his son "Baby Doc," ruled Haiti through terror and skimmed millions from state-owned monopolies in flour, sugar, plant oils, cement, and the service industries. Finally, after three decades of repressive rule, Haitians in 1986 rose up and forced Baby Doc Duvalier and his family to flee.

The military rulers who replaced the Duvaliers were little better. Although they did not dominate the economy to the same extent that the Duvaliers did, they continued to rule by terror. They also turned to smuggling, extortion, and drug trafficking as their primary sources of income. In 1990, pressure from the international community finally led to a free election which was won by a Jesuit priest, Jean Bertrand-Aristide. Coming to power in the name of the oppressed masses and aiming to clear up corruption in government, Aristide was overthrown in September 1991 by the military after only seven months in office.

The military under General Raoul Cedras ruled until October 1994. Throughout Cedras' rule, terror and oppression predominated, even as the impoverished economy continued to decline. The Inter-American Development Bank, for instance, reported that of 252 assembly firms that existed in 1990, only 44 were still operating in 1994, and that of 46 thousand industrial workers in 1990, 40 thousand were unemployed in 1994.

Throughout this time, the international community slowly increased economic and political pressure on Cedras and his supporters to try to force them from power, but to no avail. Finally, an impending U.S. military invasion and an agreement negotiated at the eleventh hour by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, General Colin Powell and Senator Sam Nunn forced the military government to leave the country in October 1994. President Aristide returned to his poverty stricken homeland soon after, pledging to restore human rights and dignity and alleviate poverty and suffering.

With nearly two billion dollars pledged by international donors and international peacekeepers on the ground to provide law and order, Haitians have their best chance in decades to improve their lives, restore without terror, and remedy the impact of generations of plunder and exploitation on the economy, the environment, and the psyches of the people. Even so, the challenges remain formidable. Haiti faces an immense task in the years ahead.

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