



CHANGING THE REALITY OF HAITI

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The greatest strengths are achieved when global goals are linked to local energies and national financing. The problem-solving of the future will involve government, community organizations, private businesses, scientists and engineers, and volunteers.

JEFFREY SACHS (GOOD MAGAZINE, JAN/FEB 2009)



HAITI, THE PILOT COUNTRY

In April 2011, Haiti will engage in its presidential elections. Although history has proved the results will most likely not bring much change, the elections offer up a mechanism to keep the country under the media spotlight in order to: 1/ develop projects on the ground 2/ to support Haiti's culture 3/ to encourage its path towards an autonomous reconstruction.

Currently—at just one hour from Miami—some 70 percent of Haiti's population of 9 million live on less than \$2 dollars a day, making it the poorest state in the Americas [Reuters] As we spend more and more time on Facebook and other social networking sites, the globally impoverished are losing their voice. Blind noise.

Either our technologies shape us, or they will be shaped by us. Either we let the news dictate our media coverage and editorial focuses, or we “push the world forward” as Good [good.is] pushes us to do.

Never have we had such a wide range of technologies to build, aggregate, and display content. This calls for a pro-active media to make bold decisions, take risks, and maintain a focused roadmap for our universal conscience to seize action.

This project offers a gathering place for a coalition of progressive media, prominent and innovative non-profits, and innovative corporations to impact change and monitor information in a country rather than to be submissive to the fatality of breaking news coverage.

It will require us to “think different”; to operate together within a common timeframe, using interactive tools to brainstorm, build content and create dynamic ways to affect change with cell-production teams, autonomous in their execution and responsible for their delivered projects.

Ultimately, the mission should inspire and enable Haitians to develop new projects in the country, and to engage around a dedicated media from abroad.

The media will have the following missions: 1/ to surround the country with attention 2/ to build bridges between foreign entrepreneurs and the local community 3/ to re-set Haiti's psyche beyond its current perception of fatalism.

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HAITI, A CONDEMNED PEOPLE?

When and why did we accept Haiti to be the poorest country in the Western hemisphere? Isn't the state of the country an epiphenomenon mirroring our past mistakes and future responsibilities?

Haiti is a post-colonial country and the first black-led republic. In 1791, from the fires of a voodoo ceremony in Bois Cayman, the first sparks of the first slave rebellion flew. They started a revolution that led the country to its independence accorded by the French in 1804. But freedom had a price that became a century-long burden: "With 60 million to be paid to the colonial planters as a compensation, the world's first black republic took on the first Third World debt".

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What we do as scientists, as scholars, as advocates, has consequences, just as our refusal to speak or act has definite consequences. We cannot escape this condition in a society based on concentration of power and privilege... We may and should recommend the simple virtues: honesty and truthfulness, responsibility and concern. But to live by these precepts is often no simple matter. **NOAM CHOMSKY**, American Linguist & Author



The country collects a series of paradoxes: ruled by the church, but it is Voodoo that symbolizes its cultural identity. French is the official language used only by around 20% of Haitians, but Haitian Creole is what you hear in the street.

Haiti suffers massive deforestation with 2% of its original 1920s forest population—a population that covered 60% of the country—left today. Meanwhile its native population increased from 3.2 million in the 50s to 8.9 million in 2008, a population currently facing 70% unemployment. With near-constant political upheaval in the past 30 years, consistent issues with gang kidnappings and a health and food crisis in the last decade, Haiti faces a humanitarian fatigue and serious doubts about its future from within and without.



In New York, women wear oversized sunglasses to get a pedicure-manicure for around \$30-35. In Haiti, this amount is beyond the monthly income for most women. Haitian women carry their business on their head. They dispatch their goods on the sidewalk for sale but their daily income is insufficient for their children to depend upon.

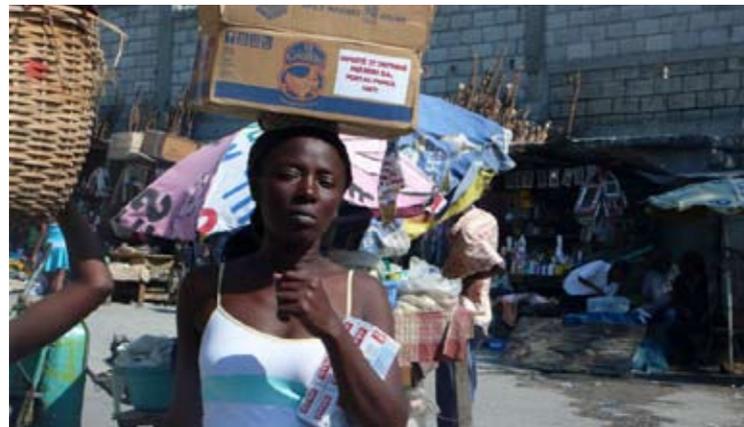
Some travel agencies' privately joke about American Airlines for building juicy incomes from luggage surpluses on their flights to Haiti. Here is the explanation: Haitians abroad live mostly in the US and Canada. In the US the largest amount is in the New York State and Florida. According to Crisis Group, in 2006, \$1.65 billions entered Haiti through its Diaspora; it represented 1/3 of the country's GDP and the highest fund Haiti was granted that year.

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We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.

JOHN F. KENNEDY, 35th President of the United States



BUILDING HAITI'S FUTURE

“In April, donors pledged \$324 million over two years to help rebuild Haiti. The Inter-American Development Bank said in June it would provide \$120 million in grants next year to improve infrastructure, basic services and disaster prevention.” [Reuters]

“The Rich Have The Blues” [Le Monde] and Western countries are learning to become poor. We might soon ask Haiti how the country did it for so long. Even with a 324-million-dollar aid package, Haiti will still need to find the strength to rebuild its foundation and develop a social middle ground while providing adapted and accessible utilities, family planning, and educational platforms.

What can be done when politics express failures or limitations in governance? What will come next when ally countries and humanitarian resources will have to reduce subsidies? What will be the form of our 21st century universal conscience to operate in an integral world?

Pandemics, water shortages, and climate change ignore borders. We are all interconnected and interdependent. That should be enough to think beyond borders and national politics for such problem solving, and it should encourage us all to share knowledge and actions with and within organizations sharing similar focuses and concerns.

What are the existing rights and ways of living in Haiti? Why don't we ask idl.org about the rights to property,

hrw.org about a human rights report, Open Society Institute about the country's social and cultural needs? What are the commuting and trading systems like? What fails in the current infrastructures? What could KIVA do to help the women in their businesses? What could the new-generation of Haitian housing built through Architecture for Humanity look like? A broader, collaborative, think tank with such organizations could build a collective roadmap for action in an unprecedented form. And this form can serve as a template for further change in other countries.

Although existing sites report on Haiti, there is little online to make Haiti an understandable and accessible culture for everyone, particularly in the preparation of the elections. And storytelling is the first tool used to incite greater involvement.

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TELLING THE STORY OF HAITI

The online media will tell Haiti's past, highlight its present, and track its future initiatives using the best of existing storytelling through content rich web documentaries, podcasts, animated timelines, as well as short text formats adjusted to our nomadic platforms and audiences inundated with information.

Our editorial mission will be to research extensively, to collect the existing and updated information, to federate the visions, to frame the content into web design solutions, to produce new content when necessary, and to set a workflow for the coalition to keep track with validation processes.

This media project will require a consensus on English language for a global media reach, but will not be limited by this linguistic necessity.

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Surely the day will come when color means nothing more than the skin tone, when religion is seen uniquely as a way to speak one's soul; when birth places have the weight of a throw of the dice and all men are born free, when understanding breeds love and brotherhood.”

JOSEPHINE BAKER, American Artist (1906-1975)



A bilingual platform could contribute to bridge communities, encourage cross-cultural collaboration, and to seek more information and knowledge from both sides. The media project will deploy in three connected parts:

1 — Haitian Roots

Through an interactive online platform (with a log-in setting for content building), we will invite historians, humanists, authors and artists abroad and within the Haitian community to collect and aggregate content, in order to compose the Haitian history. An editorial committee will be assigned to ensure non-partisan well-edited content. Next to these assigned papers: existing documents (texts, video documents, photo essays, and maps) will be repurposed using the best of our creative talents in web design.



2 — Haiti Today

In the same vein, the content for Haiti today will assemble current documentaries, articles and reports, yellow pages of the most valuable non-profit and for profit initiatives built in the current years, space for reaction and ways to volunteer. Video-conversations between people with an empathy and expertise on Haiti could include the New York Times and its varied multimedia support as a media partner.

3 — Imagined World

The last panel of the site will be a vibrant work in progress” to announce and update all initiatives on the ground. To generate regular media highlight, a “behind the scene” form of reporting, using rough cuts, interviews, blueprints, and photographic reportages will keep track of the work in progress during the setting of the elections.

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The editorial project should generate a series of partnerships. If Good Magazine became a media partner—for the quality of its visual narratives using video and infographics—we will also gain feedback from its active online audience and all brands revolving around the Good ethic. Good therefore could become a central hub to relay the different phases and achievements of the various project.

Innovations Project Descriptive

The project will invite people and entities to post initiatives in the following categories: micro-finance, infrastructures, recyclable energies, architecture and design that matters, health and family prevention and care, low cost commuting, citizen based media, and alternative forms of

education integrating a multilingual background.

As mentioned above, calls for projects in innovation might be using a platform in partnership with Good Magazine [good.is] for their extended active audience to help to gather ideas.

Opened to non-profit and for-profit entities, the project will also allow space for independent artists to contribute with adaptable ideas and an experience on the ground [for instance: hopeartists.org/]

The site will use a simple interface for contribution posting in the vein of Name Your Dream Assignment [nameyourdreamassignment.com]

Targeted Audiences

The site capacity, its content quality, its interactive tools, and its communication plan, should ensure to reach out to well-educated general audience interested in human rights, global and social issues, political changes, and innovations applied to a country's context.

To reach this first layer of audience, the site launch should be taking place in February 2011, in order for media and news magazines in the US and in Europe will be reached. The site has to benefit from major news outlets' media coverage and, with its own unique content, keep media attention driven towards the country during and after the elections.

In addition to this first audience reach, representatives of niche-audiences will be reached months in advance through identified connectors and social networking sites. Niche-communities include not only the intellectuals among the Haitian Diaspora, the AID workers and the families who adopted in Haiti, but also a large range of adventure travelers, researchers, artists, missionaries, business people, journalists and photojournalists, writers and historians who have expressed attention and interest for the Haitian culture.

To extend the ripples, we could also reach other large diasporas from developing countries with similar contexts (countries requiring permanent aid for the last 20 years) to share their own experience and wishes.

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A project initiated and written by **Claudine Boeglin**

Thank you **Mikaela Bradbury** and **Ryan Runstadler** for copy proof. Special thanks to **David Belle** for having introduced me to Haiti and for his feedback. Thank you **Gladys Thomas**, **Maud Laurent**, and **Clare Davies Drobny** for having contributed to plug the country in my heart.

The radio, the main media source for most “blue collar” Haitians, will be offered series of podcasts to be dispatched on local stations and beyond.

The project further success will be achieved if its targeted audiences become its active supporters through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, StumbleUpon, etc.

The coalition will require operating under the umbrella of at least one foundation with an adequate budget. If supported by the US government, the project could immediately find additional support. The core group will be composed with journalists/writers/historians, humanists/activists, entrepreneurs, and artists.

The core group will permanently feed the audience with regular updates, and take the pulse of the work-in-progress inviting the Haitian Diaspora and experts to raise necessary questions keeping the debate alive and vibrant.

The recruiting of entities and individuals for the innovative projects on the ground will be chosen based on their creative talents paired with realistic ideas adapted to the context of the country and materially / financially feasible within the defined timeframe. In that regard, we might favor organizations with previous experiences in the fields.

The selected individuals and entities will engage with political neutrality, an open-minded approach and a curious and civil relationship with the Haitian population. They will show talents in team management, and guarantee quality for their products to ensure long-term and viable implementations.

In Port-Au-Prince, the sign “Viv Mouvman Sosyalis” (for socialist movement) is tagged on some walls. It encapsulates the premises between hopes and fears of the 2011 elections. While any brutal news may add another chip on Haiti’s shoulders, and any breaking news will unavoidably divert our attention from Haiti, this project’s main goal will be to keep our motivation high and constant and result in an ensemble of developments that will set the tone for new forms of collaborations between non-profits, cultural entities, and corporations—and, more essentially, to give Haiti a new screenplay for the 21st century.

Overall, the project should aim to demonstrate that active encounters among people sharing humanistic, ethical, and pragmatic values have the power to build, change and bring results beyond the borders of national politics.

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Out of the sky, the birds, the parrots, the bells, silk, cloth, and drums, out of sundays dancing, children’s words and love words, out of love for the little fists of children, i will build a world, my world with round shoulders.

AIME CESAIRE, Poet and Militant