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*Canada's Crimes Against Haiti  
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Guest Commentator*

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Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin is attempting to position himself as a champion of the downtrodden. Martin talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk.

He put on quite a show at the United Nations 2005 World Summit.

"Canada cannot conceive of a world succeeding without the United Nations," said Martin. "But, make no mistake, the UN needs reform." He claims to support a reformed United Nations. Cuban president Fidel Castro also talks of a reformed United Nations. Are Martin and Castro on the same page? I don't think so. Martin's "reforms" will do little or nothing to support the world's oppressed. Castro's vision is to completely transform the planet under a better arrangement for the down pressed.

While Canada did put boots on the ground in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, Cuba also offered to help the American people. However, the American government refused Cuba's helping hand. Spokespersons for US imperialism love to use the fact that Cuba interfered in the internal affairs of Angola in the 1970s and '80s. But the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the dominant group in the struggle for Angolan independence and the democratically elected government from Portugal, had invited the Cubans to help them fight off an invasion from Apartheid South Africa. What the average citizen does not realize is that the US also asked for and received military assistance from France, the Netherlands, Spain, Haiti and others, during its war for national independence.

A new book, *Canada In Haiti: Waging War On The Poor Majority* by Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton opposes Prime Minister Martin on the question of Haiti. Fenton is a Vancouver-based independent investigative journalist, radio correspondent, and activist, who traveled to Haiti one month after the coup that removed former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power. Montreal-based Engler, who is also author of *Playing Left-Wing – From Rat to Student Radical*, is an activist who traveled to Haiti in December 2004. Canada, France and the United States are all in bed in Haiti.

Engler and Fenton spoke at a public forum and book launch at Osie and discussed the growing support in

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Canada for the people of Haiti against the Canadian, U.S., French, and Brazilian occupation. The meeting was packed. *Canada In Haiti* exposes Canadian government and business responsibility for anti-Aristide coup against democracy. The chapter "Responsibility to Protect or A Made in Ottawa Coup?" points out the coup against Aristide was actually planned on Canadian soil.

From January 31–February 1, 2003, Canada's Secretary of State for Latin America and La Francophonie, Denis Paradis, played host to a high-level roundtable meeting dubbed "The Ottawa Initiative on Haiti." Surprise, surprise, no representative of Haiti's elected government was invited. However, Otto Reich, then President George W. Bush's appointee as Assistant Secretary State for the Western Hemisphere, was in attendance.

Paradis leaked the fact that this meeting took place to journalist Michael Vastel, who reported the meeting in the March 15, 2003 edition of *L'Actualite* magazine.

Another chapter, "Using NGOs to Destroy Democracy and the Canadian Military Connection" exposes the shameful role played by many Canadian NGOs:

"Imagine a plan to provide Canadians their education, healthcare, water, and welfare through private foreign-government-funded charities, corporations and wealthy individuals. That may help us to visualize the Canadian NGO role in Haiti."

Engler and Fenton note that "without exception, documents obtained from CIDA (the Canadian International Development Agency) reveal that organizations ideologically opposed to Lavalas (Aristide's party) were the sole recipients of Canadian government funding. Civil society groups supportive of Lavalas simply did not receive development money."

Many have said NGO stands for "Nothing Going On." However, a lot is going on in Haiti, the world's first African republic. During a November 2004 visit to Haiti, Prime Minister Martin famously declared, "there are no political prisoners in Haiti." Annette Auguste, popularly known as So Anne, the folk artist and supporter of exiled president Aristide, herself behind bars, begs to disagree:

"If I am not freed there are political prisoners in Haiti. If former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and former interior minister J. Privert are not freed there are political prisoners in Haiti. If all the prisoners in Haiti who have been arrested merely for their affiliation with Lavalas are not freed, there are political prisoners in Haiti."

So Anne was arrested on Mother's Day 2004 in a military raid in which 20 US marines invaded her home "without a warrant using plastic explosives. They killed her two dogs and cuffed and hooded members of her family, including four minors under the age of 15." The pretext for the arrest was "information that she was stockpiling weapons in her home and planned to attack US interests in Haiti." No evidence was offered. So Anne is still in prison despite calls for her release.

There is a growing global movement in solidarity with Haiti. On July 21, protests against the July 6 massacre were mounted in 13 U.S. cities, five Canadian cities, in Paris, and in Brazil. Many of the demonstrations targeted embassies or consulates of Brazil because of that country's role as leader of the military component of the UN occupation force.

Africans at home and abroad must come to the defense of the Haitian people. Haiti's revolution led the way for Africans and the oppressed, worldwide. Frederick Douglass, a firm believer in the Haitian Revolution, delivered a Speech on Haiti at the World's Fair January 2, 1893 and was clear on Haiti's role in the freedom of Black Americans. Said Douglas, "We should not forget that the freedom you and I enjoy today," he said, "is

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largely due to the brave stand taken by the black sons of Haiti ninety years ago...striking for their freedom, they struck for the freedom of every black man in the world."

*Toronto-based journalist and radio producer Norman (Otis) Richmond can be heard on Diasporic Music, Thursdays, 8 p.m. – 10 p.m., Saturday Morning Live, Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 1 p. m. and From a Different Perspective, Sundays, 6–6:30 p.m. on CKLN–FM 88.1 and on the internet at [www.ckln.fm](http://www.ckln.fm). He can be reached by e-mail [norman@ckln.fm](mailto:norman@ckln.fm).*