

A Marshall Plan for Haiti

What price has Haiti paid for independence, and has that dear dream ever been achieved?

America and Haiti were born at the same time, each nation arising from belief in the fundamental liberty and reason of mankind.

Both fledgling states were deemed debtors to France. The American Patriots owed France for money and arms. Haiti was deemed to owe France for the freedom of its population held in slavery.

America quickly settled its debts with France, but the price Haiti paid for freedom was much steeper.

Haiti's political liberty was bittersweet and short-lived – it spent the next century paying France for the freedom which we hold inalienable for every man, woman and child.

That yoke crippled Haiti's stride, and more than another century later, the tiny nation that claimed the dream of liberty has been plagued by political marauders and cabals, propped up by the strategic interests of more powerful countries.

During the Cold War, the United States chose to ally with Haitian dictators who supported American interests against the Soviets. But the Cold War has been won. And too many lessons of history show that supporting tyrants breeds unrest that eventually infects the global community.

Ideals of human rights and sustainable development define our global order, but many nations have insufficient tools to achieve these ends. Every once in a while, the international community comes together to help provide those tools.

After World War II, the American Marshall Plan provided many times more than the typically minimal amount of foreign aid to the war-torn regions of Europe and Japan. Beyond altruism, the reason was self-interest. It was understood that America and the world would gain by helping these nations become economic partners contributing to world peace and prosperity – and would lose by leaving those territories vulnerable to instability wreaked by poverty and destruction.

For a brief moment, the light of the world is shining on Haiti, and what is revealed is too heartrending to comprehend.

Let us ensure that the lost life and wellbeing in Haiti is not in vain.

Let this represent a moment to begin a new chapter – a chapter for building the infrastructure necessary for true democracy and economic growth. Haiti is right in our backyard. Let's go beyond disaster relief – let's lend a real hand up to our neighbor. We'll be helping ourselves too.