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Death and Apathy at the Crossroads

WHEN I ARRIVED IN HAITI IN AUGUST OF 1993 AS A TELEVISION researcher/videographer for the American PBS series, *Frontline*, the country was already inundated in blood, and by night, it was drowned in the sounds of machine guns terrifying sleep. From the cities to the provinces, members of the arm services and their attachés had enthralled the consciousness of the population and they were snapping nerves with every kill.

On a daily basis, there were reports in almost every populous neighborhood in Port-au-Prince of abandoned cadavers left to rot or to be eaten by dogs after they were shot by some fraction of the military or the police. I, myself, afraid of blood and of dead bodies, grew accustomed to those ordinary sights. Worst of all, and most disturbing, was the total defiance, this almost ecstatic joy some of the young soldiers took in vanishing or exterminating those whom they perceived as Aristide supporters. Even a colonel of the *haut d'état major* stated, without shame, that he would be unable to prevent any bloodbath, if President Aristide were to return, and, in fact, he would perhaps be among those to kill him.

I knew my country was dangerous and pathetic, but I did not know the extent to which life was so meaningless to those with the power to exterminate. One afternoon, the producer and I were driving up to Pétionville via the Delmas route when we arrived at 82nd Street, where a huge crowd gathered. I automatically stopped the car, pulled out my camera, and headed to the center of the scene. As I traversed the crowd of onlookers, the stench of fresh blood infiltrated my nostrils. There was a group of men, who, despite the grotesqueries of what they were viewing, entrusted handkerchiefs to their mouths and noses in order to refrain from vomiting; yet they kept on staring at what I suspected was a cadaver.

When I passed through the crowd, I found myself almost on top of what was a young man, lying on his back, his body half-covered with a bloody white sheet and pieces of his brain matter strewn all around him. Despite the gruesomeness of the sight, I proceeded with taking pictures and interviewing eyewitnesses. Supposedly, the man, unnamed, tried to steal some bread and sugar from a well known street vendor, and as he was trying to flee the scene amidst the shouts of "*bare vòlè*" (catch the thief), an armed civilian shot him in the back; and as he was staggering to cross the street, he landed underneath a moving truck which crushed his brains.

Strangely, I was told that the body had been there for at least four hours. However, what perturbed me the most was that, not only was Delmas a densely populated area, with a constant flow of heavy traffic, but while I stood there, an army truck with soldiers and a police officer on a motorbike drove past the corpse as if everything were routine.

When we arrived at the hotel, I quickly rushed to my room and into the shower. For, whether imagined or real, I smelled the odor of that man's blood all over my body. After I took my shower, I sat meditatively on the bed for a moment and firmly concluded that the country of my birth, the land that I loved so much was a dangerous and volatile place. And no, it wasn't because of the 1991 military coup, which helped in the crystallization of my trepidatious sentiments; but, overall, it's the consequence of a global accumulation of events that have led to our desperate reality. Thus, the materialization of my cynicism and fear.

As a young boy growing up in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, I was aware of the violence the Macoute State of the Duvaliers had inflicted upon the people, as well as the people's own ability to inflict violence on one another. However, I never imagined witnessing or cataloging some of Haiti's senseless acts of violence. It is well known among Haitians, that we tend to exaggerate and to create believable phantasms. However, when crying grown-ups are retelling their dolorous stories, and once-proud young men and women are shamefully revealing their scars and their missing limbs, then one has to admit, however painfully, that some elements of the Haitian culture/experience are indeed diabolical.

It is quite safe and very realistic to assume that almost every human being has witnessed some level of violence, whether as a perpetrator, a victim, or a witness. As predatory and territorial animals, our capacity to inflict violence on others is unsurpassable and at times simply incomprehensible; especially when the violence seems senseless and "savage". If we were to go back to every epoch in human history and catalogue the rise to, or fall from power, we would quickly notice that every group, regardless of color or race, has been a perpetrator of violence. Of course, some groups have been more prone to violence than others; and in recent history, the victors have developed ways to hide or legitimate their hideous past by developing schemes to demonize their victims and or to portray others' acts of violence as being pure savagery and uncivilized. But, regardless of ideological or sentimental point of views, violence is violence and it's malefic.

I was three years old when I first witnessed a violent argument between my mother's father and my father. Although I do not remember the content of their disputes, I remember it was over my mother. Still to this day, although in faint imagery, I can easily recall the scene that took place on the street in front of my grandfather's house. It was almost twilight when my mother ran with me to the back of the house and then went to our neighbors' yard, where she could observe what was transpiring between my jealous and overprotective grandfather and my fervent father. From what I understood, Grandpa was opposed to Mom's relationship with Dad, who was older, already married

with children, and who was believed to be a womanizer. Whether this was true or not is irrelevant. Nonetheless, what mattered was what I perceived to be a fight between my dad and my grandpa. Although I do not remember my grandfather striking my father, I do, however, recall seeing a big wooden stick in Grandpa's hands. Whether Dad had his own weapon in his hands (rocks or a machete), I do not recollect. Nevertheless, I remember being scared and my mother had her hand over my mouth while she held me on her lap in a crouching position behind a cement wall where the street through one of its rectangular holes.

The home I grew up in, the street on which I interacted, the neighborhood in which I developed my social understanding and roles, as well as my informal education, formed and informed my world since childhood. It was within those places that I tasted violence, witnessed violence, and committed my own violent acts. In retrospect, I can analyze and label those events as such; however, when I was among those actors/witnesses, it was impossible to have the same perspective as I do now, for I was socially insulated and I had a different interpretation of my own world. What I now recognize as violence was then seen as simple fights where people got injured or beatup. Regardless, I have never mistaken the Macoutes' acts of aggression as for anything but abusive violence. Interestingly, when a civilian had knocked down a Macoute, it was always fun and well-deserved.

At the age of six, in my grandfather's house, I woke up to a loud chorus of "bare vòlè" shouted by my grandfather and my uncle who tried to corner a thief who entered the house at around four in the morning. As he ran through the front of the house trying to escape my uncle who was chasing him with a hammer, he came face to face with my grandfather who landed a cement block on his chest. The thief fell face-down spitting blood. By the time grandpa and uncle Hubert went in the back of the house to fetch a rope, the robber got up and staggered out. While he was getting up to run, my mother's and my screams had woken some of our neighbors. Before he even made it to the main street, he was caught by two guys and severely beaten. Later on, the pain administered to him became a neighborhood joke. I remember seeing the frustrated excitement of some of the men who had not had the opportunity to partake in the destruction of this man.

We breathe violence, we fear violence, we inflict violence, and we are traumatized by violence, but somehow we are unable to recognize our own apathy, our silent socio-cultural dementia that slowly devours our beings, or causes us to explode over any minute infraction. Yes, we are a fun-loving people, but our capacity to wreak senseless violence is incomprehensible.

I do not recall the exact age, but I must have been between five to seven years old when I overheard a detailed description of a gruesome murder which took place in a two-family house that belonged to a well-known singer, Dodoffe Legros. Supposedly, Dodoffe's brother, an ardent Macoute, also a Legros, had a misunderstanding with his friend, a certain Lazard Bayard, who was a well-liked and peaceful man. To resolve whatever dispute they had, Legros decided to cut off Bayard's head and leave the body in the middle of the street to rot. After hearing that story, some

of the adults and all of the children were afraid to pass by the house where the murder took place. It was believed that the house became haunted, and Bayard's ghost used to be seen roaming the neighborhood. Come to think about it, the adults seemed more perturbed by the presence of a ghost, instead of the ability of a man to cut off another man's head with a machete.

Although I grew up very happy, healthy, and well-protected by the neighborhood and overall harbor positive memories, I have nonetheless witnessed the transformation of friendly men who joined the Macoute Corps and later turned into monsters, ruthlessly defending the Duvaliers' doctrine. One such person, was a certain Gros Joel who became the arch enemy of Manno Charlemagne, a popular Haitian folk singer who sang uplifting and politically charged songs against the Duvaliers. I do not recall the exact day, but it was September 22, 1978. It must have been around seven in the evening, and the Macoutes had barely started their anniversary celebration, when Gros Joel smashed a bottle of Barbancourt rum against the blue wall of Naelle's house and then started spraying it with bullets out of an Israeli Uzi. As he was reloading a new magazine into the Uzi, he let out a deep and cynical laugh, and then said: "Fuck you, bunch of communists, tell Manno, the little singing shit, that I have the power."

Having to realize, accept, and finally admit the violent tendencies or aspects of one's country is very painful, but necessary. I could not have just gone on lecturing about Haiti's great history and denouncing the colonial powers for exploiting this peninsula and instilling violence. However true it is that the Western powers have directly participated in the political and economic destabilization of Haiti, the fact of the matter remains that we are an autonomous people and we are perpetrating the colonial masters' mentality of brutality. Violence is violence, and it is doubly painful when it is intra-inflicted and progressively degenerating national development, as well as the overall psyche.

Although it is necessary to bear witness and to be an active agent for social change, it is, however painful to process, relive, and come to terms with witnessed violence. There are times I have wished I could simply erase certain troubling memories, or at least not care as much. At other times, I feel fortunate to have a conscience and a consciousness that can recall, and make sense of those disturbing memories like the assassinations of Antoine Izmerly and Guy Malarly. I will later elaborate on both of these cases.

We breathe violence, we fear violence, we inflict violence, and we are traumatized by violence. When Aunt Lucrèse left Haiti for New York during the summer of 1993, she simply wanted a vacation, a breather from Haiti's chaos. Unfortunately, after barely a month in New York, she died in her sleep. Before her death, she complained a great deal about how the military attachés used to make their rifles sing a chorus of terror outside her bedroom window. Sometimes, she felt her head was filled with a strange ringing, an extended ping that interrupted her basic daily chores. One early Sunday morning, on her way to church, she noticed some of the neighborhood's dogs agitatedly gathered in a pack, while a slender street merchant with her hand over her mouth tried to drive them

away from a young man's corpse. When I saw her last in 1991, she was in good health and relatively happy, and within two years after the coup, prior to her death, she had aged at least five years.

We breathe violence, we fear violence, we inflict violence, we are traumatized by violence, and for most of our history, we have been governed by violence. Now, with rampant poverty, the destabilization of civil society, widespread corruption within government, and the overall use of, as well as trafficking of narcotics by Haitians regardless of class, Haitian society, especially in the urban environment, is fast becoming violent and uncontrollably dangerous. Violence is not new to the culture. We have been the victim as well as the perpetrators of violence. However, the scale and the manifestation of it seem greater than anything we have yet seen among civilians. In recent years, especially under the Duvaliers' regimes, it was the state that constantly assaulted the population; now violence, it seems, has become our common denominator.

In February 1986, after Jean-Claude Duvalier and his most trusted entourage fled the country aboard US military planes, the country experienced an explosion of vengeful violence against those poor and notorious *Macoutes* who had committed the most atrocious acts of repression against the civilian population. These civilian acts of revenge are popularly known as *Dechoukaj*. *Dechoukaj*, a metaphor in the Haitian language that symbolizes the extraction of trees from their roots, is now an anarchical tool used to annihilate the enemies of the people. It is a destructive popular political process set in place as a substitute for legal Justice.

Not to be simplistic or philosophical on the issue, but the outbursts of violence Haiti has endured, are the direct results of centuries of colonial repression during slavery; generations of political strife and governmental instability; and years of the United States' transgressive and aggressive policies. Most recently, after the 1934 US occupation, the people were subjugated to decades of ruthless dictatorial regimes that plundered the country's economy and suppressed any movement toward judicial lawfulness.

As a result of those centuries of combined repression and humiliating pain, when the people finally sought justice on their own, the state responded more violently. Consequently, given the chaotic and volatile nature of the country, individuals' anger and repressed hate spilled over and caused communal catastrophes that were manifested through savage intra-civilian, anti-civilian, and sometimes anti-police violence. Whatever the rationales or causes of those violent acts, violence begot violence and the country, regardless of sentimentality and nationalism, is still very dangerous.

In 1986, when the state's repressive lid was abruptly removed, the people's *Dechoukaj* movement materialized and became embedded in the nation's psyche. Some, mostly those who benefited from the Duvaliers' extractions, dreaded it to their cores. To others, mostly the masses, it became their wheeling justice, their power broker. In fact, the *Dechoukaj* was so widespread, that new metaphors were birthed. *Père Lebrun*, for example, which was the name of an old man who used to sell tires in Port-au-Prince, was culturally and linguistically transformed to *Pèlebren* and became the

metaphoric action-verb of tire neck lacing. Pèlebren is a very dreaded component of the Dechoukaj movement.

The fear of the people's Dechoukaj à la Pèlebren is so acute that the military under the command of General Raoul Cédras, used President Aristide's speech on October 27, 1991 as an excuse to execute, three days later, the planned coup d'état. In that speech, President Aristide referred to the use of Pèlebren as a legitimate tool against the elite's refusal to pay their back taxes or continued with their destabilization tactics against the government. Unfortunately, military might proved stronger than the people's Pèlebren. During the period of the coup, over eight thousand people were killed and close to one million people fled Haiti for the Dominican Republic and the United States.

Outside, those who fervently feared or welcomed the usage of Pèlebren, there is a "silent minority" who are absolutely opposed to the use of Pèlebren as well as the repressive tactics of the police on the basis of morality, ethics, and the simple fact that violence seems to be getting worse and the country is more divided than ever. I fall into this category. I understand the use of the Pèlebren, but I am against it on the basis of its long-term negative effect and because it is not helping to establish a state of law where everyone is equal and the country is regulated by fair and just constitutional laws. Consequently, if we continue with this lawless state of affairs, we are destined to collide in a major civil war and a more controlling foreign occupation.

We breathe violence, we fear violence, we inflict violence, we are traumatized by violence. Weeks after the departure of Duvalier, the Macoute corps was dismantled and thousands amongst the poorest of the Macoutes received different elements of the Dechoukaj. I was uncontrollably happy knowing that Duvalier and some of his cronies were gone and that the people's revolution would finally be won. I became affected, however, despite my hatred for the Macoutes, when I received pictures, articles and videos on the Dechoukaj that depicted without censorship all of the latest developments. When I saw an unedited tape and subsequent photo of a man being burned alive and his charred, fragmented body tied at the forearms to a wooden pole and festively paraded around town with a dog dressed in Macoute gear. I knew I was witnessing the psychosis and apathy of a traumatized people.

Two years later, on November 29, 1988, I remember we were at home celebrating my mother's birthday. She was expressing her wish to be in Haiti to cast her first vote in what was scheduled to be Haiti's first democratic and fair election. During the week leading upto the election, my colleagues and I were hosting different radio shows around the Boston area, informing our audience about the candidates and the electoral process. Many of us were skeptical about the outcome of the election if it were to take place. Up until the 29TH, everything seemed normal; the people's fear slowly vanished and they made their way to the voting places to fulfill their citizenship duty. Some of the streets were lined with people, for miles and those who had the chance to cast their votes were euphoric until the cultural swindlers manifested their gripe. Macoutes, who had been

constitutionally banned for ten years from all governmental posts, were enraged and reacted to their squalid nature by violently disrupting the election at one of the voting places on *ruelle Vaillant*. They opened fire with their US made machine guns, leavin, about twenty people lying in a pool of their own blood.

On the day of the election-massacre, army officers who were on hand to provide safety did absolutely nothing to capture the aggressors, who wore the typical Macoute red armbands. When our Haiti correspondent finally called in with descriptive details about the events, although attempting to remain professional, he was clearly affected by the carnage that unfolded in front of him. That evening, all of the networks aired the massacre. It was after that event that my mother decided to give up her Haitian citizenship and to be become a citizen of the United States. Many of us were angered and felt disillusioned by yet another violent chapter in the Haitian saga and quest for justice and democracy. We knew that our long-awaited dreams of democracy had been postponed for a long time, and only a well orchestrated social revolution would bring about a significant and long-term qualitative change.

As the events unfolded, it became clearer that the army and members of the legally dismantled Macoute Corps worked together under the command of former colonel Frank Roumain, a Duvalier supporter, and Jean-Claude Paul, a colonel in the army who was later poisoned by his wife by means of our nationally beloved pumpkin soup. The massacre of the 29TH of November was carried out to perpetrate the state of terror and also to reunify all of the Duvalier supporters against any popular movement that could eventually lead to a more just and open society. In the days following the massacre, the bombing of radio stations and attacks against journalists, the people activated another level of the Dechoukaj movement. They sought the immediate destruction of all unredeemed Macoutes, army officers, and Duvalier supporters. This time, the Dechoukaj went beyond the borders of the paupers and into the affluent neighborhoods where some of the ardent Macoutes resided. Unfortunately, it was still the poor who felt the people's wrath. This stage of the Dechoukaj was so brutal and disconcerting that even members of the popular movement asked for a change of tactics. Deplorably, the level of violence and the public ecstasy was too elevated to change the course of events.

When I received further pictures and videotapes, I became disturbed and disgusted by what I was viewing. One of the pictures was of a castrated and mutilated man who, lying naked with a tiny yellowish flame burning where his genitals once had been; he was gutted and both his wrists were mutilated. Around him were rocks, an iron pipe, and a couple of laughing men leaning towards the body to celebrate their latest destruction. To the right and rear of those two men was a line of about fifteen onlookers with different expressions on their faces. Some looked happy, while others were simply puzzled. Among them was a small boy of no more than twelve years old, his body half hidden behind a gawking woman; his thumb in his mouth. At that moment, I wondered about the

multitude of dead bodies this child had been circumstantially forced to witness and of the types of images he revisited in his sleep. Furthermore, how would those witnessed crimes manifest themselves in his daily interactions or possible confrontational situations later on in his life?

We breathe violence, we fear violence, we inflict violence, we are traumatized by violence. In the summer of 1993, when I informed my mother that I would be working for PBS's *Frontline* as a researcher and would eventually be travelling to different parts of Haiti conducting research and documenting human rights violations, my mother stayed silent for a while and then said to me in the calmest of voice: "I know you care about Haiti, but must you go risk your life with those motherless sentinels who would kill their own family for power!" I understood her worries, and she supported my commitment as a social activist and a truth seeker. By her look and her gaze, when she did not argue against my decision, I was wordlessly assured that I would be okay in the midst of the chaos that was unraveling in Haiti.

Indeed, I was okay; that is to say I left Haiti alive and physically unharmed. However, there were several instances where either the back of my head or my right temple made the unhappy acquaintances of FRAPH members 45-caliber or 9-millimeters. When the USS *Harlan County* was supposedly scheduled to dock at the Habitation Portuaire's port in Port-au-Prince, a group of about thirty military attachés descended like angry wolves from an unmarked blue and white police bus and began harassing and threatening the journalists. The moment they started kicking and jumping around the US *chargé d'affaires'* blended black Cadillac, I took off my badge and quickly made my way to our rented red sport utility vehicle. Once there, I came face to face with Chamblain, the second-in-command of FRAPH. He pushed one and screamed at me and then pointed his 9mm to the right side of my head. I calmly looked at him and said: "We are in the same camp, and down with the Yankees." He responded like a bullfrog: "Yeah! fuck the Yankees and that little shitty priest."

When I got into the vehicle, I was perspiring like a decathlon runner. Then I spotted our producer June, as well as our Washington investigative reporter Bob, running full speed away from a vengeful crowd. By the time they got into the vehicle, Bob received a carnival of slaps and kicks. Of course, I angered Chamblain who realized that I was a temporary imposter. He kicked the left front door and fired two rounds in the air. Through his coyote-like gaze, I knew he wanted my blood. Without hesitation, I sped out of the seaport area leaving dust and angry attachés behind.

In light of, and despite of my love for Haiti, and in the pain of seeing the depiction of our poverty through Western media, or humiliated Haitian faces wherever they may be, I have to put aside my nationalism while facing the ugly truth that my country has gotten more dangerous and unstable. Of course, one could write a book to deconstruct and expose the root causes for our culture of violence, but that would be a further intellectual attempt to mask the truth. Regardless of reasons or assigning of blames, basically it has been the same: since 1986; it has become more volatile and violent, and the great majority of the people living in the urban areas are living with great stress and

anxieties. Even the corruptible upper-class are finally admitting their fear and traumas due to the witnessing and the proximity of the recent acts of violence. Violence is non-prejudicial and classless; although, one group or class (the poor) has always been more on the receiving end than another group. Regardless, violence is violence.

Two days after the "Harlan County" incident, I was having lunch with the producer and a high ranking Haitian-American spy who worked for the de facto military government and presumably for the CIA, since he knew all of the field operatives and their roles. He informed us very nonchalantly that a high minister would see his last day today. Right away, June changed my schedule, handed me a camera, and said: "You have a good nose and you know where to go." Intuitively, I headed toward Justice Minister Guy Malary's office. Malary was supposed to sign into law the separation of the police from the armed forces, as well as releasing the names of those police officers who had assassinated the well-known industrialist and Aristide supporter, Antoine Izmerly. By the time I arrived in Turgeau and was about to turn right near the church of the Sacré Coeur, where a mass of people stood on the other side of the church morbidly gawking. I knew what they were viewing from the distance was of capital magnitude.

When I parked the car and removed my cameras, a street merchant, a salt-peanut vendor, cautiously said to me: "It's anti-gang, careful, they are heavily armed. This is not a casual crime. They knew too well what they were doing." I thanked her and promised to be careful. About 30 yards from the scene of the crime, I knew that the street vendor was right. The blue Toyota Landcruiser of the Justice Minister was overturned on its left side and the body of the vehicle was riddled with large caliber bullets. At close examination, I counted at least thirty-five holes around and underneath the vehicle.

At the moment I arrived at the scene, we were only two journalists: a young British cameraman and myself, and within ten minutes, at least eight other international journalists and some reporters of the Haitian media were there as well. What was interesting was the fact that Michel François, the chief of the Haitian police, and four of his close entourage, as well as two Colombians, were there. All were dressed in civilian clothes. Most interestingly, within forty-five minutes of the assassination, the Haitian Red Cross came to pick up the bodies who were already laid on a horizontal line on the sidewalk. I am certain that the bodies were dragged out of the vehicle to be identified and finished off by the military assassins.

I was so taken by the professionalism of the killings, that somehow, despite time constraints, I managed to videotape and to photograph almost everything. However, when Michel François and some of the anti-gang high commanders wanted to verify the corpses, they pulled out their US-made automatic rifles and forced the journalists out in a frenzy. We rushed out like crows. Some of us were chased, while others jumped in the back of a pickup. I was among the pursued, and in the fear of being caught and losing my prized tape and film, I gave my video to the salt-peanut vendor

and then ran in the opposite direction. That day, if I am not mistaken, two men from a Mexican News crew were arrested and then driven to the airport. It was assumed they had stayed behind to film the police chief who had given orders not to be photographed.

When I arrived at the hotel, the CNN field researcher/manager offered me a fairly good amount of money for the tape, which I declined because I was working for PBS. As soon as the *Frontline* producer saw me, she was elated, for word had gotten around among the journalists that I had “the goods.” Once again, it was until later that evening after I tried forcing myself to fall asleep that I began processing what I had witnessed. The Assassination of Minister Malaré was not a simple matter, nor a basic “shoot them” kind of killing. It was well financed and orchestrated and those who wanted to see his elimination were not simply concerned by the mere separation of the armed services, but he was also about to release the names of those who were implicated in the assassination of businessman and Aristide supporter, Antoine Izmerly who was gunned down a month prior on the same street.

I was at home in Somerville when the phone rang and woke me that early Saturday morning on the 11TH of September 1993. When I realized it was the producer on the other line, I knew by the hesitation in her voice that something was wrong, but I didn’t know who had died. Before I even had the chance to ask her any questions, she requested that I sit up and keep calm. Then, with as much care as she could, she softly told me of the assassination of Izmerly. Shocked and unable to control my emotion, I broke down. Patiently, she stayed on the phone with me and then filled me in on the details of his death after I insisted on hearing them. According to credible eyewitnesses and later to partly-filmed tape, five police officers entered the church of the Sacré Coeur via different doors and began shouting for people to get out; in the meantime, one of them radioed, and then they started searching for Izmerly, who realized he was in danger. While trying to take refuge behind the altar, he was arrested and then dragged out to Avenue José Martí at the intersection of Avenue Jean-Paul II near the Pax-Villa. There, he was forced to kneel down and then at close range was shot eight times in the head. Despicably, one of the officers came back and hit him twice in the head with a rock. When I first viewed the tape at the screening room, my co-workers had to pull me out and console me. I was literally a mess. Izmerly had been a good friend and a good compatriot who sought truth and justice as his motto. As someone of Palestinian descent, he was also not well liked by the State Department nor by the other elite business members who had close association with Israel or some of the Arab countries like Syria and Lebanon. Naturally, he became the enemy of all from the ruling oligarchy who supported the coup d’état.

We breathe violence, we fear violence, we inflict violence, we are traumatized by violence. When we left Haiti, it was about time. I had seen my share of violence and finally realized the depth of the country’s psychosis. As I stated previously, I knew the level of violence that existed in the country, but to actually document, and interview various victims of violence and to finally admit

Calabash

one's fear for one's country was very devastating. Of course, despite this realization, I made several more trips to Haiti with my camera and with my love for my battered country.

Despite the so-called "restoration of democracy" with the return of President Aristide to power in October of 1994 and the succession of power of President Préval in 1996, violence and apathy are present in today's atmosphere, and the political ambience is still volatile and insecure where the sounds of machine guns are still terrifying sleep and where nights and dawns remain the domain of the criminals. Unfortunately, although to a lesser degree, dead bodies are still left to rot on the streets or be eaten by dogs; yet, due to the strong Haitian will to live and survive, the people muster their strengths throughout the cities and in the provinces to bypass the politico-cultural affliction that the Duvalier legacy has inflicted and is now continuing to devour and enthrall the consciousness of the people with the countless senseless killings occurring on a daily basis.

