

## HAITI: THE WORD ON THE STREET

Ishmael Reed. So what's going on in Haiti?

Marius: What's going on is what that French man who's being quoted these days said: you put a story inside another story, then another story inside that story and you do it again and again, until everyone is confused. As far as the Jovenel Moïse assassination is concerned, it's kind of like those Chinese dolls: you open one and there's another inside it, you open the second one and there's a third one inside and so on until you find a really tiny one, the core of the matter, which we will never get to because the earthquake was a really big doll, which swallowed up all the others and prevents us from following this matter to its core.

Carla Blank: Matryoshka dolls? They're Russian.

Marius: The one I saw as a boy in Haiti looked Chinese to me, maybe it was from Mongolia. The earthquake could not have come at a better time. It displaced the assassination from the news internationally. Internationally no one is talking about it now, but an amalgamation of Haitian civil organizations made it clear from the very beginning that we Haitians would not fall for the smoke screen of blaming some obscurely motivated foreign forces but that we see the assassination as an inside coup at the heart of the presidential party, P.H.T.K (Parti Haitien Tèt Kale meaning Haitian Shaved Head Party), to get rid of a president who was not conforming to party lines. Even the president of the P.H.T.K Line Balthazar has admitted that the idea of the crime originating from the president's own political entourage could not be dismissed. Anyway, why would the Colombians do it? Or the Americans? they paid this president his due just like all the other presidents receiving drug money, or foreign money: Duvalier, Aristide and Sweet Micky, who immediately preceded Jovenel.

Ishmael Reed: I figured it had something to do with drugs.

Marius: He was pocketing drug money, like the other presidents before him. So we do wonder what it is he did or didn't do that got him eliminated. Some think it had to do with a trip, a meeting he attended in Turkey where he supposedly was talking to Russia and China, and really pissed off the U.S which as we know, is very possessive when it comes to Haiti. That might've caused the U.S to look the other way as the assassination was being planned. In mid-June, a popular radio announcer did predict the assassination and asked his listeners to remember, when the time came, that he had said it would happen.

Ishmael Reed: So drug money?

Marius: Here is an example of a familiar scenario: Colombians are arrested at the airport with cocaine, which is seized by the police and the Colombians returned home on the next plane. This is why Jean Dominique was assassinated during the presidency of Aristide's ex-prime-minister René Préval. He kept bringing up such an incident on the radio.

Ishmael Reed: Who was this?

Marius: Jean Dominique was the director of Radio Haiti. He got shot in front of his radio station when he insisted on asking the Aristide-Préval power, as it was called at the time, to account for the missing multimillion dollar load of cocaine seized at the airport. He had made it through, as a dissident, the entire Duvalier dictatorship and was a long time Aristide supporter until he started relentlessly questioning that president's involvement in the cocaine trade and he got shot. And as our police usually says: that investigation continues. 20 years later it has still not brought any answers. That's what usually happens when government has its hands in a crime: nothing. This time the Colombian commando became the scapegoat, along with this improbable doctor from Miami and now the Lebano-Syrian multi-millionaires, but none of us Haitians believe it. Duvalier, Aristide,

Sweet Micky, Jovenel all followed the same course. They accepted terms from the U S that were detrimental to their country, they accepted these terms in exchange for staying in power with the support of the U.S. and for receiving immunity from possible drug indictments.

Ishmael Reed: Who is Sweet Micky?

Marius: I think I should give you an overview of our presidential timelines. The Duvalier dictatorship lasted 30 years between Papa Doc and Baby Doc, as you call them. It ended in 1986, when a post Duvalier military junta took over until finally Aristide won the first elections in 1990 and became president in 1991. That same year an army-led coup caused him to flee the country and he spent three years in the U S where he gained powerful allies among the Democrats and liberals. He used his years in the U.S to lobby for his cause, as the rightful president of Haiti. He is the first Haitian president to gain a following and a lot of funding among the U S liberals. He returns to Haiti in 1994 with the money he had gathered plus Clintons and U.S Marines in tow. The concessions he made to the U.S in exchange for his return to power ruined the rice economy of Haiti and put the country in the hands of a U.S occupation, which later morphed into a UN occupation that left us with permanent sequels, such as cholera. Our Haitian constitution allows two non-consecutive five-year presidential terms. So in 1996, when Aristide's first five-year term ended, his party nominated their prime minister Preval who spent five years as president. That period is referred to, in the Haitian media, as the Aristide/Preval power or the Lavalas (Flashflood) power, named after their political party. In other words, Aristide continued to rule through his ex-prime minister. This set up a loophole around the constitution's mandated non-consecutive five-year terms allowing the president to continue ruling beyond the allotted five-years. In 2001, Préval stepped down after his five-years and Aristide was reelected, which brings his total time in power to eight years with five more years to go. During this time as president, Aristide builds a new university in Port-Au-Prince in order to break the back of the state university whose students are protesting his attempts to hire his own man as dean. The Haitian constitution guarantees the right of university students to elect their dean, so they demonstrate against him en masse. He sends gang members to destroy equipment at the university and sets the police against the students some of whom get shot and killed.

Ishmael Reed: How many?

Marius: The first year of protests, two students and two students again the second year. This is what brought about, in 2004, the mass demonstrations which united every major organized group in the capital against Aristide: The taxi drivers and tourist guides, the artists and artisans, the merchants, and even members of the elite which is usually silent in such circumstances. During his time as president he also lowered duties tax on American imported goods including food from 20 to 2%, further destroying a peasant economy that had been taking blows since the Duvalier dictatorship. As a result of these protests which were paralyzing the capital and the U.S refusal to break up the demonstrations with military might, Aristide took the next option: The U.S military plane. He would eventually end up in South Africa, prompting his American friends to cry that he had been kidnapped. But really, who gets kidnapped with all their suitcases? Who gets kidnapped with their entire family? Who gets kidnapped with a good friend broadcasting the action step by step to the world? Still Aristide remains the only Haitian president to have a power base in the U.S, a source of funds and good P.R, with advocates such as Amy Willentz who all carefully omit to mention that he brought in the U.N occupation to Haiti, that he finished a job started by the Duvaliers of converting some of the country's breadbaskets to free trade zones, by bringing in the police to bulldoze fields, that he attempted to destroy the state university. Once more elections

were organized and a new candidate Leslie Manigat got elected. But from South Africa, Aristide organized members of his Lavalas party to occupy the hotel where the international observers of the Haitian elections were staying. And this show of force, however peaceful, caused the international community to back down. It's true that the newly elected president had plans to really revamp the Haitian economy. This pro-Haiti stance could not have pleased the U.S, which prefers a president who sells out his country's agricultural peasants and urban workers, a policy that has been in place since the US occupation of Haiti in 1915 and is instrumental in motivating floods of refugees to flee the country. So somehow Manigat's win was nixed; he was removed and Préval, Aristide's former prime minister was again put in office for his second non-consecutive term. By that time he had officially splintered from the Lavalas party and changed the name of his own branch of that party. His presidency lasted from 2005 to 2010, when the earthquake caused the elections to be delayed. This brings the number of years in power of the Flash Flood party to almost 20 years. That post-quake election is when Sweet Micky, a popular band leader won the presidency, or as we say, gets put in by the U S and allies. His presidency marks the return to power of the Duvalierist contingent. Mickey is Baby Doc's friend, and a former tonton macoute. He spent his five years in office after which he ushered in his friend, this presently assassinated president Jovenel Moise, thus continuing the Aristidian tradition of placing a stand-in to hold power so he can pick up the presidency again in five years. The neo-Duvalierist party of the Shaved Heads (P.H.T.K) is poised for the next round with whoever is to follow Jovenel. Just like the Kennedy assassination where the assassin got assassinated, just like the Jean Dominique assassination and the others that have never been brought to light, Jovenel's assassination where some of the alleged murderers also got killed, will probably remain a mystery.

Ishmael Reed: This woman Amy Willentz says the majority of Haitians want to go back to their institutions and return to normal life: Schools, clinics, businesses opening again, being able to deal with the COVID crisis, markets, and streets safe from armed gangs. This is the best of all possible outcomes for Haiti but sadly it's improbable at least in the near future.

Marius: That's true. Most of the people I know living abroad would like to come back here.

Ishmael Reed: So you agree with that.

Marius: I came back from the U.S after the 2010 earthquake to lend some support to the family members I had here, but now I'm uneasy with the deteriorating situation and the gangs controlling the country. It seems the gangs are in charge and that there is no government, just political parties dedicated to making money. Stray bullets abound in my neighborhood and many others.

Ishmael Reed: Who is doing this, gangs?

Marius: They call them parliamentary gangs, political gangs...

Ishmael Reed: What are parliamentary gangs?

Marius: These gangs are affiliated with government groups, political parties in the government, or the opposition, or the parliament which is our form of Congress. The gangs, according to BBQ, one of their leaders, are armed by these various forces.

Ishmael Reed. They got sponsors?

Marius: One of the most vocal gang leaders, Barbecue, who controls Port-au-Prince, set out to explain "the system" to us, small fry. He says that everybody is somebody's lackey. The president and his gang are getting paid by the foreigners and their allies, U.S, Canada, France, Israel et cetera. The police are getting paid by the big money guys who also have links to these various allies, and so on.

Ishmael Reed: And they sponsor gangs too?

Marius: BBQ the gang leader who united nine gangs in an organization called G9, says: "They give us the weapons. They give us a bunch of money. Whenever they need to put people from our poor neighborhoods in the streets for one reason or another, against one individual or another, they pay up because the gangs are the only force capable of rapidly arranging instant mass demonstrations." I can add that whenever there is to be a police action against the gangs, the chief of police promptly announces it on the radio, so that the gang in that particular neighborhood is ready and decimates the policemen who are now starting, according to BBQ who is himself an ex policeman, to defect from the police and join the gangs.

Ishmael Reed: It's like the old Irish and Italian gangs in New York City. They sometimes beat up people up there on behalf of the union. They beat up people, even on park avenue.

Marius: These groups bring money and weapons in the gang controlled neighborhoods, and the gangs do the work that they are paid to do: Cause unrest in the street for the benefit of one political group or another.

Ishmael Reed: These countries?

Marius: Bi-national agents from these countries, the police, the government...

Ishmael Reed: Outsiders, outsider gangs.

Marius: Outsiders, insiders, all working their own agendas.

Carla Blank: What is so attractive about Haiti? It's so decimated now.

Marius: Like Franklin D Roosevelt said Haiti is rich with everything, both above and below ground. These foreigners come over, they pay the government to take what they want, and then they leave, not even bothering to clean up after themselves. You can still see the damage the Reynolds corporation left in the region of Miragoane where they were mining bauxite for aluminum. We didn't even find out about the gold and the petroleum in Haiti at all until after the 2010 earthquake, when Clinton, Bill Gates and friends came down with a gang of geologists and began buying land. It has been reported that we have even more petroleum brought closer to the surface by this recent quake. The geologists say we have more petroleum than all the other minerals combined. We have minerals that noone even admits to. only the people living in these out of the way places tell about the exploitation during the night of titanium, iridium, and such rare strategic metals. And none of us the wiser. We learn about it later from the peasants who live there. Our government people are paid small change by the foreigners to allow this exploitation, small change in comparison to the profits made by those doing the exploiting.

Ishmael Reed: What are free trade zones?

Marius: They are industrial parks. U.S, and other foreign multinationals set up factories there which are tax-free for 15 years. It used to be eight years during the Duvalier dictatorship, but now with this brand of democracy, it's 15 years. Americans close down their factories in the U.S. putting their own workers out of work and they come here paying Haitian workers less than \$4 a day and getting a huge tax break.

Ishmael Reed: I thought the wages were \$4.00 a day.

Marius: I thought they were \$5 a day, but they haven't even reached \$4 after 50 plus years. It was around \$1 under Duvalier, Aristide got it up to \$2. After the 2010 earthquake Clinton said the U S did not want to see the wages go to \$5 a day.

Ishmael Reed: Who are some of the companies that are paying this money?

Marius: It's so much part of our reality, we don't even know their names. I'm sure you can find out. It used to be baseball manufacturers, some single crop agribusiness concerns and the mining industries, of course. And of course the present situation might have caused them to close for now.

Carla Blank: What about cell phones?

Marius: The cell phone thing happened later with Hillary Clinton who had interests in a

cell phone company here in Haiti. It took off in a really big way after the 2010 earthquake. You know, our landlines were working at that time, but then in the space of one week after the quake, they shut down all the land-lines, which left us with only cell phones. Go figure. The Clintons were giving away cell phones to the poorer Haitians and making a few cents off every minute used. It's another example of insider/outsider shady deals.

Ishmael Reed: Let me ask you a question. Here is this know-it-all Nick Bret Stephens. He said he doesn't want foreign aid to go to Haiti. He says the actual Haitians are just about every conceivable aid scheme. Humanitarian relief would lead to more poverty, more corruption and arrest institutional capacity. It would benefit the well-connected and rich at the expense of the poor and crowd out local enterprises and cause cultural dependence. Now who is dependent? These big corporations who are cutting labor costs and taking millions out of Haiti or the Haitians?

Marius: Both are dependent. We are forced to become more and more dependent when our agriculture, our ability to feed ourselves has been made to fall to less than 20% at the most, over the last 30 years, thanks to the US sponsored brand of democracy. Our government is dependent on all those foreign millions that they are making disappear into private bank accounts, and the multinationals are dependent on those slave wages and huge tax breaks.

Ishmael Reed: They are dependent on cheap labor, but when analysts give these tough love lectures, they're not considering this dependency. They talk about the other side, but they don't talk about the cheap labor.

Marius: These are all the omissions the foreign press is so fond of. No one comes here and interviews a proper Haitian political analyst, a standup person who will tell it like it is. Many foreign analysts, so called Haiti experts tell half-truths, but omit to follow the state of affairs to its source. Many of them have their own political agenda or are doing P.R for a political group. Dependency is manufactured when the U S killed our pigs, when they got our police to bulldoze our fields, when they pay assassins whom they support in power to allow our cottage industries, such as the garment industry, to be crushed, they systematically destroy an agricultural and artisanal peasant economy as well as small businesses. What they are doing here they also do at home in the U.S, then they wonder why all these people are trying to flee Haiti.

Ishmael Reed: So what do you think of these white Americans speaking about Haitians, even though they've never been there. I know Amy Wilentz has been there.

Marius: Amy might still be speaking on behalf of Aristide's political party, Lavalas (Flash Flood).

Ishmael Reed: They don't know what the Haitians want.

Marius: She was or maybe still is a big part of his P.R crew in the U.S.

Ishmael Reed: She ignored all the stuff about the thuggery and the drug money, she ignored all that.

Marius: Yes, many of them do. Omissions, omissions, omissions which further their friends' interests. They omit to mention the gangs originating from the U S convict repatriation program, which sends back to Haiti American convicts of Haitian origin whose only aim when they get here was to make, by hook and by crook, the tens of thousands of dollars necessary to bring them back to the U.S. These are the original kidnapers. She ignores Aristide's recruiting, during his three years in the U.S, Haitian-American gang bangers in Brooklyn and the Bronx and inviting them to come back to Haiti where they become the new macoutes. She ignores the state-sponsored orphanages in Haiti, raising little crack heads and crack sellers who have grown up to become gang members more feared even than the ones from the United States. Those are the ones we are dealing with now. All that spells destabilization of a country using economic, political and cultural means. Look at Liberia, look at Somalia. Is that what we are destined to become?

The gangs are in control now they hold us hostage.

Ishmael Reed: So what is your opinion of the Haitian community in Miami? Are they like the Cubans?

Marius: I know there are all kinds of Haitians in Miami, from all walks of society. The people I know over there are hoping just as we all are. Hoping beyond hope for a healed Haiti that would allow them to come home.

Ishmael Reed: They said some doctor in Miami is behind this assassination thing.

Marius: Yes. The bankrupt scapegoat out of nowhere. How could they say he has financed the assassination deal except as a way to put a story inside a story?

Ishmael Reed: What's his name?

Marius: Dr. Sanon. He probably got paid to come forward as the mastermind in order to throw up another smoke screen. The Haitian civil associations named the prime minister Claude Joseph who was fired by Jovenel and somehow resigned the day before the assassination, only to resume his post as prime minister the day after the assassination. He was removed by the U.S and replaced but given another ministerial post. How is that for a cha-cha-cha? The associations also named the chief of police Léon Charles and the head of the presidential security guard who shone by his absence on the night in question, Dimitri Hérard who is supposed to be the first lady's lover. All three men were named as having plotted the coup and lo and behold are among the ones responsible for picking the investigators for the assassination. As we know, they make no bones about firing whoever doesn't stick to the approved script. Again, shades of the Kennedy assassination when they investigate themselves and find nothing wrong. So here are some high points of Jovenel Moises' political career: Two years ago, he fired the last constitutional prime minister, Mr. Jouthe, then he dissolved the Parliament by blocking congressional and senatorial elections, which caused his government to become unconstitutional. That is why people here were in the streets wanting him to step down as an unconstitutional president. Meanwhile, the U.S is pushing a referendum that would amend the constitution to allow two consecutive presidential terms, give a lot more power to the executive branch and generally chip away at what is left of any democratic safeguards. How would you Americans like it if that was being done in your country? Most of the population being illiterate, having them "read" the referendum, then vote yes or no is fraud waiting to happen. That harks back to the last referendum, during the first U.S occupation between 1914 and 1935, giving foreigners the right to own land in Haiti which was previously forbidden by the constitution. What other agenda is this new referendum about to set up? Most Haitians haven't read it but we know that the previous presidents have already established a loophole around the nonconsecutive-terms measure. Most of us consider that referendum unconstitutional. Most of us recognize that gangs now form the biggest political groups holding the country hostage, isolating entire regions, east, north, west and the south, which was just hit by the July earthquake cannot be reached because the gangs led by Tilapli, ( Little rain) a deluxe gang leader who drives a bulletproof SUV (it costs \$30,000 U.S at least to bullet proof an already expensive vehicle) and Izolan (Isolator) have shut down all passage to the southern province causing huge food shortages. They have blocked earthquake relief and recently all gas delivery from gas stocking centers. More food shortages are expected everywhere. Now gas cannot be found at the pump and costs 10 U.S dollars a gallon on the streets.

Ishmael Reed: Who voted for these presidents?

Marius: Both Sweet Mickey and Jovenel had a very, very slim voter turnout, but the U.S wanted them in there because they had indictments against them for drug trafficking and money laundering. That made them amenable to pressure and easy to steer in the directions indicated by their master.

Ishmael Reed: What did this president accomplish?

Marius. Nothing: Just like the others before him, he let the gangs proliferate and gain power, prompting what could become a civil war in Haiti, like in Liberia or Somalia. Do they want to finish us off? They enrich themselves and their friends prodigiously. They parade proudly in a country covered with trash like a lot of other countries we must admit, such as Guatemala and Peru, which are also getting covered in trash and my family over there says the U.S is also becoming that way due to the homeless crisis. They destroy our agriculture, our small industries for the benefit of foreigners and they neglect education, health care, the environment and the need for social justice. There are now 288 political parties all without a vision or plan, all poised to gorge themselves at the trough of the state and become super rich. Sweet Mickey is the only one not ashamed to say it. His newest song titled "I Don't Give a Rat's ass" says it like it is. Another one before that was titled "I Don't Care". And this is what we got for a president. A worthy heir of the Duvalier regime with which the U.S loves to do business.

Ishmael Reed. Is he still alive?

Tennessee Reed. Yeah. He had a concert in the Dominican Republic recently.

Marius. Yes. He's the candidate who became president after the 2010 earthquake. Back then it was between him and Wyclef Jean, a rap singer and music producer, also of genius, who had this band called the Fugees. He couldn't make the grade as president because he was American. He also proved to be very corrupt, amassing much money from his Hollywood friends and funneling it through his aid organization, Yele Haiti. Right after the 2010 earthquake, he invited Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt over here. Poor Angelina. She was pregnant. He had them sitting in the sun for hours and he put on this show for them, his honored guests. Do you know we have a fantastic dance tradition here in Haiti?

Superlative drummers, impeccable movement, beautiful costumes. For some reason Wyclef had these nondescript women in drab dresses doing the same inane step over and over again with plastic buckets on their heads, accompanied by some absolutely mediocre drummers. You can see on YouTube that we have some of the best, if you type in traditional Haitian dance and drumming, you will hear and see the quality of our drummers and dancers.

Ishmael Reed: You have the best painters in this hemisphere.

Marius. Yes we have some of the best art. That is why I was absolutely perplexed when on television I saw the rubbish of a show Wyclef was putting on for these poor foreigners. Was he trying to save money, out of the millions he had amassed from the concert for quake Haiti and fundraising among the stars?

Ishmael Reed: So Sweet Mickey chose this guy, Jovenel.

Marius: Yes. His partner in crime, a money launderer who like him was approved because that is the caliber of men the core group of foreign powers as they are called want to see ruling us.

Ishmael Reed. Did Jovenel spend as long a time in office as Sweet Micky? And what did he accomplish?

Marius: They both spent five years in office. They both accomplished nothing. None of them have the know-how, the education and the integrity needed to become president. Manigat might have had what it takes but he was not allowed the chance to prove it before he died because he was not a thief and only thieves are allowed in this office. An honest man couldn't cut it in this den of rats.

Tennessee Reed: I know during sweet Mickey's concert, some people got COVID.

Marius. Yes. His concert in the Dominican Republic where he's singing, "I don't give a rat's ass". Some of the spectators caught COVID, among which this society woman who could not find a functioning hospital in Port-Au-Prince. Her family attempted to take her to

Mirebalais where Paul farmer's hospital (Partners in Health) is equipped to take patients. The gangs were blocking the exits to Port-Au-Prince, so this woman, because she couldn't get to the hospital, died. And that's how the gangs function.

Carla Blank: Is the palace still in ruins?

Marius: All of Port-Au-Prince is still in ruins from the 2010 earthquake. It is now controlled by Barbecue, leader of the G9 gang association. As this very astute person I know has stated: BBQ is the president of the Department of the west, Lanmò 100 Jou (One Hundred Days of Death) is president of the Department of the center, Izolan and Tilapli presidents of the Department of the south and south-east. All the rest are thieving politicians cutting up the cake of the state coffers and have nothing to do with governing the country, just controlling the money.

Ishmael Reed: So the Duvalierists are back.

Marius: They're back.

Ishmael Reed: But Sweet Micky is out.

Marius: And his stand-in just got assassinated but "he doesn't give a rat's ass." Didn't even go to his boy's funeral. He may be right not to care since the famous referendum guarantees them all immunity.

Ishmael Reed: What was Obama's policy?

Marius: Obama did confer temporary asylum to thousands of Haitians displaced by the 2010 quake through a visa and work permit that cost each of them about \$2,000 per year, but like all presidents, he followed the broad policy for Haiti. He did not disturb the status quo.

Ishmael Reed: Which is what?

Marius: Which is first of all, to install a president who will accept their deals without question and without regards for our local economy, environment, health or safety. when public opinion in the U S starts to question these policies as they did, for example, when they found out the U S was selling weapons to the Duvalierist dictatorship, the U.S ostensibly stopped doing so, but Israel took over as an ally of the U.S. They took over selling arms to the Duvaliers against millions of Haitians who got murdered. Instead of your obsolete M-16s left over from past times, we got Israeli Uzis back then.

Ishmael Reed: So are the Haitians still paying reparation for the revolution?

Marius: Aristide started talking about France paying us back the millions we had paid over to them over the years for the so-called debt of independence they slapped on us after we trounced Napoleon. That means we had cost France so much money by preventing them from continuing to use slave labor that we needed to pay them back. Our leaders should have never accepted that in the first place. That was another example of collusion between corrupt heads of states. France should have been paying us for our free labor as slaves during the 171 years of their colonial rule. Aristide did make noises about France repaying that money to us, but any restitution would have gone the way of the Petrocaribe millions in the hands of the thieves in power: it would have disappeared and the investigation, continued ad infinitum. Notice that Aristide never demanded restitution from the U.S which took off with our gold reserve and treasury when they ended their first occupation in 1934. Aristide said nothing about that because he was being propped up by the U S at the country's great detriment. Well, it was the fashion he started of using mercenaries as his private-guard that led us to having these present foreign scapegoats for Jovenel's assassination. Everybody knows that those mercenaries had been hired some months before the assassination, by the PHT K (Sweet Micky's Party of the Shaved Heads) and the police. They never came from the Dominican Republic. They had been living in that neighborhood in the hills for months.



Ishmael Reed: They say this guy Duvalier was very brutal. Are those people as brutal as the Duvaliers' governments?

Marius: We can't really make this comparison. The more recent governments use gangs instead of macoutes as goons and the gangs' affiliation can always be denied. When Jean Dominique was killed, it was a gang member pulling the trigger and the Aristide/Préval power again, investigating its own crime. The investigation went the way of all such investigations. It continued just like this one here will continue and possibly never lead anywhere.

Ishmael Reed: Who runs the elite?

Marius: This is an old discourse that has been revived and dusted off everytime the need to blame a group other than the government arises. This time there's a new twist. Even the leader of the nine gangs, Barbecue, adopts the same discourse as the members of government. More scapegoating, which started this time a few months before the assassination. This caused us ordinary folk to believe that it was being planned, even then. The new twist involves the Haitian Syrian- Lebanese multi-millionaires who can make and break presidents, who flood the ghettos with weapons. They are a segment of the elite which pays the men in power to do their bidding, and who are able to pay the gangs to provoke paralyzing disorder every time the need arises.

Ishmael Reed: They're in Haiti?

Marius: The Lebanese/Syrians/Israelis, all called Arabs here, no matter where they originate came to Haiti from the Middle East in the 19th century, as merchants and became extremely rich. They are Haitian-American or Haitian-French or Haitian-Israeli citizens, but there are all lumped together as Arabs. They might have residencies in several countries, hold double nationalities. They don't pay customs duty. Their imports are not inspected thus they can bring in weapons. But no one had ever complained before about this particular segment of the elite. So by suddenly pointing fingers at this group, the PHTK are diverting attention away from their own role in this assassination. Members of the government, gang leaders, two bit commentators are all accusing that contingent of the elite of having ordered the hit against Jovenel. You can take your pick. It used to be the doctor. Now it's the Syrians, the Arabs soon replaced by the mulattos in general. Jovenel was being pushed out by mass demonstrations against his unconstitutional rule and actions. But those monster demonstrations were also managed by those people in his party who were against him. He didn't follow the course that both Duvalier and Aristide followed: He didn't take the U.S plane out. The speed with which the U.S stepped in right after the assassination to re-install the prime minister who had been fired and then rapidly to install another unconstitutional prime minister, the present one, Ariel Henry whom Jovenel had appointed, makes it obvious that the U.S wants to keep this neo-Duvalierist party of incompetents in power in order to bring that referendum and any other plan they might have, to fruition. As the new democratic tradition dictates, Sweet Micky was supposed to come back as president after his buddy stepped down, but maybe he has been stained by all the drug trafficking allegations and it's the first lady, who now seems to have U.S backing.

Ishmael Reed: They're pushing her hard. They got her on the front page of the *New York Times*.

Carla Blank: Today it's on the front page of *the New York Times*. So you see her arm is in this kind of sling.

Marius: We don't know what this is about, given that she is the key witness to the assassination.

Ishmael Reed: She talks about a night of terror.

Marius: And now she wants to become president, to run on, as she says, her husband's anti-corruption platform. What anti-corruption? It's the first time we people hear that joke. One

person having heard all the off the wall descriptions of Jovenel at his funeral as a man who was going after corruption, had this to say: "Is this the same Jovenel who was the president? We don't recognize the man who is now the object of all this anti-corruption praise." The man whose top advisor was arrested just after the assassination at the Dominican border with a million U.S dollars in cash. The man whose embassy in Washington, D.C. has been the object of a huge passport scandal, whose Paris embassy is mired in a million-dollar apartment scheme. The man from whose house another million dollars in U.S. cash was confiscated by the police after the assassination. The man who recently fired a customs administration inspector for denouncing the multimillion dollar grabbing of the country's import funds during Sweet Micky's and his administrations. This customs official said that this state of affairs had started during the Duvaliers' regime and continued afterwards but gathered new momentum during Micky's presidency. Micky gave control of the customs office to a powerful Syrio-Lebanese cartel who, like the previous Duvalierist and Aristidian cartels paid the government to be able to import their merchandise duty free, but unlike their predecessors these present ones were given free reign by Micky to choose their own man as customs directors in the various ports of Haiti. They made the customs office their private property. These shady maneuvers by the more recent administrations can be seen as separate from the contraband network responsible for siphoning off \$400 million U.S dollars per year, along the Haitian-Dominican border alone, without including what is stolen from all of the county's ports. If these siphoned sums had made it into the Haitian treasury we would not need the 150 millions from Taiwan or the \$230 millions from the international monetary funds. We wouldn't have to raise the gas prices and cause the enraged crowds in the streets, we would have been able to face the COVID crisis with properly equipped hospitals. If our leaders weren't stealing our own country's customs revenues to the tune of 1 billion U.S dollars a year, Haiti would have been able to take care of itself. But God forbid we should end our lucrative dependency. Now the U.S decided that the men from this rapacious political party should remain in power.

Ishmael Reed: The establishment here is pushing that lady real hard.

Marius: They're pushing that referendum through to a population that cannot read it, and doesn't even understand what it is. Shades of the U S occupation again before which all the foreigners in Haiti, the Arabs, Danish, Germans, French had to marry a Haitian woman to accomplish this goal of owning land. That's why so many of those families have a Black great-great grandma in the closet whom they gradually eliminate from the family photo albums so their grandchildren grow up with no idea that they themselves are Black. The first lady has to adopt the referendum program. She will remain, if she is to serve her own interests, a hostage to her party and an accomplice in this cover up.

Jovenel's fans in Cap Haitien where he is from are incensed that she told the government her family would pay for his state funeral, but that the van that carried his casket had an extremely dirty interior and a driver wearing a t-shirt with cutoff sleeves. Oh they were pissed off. Is that the respect a dead president deserves from his own family? As an observer remarked, Jovenel died the same way he had ruled and was buried in the operating mode of his administration. Anyway none of the previous presidents still in Haiti cared to come pay their respect, they were all conspicuously absent from the funeral. So, as Sweet Micky's most recent song goes: "They say Sweet Micky can't be president anymore? I don't give a rat's ass. I'm a multimillionaire." You should check out his music and have some of his songs translated.

Ishmael Reed: Okay. Did Duvalier really interrupt the funeral of his enemies and bring the casket into the palace to inspect the corpse?

Marius: You know, I wouldn't put anything past these people.

Carla Blank: Where did you hear about that?

Ishmael Reed: I read it in Graham Green's book *The Comedians*. Have you heard of that book?

Marius: Yes. All the society people I was in touch with back then wanted to be in that book. They were all inviting Graham to cocktail parties and trying to figure out who was who, when the book came out, it was laughable.

Ishmael Reed: Duvalier thought he was Bawon Samdi.

Marius: He used that aspect of vodou as a way to impact the segment of the population it would impress, to insure their support and present himself as a man of the people, so to speak. But all our presidents are posing as men of the people while manipulating the surging crowds to enforce their rule while getting paid to screw them.

Ishmael Reed: Didn't Duvalier come up as a literary person. He had a magazine, *Ason*?

Marius: Yes, he was an intellectual, a supposed patriot, an ethnographer and student of vodou. Many intellectuals supported him, even those from the elite, just like they did Aristide, at first, but the rural population, the peasantry liked him because he was a country doctor who helped eradicate this tropical disease that was crippling the farmers. Doctors and nurses from the elite were part of his crew in this eradication campaign. It's only when his presidency became focused on remaining in power at all cost by eliminating real and perceived enemies and targeting the light-skinned elite and middle class, many supporters turned away. The same thing happened with Aristide. Many progressive people from the elite backed him and began to lose their illusions after he started with the gangs to replace the macoutes, after he started with the killings, for reasons as petty as appropriating a piece of land for his university, after he became a tool of the U.S. All those leaders have committed crimes but Duvalier had the most time to do so. 30 years. It's Haiti as the hereditary republic, as one of our intellectuals wrote.

Ishmael Reed: What is the color of the elite? Are they Black or Creole or what?

Marius: They're Black. Dark-skinned, light-skinned or white-looking. Now that the post-assassination scapegoat designation has shifted from the Arabs, Jews and other people of Middle Eastern origin to include all the light-skinned people in general, we are back on familiar ground. There has often been, ever since independence, a Black elite at the head of the government. Each president brings in their own supporters. During the 20th century, there is always what becomes a Black elite at the head of government, regardless of their origins in the lower middle class. Those newly risen government people are big on continuing the depiction of the elite as light skinned, a favorite political ploy to mask their own greed and incompetence and their willingness to sell out their country and their population. Duvalier deemed himself a *noiriste* a pro-dark-skin person. Aristide, once he returned from the U.S as a newly propped-up president also played that card to try and erase the fact that he had many light-skinned supporters of foreign origin who helped bring him to power. He started mentioning his skin color as the reason his ex-supporters rejected him. But then he married into the elite, just like Baby Doc did, whose kids are now light-skinned. Now post assassination members of the P.H.T.K, government hangers-on, gang leaders are all saying things like "If I were a mulatto right now I would not dare to go out into the street because Jovenel might have been corrupt and unqualified but he was a dark skinned, nappy-haired man, like us and the light-skinned people who organized the assassination should be punished." This is what they're saying. Even the Voodoo temples in Jovenel's north during their funeral ceremonies for Jovenel still also pointed to foreign and mulatto perpetrators for Jovenel's assassination. They're parroting this kind of talk. They all seem to want to hide the P.H.T.K's role in the assassination.

Ishmael Reed: So is there a color system, the lighter you are in Haiti, the better things are for you?

Marius: To insist on seeing it this way is the result of the colonial order which continues to this day even though the majority of government people are dark-skinned. We do carry the sequels of colonization. That's why dark-skinned people in Haiti like in Africa often put themselves through a harrowing skin-bleaching process, as if they think that being light-skinned is a mark of social status, while ignoring the fact that all their high-flying government guys who do nothing but steal from the country are mostly dark-skinned and in cahoots with their light-skinned or white counterparts. These government people who are not saying a peep in protest about the treatment of the Haitians at the Mexican/Texas border, have certainly never stood up for their downtrodden, dark-skinned and impoverished constituents, but like to bring this issue up whenever it suits their political aims. These days two members of the so-called Arab-mulatto elite have been particularly targeted as responsible for every woe, from flooding the poor neighborhoods with guns to assassinating Jovenel. The strange thing is that no one is mentioning the richest, most influential finger-in every-government-pie billionaire but only the two men who have gone on social media to denounce the present state of affairs. One of them had been opposed to the referendum and announced the formation of his own political party. Whenever the leaders want to polarize the anger of the crowds to serve their own purpose, they are quick to bring out the dark skin/ light skin bogey. Look at me, I'm a dark skinned nappy headed guy, but I'm not blinded by such polarizing talk. I know there is division within the government, I know Jovenel was not popular within his own party, I know that both dark and light-skinned people can be corrupt, but also that among both light skinned and dark skinned, some people can be found, who have integrity, education and vision enough to raise the country up from this morass. I see, at my own family table, both light and dark-skinned members who love and support each other.

Ishmael Reed: So you said the Syrio-Lebanese scapegoats are being replaced by whom?

Marius: In the fashionable post-assassination discourse, the scapegoating has been expanded to include all light-skinned people from the middle class or the elite as future victims of the dark-skinned nappy headed seekers of justice for Jojo. I'm not the only one to ask: what about the dark skinned political higher-ups who wanted Jovenel gone? What about the dark-skinned straight-haired people? What about the light-skinned nappy-haired ones?

Ishmael Reed: What about the light-skinned people who played an important part in the revolution?

Marius: Yes, some of those who gave their lives during the war for independence, some of those who stood up for the dark-skinned peasants when their own dark-skinned leaders wouldn't, in particular the one light-skinned soldier who was killed defending the emperor Dessaline from his assassins. Let's look at the story within the story within the story. The first story concocted about this assassination was that it was a Colombian and U.S operation, but that didn't fly. Everyone knew that those mercenaries had been hired by the Haitian police and the PHTK to come here and flush a gang out of the same neighborhood where the president lived. The day after the assassination, those Colombians reported having been sent there by the police who had received a call for help from the president who seemed to be in trouble. The day after the assassination, a police commando was dispatched to this group's house and killed three of them. Some of the remaining ones were arrested and accused of being the perpetrators. Now we Haitians know how these things go. When you get arrested by the police, you get beaten, you get tortured and you are made to confess. So the mercenaries confessed that some of their numbers were in on the assassination, but that the majority of them really thought they had been responding to a call to go help the president and found him already dead in his residence.

Ishmael Reed. The Haitians brought who into the country?

Marius: In the new Aristidian tradition, the Haitian police had hired these mercenaries from Colombia.

Ishmael Reed. To do what?

Marius. The police and the P.H.T.K, the party in power, the Shaved Heads, brought in the mercenaries into Haiti to use their skills against the gangs, which the police could not subdue. To flush one gang in particular out of the neighborhood where the presidential family resided.

Ishmael Reed: What is the name of that neighborhood?

Marius: Laboule, above Petion-Ville. It was there that the police had given the mercenaries a place to stay and it was there that they executed their mission and flushed out the gang that was occupying an empty house. For all we know the police, as they plotted the assassination, might have set those mercenaries up from the beginning. The police might have given the gang with whom they are known to be affiliated the word to go up there and occupy that empty house then hired those guys to come to Haiti, chase the gang away and take up residence there, continuing to get paid by the state until they were sent to the president's home on the night of the assassination in response to a call for help by the president. They found, upon arriving, the president dead, helped his wife get to the hospital with his daughter and even brought the daughter back to get clothes for her mother. This is the convoluted story told by the mercenaries, the second story to come out, the story within the story. Then it was replaced by another story about the unknown foreigners coming in under cover of night from the Dominican Republic after having been ordered by that bankrupt doctor Sanon to kill the president. They must think that we Haitian people are idiots. We knew those guys had been living in that neighborhood for months.

Ishmael Reed: Complicated. So the American news does snapshots.

Marius: Complicated is right. Like a doll inside a doll, inside another doll. Even the mercenaries' story gets split in two: they were called to help the president who was in trouble or they were called to arrest him for the DEA. Take your pick. The out of the blue mastermind from Miami is another doll inside yet another doll, the Lebano-Syrian angle, inside another doll: all the mulattoes, inside another doll: the first lady's contradictory interviews. The official story is being polished and refined as we go along but it's in danger of unraveling under scrutiny. The biggest doll of all is the earthquake in July and subsequent hurricane. We now have a successful cover-up because the earthquake, then Afghanistan, have replace all other stories in your fickle media.

Ishmael Reed: So they also paid these security guards, right?

Marius: Yes. Jovenel had hired the foreign presidential security guards that were all strangely absent during the assassination. Dolls inside dolls: the main gang leader, BBQ, a 14 year veteran of the Haitian police force, some of the Voodoo temples during the funeral ceremonies for Jovenel, the foreign press are repeating the same version of the scapegoating story as the government. Seems they're all working together to make a pressure cooker effect that will soon explode the country.

Ishmael Reed: So this one story had the Colombians bringing her to the hospital?

Marius: This is what was said at first, the same ones accused of trying to kill her. Imagine a highly trained, armed to the eyes commando arriving in three cars with military assault weapons, seen by members of the police force on their way to the president's house as they were responding to a call for help, and waved through. They were heard by the police, shooting up a storm. As we say, this is a story sewing up the dead of night with white thread. However, there is another story that surfaced independently, one from a U.S military guy, ex-member of the DEA who gave an interview to a reporter at a popular radio

station. He claimed he had had access to the surveillance videos at the presidential home, and he affirms that the Colombians were set up and really arrived after the president was dead. He said that two people, whom the president knew and to whom he allowed entry after having dismissed his guards, entered and tried to persuade him under torture, to give them what they had come for. Upon his refusal they proceeded to hit him on the head as he was calling for help, whack him on the limbs with a machete and leave him dead for the Colombians sent by the police, to find. We never heard from that guy again. I wonder what happened to him. Like so many of us, I've seen the pictures of the assassinated president's body. I sent them to a friend of mine who is a medical examiner in New York state, who said without knowing whose picture he was seeing that it looked like an execution. He observed that the victim's head had not exploded as you might expect from point blank shots from military automatic weapons. His eyes were certainly rearranged, but if by bullets, from a very small caliber bullet that penetrated the iris without exploding the eye or cranium. Not consistent with the report of military style, automatic weapons. This examiner, who didn't know whose photo it was he was looking at, said that he saw neither exit nor entry bullet wounds, that blunt force trauma with extreme violence to the head appeared to be what killed this man, and that the wounds at his extremities were consistent with torture, possibly with a machete. All along the same lines, as what the ex-DEA military U S guy had said in his interview. On the morning after the assassination the president's body was not examined by a doctor. By the time the investigators came in, the crime scene had been thoroughly compromised. People who were supposed to be there were not there, people who shouldn't have been there were walking around all over, and the police prevented the investigators from entering for 30 minutes. They were told to stay outside. I got this info from CNN. The storytellers had time to tamper with evidence, to take \$1 million U.S in cash, and a number of uncashed checks. They had time to move the body and remove whatever they wished from the scene. They had time the next day after the three mercenaries got killed, to take those bodies away from the crime scene and transport them to another house where they finally allowed the investigators in. Now each investigator who doesn't follow the official storyline is receiving death threats. That too I got from CNN.

Ishmael Reed: What did they say?

Marius. They said there was no real crime scene investigation, no medical examiner or coroner's report. That now no state investigator dares to take this case for fear of the death threats they've received. The government appointed their own investigator to do the job and fired that investigator when the clues led back to them. Now the earthquake doll has all these other cover up story dolls swallowed up and our government thieves rubbing their hands together over earthquake relief money once again.

Ishmael Reed: Thank you. See, it makes more sense.

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Secretary of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

September 22, 2021

Dear Secretary Blinken,

With deep disappointment and apologies to those seeking crucial changes, I resign from my position as Special Envoy for Haiti, effective immediately. I will not be associated with the United States inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees and illegal immigrants to Haiti, a country where American officials are confined to secure compounds because of the danger posed by armed gangs in control of daily life. Our policy approach to Haiti remains deeply flawed, and my recommendations have been ignored and dismissed, when not edited to project a narrative different from my own.

The people of Haiti, mired in poverty, hostage to the terror, kidnappings, robberies and massacres of armed gangs and suffering under a corrupt government with gang alliances, simply cannot support the forced infusion of thousands of returned migrants lacking food, shelter, and money without additional, avoidable human tragedy. The collapsed state is unable to provide security or basic services, and more refugees will fuel further desperation and crime. Surging migration to our borders will only grow as we add to Haiti's unacceptable misery.

Haitians need immediate assistance to restore the government's ability to neutralize the gangs and restore order through the national police. They need a true agreement across society and political actors, with international support, to chart a timely path to the democratic selection of their next president and parliament. They need humanitarian assistance, money to deliver COVID vaccines and so many other things.

But what our Haitian friends really want, and need, is the opportunity to chart their own course, without international puppeteering and favored candidates but with genuine support for that course. I do not believe that Haiti can enjoy stability until her citizens have the dignity of truly choosing their own leaders fairly and acceptably.

Last week, the U.S. and other embassies in Port-au-Prince issued another public statement of support by for the unelected, de facto Prime Minister Dr. Ariel Henry

as interim leader of Haiti, and have continued to tout his "political agreement" over another broader, earlier accord shepherded by civil society. The hubris that makes us believe we should pick the winner – again – is impressive. This cycle of international political interventions in Haiti has consistently produced catastrophic results. More negative impacts to Haiti will have calamitous consequences not only in Haiti, but in the U.S. and our neighbors in the hemisphere.

Sincerely,



Daniel Foote

Cc: The Honorable T. Nuland, Under Secretary for Political Affairs  
The Honorable B. Nichols, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs  
The Honorable K. Merten, Acting Director General  
The Honorable Gregory Meeks, Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Andy Levin, Member, U.S. House of Representatives

Here is a list of Haitian non-profits that have proven trustworthy and can make good use of donations:

FOKAL

AYITI DEMEN

PARTNERS IN HEALTH

HEALTH EQUITY INTERNATIONAL

MEDISHARE4HAITI

GASKOV.ORG (a permanent family run-clinic in Les Cayes, a town devastated by July earthquake)

LAMBI FUND

[hopeforhaiti.com](http://hopeforhaiti.com) (also in affected area)

locallyhaiti.org

[cofhed.org](http://cofhed.org) (in camp Perrin a destroyed beautiful small community)

[fonkoze.org](http://fonkoze.org) ( all affected zones)

[haiticommunitytrust.org/EarthquakeReliefFund](http://haiticommunitytrust.org/EarthquakeReliefFund)



