



Haiti: The Aftershocks of History

Laurent Dubois

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A passionate and insightful account by a leading historian of Haiti that traces the sources of the country's devastating present back to its turbulent and traumatic history

Even before the 2010 earthquake destroyed much of the country, Haiti was known as a benighted place of poverty and corruption. Maligned and misunderstood, the nation has long been blamed by many for its own wretchedness. But as acclaimed historian Laurent Dubois makes clear, Haiti's troubled present can only be understood by examining its complex past. The country's difficulties are inextricably rooted in its founding revolution—the only successful slave revolt in the history of the world; the hostility that this rebellion generated among the colonial powers surrounding the island nation; and the intense struggle within Haiti itself to define its newfound freedom and realize its promise.

Dubois vividly depicts the isolation and impoverishment that followed the 1804 uprising. He details how the crushing indemnity imposed by the former French rulers initiated a devastating cycle of debt, while frequent interventions by the United States—including a twenty-year military occupation—further undermined Haiti's independence. At the same time, Dubois shows, the internal debates about what Haiti should do with its hard-won liberty alienated the nation's leaders from the broader population, setting the stage for enduring political conflict. Yet as Dubois demonstrates, the Haitian people have never given up on their struggle for true democracy, creating a powerful culture insistent on autonomy and equality for all.

Revealing what lies behind the familiar moniker of "the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere," this indispensable book illuminates the foundations on which a new Haiti might yet emerge.

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