

## **Dissecting Toronto Star cover-up of Canada's complicity in Haiti's on-going impunity, repression, poverty and suffering**

May 14, 2006, by Grahame Russell

### **BELOW**

Rights Action dissects a Toronto Star article, to give an idea of how the Canadian government and media continue to refuse to question, let alone accept responsibility for how Canada has contributed to Haiti's endemic suffering.

### **WHY CRITIQUE THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT & MEDIA?**

Rights Action is a tax-charitable organization in the USA and Canada - funds community based development, human rights and environment projects and organizations in a number of countries, including Haiti. For the 4<sup>th</sup> time in Haiti, since the end of the brutal, exploitative Duvalier regime (late 1980s), the Haitian people have elected a government. Two out of the first three times, the "international community" including Canada - conspired with oligarchic and military sectors in Haiti to overthrow the elected governments (1991, 2004) and re-install repressive, oligarchy-dominated regimes.

In the measure that citizens, politicians and the media in the USA, France and Canada the so-called "international community" do not hold our governments accountable for our illegal interventions against successive democratic regimes in Haiti, we condemn the majority poor and African-descendant population of Haiti to continued interventionism by the "international community", and continued exploitation, poverty and repression.

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**HAITIAN HOMECOMING 'EMOTIONAL' FOR JEAN: GOVERNOR GENERAL OFFICIALLY HERE FOR INAUGURATION, BUT HER REAL MISSION IS TO OFFER HOPE**, By Francine Kopun, feature writer, TORONTO STAR article, May 14, 2006

*The very title of the article is about Canada's Haitian born governor-general, and not about how Canada has contributed to the on-going repression and impunity in Haiti. [See attached 06-04-11 article by Anthony Fenton and Dru Oja Jay, and see the book, referred therein, "Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority", by Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton]*

Port-au-Prince For Governor General Michaëlle Jean, who fled her country of birth to escape a brutal dictatorship, returning yesterday as a head of state was the realization

of a life's dream. "It's very emotional to be standing here," she said, after stepping off a military jet onto the steaming tarmac at the airport in Haiti's capital yesterday. Forced to leave with her family at the age of 11 to escape the oppressive and violent Duvalier regime, Jean said Haiti has forever remained in her heart.

*The story provides no mention that this "Duvalier regime" was supported militarily, economically and politically by the "international community", mainly by the USA and France, and also by Canada.*

"I'm very happy, very happy; it's the realization of a great dream," she said, after the brass band on the tarmac finished playing "O Canada," and a Haitian banjo band began playing.

*What happiness is this to arrive in Haiti as governor general of one of the three G8 rich and powerful countries that has contributed to Haiti's recent repression, suffering and despair "and make no reference to Canada's complicity?"*

Jean came to attend today's inauguration of President René Préval, but her true purpose is to give embattled Haitians hope for a better future.

*What "hope for a better future" is there in Haiti, if the "international community" (and our media) cannot truthfully question how, for some 200 years, the "international community" has constantly and negatively intervened in support of an undemocratic and exploitative minority in Haiti?*

Canadian officials had originally believed Préval's inauguration ceremony would be peaceful, but have recently learned that 10,000 T-shirts bearing the likeness of deposed president Jean-Bertrand Aristide have been imported into the country; they now fear there could be some kind of demonstration.

*Why should there not be a demonstration in favour of the twice militarily-ousted, democratically elected President Aristide? Canada and its governor-general stand in favour of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression " ?*

Although she has returned to Haiti several times since leaving in 1968, this is Jean's first official visit as Canada's Governor General. Her appointment has been described as holding the same importance for Haitians as the election of Pope John Paul II did for Poles. The drive from the airport to the luxury hotel where Jean is staying was a sober reminder of all that Haitians have suffered since she left.

*How poignant - the Canadian mission and media staying in the luxury hotel, driving through the widespread and endemic misery of the Haitian majority " that Canada has contributed to!*

The cratered and chaotic streets of Port-au-Prince teem with filth and poverty and the desperation that poverty breeds so well. But this is no longer the Haiti Jean wants to see reflected in the media, the Haiti that has become synonymous with slums and political violence and failure, and even the plain bad luck of hurricanes and floods.

*How will this not be the Haiti reflected in our media, if Canada's government, our own governor general and media cannot even question Canada's complicit role in perpetuating Haiti's poverty, oppression and suffering?*

She wants the world to see the hope that threads through the crowds of poor – the little girls dressed for school in hair ribbons and white lace ankle socks and shiny shoes, and their mothers, perfectly coiffed and dressed though they live in a city in ruins. “I looked at the faces on my way to the hotel and I recognized the people,” said Jean. “I can see that the people are tired, though. A lot of things happened here. They need a boost right now. I feel the population is beaten down, fatigued. They have endured many difficult trials. Surviving is the challenge. “At the same time I could see the pride in their bearing. That's still there. That's still intact. You can see it in the way they dress. Those are signs of pride.”

She made a point of meeting separately with a handful of Haitian journalists to tell them Canada is dedicated to continuing to help Haiti and she is personally dedicated to the task.

*As a former inquiring journalist, did she speak critically with Haitian journalists about the dedicated role Canada played in supporting the illegal coup against the elected Haitian government of 2004?*

“I am very attached to the country of my birth,” she said. Later, Jean told Canadian journalists it was Haitian reporters, who have so often paid for freedom of the press with their lives, who inspired her to pursue a career in journalism.

*As a former inquiring journalist, did she challenge Canadian journalists to investigate properly and fully the illegal role Canada played in the 2004 coup, as documented by journalists mentioned above?*

Asked whether she believed she could make a difference given that her role as Governor General is largely symbolic, Jean replied: “We live in a world that needs symbols. Sometimes symbols change things.”

There are 150,000 Haitians living in Canada and Haiti is the largest beneficiary of Canada's development assistance in the Americas. In the past two years, the Canadian International Development Agency spent \$45 million in Haiti on political governance, including \$30 million on the recent elections; \$76 million on access to basic services like

water and sanitation; \$12 million on local development and \$6 million on economic recovery.

*This sounds good, but only because the media ignores the fact that the international community illegally helped overthrow the elected government of Haiti, thus destroying good governance and democracy, contributing directly to a worsening of poverty.*

*With development assistance like this, who needs enemies? It is documented in the book Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority, that development assistance as distributed by C.I.D.A. from 2000-2004 went to Haitian and Canadian NGOs that were directly opposed to the democratically elected government of Haiti.*

The country is pinning its hope on the president being sworn in today; the wish is that he can achieve the political consensus necessary to end the bloody political battles that have torn Haiti apart.

*Canada and the international community helped overthrow the political consensus that the Haitian people had elected (in 1990 and 2000) and contributed directly to the bloody political battles.*

Jean warned the international community to be patient with Haiti: "There was a tradition of dictatorship in this country. You don't get rid of some behaviours from one day to another."

*The governor-general did not demand that the international community be held accountable for its illegal participation in the 1991 and 2004 coups and did not criticize the interventionist behaviors of the rich and powerful nations going back some 200 years in Haiti's history.*

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For more information about work in Haiti or to support community based development, environment and human rights groups in Haiti: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org).