

Help 4 Haiti

Nou se Ayisyen – We are Haitian

We at Better Family Life offer our deepest condolences to the Haitian people during this tremendous time of loss, devastation and sorrow. Please help by sending a financial donation to one of the many legitimate organizations providing them with assistance. You can click on a logo below to donate now. Thanks so very much.

Nou se Ayisyen.



**THE PEOPLE OF HAITI NEED OUR HELP:
We are one humanity**

By Malik Ahmed

In the very difficult midst of a BFL Cultural Center fundraising drive that begs for massive and urgent financial assistance, it is ironic I would be reaching out to the BFL staff, members, volunteers and all people of goodwill to provide financial and other forms of assistance to the people of Haiti. Indeed Haiti needs everyone's collective help to recover from the devastating and crippling 7.0 magnitude earthquake that nearly leveled the capital city of Port-Au-Prince on January 12, 2010. Nearly 1 million are homeless, tens of thousands are dehydrated or starving. Even more numbers of children have become orphans as a result of the worst natural disaster in over 200 years to hit this beleaguered nation of 9 million souls. This disaster comes on the heels of 3 devastating hurricanes to wreak havoc on the Haitian people, and destroyed much of its fragile infrastructure.

The loss of human life is staggering. As of today, the Haitian government has reported over 200,000 deaths, creating the necessity of emergency mass-graves without giving the dead the dignity of "last rites" burial services. Each day the death toll rises. We will never know the real number. Some Haitian officials believe it will be more than 300,000.

Debris from homes, schools, hospitals, and government buildings is spewed in every direction beyond the scope of imagination, and water systems and power lines have also been

destroyed. The most vulnerable population – the poor and children – wait in endless lines for food, water, medical supplies and entrance into over-crowded shanty towns made of sheets, blankets and dislodged pieces of metal and other materials. Children are scavenging for food, searching for missing parents, groping with broken limbs, untreated injuries and malnourished bodies.

“This is a time when we are reminded of the common humanity that we all shared” bemoaned a grieving President Barack Obama who is facing an intransigent Republican-led blockage of passage of his healthcare reform bill. Yet, in spite of his domestic troubles, the President still sent over \$100 million in financial aid to Haiti and ordered the deployment of thousands of U.S. troops to help keep peace and assist with reopening Haiti’s international airport. President Obama urged all Americans to lend a helping hand.

This is indeed a time when we must remember our common humanity by helping the people of Haiti. As African Americans we have so many commonalities with the Haitian people i.e. historical African roots, a common struggle out of inhumane oppression, greed and enslavement, vast cultural and intellectual ties, and families that include Haitian members. It is essential that we display the necessary humanitarian response through financial donations to creditable charities.

In 2005, the Better Family Life staff, members and volunteers along with the Millions More Movement spearheaded a drive that raised money and over \$150,000 in clothing, food, medical

supplies and equipment that filled a 16-wheel tractor trailer. This aid was distributed to several churches along the gulf coast to help hurricane Katrina victims recover from the worst natural disaster in US history. We were one of the first groups in the St. Louis area to provide humanitarian support to the victims of hurricane Katrina, and were proud we had the courage to act!

Shortly before hurricane Katrina, in June of 2005, BFL purchased the former Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary School from the St. Louis Board of Education and had just commenced the fundraising drive for its renovation to convert it to the Better Family Life Cultural, Educational & Business Center. However, we were able to put aside our needs and see a bigger mission in the relief efforts focusing on the poor and mostly African American citizens of New Orleans and the surrounding communities. The poignant fact was, in our own backyard, these law-abiding, tax paying citizens, were temporarily neglected by the most powerful government on earth. Haiti deserves a more humane consideration from ordinary citizens like you and me. We must continue to respond to their plight long after the television cameras and news media move on to the next breaking news story. We must stay committed long after the spirit of goodwill fades. We must be aware that it will be years, if not decades, before Haiti will fully recover.

Nearly 38 years ago, I visited the island nations of Haiti and Jamaica. It was my first time being in the developing world. Even in so-called good times, Haiti was an immensely poor and under-developed country, with a decaying infrastructure of roads,

buildings and industry. At the young age of 20, I was brought face to face with the stark realities of the so-called third world. I was shocked at the high level of poverty and malnourished children whose existence was sustained by begging tourists for loose currency. I could not believe a country so geographically near America could be several centuries behind in its development. I kept asking myself why the conditions in Haiti did not necessitate an international humanitarian intervention.

But I was also incredibly amazed by the spirit of the people. The Haitians are fiercely proud, self-sufficient, intellectually focused and have retained much of their African heritage-unlike many other people of African descent throughout the world. Common people spoke of the need to rebuild the country, to fight ineffective political leadership and governmental corruption, and to send their children abroad for advanced education. I witnessed first-hand their creative ways of surviving the hardships of daily living, the awesome multi-talents of their artistic community, their elaborate religious rites and the communal workings of families.

Some of Haiti's problems are self-inflicted. Others are the result of the historic and geopolitical intrigue that was leveled against it after winning its freedom in 1804. The international manipulation that followed this first successful movement of former slaves to achieve independence in the western hemisphere at the height of worldwide white supremacy, domination and control exacted a harsh and punitive price. Today, they are still paying that price.

With all of their suffering, political turmoil, coups and counter coups, Haitians are some of the most resilient people on the planet. They are hard working God loving souls who believe their future will be better than their past. They will once again rise from the phoenix-like ashes of their current disaster, like the New Orleans Saints football team rose from their perennially miserable NFL experience to be the Super Bowl Champs of 2010.

We can all help in the recovery effort by making a financial contribution. I recommend this be done through reputable non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and charities such as the *Haiti Support Project's* Haiti Relief Fund Initiative at www.ibw21.org, and through the charity of recording artist and popular goodwill Ambassador, Wyclef Jean at www.yele.org. Any financial gesture that you make will go a long way to help the Haitian people recover.

Thank you in advance for reading this appeal and thank you for whatever financial assistance you are able to give. May God continue to protect and guide us; and may we continue to see the "fruits" of cooperative economics, unity and collective work and responsibility. When disaster strikes, we are forever reminded that we are one-humanity.

Warmest regards,

**Malik Ahmed, CEO
Better Family Life, Inc.**