

## Haiti between Pestilence and Hope: The Progressive Ideals from the Revolution of 1804 Set the Pace

**Fritznel D. Octave**

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*Haiti between Pestilence and Hope is a hopeful text that recalls Haiti's troubled political past while suggesting ways to brighten the nation's future.*

Fritznel D. Octave uses Haitian history as a blueprint for the nation's future progress in *Haiti between Pestilence and Hope*.

Bemoaning the fact that Haiti only makes international headlines when calamities occur, as with natural disasters and political upheavals, this book seeks to correct those negative perceptions. It argues that, despite Haiti's troubles, there is more to the nation and its people than just their tragedies. It thus reintroduces Haiti as a land of unrealized opportunities that has only so far failed to provide for the majority of its citizens. The talent and resources needed to make Haiti a more successful nation, the book says, have been with it all along.

Describing Haiti's history as "the story of unfinished business," the book notes that the nation was founded in 1804 with high ideals. It also argues that the nation has failed to live up to these ideals in the two centuries since its founding. It asserts that the slave rebellion that won Haiti its independence left a mixed legacy of unity, distrust, liberty, and prejudice, and it cites a number of reasons for Haiti's failure to thrive, including irresponsible leadership, a lack of personal responsibility, and harmful foreign intervention.

Examples from Haiti's past and present are used to illustrate the impact of each trial that Haitians have faced. The book covers Haiti's most notorious and influential leaders, including their rises, falls, and occasional comebacks, all while noting the marks that each leader left on the nation. It also touches on Haiti's potential-laden natural advantages, like national monuments that could attract tourists and the nation's relationships with important neighbors, including the Dominican Republic and the United States.

Still, even as it highlights the problems that have long afflicted Haiti, the book shares reasons to hope that it will have a better future. Haiti's hardworking people, natural beauty, and progressive constitution are celebrated as factors that stand to propel the nation toward prosperity and democracy. The book encourages the election of responsible leaders, as well as strong investments in education and infrastructure—work that must be done by Haitians themselves, both at home and abroad. In its focus on the opportunities available to Haiti, the book infuses inspirational notes into its acknowledgements of the difficulties ahead. However, the book's counterintuitively structured prose and unusual and incorrect word choices impede its delivery throughout.

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EILEEN GONZALEZ (October 21, 2022)

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