



Autobiography & Memoir

Rubble: The Search for a Haitian Boy

Sandra Marquez Stathis

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Recent scientific studies suggest that the human desire to help others is innate. In journalist Sandra Marquez-Stathis's remarkable first book, that drive is explored in a place where the choices of how to assist are confounding and the ramifications of the decision potentially life altering—Haiti.

While *Rubble* has many of the features of a modern-day fairy tale—a young American human rights observer in Haiti who falls in love with a sweet and charismatic homeless boy, and her subsequent search to find him (almost two decades later) in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake—it is, refreshingly, nothing of the sort. Instead, it is a story packed with a candid humility reflecting the complexity of the author's efforts, skills, and decisions set against a backdrop of a country where political upheaval, unrest, poverty, and foreign intervention had already produced seismic catastrophes well before January of 2010.

With her decisions to go to Haiti (both in the 1990s and after the earthquake) and her experiences there, Stathis shows a great deal of introspection and compassion, and never remotely teeters toward becoming patronizing or condescending. At times, the author didn't completely comprehend her environment or its people, and at one point she even questions some of the aid work done there. Yet, as she came to see that the necessities and truths of survival in Haiti are not "black and white" or linear in logic, but more accurately nuanced and circular, her understanding of the country and culture broadened and her attachment deepened.

Haiti took Stathis in and enlightened and adopted her in a way that perhaps only human rights, justice, and aid workers can know. As Stathis recounts her story of Junior (the boy) and Haiti, she includes many individuals who have been drawn to work with the people of this nation. Her bond to this adopted land is never more apparent and poignant than when Stathis mourns the loss of students and faculty from Lynn University in Florida, people whom she had never met.

Rubble is virtually void of cultural judgment and is full of awe at the pure beauty and brutality that is Haiti. Although most of us will never have the courage to venture as far, or risk as much, as Stathis did, by reading her account we can certainly get a vicarious taste of a momentous life journey.

Elissa Mugianis