

The Re-foundation of a Nation by Jean-Claude Bajeux, Executive Director of CEDH, Ecumenical Center for Human Rights

We must take seriously the silence, which followed upon the unprecedented vibration of an unnamed earthquake that shook the country far beyond its core. We can hear it everywhere: there was a “before January 12th, 2010”, and there will be an “after January 12th, 2010”. And Laennec Hurbon does not hesitate to title his article in *Le Monde* “Haiti, Year Zero”.

Haiti, this country we are looking for, in vain, up and down hill, or lost in the silence of libraries and the echoes of concert halls. This country has always been haunted by the devils of autocracy.

An hesitation in the heart of its deep soul has not enabled the distinction to take place between the state-of-the-art nations, those who set the tone on those who follow, those who do not stop defining their identity and completing the contract which holds them together, and those who chose and privilege the principles of the law, freedom and development.

When we went to war against slavery in its denial of the human condition and its obsessive fear of profits from free work, the historical movement, which resulted from it and led to the independence of the country, should have been an inevitably assertion of human rights, living free and equal in a community of law.

How this vision, which embraces a radical revolution in a fierce and rough system, has encompassed in a post-colonial society the reproduction of the exact same hierarchy of power coming from African traditions as well as European lines?

It was therefore an evidence, at least for us who look two hundred years ago this nation growing and evolving: from the very first minutes of the independence, we should have banished any speech mentioning or addressing the existence of disparities between human groups or ethnic groups, as well as any speech or vision contaminated by the creed of slavery.

And this was Haiti. To exist as a nation, Haiti had to refrain itself from any assertion of citizens' disparity, based on a conscious or unconscious racism. This radical position served as a driving impetus for the War of Independence without which, this state would have never been a reality. This requirement crosses the diverse episodes of the war of Independence, and imposes itself upon all actors: all Haitians are, regardless of whom they are, soldiers of freedom. This requirement is the soul of the « Oath of the Ancestors ».

This message has been introduced, defended and spread worldwide for two hundred years.

It should not have been shunted aside. The nonsense of a primary racism and mutual exclusions of children from the same family should not have been extended beyond the streets and in the daily life. This could have led and had led to miserable and woeful competition, and, finally, to an unparalleled killing frenzy of a bloody and sterile power which lasted twenty-nine years and drained the state.

But, in this mixed race society, which by definition, could not, without denying itself, being haunted by racism, the poison was already there, active and harmful, exuding a mystic and mythical biology. There are no excuses for this.

And, since the independence, we are still waiting for the formulation and the expression of a public policy to fight this poison, and a political will and policy for the eradication of these racist prejudices. Anténor Firmin and Jean-Price Mars have expressed this political concept, aiming for embracing all citizens to be freed from the slightest feeling of unworthiness.

Is race a prison? Certainly not!

These are offensive creeds, disseminated by the powerful. They convey these believes up to supposedly decolonized families, creating obsessing neurosis, inferiority complexes, which we carry on as iron collar and itches, driving us to commit unpunished crimes.

We have to recognize and admit the role and the importance of this factor as a first explanation behind our lateness in the organization of this country.

In a re-foundation process, it will be crucial to make an inventory of the detrimental effects of such a metastasis. It will be critical too to re-invent the basis for a common life program redeemed from the pathogenic effects of Gobineau rambling speech, with regards to the great diversity of human beings.

The second obstacle to the construction of the nation, capable of assuring citizens' « happiness » and ensuring access to democratic liberties for every citizen, has been the silence of the majority, in its non-access to writing, as per say the inability to express themselves and to communicate, the incapacity to confide to script the archives of the nation as well as the treasures of knowledge. After two hundred years, the world of technical knowledge, the universe of technologies in its diverse languages, and the development of memory through writing, remain closed to half of our children.

This is not only the negation of progress but, indeed, the destruction of a treasure. The oath of the Ancestors should have embraced a responsibility for revolution: the union between everybody and the knowledge for all, immediately and entirely. At the same time, the access and the use of the two languages by all children entail the openness to knowledge, then to freedom.

The non-existence of an educational method, teaching both languages at the national level for every single child in Haiti, is literally unacceptable.

Furthermore, the promises of democratic liberties have gone unheeded. Those who promoted these democratic values such as Felix Darfour, the three brothers Coicou and Capois-la-Mort have been shot and killed respectively on September 2nd 1822, March 15th 1908 and 1806 in Terrier-Rouge, only two years after Vertières. We had to wait the Constitution of 1987 for the recognition of citizens' rights and the respect of these liberties.

Also, the decision of Minister Bernard concerning the role and the use of the two languages in the educational system, had to wait the same period of time to be formulated. As well in public life, we have always prevented democratic liberties to rule our society, remaining deaf to the democratic speech, and failing in the duty to send our children in schools, all and some, and at all costs.

If Haiti still wants to be a reality, the condition sine qua non is to continuously forbid and fight against the emergence of racial categories, thus racism, and mobilize all efforts to send our children to school. These are the two non-negotiable conditions for the re-foundation of the nation.

This oath has to impose itself to the ninth generation following the independence.

Address and speak about the process of reconstruction are not enough if we want to avoid our past mistakes, to free ourselves from the chain of inequalities, the dangerous nonsense of racism and the

silence of ignorance. This must be clear and have immediate impact on the system and the content of education, in the reality of relationships amongst citizens and in the law of the new state. This is an imperative oath.

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