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Haitian Leaders and Advocates Host Symposium to Tackle Ongoing Crisis in Haiti

The three-panel discussion hosted by the Haitian American Foundation for Democracy, Roots of Development, and American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies will explore Haitian solutions to the country's pressing challenges.

Haiti: From Crisis to Catalyst

April 4, 2024

1:30-3 pm – Panel 1—Migration

3:30-5 pm – Panel 2—Aid

5-6 pm – Reception

6-8 pm – Panel 3—International Engagement

American University Butler Board Room

6th floor Butler Pavilion

4440 Massachusetts Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20016

And on Zoom,

<https://american.zoom.us/j/99792651680?pwd=VDZLSTVqTW55WHJxTFRnVG9DYTFNz09>

Meeting ID: 997 9265 1680

Passcode: 268136

Or

HAFFD website,

<https://haffd.org/haitifromcrisistocatalyst>

WASHINGTON, DC—Leading Haitian, American and regional thinkers, advocates, and program managers will gather on Thursday, April 4 at a symposium at American University, and on Zoom, to discuss solutions for Haiti's most pressing problems. Panelists include a former Haitian prime minister, a democracy activist close to the negotiations for a transition government of Haiti, leading US immigration advocates, and key players innovating new ways of managing international aid through local organizations.

Gangs have formed a confederation in Haiti and have launched war on the state. Residents of Port-au-Prince, the capital, are living in terror as gangs attack government buildings, police stations, and banks—as well as private homes, businesses, and any person in their way. A new transition government is in formation, and many hope that it will reestablish security, rebuild collapsed state institutions, and inspire Haitians' confidence to vote in elections later next year. What will it take for that to happen? What could be the consequences of failure? How will Haiti's crisis and potential solutions impact the United States and the region?

Panel 1: Reexamining the Impacts of Haitian Migration

How do current US policies and the collapse in Haiti impact Haitian and Haitian American communities? How can newly arrived Haitians contribute to political discourse in a cataclysmic year for Haiti and an election year for the US?

Speakers and panelists include:

- Ernesto Castañeda, director of American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies
- Leonie Hermantin, director of special projects, Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center, Miami
- Guerline Jozef, executive director, Haitian Bridge Alliance, San Diego
- Frandley Julien, immigration lawyer, Miami

Panel 2: Local Power and International Aid

In Haiti, locally-led initiatives have sustained communities through the current crisis. Considering powerful examples of localization of aid in Haiti, what are the best practices for achieving sustainable change in Haiti and globally?

Speakers and panelists include:

- Milostène Castin, activist, northeastern Haiti
- Scott Freeman, anthropologist and professor, American University
- Jessica Hsu, independent anthropologist, Port-au-Prince
- Jake Johnston, senior research associate, Center for Economic Policy and Research, and author of *Aid State*
- Hon. Michèle Pierre-Louis, former prime minister of Haiti and executive director of FOKAL, Port-au-Prince
- Louino Robillard, program director, Rasin Devlopman, Port-au-Prince
- Sarah Rose, senior advisor for localization, USAID
- Gunjan Veda, executive director, Movement for Community-Led Development

Panel 3: Past Lessons for Future International Engagement in Haiti

In this moment of collapse and rebuilding, it is crucial to consider what international engagements have worked in Haiti in the past, what programs have failed, and why. How can these lessons be applied to a strategy that not only disarms and pacifies gangs—but also builds government institutions and functionality, and combats corruption and criminality long-term?

Speakers and panelists include:

- Monique Clesca, journalist and former UN official, Port-au-Prince
- Roberson Edouard, sociologist, l'Université Laval, Quebec City
- Georges Fauriol, senior associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies
- Jeffsky Poincy, governance and policy expert, Washington, DC

The Haitian American Foundation for Democracy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to engage the Haitian-American diaspora in promoting policies that foster democracy, human rights, economic development, and inclusion.

“Haitians deserve governance by the talented, capable people of integrity and technical skill who have been reluctant, and often afraid, to participate in public life,” wrote Jean-Philippe Austin, the co-founder of the Haitian American Foundation for Democracy, in *The New York Times* on Saturday.

Roots of Development is a Washington, DC-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and promote community-led development. Roots of Development accompanies local partners as they improve the quality of life in their communities, and advocates for aid efforts to center local knowledge, resources, and actions.