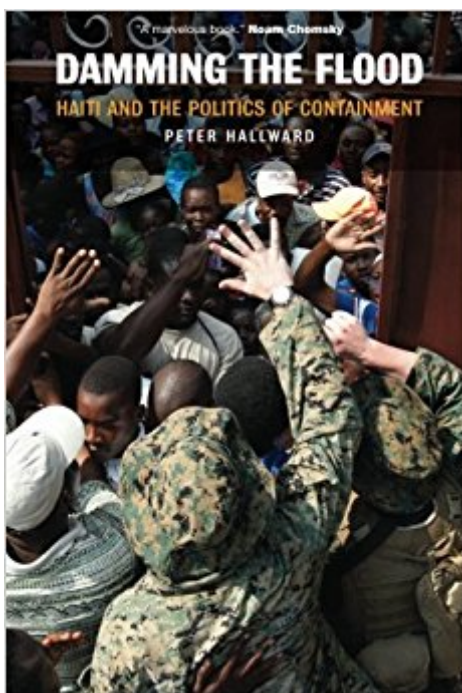


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# Damming The Flood: Haiti And The Politics Of Containment



## Synopsis

Long before a devastating earthquake hit in January 2010, Haiti was one of the most impoverished and oppressed countries in the world. However, in the late 1980s a remarkable popular mobilization known as Lavalas (the flood) sought to liberate the island from decades of US-backed dictatorial rule. *Damming the Flood* analyzes how and why the Lavalas governments led by President Jean-Bertrand Aristide were overthrown, in 1991 and again in 2004, by the enemies of democracy in Haiti and abroad. The elaborate campaign to suppress Lavalas was perhaps the most successful act of imperial sabotage since the end of the Cold War. It has left the people of Haiti at the mercy of some of the most rapacious political and economic forces on the planet. Updated with a substantial new afterword that addresses the international response to the earthquake, *Damming the Flood* is both an invaluable account of recent Haitian history and an illuminating analysis of twenty-first-century imperialism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This riveting and deeply informed account should be carefully read by those who recognize that Haiti's tragic history is a microcosm of imperial savagery and heroic resistance." —Noam Chomsky "A detailed account of the 'democratic containment' of Haiti's radical politics in the past two decades ... an outstanding book." —Slavoj Žižek, *New Statesman* "An excellent book ... the first accurate analysis of recent Haitian history, and of its history in the making." —Dr.

Paul Farmer, Harvard University “Damming the Flood is a brilliant, politically sophisticated and morally infuriating work on a shameful piece of very recent history that the US press has either distorted or ignored. It is the most important and devastating book I’ve read on American betrayal of democracy in one of the most tormented nations in the world.”

• Jonathan Kozol, author of *Death at an Early Age*, *Rachel and her Children*, and *Savage Inequalities* “The book is a masterpiece. As someone who lived through those years, *Damming the Flood* is not only incredibly accurate and well sourced but the analysis is also flawless.”

• Ira Kurzban, immigration lawyer and former attorney for the Haitian Government “This is a book about the latest crime that the world’s most powerful nation committed against one of the world’s poorest. I like this book for its scholarship, its measured tone, and its good writing. But I am grateful for it above all because at long last it presents another side of a story that has been reported, almost universally, with stunning tendentiousness and in apparent ignorance of the lives and opinions of most Haitians. This book goes a long way to setting the record straight ... It ought to be required reading for every historian of the Americas and for every student of political science.”

• Tracy Kidder, author of *Mountains Beyond Mountains* “*Damming the Flood* is the best source for anyone trying to understand what has happened in Haiti, and it is unfortunately equally valuable for explaining what is happening elsewhere in Latin America. It is meticulously researched, with ample citations to the mainstream press, human rights reports, and experts from many countries and political perspectives.”

• Brian Concannon, Jr., director of the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti “*Damming the Flood* demonstrates that, contrary to what so many self-proclaimed experts have led us to believe with the steady diet of half-truths and outright lies they have been feeding us, it is indeed possible to get Haiti right. All it takes is a healthy dose of respect for a nation and a people so deserving of it, and an uncompromising devotion to the truth.”

• Patrick Elie, political activist and former Secretary of State for National Defense, Haiti

Peter Hallward teaches at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University, London. He is the author of several books including *Absolutely Postcolonial*, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*, and *Damming the Flood*.

No foreign policy issue is more distorted in the corporate media than Haiti, with the exception of

Israel/Palestine. Peter Hallward has written a marvelous book with a politically engaged perspective. His account of the years leading up to the U.S. kidnapping of Aristide in 2004 is an invaluable corrective to the demonization of Aristide and Lavalas. The story of Haiti, as told by Hallward, gives the reader insight into the lengths the U.S. government will go to repress popular movements that seek to redistribute wealth. Most Americans cannot comprehend the level of repression the U.S. can bring to bear on a small country like Haiti. For further evidence see the diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks and published in The Nation magazine. This book receives the highest praise from Chomsky, Zizek, and Dr. Paul Farmer. You shouldn't need any further proof that it is a must read.

This book should be read by everyone in the US. We in the US don't realize what our policies have done to countries in Latin America. We helped depose the most beloved and popularly elected president in Haiti, Aristide. We and our NGOs have brought in cheap food which contributed to the decimation of the Haitian agricultural sector. Now people don't have jobs, they have US supported officials, no public education, a literacy rate of 50%, not much indoor plumbing or waste disposal. Very poor infrastructure, no trees, the land turns to mud when it rains. The mud flows into the ocean which kills the fish and coral reefs. It is an environmental and humanitarian disaster. And little missionaries go over and try to help but there is no coordination of their efforts and no follow through. Many of their projects fall apart after they leave. People tried to help like Clinton and Sean Penn but they didn't consult the local officials, they sometime did what benefited them and their friends rather than Haiti. Did they really need a brand new hotel when most of the country doesn't have running water? I will be going to Haiti soon and will report back after the trip.

Vital information that pulls no punches. Closely researched and reasoned. With Paul Farmer and Jeb Sprague's books a veritable handbook for understanding today's Haiti.

A lucid analysis. Well written!

This is an important book for understanding the negative influences of international forces in Haiti, but the author's insistence on Aristide's position as an innocent victim and a leader of a unified opposition movement presents too simplified a picture of the current political situation in Haiti.

I read a lot of books on Haiti, this is the best one I have seen on Haiti's history between 1990 and 2005. Well-written and researched, with strong analysis. It is important for anyone interested in

understanding Haiti today, but it is equally important for understanding current U.S. foreign policy. The excellent explanation of how the U.S. undermined and overthrew Haiti's democracy in 2004 applies to similar U.S. efforts in Venezuela over the last 8 years, and current efforts to undermine democracy in Bolivia.

This is the finest political study I've read in years. Hallward presents an impressively insightful and revelatory examination of Haiti's grassroots democracy movement (mid 1980s-present), plus an expose of the numerous malicious forces fighting to prevent democracy and human rights in Haiti (e.g. powerful Haitian wealthy sector, Duvalierist holdovers, and the US State Department). In thoroughly-documented detail, Hallward corrects the fallacious and slanderous reputation that has been heaped upon Jean Bertrand Aristide by his many self-interested opponents. Hallward argues convincingly that JBA was driven from power, not because he was corrupt (as some critics alleged, without providing evidence), but, rather, because JBA's efforts to improve the lives of the Haitian poor presented too great a threat to numerous established interests. Hallward makes a compelling case that JBA's so-called "voluntary resignation" in 2004 can be better understood as forced, blackmailed, via the threat of mass-violence by a band of thugs with ties to the Haitian elite and the US State Department. Hallward provides evidence that, contrary to popular perceptions, JBA's Lavalas party governed responsibly and with great respect for human rights, whereas their opponents were guilty of human rights abuses on a massive scale. Though Hallward's tone is measured and credible, the book has a great moral clarity and shows that the US has abetted in a large-scale violation of human rights in Haiti. I enthusiastically recommend this book for those interested in modern Haitian history, and/or grassroots democracy movements, US foreign policy and neo-colonialism.

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