

Aristide

and the Endless Revolution

**A Documentary Film by
Nicolas Rossier**

82 minutes, color & b/w, Beta SP
English, French and Creole w/ English Subtitles



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BARAKA PRODUCTIONS

Presents

ARISTIDE AND THE ENDLESS REVOLUTION

Produced and Directed
by

Nicolas Rossier

Narrator Ross Douglas

Co-Produced with TSR Switzerland
WXEL-TV-DT West Palm Beach, Florida
Interflix Studios
New York State Council of the Arts

CREDITS

Produced and directed by Nicolas Rossier

Editor - Cameron Clendaniel

Producer - Roopa Choudhury

Cameras - Nicolas Rossier and Jawad Metni

Co-producer - Cameron Clendaniel

Associate Producer- Ronald Laporte

Narrator - Ross Douglas

Narration written by – Cameron Clendaniel and Nicolas Rossier

Co-produced with La Télévision Suisse Romande

une entreprise de SRG SSR Idée Suisse

WXEL-TV-DT, West Palm Beach, Florida

Interflix Studio

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Music composed by Lubo Astinov

Original music - Misik Serena'd

Produced by Digital / Geronimo Records

Composed by Online Titus

Associate producers - Ronald LaPorte and Jennifer Filippazzo

Film consultants - Michelle Stephenson and Michel Maintenaz

Legal advisor - Innes Smolansky, Esq.

Assistant producer - Marianne Brun and Joseph Mastantuono

Sound engineer - Tom Gambale

Additional cameras - Vincent Gaines, Raouf Zaki, Andrew Rath, Alexander Kukharenko
and Chris Cook-Johnson

Journalists - Cameron Clendaniel and Roopa Choudhury

Research - Laurence Magloire, Michael Kessler, Jennifer Filippazzo

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Stephenson, Witness and NOTION

Short Synopsis:

An hour south of Miami, the elected president of the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation has twice been forced from office with the complicity of the international community. "ARISTIDE and the Endless Revolution" investigates the tragic events that led to the second violent expulsion of Jean Bertrand Aristide from Haiti. This documentary reveals the tangled web of hope, deceit, and political violence that has brought the world's first black republic to its knees.

Extended Synopsis:

A complex historical truth emerges in Nicolas Rossier's intelligent examination revealing the oft-suppressed story of the 2004 coup d'état in Haiti, as well as the systemic violence and human rights violations that erupted under the interim government. An interview with the deposed president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Pretoria, South Africa, is juxtaposed with the views of a wide range of supporters and critics, including US Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega. It is not Aristide and the Lavalas supporters who emerge looking like thugs but international interests concerned with suppressing popular democracy and ending the reforms Aristide was capable of making despite embargoes and the need to service a debt for loans Haiti never received.

History repeated itself in Haiti in 2004 in that the former parish priest had already been deposed as president in 1991 with CIA support. His kidnapping marked the fourth American intervention into Haiti in 90 years. This was also not the first intervention by France. In 1801, Napoleon had the leader of free Haiti, Toussant L'Ouverture, seized and deported to prison in France where he died. While faced with the strangulation of aid, Aristide had begun a campaign for reparations. This provocative investigation draws out the central place of international history in the historical poverty of Haiti.

QUOTES FROM THE FILM:

"Once we have elections where we will not have weapons, bloodshed, but, on an equal basis, human being freely choosing the one they want to lead them, then we will feed our democratic process. Then we will break with the tradition of moving from one coup d'état to another coup d'état, but moving one democratic election to another one. That was the goal." PRESIDENT - J.B ARISTIDE

"When you say what's Aristide's future you're also saying what's Haiti's future. You know, it's not easy to erase people's memories, and the people who I'm around, the patients, the people in hills, as you said, they're very attached to this guy. And they're not going to forget about him." PHYSICIAN & ANTHROPOLOGIST - PAUL FARMER

"Aristide was not perfect, but he represented an institution, if allowed to grow and prosper, symbolized another relationship that Haiti would have to the world." ACTIVIST-ACTOR - DANNY GLOVER

"We did conclude because of his failure to take advantage of opportunities over the years that he probably wasn't going to be able to govern the country, but in the final analysis the decision for him to leave was a decision that he made." ASST SECRETARY OF STATE - ROGER NORIEGA

"The orders from on high are that we are to concentrate on this question, just how much was Aristide responsible. But we don't have to follow the orders from on high, and if we're sensible we see that the only question was how it would implode." WRITER - NOAM CHOMSKY

"Aristide represented a people's reform movement and genuinely I think was trying for the first time ever in history, at least in modern history, to be the voice of the voiceless, to be the voice of the people who had, unfortunately had no source of support and were constantly the victims of a corrupt elite and a military regime." FORMER ASST SECRETARY OF STATE - JOHN SHATTUCK

“President Aristide came out Cite Soleil. He was a priest who spoke Creole and talked with the people and communicated. Prior to that time, people in power spoke French. And up comes this priest, talking to poor people, and yes, he created for them hope. He communicated with them, and he led the way to change.”
CONGRESSWOMAN- MAXINE WATERS

“The international community wanted a negotiated settlement. But for a solution to be negotiated it was necessary to have two parties, Aristide on one side and the opposition on the other. They wanted the negotiations to run their course. But when they realized that was not possible and that the situation was going to turn into total anarchy, at that moment they intervened and told Aristide that he must leave.”
HISTORIAN – CLAUDE MOISE

“They saw after the May 2000 election that the Fanmi Lavalas Party was going to be in power for the next 20 or 30 years. This was not only about Aristide, and it was not I wouldn’t even say principally about Aristide, it was really about the destruction of the Lavalas Party, because the Lavalas Party was what represented the majority interest.” ARISTIDE LEGAL ADVISOR - IRA KURZBAN

“He’s simply said to the property classes, you have to give a little more to the poor. We want to move from abject misery to dignified poverty. That was his program.” JOURNALIST - KIM IVES

“The most articulate voices and the most spirited voices for democracy in Haiti are being allowed to die from starvation and from violence. It’s a set back that’s multiple decades backwards. Everything’s broken, and everybody knows it.” HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER -THOMAS GRIFFIN

“I think that the decision to cut off aid to Haiti in 2000 was a decision that wasn’t just American, by the way, but which Europe agreed to, is directly responsible for the disintegration of Haitian institutions and the weakness that would allow 200 armed criminals to overthrow the government.....The problem is that if you don’t provide the funding you’ve got to provide the troops. You don’t have an alternative in Haiti. It’s too weak to isolate and cut-off assistance unless you’re prepared to follow that up with a military intervention.” EXPERT IN PEACE BUILDING - JAMES DOBBINS

What People are saying about *ARISTIDE AND THE ENDLESS REVOLUTION*:

“Informative and very moving. An excellent film about the sad recent political history of Haiti that not only provides a rich, well-detailed context for understanding the rise and fall of Aristide but also offers a provocative meditation of the role of outside, especially American, forces and interests in his tumultuous career.”

“*Aristide and the Endless Revolution* should be added to the list of required films (along with *Hearts & Minds*, *The Education of Little Tree*, *Black Robe*, *Paths of Glory*, *Kingdom of Heaven*, and *The Battle of Algiers*) in every high school in the western world.” - *Jack Random - Author of the Jazzman Chronicles*

“Well-made, balanced review of recent events set in a historic political context. There are great interviews with key players from both sides, especially President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.” - *The San Francisco Bay View*

“Compelling and informative, this documentary by Nicolas Rossier examines events in Haiti--including the history leading up to the 2004 kidnapping of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide--via interviews with a wide range of opponents and supporters as well with the former parish priest himself.” - *Vancouver International Film Festival*

“An important story, a compelling film...a good history of Aristide’s presidency and departure from office, and the impact on Haiti.”

Director's Statement:

It took me almost two years to make this film and I made it under very difficult conditions. I had to navigate through a web of rumors, doubtful sources, false accusations and bad faith. My film makes some points but I also believe that it raises serious questions.

A president was elected five years ago by an overwhelming majority of Haitians with a mandate of five years. Today there would not be such chaos in Haiti if the opposition had accepted the Caricom's power sharing plan agreed by Aristide beginning of February 2004.

Instead the international community let a gang of well armed and convicted criminals take over half of Haiti and force Aristide to leave. This was a slap to democracy and to the history of the first black republic which was learning a new language for the first time.

With Aristide and his movement, a process was taking root after 200 years of violence, murders and 33 coups. What is going on in Haiti is not so complicated. A good majority of Haitians don't understand why their leader was sent in a plane to Central Africa. People can say anything they want against Aristide and the lavalas majority but the fact remains that this majority is being oppressed every day in Haiti and with the complicity of the UN and the international community.

Economically Haiti is not in better shape today. The past year has been one of sharp decline in living standards for the vast majority of Haitians due mostly to the increase in politically motivated killings, kidnappings and political instability. And all this despite the lifting of the police materials embargo a year ago and the presence of 8,000 new security forces.

Haitians need to engage in an honest dialogue of reconciliation in the like of the one established in post-apartheid South Africa. Without that happening, any semblance of peace seems an illusion and free democratic elections can simply not happen. Unless constitutional order returns, political prisoners are freed and exiled supporters are allowed to return to Haiti, peace will simply not be possible in Haiti.

Principal Biographies:**Producer/ Director - Nicolas Rossier**

Nicolas is a New Yorker of Swiss French descent and has been living in New York for more than 8 years. He holds a degree in Economics and Political Science from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva and has studied Theater and Film production at the School for Visual Arts and the Lee Strasberg Institute. Nicolas worked on several film and theatrical productions as an actor and producer. "ARISTIDE and the Endless Revolution" is its first feature length documentary. His other film works have appeared on the Hallmark Network, PBS KTEH, Bridges TV, Link TV, Canadian TV, Danish TV and many other international networks. He has been featured as a guest speaker at Stanford University Media School, the Laura Flanders Show on Air America, the Andy Martin Show, Swiss TV, Greek National TV. His films have been presented in top festivals and venues such as the Film Society of Lincoln Center, Asia Society, the IDFA in Amsterdam or the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In 2001 Nicolas founded Baraka Productions and has now three other films in production.

Editor/ Co-producer - Cameron Clendaniel

Cameron has worked in film and digital media production for over five years, and holds a degree in studio art and political science from Williams College, where he found his passion for editing. Since graduating in 2001, he has worked in film production in Boston and for a public-affairs magazine as a foreign correspondent in China, where he also shot and directed his first documentary feature "The China Trials." In 2003, Cameron wrote and began editing his film at the American Beat studios, where he also functioned as a video editor and Flash animator, programming a virtual reality DVD-ROM tour of an award-winning museum exhibit. Cameron now works as a writer and film editor out of his studio in Brooklyn, where he edited "Aristide and the Endless Revolution".

**Aristide re-examined in *L'Express du Pacifique* in Vancouver Canada: Interview by Cécile Lepage
Nicolas Rossier's documentary *Aristide and the Endless Revolution* offers a powerful re-reading of
the Haitian crisis.**

After talking with more than 200 people from all sides and investigating for a year and a half, the filmmaker, who has a degree in political science, shines new light on the circumstances surrounding the departure of the Haitian president from Port-au-Prince under American escort on February 29, 2004. Was it a voluntary resignation or a modern coup d'état? Likely to spark considerable controversy because it takes such a critical stance against France and the United States, this well-directed documentary is playing this week at the Vancouver International Film Festival.

LEP: Tell us how this documentary came about ...

Nicolas Rossier: At one time, I pictured Haiti as a decaying society in chaos. In New York, where I've been living for eight years, I often ride in taxis whose drivers are from Haiti. I was fascinated by their passion for the political debates on their community radio station. These endless, often high-level discussions on the living conditions in Haiti made me want to do a report on a Haitian radio station and to also look into the political history of Haiti. That's how I became interested in Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the question of his power. At first, I didn't want to focus on him. I started doing my research in December 2003. But it wasn't until I interviewed him in August 2004 in South Africa that I decided to give him a lead role in my film.

LEP: What was the impression you got from your meeting with Jean-Bertrand Aristide?

N.R.: I had consulted archived images and reports, but I didn't really have a clear vision of who he was. I had been warned about his charisma. Still, after a two-and-a-half hour interview, I got the impression that he was a modest, quiet, frank man. I wasn't bewitched by his personality. Since his "resignation", no interview with Aristide as comprehensive as this one has been broadcast, as far as I know. And yet it's legitimate to give him a chance to explain himself. Why did his dream of social change turn into a nightmare?

LEP: What is your version of the facts?

N.R.: Paul Farmer, the founder of Partners in Health, an association that sets up hospitals on the island's central plateau, was one of the first intellectuals to reveal and criticize the coup mounted by France and the United States on Aristide in a series of articles he published in recognized and non-alternative periodicals. His ideas, which went against the opinions spread by the mass media, called out to me. As a filmmaker, mainstream views scare me. In Europe, I was confronted with violent reactions from academics I respected. They said I was crazy and accused Aristide of demagoguery and even worse villainy. I'm not here to revise history, but I am trying, with my camera, to dig behind the image most people have of the African dictator whose reign starts out well and ends badly. Little by little, very credible sources showed me another story, another context to the fall of President Aristide. My research reveals that the systematic accusations against Aristide are based only on rumors. I think that in Haiti, as in other places, you can't place the blame for an entire society's failure on a single person's shoulders. Personally, I'm convinced that Jean-Bertrand Aristide is someone who really tried to do his job well. He had an extremely difficult political journey that was punctuated with coups and assassination attempts. He was elected to the head of one of the poorest country in the world and the international community kept trying to put spokes in his wheel, like when they ordered an embargo on financial aid and then criticized his wait-and-see policy. Here's how a member of the provisional electoral council summed up the situation: "When you're given too many cars to repair and your tools are taken away, you may be the best mechanic in the world, but you're still a naked king!" So, yes, Aristide made mistakes. But the international community, headed by France and the United States, is responsible for the failure of Haitian democracy.

LEP: What future do you see for Haiti today?

N.R.: Aristide still represents the majority of Haitians, or at least the majority party in Haiti. Elections are planned for this fall, but all the leaders of the Lavalas party—which Aristide founded—are either in exile or prison. Under these conditions, it's very likely and even justified that the vote will be contested. Today, the country is in more chaos than ever. There's a feeling of urgency and a desire to move on and forget these wounds, but this will probably not be possible until there is a national effort toward reconciliation. In addition, the local elite has reactionary ideas that are completely anti-democratic. For instance, they don't believe that the mountain population, which is poor and uneducated, is capable of having political opinions. The UN presence in Haiti has led to a neo-colonialist vision. I don't have a political agenda in this documentary: what I really wanted to bring to light is what hasn't been said. History isn't as simple as we believe.

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1492 - December 6,

On December 6th, 1492 Christopher Columbus landed at Mole St. Nicholas in Haiti's north Coast. The Spanish build the New World's first settlement at *La Navidad* on Haiti's north coast.

1697 - Sept 20,

Spanish control over the colony ends with the Treaty of Ryswick (Ryswick was signed September 20, 1697), which divided the island into French-controlled St. Domingue and Spanish Santo Domingo.

1791 - August 22,

A slave rebellion is launched by the Jamaican-born Boukman leading to a protracted 13-year war of liberation against St. Domingue's colonists and later, Napoleon's army which was also assisted by Spanish and British forces. The slave armies were commanded by General Toussaint Louverture who was eventually betrayed by the French and subsequently exiled to France where he died.

1803 - April 7,

Toussaint L'Ouverture died of apoplexy, pneumonia, and starvation in Fort de Joux in France.

1803 - Nov 18,

The Battle of Vertières marks the ultimate victory of the former slaves over the French.

1804 - January 1st,

The hemisphere's second independent Republic is declared on January 1, 1804 by General Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Haiti, or *Ayiti* in Creole, is the name given to the land by the former Taino-Arawak peoples, meaning "mountainous country."

1806 - Oct 17,

revolutionary hero Jean-Jacques Dessalines is assassinated.

August 1934

The last contingent of U.S. marines departed in mid-August

1986 - Febr 7,

Widespread protests against "Baby Doc" lead the U.S. to arrange for Duvalier and his family to be exiled to France. Army leader General Henri Namphy heads a new National Governing Council. 1986 Baby Doc flees Haiti on February 7th

1990 – 16 dec

In a campaign marred by occasional violence and death, democratic elections finally take place on December 16, 1990. Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a parish priest, well known throughout the country for his support of the poor, is elected President with 67.5% of the popular vote. The "U.S. favorite" Marc Bazin finishes a distant second with 14.2%

1991 – 30 sept

(September 30, 1991) a military coup d'état In September President Aristide addresses the UN General Assembly. Three days after his return military personnel with financial backing from neo-Duvalierist sectors and their international allies unleash a coup d'état, ousting President Aristide. Over 1,000 people are killed in the first days of the coup.

1994 –Oct 15th

On September 15th, U.S. President Clinton declares that all diplomatic initiatives were exhausted
On October 15th, President Aristide and his Government-in-exile return to Haiti.

2000 - Nov 26th

Aristide is elected at 90 % of the votes. Opposition is boycotting the presidential election. Participation is about 60%.

2004 - February 29th

Aristide is removed from office on February 29 and taken out of the country to the Central African Republic.

2006- January 8th

The Provisional Electoral Council now says that the first round of voting will take place on January 8th, with a runoff to be held on February 15th. Haiti therefore will miss a constitutionally mandated deadline of February 7th to hand over power to an elected government.

