



An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, from Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President

By *Randall Robinson*

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On February 29, 2004, the first democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was forced to leave his country. The president was kidnapped, along with his Haitian-American wife, by American soldiers and flown to the isolated Central African Republic. In *An Unbroken Agony*, best-selling author and social justice advocate Randall Robinson chronicles his own cross-Atlantic journey to rescue the Haitian president from captivity in Africa while also connecting the fate of Aristide's presidency to the Haitian people's century-long quest for self-determination.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The title promises a history of Haiti, but Robinson (*The Debt*, etc.) delivers a brief for former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and an excoriation of American policies and actions related to his exile. The portrait of Aristide borders on hagiography: Of all the public Christians I have known personally, Aristide led a life that emulated the implacable Christ whose sympathies for the poor Aristide had since childhood taken to heart. The Americans, meanwhile, are largely portrayed as evil: American officials had armed and directed the thugs, organized an unelected and unelectable opposition, and choked the Haitian economy into dysfunctional penury. Robinson's righteous outrage often turns to rant, and his passionate, partisan account veers into repetition, without providing adequate context for his ire. He offers minute descriptions of Aristide's abduction to the Central African Republic in September 1994, his flight and the efforts to save and relocate him, but spends little time on Aristide's governance as Haiti's first democratically elected leader. For the uninitiated, Haiti must appear to be a bewildering stew of obscure and violent events, Robinson writes. How sad that he did not use these pages to clarify the broth. (*Aug.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Outspoken to the point of controversy, activist Robinson boldly addresses the dire consequences of centuries of racism, most famously arguing for reparations to African Americans for slavery in *The Debt* (2000). Here he focuses his penetrating attention, vigorous analysis, and drum-roll eloquence on crimes against Haiti. A searing overview of Haitian history and the reasons behind the black nation's persistent poverty and isolation is followed by a riveting account of the 2004 coup against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former humanitarian priest "twice overwhelmingly elected president by the poor." Robinson marshals strong evidence to support his belief that the Bush administration engineered Aristide's removal, and he has firsthand knowledge of the debacle. As friends of the Aristides, Robinson and his wife were in contact with the couple just before they were hustled off to the Central African Republic. Two weeks later, Robinson accompanied U.S. congresswoman Maxine Waters on a daring rescue mission that resulted in the Aristides finding temporary asylum in Jamaica. Robinson's dramatic account makes it clear that many questions remain unanswered. Seaman, Donna

Review

"A tour de force.... Heartfelt, impassioned."

"Engaging.... Robinson continues an important conversation.... His anecdotes support his attempts to reclaim African heritage and empower African Americans."

"In a manner strikingly reminiscent of James Baldwin, Robinson combines acute insight, attention to the obvious but overlooked, and unpretentious breadth of vision."

"Incisive...keenly observed, perceptively written.... Some of the most beautifully written anecdotes and carefully crafted prose ever seen in a book with such political purpose."

"Randall Robinson is the greatest Pro-Africa Freedom Fighter of his generation in America, his powerful poignant story of personal and political struggle is one of vision, courage, and sacrifice." -- Cornel West

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