

Pierre Labossiere

Pierre Labossiere grew up in Haiti and co-founded the Haiti Action Committee in 1990. He lives in Oakland and is heavily involved in solidarity work with Haiti, including webinars and protests.

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0:00

Alex:

I'm glad you could join me. So, tell everyone what's your name and how are you involved with the Haiti Action Committee?

Pierre:

Yes. Thank you for inviting me, my name is Pierre Labossiere and the Haiti Action Committee is an organization that's about 30 years old. And so I got involved- I'm one of the co-founders of it, and the way it was- it came together, it was back in 1990. We had our first meeting of a group of us, friends, people who were very active in various organizations, liberal organizations, women's organizations, organizations anti-apartheid movement, organizations dealing with solidarity with Central America, and so those organizations became very interested in what was going on in Haiti. And at the time, the grassroots movement in Haiti, it was involved in a struggle to have the first free, fair democratic election in Haiti's history. And so people got all excited about doing that. And so, that was the beginning of it, coming together. Later on, when the election was successful, and the people of Haiti turned out massively on December 16, 1990 and the elected president, Aristide, [...] priest as president of Haiti. And so we were all excited along with the Haitian people. And we knew that the movement would be facing additional difficulties. There would be facing repression. And so some of them came from Haiti, some of the members of the movement came from Haiti, we asked them "How can we be helpful to you on the ground?" They said, we need people to tell the story. The story of our struggle. To tell the stories, we need people to be in solidarity because they are not going to. What they mean by "they" is powerful countries outside of Haiti, will not allow democracy to flourish in Haiti. Because many of those countries had been supporting the dictatorship of the Duvalier before him, and later on the military dictators who succeeded Duvalier. And so people were very aware of what's going on. And so that's how the Haiti Action Committee came to be.

2:40

Alex:

Was there like a starting event in Haiti that kind of catapulted, or made it more urgent to start? Like, why was it formed?

Pierre:

Yes, it was... What I do remember is many of the current members, I had a good friend of mine. His name was Jean Ali Montes (?). And he had visited me in California. And he was very active in the grassroots movement. And so, six months after his visit to California, in June 1990, it was

in December early January, but in June 1990 he was gunned down in Haiti. He was a liberal organizer, community organizer. They assassinated him. And so I shared that with members of the group and I was going to Haiti to pay my respects, and so people told me that this kind of thing cannot be allowed to take place. And so they wanted to- me to make contact with the grassroots movement in Haiti, and to see if we could bring two representatives from the grassroots movement in Haiti to come to the US. And to speak to the people in the Bay Area. And so that's what started crystallizing the movement. And later on, by December 1990, I went to Haiti in August, and I had the beautiful opportunity to meet with the priest father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who later became candidate for the presidency. Later on by December 16, 1990, elections took place and he was elected massively, overwhelmingly. When the group, when the two representatives, one was a priest from the liberation theology movement, and he was the co-founder of the present organization, and the other was a woman community organizer. Both of them came in May 1991 and out of that, we realized we must have an organization that will be in solidarity with the people of Haiti.

5:04

Alex:

I see, so that's kind of the history of it, right?

Pierre:

Yes, actually there was a group before that called BAHACO, the Bay Area Haitian American Council, but later on the coup d'etat took place in September 1991. There was a very bloody coup d'etat against President Aristide's government. Very young government, only 7 months in power. And this coup d'etat took place. Over 5,000 people were massacred during this coup. So as a result we put out a call, calling on all various organizations in the Bay Area to come and join us in a coalition to oppose the coup and to be in support of the Haitian refugees. Because many refugees were being returned to Haiti, many of them were being put in jail, they were put at the Guantanamo camp in Cuba. There was a concentration camp there where they worked the Haitian refugees and so we mobilized against that. And several organizations come together. And we formed the Haiti Action Coalition. Out of all those organizations you had labor, you had church organizations, women's organizations, students organizations, and I want to pay special tribute to Randall Robinson, the founder of TransAfrica who just passed away last Friday, that he passed away. And so Randall Robinson was one of the key individuals who went on a hunger strike to protest the denial, the inhumane treatment of the Haitian refugees to put as against the coup. Before him there was a dancer, this great dancer, Katherine Durnham, who had started a hunger strike for the same reason. Randall Robinson during the years of I believe that was in 92, 93, he went on a hunger strike as well and almost lost his life in this hunger strike. And there were many others, many people who came to be in support. Many student groups, organizations from various universities were involved, you know, hunger strike for Haiti. The hunger strike, it became a rolling(?) hunger strike where one university started back east, one university would be hunger striking, then the next week another one would pick it up, and others would pick it up, until it reached the west coast, and several like UC Berkeley, several places. Universities were having hunger strikes in solidarity with the people of Haiti. The Haiti Action Coalition was very involved in all of this. And we were demonstrating, putting out the call

for solidarity, so it was out of the calling it a Haiti Action Coalition because in a coalition, everybody had to take whatever proposal back to the organizations to vote on it before it could move forward. But then we decided later on, a few years later to make it a committee. Still with representatives of those various organizations but now as a committee, we could make decisions and move forward a little bit more quickly than as a coalition.

8:38

Alex:

You mentioned the coup in 1991, right?

Pierre:

Yes.

Alex:

And there was another one, so I want to know how the US was connected to that and what impact the coups had on the Haitian government.

Pierre:

Definitely. So 1991 I mentioned after 7 months in office, President Aristide was overthrown in a bloody coup d'état by the Haitian military. Now, no coup d'état takes place in Haiti without the US giving the greenlight. That's a given. Every expert you speak to including the Haitian people, who are underground who are the real experts on the topic, but every other expert from academia, other observers of the situation, the US is always involved. The Haitian military was created, as of 1915 now but before that, we had the independence of Haiti was a people's army. In 1804 the army that defeated Napoleon, but under 1915 when the US invaded they created a new military in Haiti that was totally beholden, financed, equipped, trained, everything by the US. So whatever the army did in Haiti—the human rights violations, the abuses, the massacres, it was the US supporting them. It wasn't just the US, you had France and other big countries too that called themselves democracies. Also supporting the very brutal criminal Haitian military. When Papa Doc came to power he created a militia called the Tonton Macoutes. They were like an adjunct to the Haitian military and very brutal bloodthirsty, committed untold massacres. Nothing takes place in Haiti without the US giving its blessings. And so when the coup took place against President Aristide it was to everyone, it was very clear that the US was involved. They didn't like President Aristide for many reasons. One, he was a liberation theologian. What does that mean? It means that he is a theologian, a priest who thought about, who had very explicit ideas about the gospel. About the relevance of religion on people's lives. Not a religion that made you believe in an afterlife or you can suffer on earth, and then you die, hopefully you go to heaven and live a good, happy life. And that's what they call theology of resignation. But liberation theology meant and means that no, God created every—for people who believe in God— God created every human being to be happy, to live a dignified life right here on Earth. To have enough food for their belly, to have enough shelter, to have access to healthcare, and created us with all the rights and privileges that human beings are entitled to. Which means all the freedoms. Freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom to live a life of dignity. And so that's what he was preaching. For example there was a number of sweatshops that had

left the US and other countries but to come to Haiti and to pay people very low wages. And so liberation theologians were saying no, this is not correct. It's fine for it to make a profit, but not to the point where the workers who are working for you, cannot live a decent life. They cannot send their kids to school. And while you're making millions but they're suffering and not being able to have access to clean drinking water in their homes.

12:49

Alex:

So the US doesn't like him because he's anti-capitalist?

Pierre:

He was very active, not anti-capitalist, he was someone who was preaching fairness and equality and didn't like that at all. One of the things that the US state department and the US embassy in Haiti was very opposed to because he proposed at the time that the minimum wage should be increased. And so he was putting together a plan to increase the minimum wage. So many of the sweatshops that had left the US to come to Haiti to take advantage of the miserable working conditions that the people were working under. When people organized into unions in order to bargain, just like in the US, bargain for higher wages, for better conditions on the job and things like that, the US embassy didn't like that. And they were opposed to President Aristide, Aristide raising the minimum wage. That was one of the reasons for the coup d'etat as well.

14:02

Alex:

Can you tell me the origins of why the US is so involved in Haiti?

Pierre:

Haiti is a country that was founded by Africans who had been enslaved. They had been kidnapped from Africa, and were enslaved in the colony. First under the Spanish, in 1503, the year that was when the first report of enslaved Africans arrived on the island. Prior to that, it was reported that it was the Africans who came and traded with the indigenous population. But I'm talking about enslaved kidnapped Africans—enslaved and put in slavery for life. And so that was in 1503. And so the Africans united with the indigenous population, who were also being enslaved by the Spanish and they rose up in a joint rebellion in 1510, or thereabout. And so they were successful to a certain degree, in creating a little free territory for themselves in that period. But since then, continuing until the French came to the island in 1697 and separated them and there was a separation. Between what is present day the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the country of Haiti, so during that time Africans—kidnapped Africans who were brought to the island, continued to rebel. There were many, many rebellions. One of the most famous ones— I mentioned 1697. 1697 Spain and France were at war. So they signed a peace treaty called the treaty of Ryswick. In that treaty, they agreed to split the island with Spain recognizing French sovereignty over the western third of the island, which is present-day Haiti. And Spain retaining two thirds of the island which is present day Dominican Republic. But they were both colonies, of France and one was a colony of Spain. So after 100 years, by nearly 100 years by

1791 the people of the enslaved Africans, finally came together. There had been rebellions before, but they agreed on a major uprising that would involve all of the plantations. So all of them would rise up at once. This was in the Northern part of Haiti. They came together in a congress at a place called (???) That was August 14, 1791. They plotted an uprising to take place later. So the uprising took place one week later on August 21 in the night of 1791, and that was the movement that launched what they call the Haitian Revolution. What is called the Haitian Revolution. So it was 13 years of struggle, with periods of peace until the French were finally defeated in 1803 at the battle of Vertieres. Vertieres is the name of where the last battle was fought in the north of Haiti.

17:41

Alex:

You're also talking about a bit of the deportations and that still continues today, because according to my research, President Biden deported 20,000 Haitian refugees last year. I just want to know your thoughts on why the US is deporting so many Haitian refugees, and stuff like that.

Pierre:

Yes, US foreign policy in regards to Haiti has been terrible. From the founding of the Haitian nation in 1804, at that time you had Thomas Jefferson who was president of the US. And he is, in the US he was known as a great democrat. But also he was someone who was engaged in slavery. As a plantation owner, he had [...] But that's what people say. He was a slave owner, he had Africans, kidnapped Africans, working for him in chattel slavery. Chattel, that meant that... how can a human being belong to another human being? And that person will determine everything you do, and beat you, to force you to work and what have you. And then sell you, separate families. Separate a mother from a child. By selling the children.

19:03

Alex:

Thomas Jefferson didn't like Haitians because they broke free of slavery, right?

Pierre:

They broke free of slavery. Not only did they break free of slavery, they overturned the system completely and totally. That revolution started a series of things that eventually led to slavery being abolished in many, many lands. So Haitians didn't just stay like that, either. They actually helped other countries, other lands in gaining their independence, gaining their freedom. After Haiti was successful in overthrowing slavery and also declaring itself an independent nation, Thomas Jefferson as president of the US declared that the US should never recognize Haiti as a nation.

20:03

Alex:

The US intervention started with that?

Pierre:

You can say that because what happened is the US participated in an embargo against Haiti. It was a whole chain of events. From Haiti becoming independent in 1804 to 1862 the US refused to recognize the existence of Haiti. And all the more, what happened, US foreign policy was centered on the destruction, on seeing that Haiti would be destroyed. By having this embargo plus the US supported the French when the French demanded that the former enslaved Africans would have to pay reparations to plantation owners, to people who claim to own them because, by us rebelling—our foremothers and forefathers rebelling—it's like they lost their property. Their property was actually us human beings. That was such an odious thing and so the French forced, with the support of Britain and Spain, and the US and all other forces that were engaged with slavery at the time, they forced Haiti to pay to the French the equivalent of 21.7 billion dollars. This is the amount of money calculated as of 2003, now it's much higher than that, according to a number of experts. And so they force Haiti to pay this money. Haiti had to incur huge debts to pay this money from 1825 until the early 1950s, until 1952.

21:58

Alex:

And how does the debt they were forced to pay still impact the country?

Pierre:

Very badly. Because first the population of Haiti had just come out from being in a terrible war, which had lasted 12 years, devastated the economy, many many thousands of people had been killed during the war, hundreds of thousands had been killed during the war, so Haiti was trying to rebuild itself. So now money that should have gone into rebuilding the nation, the new nation, building schools, building hospitals, rebuilding our cities, providing money for our farmers, investing in the infrastructure, for agriculture, for clean drinking water for everyone. Things to go into the building of the country as a nation actually went to pay France, you see? It was a transfer of the wealth that the Haitians were producing, by their agriculture, exportation of coffee, and what have you. And how did this happen? You had the Haitian government forcing, extracting taxes, huge taxes from the Haitian population and not building schools, not building hospitals. So the money they would have spent in building schools and hospitals was being transferred to France. To pay France. And that's why President Aristide in 2003, on April 7th, 2003, he demanded that France return that money to us. And this campaign is called restitution. Because restitution is we know the amount of money that was extorted from us. It's like somebody pulling a gun on you and taking your wallet with all the money in it. So now when you demand that that money be returned to you, it's called restitution, to give you back that money. Now, reparations is another part of it. Because reparations, it's like, when you go into someone's land, and you kidnap them, and you kill their families, you kidnap them and force them to work for years and years and decades, for free. Free labor, you know? They are forced to work 12 hour days if not more. That money you extract from their labor, you don't pay them. You pocket it all. And then the crime of flogging people, killing people, separating families, these are human

rights- crimes against humanity. This is called reparations. So you have to *repair* the pain and the outrages that you have inflicted on that person. So it's called reparations. And that, it's very hard to put a price on it. How can you put a price on something like this? That was a 2-part campaign in the years 2003 called Restitution—for what we knew, the amount that was taken from us, and then reparations which is something that would be a lot more involved and more significant in terms of, not just monetary, but also people had to be repaired mentally, psychologically from the trauma that they were continuing to live under. We also had the US army. When it occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, over 20,000 Haitians were massacred by the US military. And there were aerial bombings. Some of the first aerial bombings that took place, took place in Haiti. To crush the people's demand for sovereignty, to respect their rights, not take over their land. They were met with increased, incredible brutality and crimes against humanity. All of that happened from 1915 to 1934, continuing later on to the present with the US supporting Papa Doc Duvalier, his real name is Doctor Francois Duvalier, and his son, Baby Doc, his real name is Jean Claude Duvalier, and the US kept supporting, not just the US, you had France, you had other countries that provided them with money, with weapons, with training, and all kinds of political and diplomatic support. And it was stated that close to 50,000 Haitians were killed by the Duvaliers. So, a lot of harm to a people. And that calls for justice, reparative justice.

27:21

Alex:

Also, a lot of the things happening is connected with gangs, right? And I've been hearing that the gangs are tied to the government, to support them, but I've heard that people also disagree so I want to know what do you think of, are the gangs in Haiti actually related to the government?

Pierre:

Yes, definitely.

Alex:

Oh, by the way, can you put that in a sentence? Because I'm gonna edit out my voice after.

Pierre:

Okay, the so-called gangs in Haiti are nothing but a continuation of what I talked about earlier, the Tonton Macoutes. The militia that the Duvalier, that Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc) and his son Baby Doc created the militia. And it was created to be nothing but a terror organization, to kill people with impunity. ... So, somebody's life wasn't worth anything. And the term Tonton Macoute means boogeyman. Really what a Macoute is, it's like a big satchel on the side that peasants have, in order to put whatever—their produce, their goods and what have you. When we were children and we were being naughty, the old folks used to tell us, well if you're being naughty or not eating your food, the Tonton Macoute, meaning an old man, would put you in his satchel and carry you away! When the militia first started, they used to wear hoods over their head, similar to the Ku Klux Klan, right? They would wear hoods over their heads. That way,

they would come at night to kidnap and kill people who opposed the government of Duvalier. At that time, Duvalier was not strong enough. So his henchmen could get away with assassinating people with impunity. Because they were still a democratic society, so they couldn't do it, they couldn't get away with it early on. They used to mask themselves to do this kind of stuff. So people started talking about those disappearances at night, people started calling them, using a nickname—Tonton Macoute. This word that Tonton Macoute got them. So it's a reference to what you say about naughty children. So later on, as Duvalier officialized the militia, they liked that name because it instilled fear. When you are a child and you are told something that really puts fear in you, even when you become an adult, there is still that- a lot of it remains at the subconscious. And so that's why they proudly took on the name and used it. The official name is Volunteers for National Security. The Tonton Macoute, with them came a complete end to the judicial system in Haiti. ... Let's say if a Tonton Macoute took your land, you couldn't go to court. You couldn't bring a lawsuit. Yeah, you could try, but that would mean the end of your life. And no judge would pass judgment for you against the Tonton Macoute. We started seeing the destruction of Haiti as a state and as civil society started becoming slowly destroyed.

31:21

For me, who grew up during that period, seeing the way those so-called "gangs" as they are referred to in the media. Which by the way, to me, this is a cynical ploy. By calling them gangs, they rely on people, generally when you say gangs, you see a group of thugs and other people who are out there, really on the margin of society and they commit crime, but they are not connected with the government. As a matter of fact, the government goes after them, and governments in many countries. But when they say that, this is the image that people see. Whereas in Haiti, those gangs are nothing but a continuation of the Tonton macoutes. Many of them, many of the gang leaders, they put videos of themselves out there. They make their own videos to promote themselves, and they tell you straight: this assault rifle, president Martelly gave it to me. President Jovenel Moïse gave it to me. And they gave it to us so that during the past elections, we wanted to make sure that they would win. They call it out! And they say, point blank, that the government gives them the weapons. One of them stated that he named the name of member of parliament who gave him the weapons, named the senator who gave him the weapons. And several of them name so many others. The private sector in Haiti is very involved, many members of the private sector are involved in this. And this is something that, now, Canada and the US have admitted to it, by taking sanctions against some of those people. And so this is a well established thing.

33:12

Now what's the idea of it? Because Haiti has a strong movement, strong people's movement. Because the democratic rights that we won, that we fought for and won after the dictatorship of Duvalier, there was a constitution that the majority of Haitians voted for, overwhelmingly for. What happened is that because there was such a struggle against the dictatorship of the Dualivers that, and out of the struggle many, many people were killed in that struggle. The struggle was about the right to vote. It was about the right to freedom of expression. It was

about the right to participate to have a seat at the table of decision making. For example, here in the US people pay taxes. Your taxes come back to you in the form of clean streets, if there are potholes, they're fixed. It comes to you in terms of highways are built. In other words, you see your tax dollars at work to benefit you, to benefit the community. City council meetings, people go and voice their opinions. Or they might have some decision, they have a seat at the table by way of their representatives. If a school is needed, then it's built with tax dollars. But in Haiti, no such thing. You pay your taxes, this president and these politicians pocket it and you cannot say anything. Anything you say is a death sentence. So people had fought for democratic rights. The right to determine, to have a say in terms of not only the tax money, but how the direction of the country and also how the resources, the mineral wealth of the country, such as the gold, the uranium, the iridium, the copper, marble, how they are gonna be used for the benefit of the population. But we had no such say.

35:39

So, out of the struggle that toppled the Duvaliers and continued to topple the various military dictators who came later, there was a constitution. For the first time, the Haitian people had an opportunity to vote for their own constitution. They had a say in the drafting of it, and then they voted massively, overwhelmingly. And that was on, actually this day: March 29, 1987. That's when people came out and massively, overwhelmingly, voting for the constitution. And what did the constitution guarantee? It enshrined all of those rights. All of those rights that human beings have in the Haitian constitution. And also guaranteed the mineral wealth of Haiti belongs to the people of Haiti. In other words, before the government would go and start signing contracts, as well as being done under the Duvaliers. And have nothing to do with the wishes of the people. These contracts now had to come before parliament, the legitimate representatives of the Haitian people, so they could be discussed and voted on in all transparency. That was a big gain of the movement. So there were democratic gains. And now they are trying to undo, to remove all of those gains, all of those democratic gains. Once somebody has had democracy, and they have seen, for example, when President Aristide has been in office, how their tax money was being used to build schools. President Aristide's government built more schools than ever before had been built in Haiti. Schools, hospitals, there was freedom of expression. People were unions. The minimum wage was nearly doubled under his presidency. There was subsidy on the fuel, on gasoline as to keep it affordable and to keep the prices low. But with these governments, they have completely removed a lot of this. School lunches, no longer. A number of advances that have been made have been completely removed. Credit for farmers. Infrastructure, road building, road construction in many areas. All of that has been stopped. The construction of affordable housing for the masses of our people. Investing in affordable housing. All of that. Massive literacy project that saw that many Haitians who before could not read or write, now the government had invested in literacy, where people who were taught how to read and write and had access to education. So in other words we were building a society.

38:42

So since the first coup of 1991 to 1994, and later on, When President Aristide came back into power, he continues those programs to keep them going, and to rebuild the country. So, 2004 there was another coup and since then all of those gains have been completely, totally, are being systematically dismantled. And so you have the Haitian judicial system being dismantled. And so people are rising up, people are rising up in protest. And so here comes the gangs, the so-called gangs who are nothing but death squads. But the terror campaign is to one, prevent people from voting for the representative of their choice, because these guys show up with their big guns, they spray the place with bullets, they break windows, they start beating up on people, and before you know it it's over. The election cannot take place. However, whoever they want to be in office is actually put in office. These are the situation, and so as people are demonstrating, these guys would unite, will work with the police and open fire on the demonstrators. Killing people. And now what we are seeing is more massacres of these gangs. They go in a neighborhood, setting fire to people's homes, beating people out of their homes, hacking them to death with machetes, massacring them, burning them, burning people alive has happened recently in Bele, in the neighborhood of Bele. As it happened in Lasalin and in many other neighborhoods like Pont Rouge and quite a few places.

40:32

Today, as before we've been very involved, the Haiti Action Committee has been very involved in denouncing what's been going on. We've been doing that ever since we were formed. Denouncing the crimes against humanity taking place in Haiti. Letting people know the real story of the struggle, what it is about, why are people protesting, and also we explain that to various communities in the US, different individuals. So they can have a better idea of the situation. Our goal also is, as people become more aware of the truth, of the true nature of the reality of the situation, that people will become engaged to address their members of congress, their senators, to be proactive, to be actively engaged, to change US foreign policy in regards to Haiti.

41:35

This is a foreign policy that started from hatred of the nation founded by formerly- previously enslaved, kidnapped and enslaved Africans, who they are to struggle and they are to win. And win their freedom creating a nation And a nation that stood very strong, opposed to colonialism, opposed to slavery. It's time for this war against the African people of Haiti, be over. It needs to stop and the US foreign policy has been on automatic pilot ever since 1804 and it needs to stop. The only time there was a bright spot in US foreign policy in regards to Haiti was in 1862 when the US- when President Lincoln recognized Haitian independence. Recognized Haiti as a nation. And it happened only because there was such a massive movement in the US during the civil war, a movement that was very opposed to slavery, a progressive movement that was trying to break with such an ugly past in the US and where it recognized the quality of all human beings. Out of that came the recognition by the US of Haiti as an independent nation. With the end of reconstruction, in the US, with the rise of racists being in power in the US, all of those gains of the movement in the south, all of those gains of the movement—not just for the south

but in various parts of the US, all those progressive gains were systematically being dismantled in that odious system called the Jim Crow system. Also, we saw US foreign policy playing out in Haiti in the same way that it was playing out in the southern United States in the US, the very reactionary anti-people policy.

43:52

That's one of the things we want to do, is for people to understand the situation and not fall for, "well, these are gangs." No, these are terror organizations that are trying to maintain a system that is impoverishing people, starving people, killing people. Those gangs, so-called gangs, terror death squads, terror organizations or death squads, they're burning people alive, all to strike fear, just like lynching was doing in the southern US to strike fear the population and force people to accept a system of inequality and injustice that is destroying human lives.

44:40

Alex:

So, that's really important, I think, for people to know the truth and how the US is connected to all that. Now, my battery's running low but I wanna ask you one last thing which is a personal question which is what motivates you personally to fight against US imperialism and racism and stuff like that?

Pierre:

Well, as a human being growing up in Haiti, I was fortunate to be around people in my family, in my neighborhood, in my community, people who believe in justice and the sacredness of human life. And the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity. This is something that's part of me, and I've felt it, it's also—I like to joke that it's part of our DNA as a nation. Because Haiti, when it was born, Haiti was in solidarity with people all over the world. Haiti declared itself a sanctuary nation, inviting enslaved Africans and people of indigenous origin to come to Haiti and Haiti would protect their freedom, and they could gain Haitian citizenship. Haiti also supported the liberation struggle in South America, with Simón Bolívar and Miranda coming to Haiti, asking for assistance and Haiti provided them with guns, ships, money, and also Haitian volunteers who went and shed their blood in the countries of South America with Bolívar to free the nations from colonialism and slavery. And Haiti also supported the movement for Greek independence. Many people do not know that, the independence of Greece in the 1820s. When the Greeks were fighting for independence, Haiti provided them, they asked for weapons, Haiti needed its weapons, but it provided them with coffee, with shiploads of coffee, so they could sell the coffee, buy the guns in order to gain their freedom. And the Greeks were successful. And also so many other things, where Haiti connected with nations of this world. Be it in Africa, South America, Asia, for decolonization. During the period of the decolonization and also against apartheid, Haiti stood very strong with all those forces for equality and justice. So, that's what motivates me.

47:29

Alex:

It's the fact that Haiti has been so selfless?

Pierre:

Yes, it's recognizing that we are all human beings and the suffering for one is the suffering of all. So, we cannot tolerate seeing another human being being treated unjustly because we went through that. So, we feel the pain of injustice. When we see it being done to someone, it's being done to us. So, overall that's the philosophy that you'll find among the majority of the Haitian population.

Alex:

Okay, thank you!

Pierre:

You are welcome.