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### Haiti: A Complete Crisis

The country of Haiti is one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world. Born out of slavery, poverty, revolution and corruption, the people of Haiti have suffered greatly. The land has been devastated by deforestation and natural disasters, its people suffer from poverty, illiteracy, disease, unsanitary conditions, poor medical care and are severely oppressed by its government.

Haiti covers 10,714 square miles. It is located in the subtropics on the western third of Hispaniola, the second largest island in the Caribbean, which it shares with the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic. The neighboring islands include Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. Three-quarters of the terrain is mountainous. The climate is mild, varying with altitude. The mountains are calcareous rather than volcanic and give way to widely varying microclimatic and soil conditions. A tectonic fault line runs through the country, causing occasional and sometimes devastating earthquakes. The island is also located within the Caribbean hurricane belt. The population has grown steadily from 431,140 at independence in 1804 to the estimate of 6.9 million to 7.2 million in 2000. Haiti is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Until the 1970s, over 80 percent of the population resided in rural areas, and today, over 60 percent continue to live in provincial villages, hamlets, and homesteads scattered across the rural landscape (Schwartz 1).

Haiti is a Rubix Cube of problems. Sixty percent of Haiti's population is living below the poverty line (Taft-Morales 2). This means that 6 million people in Haiti are living off of \$2 or less a day and of that 6 million, 2.4 million are surviving on \$1.25 a day (Badger 1). The people can't afford things like clean water and nutritious food to eat, the lack thereof leads to things like disease and malnutrition. Because of disease and malnutrition, infant mortality is extremely high, as is the death of the mother in childbirth. It is roughly 16 times higher than that of the United States. One-hundred thousand children under 5 years of age suffer from acute malnutrition in Haiti ("Statistics About Life in Haiti" 1). Being one of the world's poorest countries, daily life for the average family is one of constant struggles. Disease, exploitation, starvation, and premature death is a reality that people in more developed countries will likely never experience.

Malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, and sexually transmitted diseases take a toll on the population. Estimates of HIV among those ages twenty-two to forty-four years are as high as 11 percent and estimates among prostitutes in the capital are as high as 80 percent. There is less than one doctor per eight-thousand people. Medical facilities are poorly funded and understaffed, and most health care workers are incompetent. Life expectancy in 1999 was under fifty-one years (Schwartz 12).

In the absence of modern medical care, an elaborate system of indigenous healers has evolved, including herbal specialists know as leaf doctors, granny midwives, masseuses, injection specialists, and spiritual healers. People have tremendous faith in informal healing procedures and commonly believe that HIV can be cured (Schwartz 12)

In the 1800s, Haiti exported wood, sugarcane, cotton and coffee, but by the 1960s, even the production of coffee, long the major export, had been all but strangled through excessive taxation, lack of investment in new trees, and bad roads. Recently, coffee has yielded to mangoes as the primary export. Other exports include cocoa and essential oils for the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. Haiti has also become a major transshipment point for illegal drug trafficking. In a country such as Haiti, a family's only option is to turn to the most promising sources of income like drug dealing, weapons trading, gang membership, kidnapping and extortion just so they can survive. One cannot really blame them for choosing such unsavory means of income; there is almost zero social infrastructure, making travel difficult, dangerous, and time consuming (Corbett 16). Unemployment is at an astounding 75% and foreign aid accounts for 30%-40% of the government's budget. Roughly 90% of the population is illiterate and only about 30% of Haitian children ever begin school; of the thirty percent, only 2% stay in school beyond the 5th grade ("Statistics About Life in Haiti" 1).

Accessing proper nutrition is among one of the highest needs for the poor in Haiti. Nutritional deficits are caused not by inadequate knowledge but by poverty. Most residents have a sophisticated understanding of dietary needs, and there is a widely known system of indigenous food categories that closely approximates modern, scientifically informed nutritional categorization. Rural Haitians are not subsistence farmers. Peasant women typically sell much of the family harvest in regional open-air marketplaces and use the money to buy household foods. Rice and beans are considered the national dish and are the most commonly eaten meal in urban areas. Traditional rural staples are sweet potatoes, manioc, yams, corn, rice, pigeon peas, cowpeas, bread, and coffee. More recently, a wheat-soy blend from the United States has been incorporated into the diet. Important treats include sugarcane, mangoes, sweetbread, peanut and sesame seed clusters made from melted brown sugar, and candies made from bitter manioc flour. People make a crude but highly nutritious sugar paste called *rapadou* (Schwartz 4).

Haitians generally eat two meals a day: a small breakfast of coffee and bread, juice, or an egg and a large afternoon meal dominated by a carbohydrate source such as manioc, sweet potatoes, or rice. The afternoon meal always includes beans or a bean sauce, and there is usually a small amount of poultry, fish, goat, or, less commonly, beef or mutton, typically prepared as a sauce with a tomato paste base. Fruits are prized as between meal snacks (Schwartz 4).

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. It is a nation of small farmers, commonly referred to as peasants, who work small private landholdings and depend primarily on their own labor and that of family members. There are no contemporary plantations and few concentrations of land. Although only 30 percent of the land is considered suitable for agriculture, more than 40 percent is worked. Erosion is severe. Real income for the average family has not increased in over twenty years and has declined precipitously in rural areas. In most rural areas, the average family of six earns less than \$500 per year (Schwartz 5). So, how can a country so poor, so corrupt and so dysfunctional ever hope to be revived? A functional country needs money, education, medical care, industry, and most of all people that care and want to make things better. The resources in Haiti have run dry

and Haiti needs outside assistance to improve itself. Hundreds of millions of dollars have already been given to Haiti over the last decade and it has only gone to line the pockets of corrupt leaders (Henley 5). Foreign governments, charities, humanitarian aid and nongovernmental organizations have raised and spent billions of dollars with no success. I propose that their efforts were unsuccessful because there are too many cooks in the kitchen, in other words, too many organizations are trying to solve the same problem with various solutions that just are not working. In the 1960's the U.S. Navy proposed a design plan to address complex problems. It is as follows: "Keep it simple, stupid." We should be focusing on finding a single solution that is widely implementable, regardless of age, intellect, and disability that has a positive environmental impact and a readily marketable product to a large and eager market. Haiti needs a way for the people to benefit without relying on humanitarian efforts and donations. Haiti needs a way for the people to have access to good jobs, nutritious food, and clean water. Haiti needs to become the world leader in the growing, manufacturing, and distribution of medical cannabis.

The use of medical and recreational cannabis has been widely accepted in many countries for decades and its popularity and acceptance in the United States has skyrocketed in recent years. Today, only twelve states remain where medical cannabis is still illegal but in all likelihood, they will soon legalize it too ( "Map of Marijuana Legality by State" 1).

The climate of Haiti is near perfect for an agricultural solution. Haiti is located in a tropical climate and receives an average of 70 inches of rainfall annually ( "Haiti Climate" 1). The year-round growing season, large amount of available farmland and cheap labor combine to make Haiti a prime spot for new farming. Due to Haiti's poverty, they have long been reliant on wood as a fuel source which has left much of Haiti's land deforested and vulnerable to soil erosion unless something is done to turn things around. This deforestation has left an ample amount of farmland and the planting of cannabis will stop the existing erosion and prevent future erosion. The ambient environment is near perfect. However, to avoid further land abuse the education of local farmers will be required.

There are many farmers in Haiti but few with proper education on planting, pest control, irrigation and crop management. "Although agriculture is an important division of Haiti's economy, the country fails to produce enough food for its people. Haiti imports more than 50% for its population's needs, and imports 80% of its staple item: rice." ( "Statistics About Life in Haiti" 1). Haiti is in desperate need for its people to be educated in modern farming techniques to better use its natural resources. Instead of the United States and other world powers throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at Haiti with the hope that a corrupt government will help the people, I propose that we redirect those funds. Instead of throwing cash into a broken system, let's teach the people of Haiti to help themselves. By redirecting the humanitarian funds from a broken system to a possible fix we can encourage new growth in Haiti. The USA can use that money to encourage US companies, specifically those companies interested in growing and manufacturing medical cannabis to relocate to Haiti. Additional incentives could likely include tax credits and access to the U.S. financial systems. These large companies armed with modern farming techniques and equipment could help create a partnership in Haiti. The companies would benefit from plentiful land, cost effective labor, a prime

growing season and possible U.S. Government incentives. As a part of this new vision for Haiti, large corporations would be required to provide infrastructure development, including but not limited to roadways, sewage and water systems, sustainable housing, education, and health clinics. Companies would also be required to implement crop rotation, pay employees a wage that meets the cost of living, and provide decent healthcare to employees, thus providing essential life-saving care. By providing decent housing, roads, and medical clinics along with a living wage, job training and education the US companies would be greatly improving the lives of the Haitian people.

With proper infrastructure, access to clean water and good food, the country of Haiti would not only improve but it would soon thrive. The people, who would no longer need to worry about day-to-day survival, can now remove their focus from their immediate needs and instead focus on planning for the future which includes things like education, savings, and entrepreneurship. If the people of Haiti can make it to this point, the economy will begin to diversify itself. Now people who don't want to farm, don't have to. Haiti can grow and develop further, creating more and more jobs for the people. Children can attend school past the fifth grade and go on to become something bigger and better than they ever imagined.

With the 4.5 million acres of arable land, ("Haiti - Agricultural Land (% of Land Area)" 2), even a small percentage converted into cannabis production would have an enormous effect on the Haitian economy. According to New Frontier Data, a cannabis data analysis firm, land used for cannabis can yield more than \$1.1 million per acre (Song 1). Even if a mere 10,000 acres were used to produce cannabis, the income generated will have effectively doubled the country's GDP and in theory the industry could produce \$5.1 trillion. Of course, this does not include price variants like supply/demand or competition in the market but even still, the industry clearly has the potential to generate more than enough revenue to overcome the problems plaguing Haiti.

Not only will Haiti be exporting medical grade cannabis but the byproduct of cannabis, hemp, can also be used in a variety of different ways. A quick internet search produces pages and pages of information on the uses of Hemp. For example, 1 acre of hemp will produce as much fiber as 2-3 acres of cotton. Hemp fiber is stronger and softer than cotton, lasts twice as long and will not mildew. Also, on an annual basis, 1 acre of hemp will produce as much paper as 2-4 acres of trees. Everything from tissue paper to cardboard can be produced from hemp. Hemp Fiber is durable, breathable, absorbent, and has amazing antimicrobial/anti mildew properties ("Hemp Uses, Information Facts - Hemp Basics." 1). Hemp can be used to make: Paper, fiber, alternative fuels, plastics, and food. Those fibers, clothes and plastics made from hemp have potentially millions of different applications in the world. Hemp can even be used to make "Hempcrete" and "hemp wood" both of which are viable alternatives to modern building materials (Pollock 2-3). These building materials could be used for the employee housing that would be required of the companies making the improvements more efficient and cost effective. From this information alone one can see the other potential manufacturing opportunities to use the by-product of Cannabis. A company with proper funding and incentive could build from the ground up in Haiti, and with good planning and design could become very large and very successful bringing the people of Haiti along with it.

This is a single solution that attempts to solve a myriad of issues. For decades, multiple agencies have focused on single issues and have attempted to resolve those individual crises and the results of these efforts are plainly visible. Haiti remains one of the poorest countries in the world. This is an attempt at a holistic solution. Can you address Haiti's inability to grow enough food for its people without addressing soil erosion, deforestation and ineffective farming techniques? Can you correct health disparities without addressing the nutritional needs of the population? How do you address the government corruption without creating an educated population and without addressing all the aforementioned issues? The greatest benefit to this proposed solution is it's potential to address the foundational problems that plague this nation allowing for long term sustainable growth, economic diversification and environmental protection. This arrangement would be a win-win situation for both Haiti, the United States and the pharmaceutical companies. Haiti would grow and eventually thrive with an exportable product in high demand, education of modern planting techniques, living wages and health care. The pharmaceutical companies would benefit with cost effective labor, prime growing conditions, potential tax breaks and government money, as well as some fantastic PR. The United States can only come out as a winner from this deal. We would benefit by importing an affordable product, and eventually weaning Haiti off the dependence of foreign aid.

There is often concern when U.S. companies move jobs overseas. The medical cannabis industry provides unique opportunities for this to be very successful. First, the pharmaceutical industry already manufactures drugs in foreign countries such as Mexico and China and we are already adept at navigating the intricacies of foreign laws as well as import and export issues. Due to its current status at the federal level, large pharmaceutical companies have not become involved in the production or research of medical cannabis. However, locating to a foreign country will make their participation in the industry much more manageable. The involvement of large pharmaceutical companies will hasten the standardization and quality control of the product which in turn would allow for more consistent care and more accurate research to occur which is essential for the eventual legalization at the Federal level for medical purposes. Additionally, by allowing companies to import a quality controlled, standardized, product the US and other countries can more effectively track, regulate and tax. This solution will of course require legislation to be passed, however, the apparent efficacy and undeniable demand will make this inevitable.

Let us stop throwing away money into a system that has proven itself ineffective for years. The United States, with all of its education, power and money, needs to change the way things are done and become a leader in helping to change the world. Let's do away with the hand-outs of humanitarian aid that doesn't work. Instead of giving a man a fish so he can eat for a day, let us teach him to fish so he can always be full.

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