

**HAITIAN HERITAGE MONTH ESSAY CONTEST 2022**

**Theme: “From a historical perspective, explain the setbacks that have hindered Haiti’s development and suggest ways to overcome them.”**

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Located in the Caribbean on the western third of the island Hispaniola, bordered by the Dominican Republic, once the most popular tourist spot in the Caribbean, Haiti is home to miles of breathtaking beaches and crystal blue waters. Looking past the beautiful parts of Haiti, this country is currently facing many different setbacks that are hindering its development.

First and foremost, Haiti's economic and social development has been and continues to be obstructed by political instability, increasing violence and fragility. Since breaking free from French colonial rule over two centuries ago, Haiti has encountered multiple foreign interventions and devastating natural disasters. The merging of these forces has transformed what was once the wealthiest colony in the Americas into the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Not only that, but the United States has had a long and troubled history with Haiti, including a nearly twenty-year, sometimes bloody, occupation in the early twentieth century.

Despite an often-rocky relationship, the two countries maintain close economic and social ties, although bilateral relations were strained under President Donald Trump. During his tenure, Trump found ways to restrict immigration from Haiti, and while President Joe Biden promised a new approach, the assassination of Haiti's president and a worsening economic crisis have challenged U.S. policy on multiple fronts.

Ultimately, before taking office, President Biden promised a new era of U.S. engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean. His response to Haiti's latest crises has spurred calls for stronger action. In January 2021, the administration announced that it was sending an additional \$75.5 million in development aid and health assistance to Haiti, although overall security assistance to the Caribbean nation has steadily declined in recent years. Following the August earthquake, the administration approved another \$32 million in disaster-relief funds and

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authorized USAID rescue teams to be dispatched to the island. Meanwhile, some policy analysts have argued that the Biden administration's response in the aftermath of President Moïse's murder was insufficient. Some Congressional leaders have urged Biden to intensify efforts to provide relief and support Haitian security services.

Furthermore, Haiti rests as the poorest country in the Latin American and Caribbean region and among the poorest countries in the world as a whole. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already weak economy. On the UN's Human Development Index, Haiti ranked 170 out of 189 countries in 2020. Past marginal gains in poverty reduction have been undone by a succession of crises, such as the COVID19 pandemic, the assassination of the President, Jovenel Moïse, and the August 2021 earthquake being the most recent ones.

Elaborating, it is devastating for me to know that this country where my parents were born and raised in, is quickly crumbling on several different fronts. Haiti holds a significant part in my life and in the lives of my family. Fortunately for me, I received the chance to visit Haiti in 2015 with my family. Now, due to all the tension in Haiti, I am not certain of when I will receive the opportunity to visit Haiti again. Due to my parents' close connection with Haiti, they have been providing aid to certain areas in the country through their organization to contribute to the country's positive future development. Some examples of efforts that have been made on my parents' behalf include: supplying food, clothes, school supplies, water systems, building of lights in dark streets, and more.

Evidently, efforts can be executed to assist in overcoming the issues Haiti is encountering to contribute to its advancement. People can provide donations and support to organizations that are reaching out to Haiti. There are organizations such as: Haiti Emergency Relief Fund, Hope for Haiti, Team Rubicon and more. Simple research can be conducted to determine which

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organizations you would like to participate in to potentially change lives of people that reside in Haiti. Every contribution truly helps. It is obvious that the government of Haiti does not have the best interest of its citizens in mind, which indicates that measures must be taken in another fashion. Like Martin L. King Jr. once said, “We are all in this together”, which demonstrates in this case that we should not allow Haiti to fight this battle alone. We need to provide as much help as possible to this country and we will witness dramatic positive change in the country overall.

### **References:**

- [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)
- [www.globalcitizen.org](http://www.globalcitizen.org)
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