

# High Hopes for Hillary Clinton, Then Disappointment in Haiti

By YAMICHE ALCINDOR MARCH 14, 2016

Carrying horns, handwritten signs and bottles of gasoline to set tires on fire, a group of men marched into one of the many protests that have paralyzed parts of the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, this year.

They were angry with their president, who let Parliament collapse and failed to hold scheduled elections. They were angry with the United Nations for not ensuring a fair vote for his successor. And they were angry with the former American secretary of state who had helped put him in power.

“You see all these people here?” said one of the Haitian-flag-draped protesters, Jean Renold Cenatus, 32, who said he was unemployed. “It’s because of what Mrs. Clinton did five years ago that we are facing this situation.”

In their post-2000 lives as global citizens, Hillary Clinton and former President Bill Clinton have been tied to no country more closely than Haiti. As a United Nations special envoy, Mr. Clinton helped raise hundreds of millions of dollars for the country after its devastating 2010 earthquake. Mrs. Clinton traveled there four times as secretary of state and shepherded billions of dollars in American aid.

They often speak fondly of Haiti, one of the first places they visited as newlyweds in 1975.

“We came here for the first time together, just after we were married, and fell in love with Haiti,” Mrs. Clinton said in 2012, standing near her husband at the opening of a Haitian industrial park she helped to finance. “We have had a deep connection to and with Haiti ever since.”

But as she seeks the world’s most powerful job and Haiti plunges into another political abyss, a loud segment of Haitians and Haitian-Americans is speaking of the Clintons with the same contempt they reserve for some of their past leaders.

In widely read blogs, in protests in Port-au-Prince and outside Mrs. Clinton’s campaign headquarters in Brooklyn, and on popular call-in radio shows in Florida, where primaries will be held on Tuesday, the Clintons have become prime targets of blame for the country’s woes.

Among the litany of complaints being laid at their feet: Fewer than half the jobs promised at the industrial park, built after 366 farmers were evicted from their lands, have materialized. Many millions of dollars earmarked for relief efforts have yet to be spent. Mrs. Clinton’s brother Tony Rodham has turned up in business ventures on the island, setting off speculation about insider deals.

“A vote for Hillary Clinton means further corruption, further death and destruction for our people,” said Dahoud Andre, a radio show host in New York who has helped organize protests against the Clintons. “It means more Haitians leaving Haiti and not being able to live in our country.”

And now, Michel Martelly, a president whom Mrs. Clinton helped get elected, has turned out to be another in a long line of troubling leaders.

Tony Jeanthenor, 55, a member of the Miami-based Haitian human rights group Veye-Yo as well as Lavalas Family, a Haitian political party, said he was voting for Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont because of the senator’s distaste for involvement in other countries’ affairs.

“Nothing good for Haiti can come out of Hillary because of her past behavior,” Mr. Jeanthenor said.

The dismay over Mrs. Clinton in South Florida’s Haitian community is not likely

to affect her fortunes on Tuesday, as she holds a comfortable lead over Mr. Sanders in state polls. Whether it could damage her in a general election is unclear. An estimated 150,000 Haitian-American voters live in Florida, the state where 537 votes decided the 2000 election. But they have also overwhelmingly voted for Democrats, according to Fernand R. Amandi, a principal partner of Bendixen & Amandi International, a public opinion research firm in Miami that has polled Haitian-Americans extensively.

Jean Monestime, a Haitian-American who is the chairman of the Miami-Dade County Commission as well as a chairman of Caribbean Americans for Hillary, said he had spoken to the Clinton campaign about the criticisms. But many Haitian-Americans in South Florida still appreciate her efforts on the country's behalf, he said, and intended to vote for her.

The others should not "keep whining and complaining," he said, because if another candidate wins, one who is less interested in Haiti, "we are going to be marginalized by the change."

Indeed, the Clintons have been involved extensively in Haiti for years. Mr. Clinton won the praise of many Haitians by sending in 20,000 American troops to return Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the country's former president, to power in 1994, three years after he was ousted in a military coup.

The Clintons had large roles in the earthquake recovery effort, Mrs. Clinton as secretary of state and Mr. Clinton as co-chairman of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission. Along with his predecessor in the White House, the elder George Bush, Mr. Clinton raised tens of millions of dollars through the Clinton Foundation to promote development, schools and farming in Haiti, while also helping draw hundreds of millions in private investments.

Officials at the Clinton Foundation said they were not surprised by some of the disappointment, given that even before the earthquake, Haiti was one of the world's poorest countries. Now, the average family gets by on \$1.25 a day.

Jake Sullivan, Mrs. Clinton's deputy chief of staff for policy at the State Department and now the senior policy adviser for her campaign, said the United

States' work under Mrs. Clinton's leadership "certainly had a significant impact in support of Haiti's recovery."

"Our commitment of more than \$4 billion since 2010 has helped provide shelter for more than 300,000 Haitians; health care for more than half the country in U.S.-supported facilities; train a new national police force; and raise the average incomes of tens of thousands of farmers," Mr. Sullivan said in an email. "Secretary Clinton is extremely proud of the work she and her team have done since the earthquake."

But to many Haitians, the most significant moment of Mrs. Clinton's tenure as secretary of state was in 2011, when she flew to Haiti to pressure President René Préval to admit Mr. Martelly, a popular recording artist, into a two-person runoff for president. Mr. Martelly was third in initial voting, but the Organization of American States believed that the man who was second, Mr. Préval's pick, had benefited from vote fraud.

The night of the runoff, which Mr. Martelly won, Mrs. Clinton's chief of staff, Cheryl D. Mills, wrote a congratulatory note to top American diplomats in Haiti.

"You do great elections," Ms. Mills wrote in a message released by the State Department among a batch of Mrs. Clinton's emails. She wrote that she would buy dinner the next time she visited: "We can discuss how the counting is going! Just kidding. Kinda. :)"

Ms. Mills's email may have been intended as tongue in cheek, but it has fed a suspicion among Haitians, if lacking in proof, that the United States rigged the election to install a puppet president.

And as Mr. Martelly slowly concentrated power around him and gave important jobs to friends with criminal pasts, the woman who had helped put him in the runoff began to come under attack. (Mr. Martelly left office last month, as scheduled, but without a successor in place.)

After Mrs. Clinton declared her candidacy for president of the United States, calls began coming in to Mr. Andre's radio show, like one in June in which a woman lamented that she and her late father had been supporters of The Clintons and had

donated money to help elect each to office. “When they did good things, we should applaud,” the woman said in Haitian Creole. “But when they do bad things, we should denounce them because it is not good. And Hillary Clinton is not good.”

The activities of Mr. Rodham, Mrs. Clinton’s brother, are frequently mentioned on the shows. Last year a book, “Clinton Cash” by Peter Schweizer, revealed that in 2013, Mr. Rodham was added to the advisory board of a company that owns a gold mine in Haiti. He and the company’s chief executive both told *The Washington Post* that they had been introduced at a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative, an arm of the Clinton Foundation. Officials at the foundation said they had not played a part in Mr. Rodham’s joining the mining company.

Mr. Rodham and several partners also sought a \$22 million deal to rebuild homes in the country while Mr. Clinton was leading the recovery commission. They were not successful.

While there is no evidence that Mr. Rodham got preferential treatment, his ventures were quickly inflated into rumors, heard often on the streets and airwaves, that the Clintons had been busy buying land in Haiti for profit.

Outspoken activists like Ezili Dantò, a human rights lawyer who founded the Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network, say they cannot help believing that Mrs. Clinton gave her brother a hand.

“She is looked upon as a liberal and someone who respects human rights, workers’ rights and so forth,” Ms. Dantò said. “But we haven’t had that experience with her in Haiti.”

The Rev. Philius Nicolas, 85, of Brooklyn, an elder statesman of the Haitian community in New York, said he had heard all the complaints and understood the frustration.

But Mr. Nicolas, who proudly displays in his church office a photo of him and other Haitian-Americans standing with Mrs. Clinton during her 2000 Senate campaign, said he was going to vote for her again. He said he thought she would be the best leader for the United States, Haiti’s biggest benefactor.

“We can’t vote for a president because of Haiti only,” Mr. Nicolas said. “If things go bad in the United States, we are the first ones who are going to get hurt. First and foremost, we need something good for us and then for back home.”

Frances Robles contributed reporting.

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