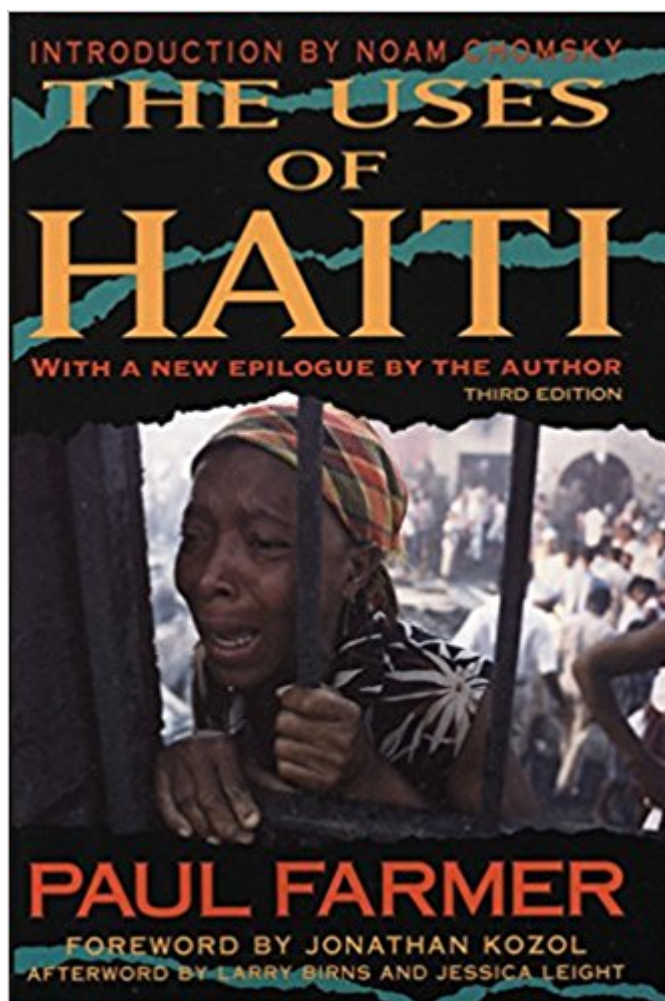


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The Uses Of Haiti



Synopsis

The Uses of Haiti tells the truth about uncomfortable matters—uncomfortable, that is, for the structures of power and the doctrinal framework that protects them from scrutiny. It tells the truth about what has been happening in Haiti, and the US role in its bitter fate. —Noam Chomsky, from the introduction

In this third edition of the classic *The Uses of Haiti*, Paul Farmer looks at what has happened to the health of the poor in Haiti since the coup. Winner of a McArthur Genius Award, Paul Farmer is a physician and anthropologist who has worked for 25 years in Haiti, where he serves as medical director of a hospital serving the rural poor. He is the subject of the Tracy Kidder biography, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.

Book Information

Paperback: 475 pages

Publisher: Common Courage Press; 3rd ed. edition (April 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1567513441

ISBN-13: 978-1567513448

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.2 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #104,876 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in [Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Haiti](#) #53 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Caribbean & Latin American](#) #3746 in [Books > History > World](#)

Customer Reviews

In this impassioned, sometimes unwieldy, synthesis of history and report, Harvard-based Farmer, who alternates research with medical practice in rural Haiti, offers an indictment of American policy. He traces Haiti's long standing injustice from the sufferings of the 18th century slave economy, and the post-revolution establishment of a still-persistent feudal economy to the U.S. Marine invasion in 1915 and our subsequent support, based on business interests and anticommunism, for tyrants like Papa Doc Duvalier. The democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed in a 1991 coup shortly after he began to redress Haiti's ugly inequalities; Farmer (*AIDS and Accusation*) notes how media reports meshed with the Bush administration's line, and criticizes the Clinton administration's inaction. Departing from his historical narrative, Farmer also decries harassing U.S.

policy toward Haitian refugees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; describes the torture death of a peasant as an outgrowth of U.S. military training; and suggests that AIDS in Haiti should not be blamed on images of squalor, but more on "an established political and economic crisis." American remorse, he suggests, would be the first step toward a new commitment to justice. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Paul Farmer is Professor of Medical Anthropology at Harvard medical School and Founding Director of Partners in Health. The subject of a just released biography by Tracy Kidder, Farmer is the author of *The Uses of Haiti*, *Infections and Inequalities*, and *AIDS and Accusation*. Greg Bates is Publisher at Common Courage Press.

Paul Farmer is a wonderful human being who has devoted his life to helping the poor of Haiti get medical care. This is barely mentioned in the book. To me, this gives his opinions even more credibility. He details the abuses of Haiti by our hegemony and then details the reasons for these abuses. I had always suspected the reasons, and my suspicions were confirmed. I wanted my opinions bolstered by facts or I wanted to change my opinions. This book was erudite, cogent, and salient. I want to say it was enjoyable, but the subject is so sad, that word does not quite fit. If you're interested in Haiti's plight, this is a great book to read.

I never knew the history of Haiti and was curious about how a country could be so devastatingly poor. Well, the answer is shocking but not totally unexpected. Haitians are not responsible for their fate and they could be saved if there was a will to do it. This is a book that will keep you engaged and is good if not cheery reading. It is one of those books I think should be required reading in school. Dr. Paul Farmer is an amazing man and should be an inspiration to us all.

For those interested in the history of Haiti and what Paul Farmer terms Colonial Enterprises domination this is a must read book. He was Mother Teresa to Haiti. We need him to return to that attitude God bless Paul Farmer

in good shape

Excellent book

Good book. Farmer exposes his wealth of experience and the sad fate of Haiti in this book. A must read for all those who wish to work in Haiti.

The author mentions in his "Diagnosis" that he desires to avoid being "intellectually dishonest". Unfortunately, that is exactly what he has accomplished in this book. I would excuse the original edition for its short-sightedness, given the incomplete story of Aristide and Preval, but with the facts now known, Farmer has made the conscious decision to skew facts in order to show support for his original hypothesis, and ironically, to further "use" Haiti for his own benefit. One of the surprises when I first visited Haiti, after reading books such as this one, and hearing the stories that are so common about the nation, is how bad Haiti ISN'T! In fact, it is one of the greatest frustrations of Haitians, that books like these continue to propagate the woes of Haiti in lieu of the complete story that includes incredible accomplishments, a thriving culture and beautiful country (among other things). Haiti is beautiful, and Haiti is strong. The place where Farmer gets it right is in his title, "The Uses of Haiti." Numerous NGOs, private and public organizations, and other individuals and groups, thrive on the public perception of Haiti as horribly weak and needy. There might be the side which chooses to blame in order to build guilt (such as in the case of Farmer), or the side that simply tugs on the heartstrings of the developing world by showing the worst of Haiti. Haiti's poor are an extremely valuable marketing tool used by "non-profit" organizations which pocket millions of "aid" money. So here, Farmer gets it right on the surface, at least. I simply can't get into the vast amount of inconsistencies and outright deceptions in Farmer's book. And it horrifies me to think of his reasons for such deceit, but there are some very easily researched points that I will bring up. First, Farmer indicates that Aristide was happy to step down in order to have a democratically elected president take his place. In reality, Preval was a friend of Aristide, and the corruption in Aristide's administration is what secured Preval's win. In addition, Aristide only "supported" Preval (i.e., named his successor) after he first tried to (illegally) retain his seat and was opposed. Shortly afterward in his book, Farmer states that Aristide won "in a landslide" in his second election. This is interesting, and accurate if one looks at the percentage of votes for Aristide. But the other side is that only 5% of the eligible voters participated in the election, due to fear of the CURRENT administration (Preval/Aristide). He cites "overwhelming support" and that the Haitians were "eager to re-elect him". Does 5% sound like "eager" to you? Mr. Farmer, you are a blatant liar, twisting facts in order to place blame on those you wish were at fault, and ignoring the actual enemy of Haiti. Throughout the book, Farmer also points his finger at every American Republican he can find to blame, ignoring that it was first Clinton who blocked loans to Aristide, because Aristide's

administration was shown to be so corrupt that the money was assumed to "go to waste". This was not initiated by the Bush II administration as Farmer would have us think. The solution for Haiti comes from the same solution for the U.S. and everywhere. Right now, Haiti is the victim of the Curley Effect. It's the same thing that has pushed Detroit and other U.S. cities to dire need. Politicians use the plight of the poor to bring in "aid" money, from which they take a large portion and then "redistribute" a remainder to the poor to make it look as if they are generous. Sure, Aristide did some good. And so did the U.S. forces at the time of their occupation. But without a strong middle-class which can be used as a virtual ladder upon which the poor can climb out of their poverty, Haiti and Detroit will remain in their current condition. It is the conservative policies so hated by Farmer, which help to build such middle-class strength. But if Haiti is truly strong, then Farmer will have no market for his book, and he risks the embarrassment of having to admit he was wrong after-all. Instead, he will continue to deceive. Shame on you, Paul!

This is not an easy book for an American to read. Page after page confronts us with the links between U.S. policies and the horrible suffering of poor Haitians, which continues to this day. It exposes the lies we have told ourselves to justify this treatment- demonizing Haitians who seek a more just international order (from the leaders of the Haitian revolution through the opposition to the U.S. occupation to the current pro-democracy movement), distorting or misrepresenting facts about Haiti, and so on. But a reader who disables his or her defense mechanisms will find a coherent explanation for Haiti's current misery, and clear directives for how we can help end it. But the book says almost as much about America as it does about Haiti: how we justify doing things abroad that we would never tolerate at home, with the willing collaboration of the press we trust to keep government honest. Uses of Haiti is a combination of emotion and academic rigor, which is unsettling to most readers used to one or the other. But the emotion (a normal and human response to 20 years of treating Haiti's sick), and rigor (the author is an MD and a PhD in anthropology) complement each other, if the coexistence is sometimes awkward.

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