



Free Press Viewpoint

Nation's poverty magnifies disaster

Money and help pour with agonizing slowness into crumpled Haiti.

Imagine, if you will, a disaster even more immense than Hurricane Katrina smashing the Gulf Coast, swamping New Orleans, washing away 200 years of history.

Remember how long it took to restore order, stop looting, provide food and water, begin organized rescue efforts, bring in the Army, then re-establish civilian control.

Now, put this disaster in the middle of one of the world's poorest, most overcrowded, least-well-governed nations. Destroy the port, ruin roads and bridges, topple buildings into the streets, jam the only airport with relief and military flights. Wipe out the forces of law and order, the government, the international presence meant to keep things going.

And there you'd have Haiti today.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas. Its government barely functions. (A United Nations peacekeeping force, run by a Canadian Mountie, stood between the nation and lawlessness, little else. The Mountie and his two top aides are dead.)

Some blame the United States. Some say we've done too little for Haiti. Some say we did too much. It matters little now; the millions of survivors fighting for food and water do not care.

To their credit, President Obama and world leaders moved quickly to send unprecedented aid to Haiti in the days following the quake Jan. 10. This is as it should be. The civilized world can and should give from its abundance when something like this happens.

Mr. Obama ordered six to eight U.S. ships carrying aid and work crews, at least 10,000 Army and Marine Corps troops to restore order and keep the peace, and huge amounts of food, water and medical supplies into motion.

Relief agencies, everything from church groups to the American and International Red Cross organizations, sprang into action. Nations around the world sent what they could, from a few rescue workers to whole military units.

The bloodied infrastructure of Haiti is hardly up to this influx of help. The one airport is jammed. Reports say it can take six to eight hours to unload a single plane. There are no ramps and stairs, no crews.

One International Red Cross/Red Crescent team landed in the nearby Dominican Republic and proceeded to attempt a border crossing by road. They estimated a 12-hour trip. (Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola.)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Haitian President Rene Preval at the airport near Port-au-Prince and promised more help. Her husband Bill, heading a U.S. relief effort along with former President George W. Bush, was due any time.

The world response is impressive. It is an example of the best in humanity.

For many, it will be too little, too late, for the nature of disaster forecloses a truly prompt response. Nonetheless, it is our duty, the rest of the world, to do what we can. And we will.

Help is on the way. Little else can be done now but pray for the survivors and move the mountains of rubble that block the way.

— Steve Haynes

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Menu offered a real adventure

Man, it sounded like such a great idea at the time. Go to a real soul-food restaurant and order barbecue.

We were in Augusta, Ga., and the girls knew of this place, run by a church, that was popular with everyone from businessmen to housewives to teenagers.

My irreverent children called it I-Hop for Jesus and warned that the place had less ambience than a high school cafeteria, the food was served cafeteria style and everybody sat at plastic tables on folding chairs.

But, they said, the food was pure soul.

Sounded like tasty fun.

The kids were pretty close on the name, as it turned out. The restaurant, which just serves lunch and is run by volunteers, is in a large room attached to the United House of Prayer for All People church — I Hop for Jesus, it is.

The menu is painted on the wall above the servers. You grab a tray and tell them what you want. The cost is \$6 per person for the main course, two vegetables, bread and tea.

This was Thursday and the offerings were barbecue, liver and onions, fried chicken spaghetti or Salisbury steak with rice. Your choice



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

of sides included mashed potatoes and gravy, lima beans, yams, turnips, green beans, black eyed peas, rice and gravy, cabbage or macaroni and cheese. Breads included corn bread, rolls or sliced bread.

Desserts were \$2 extra and included several puddings and cakes.

I was hungry for southern barbecue and didn't read any farther on the menu. The nice serving lady told me what kind of barbecue it was, but her accent was a little strong and it wasn't until I nodded and she put the barbecued pigs feet on my tray that I began to have some misgivings. I added yams, black eyed peas and corn bread to complete my soul food meal.

I stopped short of the sweet tea. I love sweet

things, but sweet tea — a southern staple — contains more sugar than water and would choke a hummingbird. I put in a special request for plain tea and it was graciously granted.

The barbecued pigs feet were interesting — inedible but interesting. There is almost no meat on them. You are supposed to eat the skin and fat, and there's lots of that.

Steve and the girls took pity on me and gave me part of their fried chicken. It was delicious, and so were my yams and black eyed peas.

I noticed a lot of people were getting the pigs feet, so I guess it's a popular item. I figured you have to try new things now and again.

But next time, I'm sticking to the fried chicken. That's about as southern as you can get this side of barbecued pigs feet, and I definitely think I'll stay this side of that particular delicacy from now on.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

2010 Legislature faces tough challenge

We are back in session and I have no idea how things will go. I find no majority for anything!

Please note that my room number has changed (not the actual office, but the number) to 274-West. Please update that in your information. My phone is still (785) 296-7676 and best contact e-mail is jmorriso@ink.org. I see that e-mail. All the other e-mails go through my secretary.

Thanks a lot for your help. If anything is going on that I may need to know about, please contact me soon, as things move quickly. If there is anything that you need to know more about, let me know.

Last Week at the Statehouse

This 2010 session may be challenging one, but as the governor reminded us, this is the best time to be a legislator and to take on the challenge to preserve the progress that our ancestors have made for Kansas over the past 150 years!

This is my 18th session, and it progressing much too slowly. No one really knows how to tackle the economic problems we have.

Selling State Assets?

I would like to have my committee, the Government Efficiency and Fiscal Oversight Committee, study and debate the possibility of Kansas selling some of its assets including buildings, land, computers and other office equipment. I would also like to study if there is any benefit to "decentralizing" Kansas government.

Last Thursday I received information from a survey conducted by KWCH-TV in Wichita. Fifty-six percent responded that the state sales tax should be increased in order to prevent further cuts in the budget. Seventy-one percent said that too many organizations were exempt from sales taxes: Fifty-six percent supported an increase in cigarette taxes. Sixty-five percent supported banning smoking in public places.

Kate's Law (Autism)

Last session, Rep. Nile Dillmore (D-Wichita) made a motion to move HB2367 out of the



Jim Morrison

• Capitol Review

conference committee and have it considered when we return on April 29. It would require insurance companies to cover treatment of autism. It passed, but it was never debated on the House floor. I hope we can address "Kate's Law" during this session and help these children, ultimately reducing the costs in our schools and social services budget.

Earned Income Tax Credit

You may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. This is a refundable federal tax credit for low to moderate-income working individuals and families. Congress originally approved the law in 1975 in part to offset the burden of Social Security taxes and to provide an incentive to work. When the credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim it.

To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they did not earn enough otherwise. The credit has no effect on welfare benefits. In most cases, payments will not be used to determine eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, low-income housing or most temporary assistance for payments.

The federal adjusted gross income limits for qualifying for the credit for tax year 2008 (which are adjusted annually for inflation) were:

- Married filing jointly with more than one qualifying child, \$41,646
- Single with more than one qualifying child, \$38,646
- Married filing jointly with one qualifying child, \$36,995
- Single with one qualifying child, \$33,995
- Married filing jointly with no qualifying

children, \$15,880

• Single with no qualifying children, \$12,880

"Earned income" basically means salary income. A taxpayer cannot file "married filing separately" or have investment income in excess of \$2,950 and get the credit. Claimants must be between 25 and 65 and cannot be claimed as a dependent by anyone.

Details are available on the IRS website, www.irs.gov The Kansas credit is 17 percent of the federal rate.

Keep in Touch

It is a special honor to serve as your state representative. I value and need your input on the various issues. Feel free to contact me with your comments and questions. My office address is Room 274-W (same office but new number), State Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan., 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7676 or call the legislative hotline at (800) 432-3924 to leave a message. E-mail me at jmorriso@ink.org. You can follow the session online at www.kslegislature.org.

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