

The Haiti Babii Interview

Walking on FireHaiti Will Not Perish Beverly Bell Michael Deibert

Walking on Fire Haiti Will Not Perish *Beverly Bell Michael Deibert*

haiti long noted for poverty and repression has a powerful and too often overlooked history of resistance women in haiti have played a large role in changing the balance of political and social power even as they have endured rampant and devastating state sponsored violence including torture rape abuse illegal arrest disappearance and assassination beverly bell an activist and an expert on haitian social movements brings together thirty eight oral histories from a diverse group of haitian women the interviewees include for example a former prime minister an illiterate poet a leading feminist theologian and a vodou dancer defying victim status despite gender and state based repression they tell how haiti s poor and dispossessed women have fought for their personal and collective survival the women s powerfully moving accounts of horror and heroism can best be characterized by the creole word istwa which means both story and history they combine theory with case studies concerning resistance gender and alternative models of power photographs of the women who have lived through haiti s recent past accompany their words to further personalize the interviews in walking on fire

the world s first independent black republic haiti was forged in the fire of history s only successful slave revolution yet more than two hundred years later the full promise of that revolution a free country and a free people remains unfulfilled home for more than a decade to one of the world s largest un peacekeeping forces haiti s tumultuous political culture buffeted by coups and armed political partisans combined with economic inequality and environmental degradation to create immense difficulties even before the devastating 2010 earthquake killed tens of thousands of people this grim tale however is not the whole story in this moving and detailed history michael deibert who has spent two decades reporting on haiti chronicles the heroic struggles of haitians to build their longed for country in the face of overwhelming odds based on hundreds of interviews with haitian political leaders international diplomats peasant advocates and gang leaders as well as ordinary haitians deibert s book provides a vivid complex and challenging analysis of haiti s recent history

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