Port-au-Prince, Haiti: 01-2010 GROUND ZERO FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

The recent CNN Telethon “Hope for Haiti” means perhaps “Hope for the World.”

As Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson, and Stevie Wonder reminded us in their song: “We are the world, we are the children, let’s make a better world for you and me.”

“It is a small world after all,” as an old song goes.

If after 9-11, NY City became “Ground Zero” for an international campaign against global terrorism, it is possible that, after 1-12-2010, Haiti -- the first black independent nation in history, standard bearer of the torch of liberty since 1804, and now the poorest country in the world -- could become Ground Zero for an international effort against world poverty, against international epidemics and diseases, against world hunger, homelessness, despair... FOR GLOBAL HEALTH TO ALL

In our era of globalization, concerns about planetary environmental and climate changes, trafficking of guns, narcotics and all sorts of items across artificial borders, global economic crises and recessions, international epidemics like swine flu... hasn’t the time for a new way of thinking arrived? Isn’t it time now for “global thinking”? That is:

Shouldn’t world citizens and world leaders begin to “think locally but act globally”?

Why shouldn’t Haiti become “GROUND ZERO FOR GLOBAL HEALTH”?

Why shouldn’t Haiti or a place we used to call “the Pearl of the Carraibes” in a distant past, or Haiti up until 01-2010, become the first “GLOBAL NATION ON EARTH”? And 01-12 “INTERDEPENDENCE DAY AROUND THE WORLD”?

9 to 10 million human beings on the small island of Haiti are “down but not out”... using resilience, heroism, ... generating INTERNATIONAL solidarity, uplifting compassion, altruism, heart-warming humanitarianism and acts of kindness, volunteerism, kinship, religion, faith, creativity, insight, imagination... gratitude, admiration, joy, happiness, optimism...

Against unprecedented chaos, mass disaster, confusion, panic, disorientation, un-coordination, pain, suffering, trauma, crush injuries, fractures, starvation, malnutrition, contamination, epidemics, diseases, death, unimaginable destruction, gut wrenching devastation, horrific catastrophe, unbelievable grief, apocalyptic consternation, despair, desperation...

Port-au-Prince, in 01-2010, created a moral conundrum and ethical dilemma of titanic dimensions for 13 members of my Haitian family (and for me, my wife and our Guatemalan and U.S. families) after their humanitarian relief, followed by their rescue and evacuation from Haiti to Guatemala -- and on to Montreal, Miami, NJ, or NY -- went bittersweetly well... because quite a few other family members along with more than 9 million human beings remain trapped in Haiti, have a very uncertain future and are living lives with odds that are overwhelmingly against their survival.
The Haitian saying “Tout moun se moun” reminds us that “a human life is worth nothing; but nothing is worth a human life.”

01-2010 marks perhaps the time for a 21st century newer Approach to Global Health, that is “Saving the entire world and preserving health for all one person at a time, one family at a time, one community at a time.”

Roger Duvivier, New Rochelle, Jan. 23, 2010