

Ayisyen Pa Gen Zanmi

A Meditation On Anti-Blackness, Ressentiment, And The Structure of
Anti-Haitian Solidarity

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Anti-Haitianism is no new phenomenon, as it did not begin with Bill and Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, JD Vance, Luis Abinader, or Rafael Trujillo. “Ayisyen Pa Gen Zanmi: A Meditation On Anti-Blackness, Ressentiment, And The Structure of Anti-Haitian Solidarity” is a meditative essay that is articulated by way of the anecdotal through the lens of Afro-pessimism, which chronicles a history of gratuitous antiBlack violence that engulfs the social, epistemological, psychological, and cultural dimensions of Haiti and Haitian peoples globally. Derilus contends by way of anecdote that while antiBlackness is inarguably the fulcrum of all other kyriarchal structures (e.g.: *fatphobia, transphobia, misogyny, colorism, biphobia, adultism, capitalism, fascism, racism, enbyphobia, speciesism, childism, homophobia, sanism, ableism, classism, anthropocentrism, fatphobia, ageism, etc.*) there are starkly minute differences between antiBlackness and anti-Haitianism. The ways in which not only white and by extension, non-Black people are junior partners of Black suffering, non-Haitian Black people, too, are tertiary participants of said structure, such that, much of the African diasporas’ uncontested veneration for Haiti is fetishistic, unveiling their vitriol and disingenuity. In view of this vitriol, Derilus speculates further if *ressentiment*, a philosophical concept introduced by 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in his 1887 book, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, that is defined as a point in which the subject (e.g.: the African diaspora) directs hostility toward another subject or object (e.g.: Haitians) is one of the sources of their ills. It is important to note that *ressentiment* is not reducible to jealousy or envy and if once formerly enslaved Africans freed themselves whereas several other Slave rebellions were unsuccessful, where does the thought of unfreedom go? Calvin Warren, who is a scholar of Continental Philosophy, queer theory, Black Philosophy, Afro-pessimism, and theology, adds to this concept of *ressentiment* in his piercing essay, “Black Nihilism And The Politics of Hope” stating: “*Ressentiment constitutes torment without relief, and the desperation for relief results in forms of self-injury.*” Is this *torment without relief* the totality of anti-Haitianist violence that is bundled in the sentiment that *everyone wants to be Black, but no one wants to be Black and in the African diaspora, no one wants to be Haitian*? All things considered, Anti-Haitianism could be first attributed to when a 1791 precursor known as Bwa Kayiman lead to the Haitian Revolution that became the cornerstone of liberation for all Black people thus becoming the first nation to establish itself as a free Black Republic.

“I remember how the other students (including African-Americans, Latinos, and other Caribbean immigrants) shunned Haitians and refused to interact with us in gym class because they assumed that if you were Haitian you were automatically an AIDS carrier...During this period, some of my Haitian classmates would try to pass off as Jamaicans or even Africans so that they would not deal with the stigma and prejudice encountered by Haitians.” — Cécile Accilien, “Congratulations! You Don’t Look Haitian”

“*Ressentiment constitutes torment without relief, and the desperation for relief results in forms of self-injury, in which the body must speak the existential crisis that gets muted within humanist grammars.*” — Calvin Warren, “Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope”

ALL BLACK LIVES DON’T MATTER: ANTI-HAITIANISM AND THE WORLD

Ayisyen pa gen zanmi, or *Ayiti pa gen zanmi*, a sentiment often shared discreetly amongst Haitian peoples, translates to ‘*Haitians have no friends*’ or ‘*Haiti has no friends*’ in the English language. Although it is overlooked that because we are of the same African diaspora — that because we *struggle, live, and die* in ways that are virtually indistinguishable, yet minutely dissimilar because *we are subjects of social death* — there still remains an incontestably unanimous agreement upon us that there is an *unconscious*, if not, *subconsciously* snide fascination with Haitians and Haiti that leaves no space to unveil the intergenerational, unrelenting anti-Haitianism that has not only been evident in the apartheid state of the Dominican Republic and the genocidal Latinidad project, but also Cuba, Trinidad, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe, Brazil, Martinique, and the entirety of Latin America.

Ultimately, I argue that anti-Haitianism is as global, yet minutely distinct in its annihilationist logics as anti-Blackness is. ***Anti-Haitianism***, as defined by professor Bertin M. Louis, Jr. of Anthropology

and African American & Africana Studies (AAAS) at the University of Kentucky, “*consists of actions, beliefs, outcomes, policies, political strategies, and practices that reify the negative connotations associated with Blackness and Haitian identity. Recent anti-Haitian examples should remind us of this unique anti-Black phenomenon that occurs with systemic regularity in the United States and elsewhere.*”

Anti-Haitianism is *no* new phenomenon. To cite an instance, Haitians can never relent from the fact that war criminals Bill and Hillary Clinton, with ties to pedophilic sex traffickers Ghislaine Maxwell and Jeffery Epstein, honeymooned in Port-au-Prince of Haiti with intentions of expropriating, exploiting, and transmogrifying the land into what writer Nathan J. Robinson states would be a “laboratory where the United States could road-test new approaches to development, taking advantage of ‘the power of proximity’”:

“Bill and Hillary Clinton had long shared a personal interest in Haiti, dating back to the time of their honeymoon, part of which was spent in Port-au-Prince. In his autobiography, Bill says that his understanding of God and human nature were profoundly transformed when they witnessed a voodoo ceremony in which a woman bit the head off a live chicken. Hillary Clinton says the two of them “fell in love” with Haiti and they had developed a “deep connection” to the country. So when Hillary Clinton became Secretary of State in 2009, she consciously made the redevelopment of Haiti one of her top priorities.”

In the same way Bill and Hillary Clinton have ravaged Haiti, Erik Prince, who is the founder of the private military firm Blackwater and head of Vectus Global, signed a 10-year agreement with Haiti’s government in an attempt to combat what has erroneously been referred to as “gangs” with the accompaniment of helicopters, drones, U.S. soldiers, and military from other countries to accomplish their so-called “objectives”:

“Combat gang violence by deploying drones, weapons, and nearly 200 foreign personnel, including snipers and intelligence specialists from the U.S., Europe, and El Salvador. The goal is to reclaim territory and secure major roads, particularly the route from Port-au-Prince to Cap-Haitien.

Rebuild Haiti’s tax collection system, especially at the border with the Dominican Republic, where gang control has crippled customs revenue — once responsible for half of the country’s tax income.”

CARICOM, which is also a multiracial union of fifteen states whose founding leaders are Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, is a co-conspirator in Haiti’s destruction. In the essay, “Why is CARICOM Betraying Haiti on Behalf of the U.S.?” Haitian editor and contributor Jenima Pierre highlights that CARICOM, (abbreviated to mean the Caribbean Community,) was never an ally or friend of Haiti. They have also insisted on suspending Haiti’s membership from subsequently after the United States initiated a coup d’état and abduction of Jean-Bertrand Aristide by U.S. marines in 2004. With this in mind, The Dominican Republic continues to rev up its paramilitary forces to abduct, rape, and kill Haitians in the same way ICE has been doing to Haitians in the United States, namely, after Donald Trump ended their Temporary Protected Status. In like manner, Luis Abinader, who is both a Trumpian sycophant and staunch supporter of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, echoes his historical predecessor, Rafael Trujillo, in thought, action, and policy. Ana Belique, who is a founding member of the Reconocido Movement, which is “*a movement that campaigns for citizenship rights and equality for all Dominicans of Haitian descent, mobilises and empowers marginalised communities, and accompanies people who require legal support to access their documents,*” writes in her essay, “President Abinader’s Anti-Haitianism,” the following:

“President Abinader has referred to the crisis in Haiti as a threat to the sovereignty and national security of the Dominican Republic, repeatedly demanding before international forums such as the OAS and the UN that Haiti be intervened militarily. This is quite grave, especially taking into account the history of our own country, which suffered in 1965 a US military invasion under the umbrella of the OAS. Reading the national press and listening to the President’s statements, it gives the impression that he is preparing the people to declare war on Haiti.”

Rafael Trujillo, a Dominican dictator who, on October 2nd- October 8th 1937, initiated the Parsley genocide in which more than 35,000+ Haitians were murdered. If one was dark-skinned and had African features, it was enough for Trujillo’s military to distinguish them as Haitian and subsequently have them killed. Subsequently after Jean-Bertrand Aristide was abducted by U.S. Marines, The UN (United Nations) launched MINUSTAH, a colonial, imperialist project initiated on behalf of Core Group, which is “an unelected group of foreigners from Brazil, Canada, France, Spain, the US, Germany that appointed itself as arbiters of Haitian politics” has been central in the World’s occupation of Haiti and their continued genocide of Haitian people:

“A multi-billion-dollar operation, MINUSTAH had, at any given time, between 6000 and 12,000 military troops and police stationed in Haiti, alongside thousands of civilian personnel. The military wing of the MINUSTAH mission was led by Brazil, which provided the lion’s share of soldiers. However, this multinational military occupation force also contained soldiers from a number of Caribbean, South American, and African countries, including Argentina, Chile, Columbia, Jamaica, Grenada, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Guinea, Cameroon, Niger, and Mali.”

Indeed, it is not only the white man who is our mortal enemy. African, Caribbean, Spanish, Arabic and European governments send their militaries to kill us like the four Haitian women who were beheaded and found near the border — whose conspiratorial abettings impel Haitian youth like Pierre Damas Bel to suicide — plaguing my homeland as I remain in the imperial core for what is *now*—enveloped in what feels like ambivalence, disconcertion, dolefulness, disquietude, and rage. It has always been the white man and by extension, the World, who is forever our mortal enemy, too. Once we take into account that the Parsley genocide occurred in what were its afterlives of the U.S. occupation that initiated in 1915 as result of the Haitian Revolution in 1791–1804, anti-Haitianism in the West would have exacerbated — though — scarily enough — anti-Haitianism did not begin with Trujillo.

Together with Haiti’s mortal enemies are our supposed staunchest allies. Angela Davis, who was a longstanding member of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), proponent of the Black Panther Party, women’s rights and voice of prison abolition in the 1960s, has veered away in her political and ideological trajectory in pursuit of Black Liberation over the years. As she still does talks on a “necessity for multiracial unity and struggle,” many a time has Davis been duplicitous by betraying the very people she claimed to love and support, specifically Haitians. Margaret Kimberley, BAR Executive Editor and Senior Columnist of Black Agenda Report, reminds us that Angela Davis not only endorsed Obama in 2008 and 2012 and further insisted that he was part of the Black Radical Tradition, but she also endorsed Hillary Clinton in 2016.

More examples of anti-Haitianism point to how white, non-Black, and even Black people (particularly those of whom are Marxists) rely on the *ruse of analogy* to erase and or make nebulous the irreconcilably onto-phenomenological way in which Haitians-as-Africans, not Latinos, *suffer*. Why do white settlers and non-Blacks alike contend that we are but what we are? Why do Yemenis, who refer to Black Yemenis as *Muhamasheen*, otherwise understood as ‘*untouchables*,’ and are subjected to bare infrastructure and necessities, call their country the “Haiti of the Arab World”? Frantz Fanon reminds us in *Black Skin, White Masks*, that “the Negro is a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety.” Consequently, it is by their ritualistic deracializing our Black dilemma and making it a Human/universalist dilemma that our

points of concern become null and void in all social justice circles and political movements in the U.S. and elsewhere.

From resurging anti-Haitianist tropes about us eating cats and dogs from white nationalists such as JD Vance, FBA/ADOS/Soulaan reactionaries, liberals and the anti-Black U.S. Left, the unrelenting vilification and cooptation of Vodou, this necrophiliac fixation of *would-be* zombie apocalypses that is conveyed through Hollywood films and video games—which is a phantasmagorical bastardization of the zonbi, reinforces the fact that there is indeed a specter haunting the white, nonblack, and Black psyche and it is the Haitian. In view of the specter, as Haitian writer Naomi Legros points out in her essay, “US Immigration Policy and the Resurrection of the Zonbi,” the zonbi is *socially dead*, or in Haitian Vodou and amongst Vodousaints, “the zonbi is condemned to an afterlife of slavery instead of the freedom they yearned for — suspended, neither dead nor free, between worlds.”

Unlike the drunk white ICE agent who asked a Black deputy if he was Haitian or the Black woman who interrogated Chicago mayor Brandon Johnson by saying, “word on the street is you’re Haitian!” I look to Christina Sharpe, who writes in her poignant text, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being*, the polysemous significations of the word *ship* and how even the gratuitousness of anti-Blackness is not enough to encapsulate the totality of anti-Haitianism. Sharpe sifts through an archive and recalls the earthquake that devastated Haiti on January 12th, 2010 that claimed the lives of 300,000+ Haitians. She sees an image of a young Haitian girl with a listless expression on her face. The word *ship* is marked on her forehead. Sharpe remarks:

“Is Ship a reminder and/or remainder of the Middle Passage, of the difference between life and death? Of those other Haitians in crisis sometimes called boat people?”

This brings to mind Cécile Accilien’s anecdotal essay, “Congratulations! You Don’t Look Haitian,” where she gives her account on the anti-Haitianism and Afrophobia she experienced when she was in high school in Newark, New Jersey:

“When I was in high school in Newark, New Jersey, it was very common to hear African-Americans mock us because of our accents, tell us (black immigrants from other countries) that we were not “black,” but rather “Haitians” or “Africans,” and tell us to “go back where we came from.” We were also commonly referred to as “boat people” or told to “return to the banana boat.” I was even told by a classmate once that we had no “business” celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday because we were not African Americans.”

There is a frequent emphasis to refer to us as “boat people” — strangers from a strange land who are endlessly pulled far and between the plane of existence and nonexistence. This strangeness I liken to Saidiya Hartman in her memoir, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along The Atlantic Slave Route* when she recounts her journey to Ghana and is forced to remember the word *obruni*, which is the Akan word for *stranger*:

“Obruni forced me to acknowledge that I didn’t belong anyplace. The domain of the stranger is always an elusive elsewhere.”

Perhaps we are all of these things. Perhaps the anti-Haitianism was so rampant back when I was in middle school that I didn’t want to recall instances in which I disavowed being Haitian. As a preteen, I used to live in West Haverstraw, a village located in the town of Haverstraw in Rockland County, New York. The demographic of West Haverstraw was and still is predominately white and Latino. From 6th to 9th grade, I’ve been forced to recall attending North Rockland High School and being the only Haitian on the school bus who was seated amongst a majority of non-Black, light-skinned Dominicans — not to mention, hearing a white Dominican classmate named Brian who hung out with Black people and in the same breath so brazenly yelled out, “*I hate Black people!*” and no one beat his ass. I can

never forgive or forget being bullied — physically and sexually abused by a light-skinned Puerto Rican (who went by Xavier) and a white male classmate (who went by Robert) — most of who still hung out with one another. In addition to this, more recently, I also recall my former light-skinned, cis, Black American roommate whose name was Chase. He was married to a white Mexican settler from California named Daniela. I lived with him and his wife in Brooklyn in the middle of February of last year after beating an eviction case in which the landlord's daughter, who was a Black woman, went to great lengths not only to surveil my social media to levy charges against me in housing court that I wanted her mother dead, but also goaded my two roommates (one of whom was an acquiesced, dark-skinned Haitian cis man who frequently bought the landlord gifts and the other a light-skinned Latinx non-binary person) into pressuring me to self-evict because I was unemployed and months behind on rent. Why my interaction with Chase is important is because I've had to confront his anti-Haitianism after several conversations we've had about Blackness, Pan-Africanism, gender, sexuality, interracialism, solidarity, geopolitics, and history. He was from Atlanta and had roots in the Midwest. I was brought up in the North most my life and only visited Haiti when I was five. Time and again, we'd butt heads politically and ideologically, and there came a point where my anti-American position brought out the Afrophobe/xenophobe/anti-Haitianist in this man when he said something to the effect of,

“As much as you hate America, and not wanting to claim that you are American, why don't you go back to Haiti?”

It generally takes a lot for me to react, because I was afraid of myself — *rageful* — what I could've done in that moment, I shut down from the conversation. In Chase's shitty attempt to explain himself via text, I corrected him and said that the way he went about addressing me was anti-Haitian. How this one interaction turned out was that he argued that Black people who come to America, are by default American. I generally understand that while the media, journalists, podcasters and what have you, uses the term '*Black American*' as a catch-all term for the African diaspora and non-Blacks use the term '*Black American*' as a pejorative, a lot of our own people in this country still seem accustomed to using the term as a way to refer to us as *Black people in America*, not the separate designation in itself. My rebuttal to Chase was that many Black people in America do not claim America because of its irredeemable history and position as a fascist, white, settler-colonial surveillance police state and prefer not to be referred to as Americans, myself included. Over the course of time, I've felt more of a separation from the term 'Black American' not only because it is politically and existentially incorrect, but also because even though I was born in America, and other Haitians may chastise me as a stranger in the same way Hartman was, America was never really home to me, even if I was welcomed. I believe this is in part of why my mother decided to leave this incorrigible country and move to Africa. Two years from now, she will have left and have passed down her home to my sibling and I to take care of. She mentioned she's been to Ghana, Nigeria, and will be revisiting Rwanda this month. Is she aware of the Rwandan genocide and its afterlives? What their government thinks not only of their people and our Congolese siblings not only after what they've done to them, but also how they perceive Haitians? Will Rwanda welcome my mother? Will Africa welcome my mother? The last we spoke in person, which was about a few weeks ago, she lamented of the instance in which her mother, father, and brother encountered the Tonton Makout at one of the airports — Toussaint Louverture International it might have been? *Tonton Makout* were a Haitian paramilitary secret police force that was created by the Haitian dictator, François “Papa Doc” Duvalier in the late 1950s during his regime. They were known for assailing, abducting, and killing anyone who dissented against him. My mother cried recalling how they brutally beat my grandparents and uncle. This same Duvalierian violence ripples through Haiti in different arrangements today. I finally understood why my mother and my uncle used to talk about taking me to Haiti with them, and then recanted their words soon after in saying, “it's too dangerous.” What about the anti-Haitianist violence everyone else is doing onto us? Why have we gone to Canada? Why did y'all go to France? In spite of all this meandering in thought, however, I seldom wondered

to myself sometime ago — maybe my mom, aunts and uncle were right: there is a common expression amongst Haitians when they discipline you and that is through them making threats of taking their children back to Haiti — minus the familial and imperial violence, I probably wouldn't have minded that.

Fast forward to the ICE abduction in Chicago last year where they terrorized a predominately Black neighborhood. In spite of the fact that many people were shocked, it is also terrifying how Haitians have been scapegoated as the ones who “should be abducted” — the ones who “should be deported” — the ones who “should have to bare the brunt of that disaster.” When ICE murdered Renee Nicole Good and Alex Jeffrey Pretti consecutively within a week of each other, they were not only well received enough for everyone to crowdfund several campaigns, host vigils, and protest in honor of their passing, but to also erroneously use the phrase “*Rest In Power*” for these white people — who have always *lived in power* and are deemed human subjects. However, in the collective unconscious, Black people, are not perceived as persons who receive injury — persons who are without a heritage of rights and claims. This is why Keith Porter, and more to the crux of this essay, Marie Ange Blaise, Emmanuel Cleeford Damas, Daphy Michel, and Jean Wilson Brutus, who are all Haitian, were not registerable to everyone else, in life and in death. Recall Hurricane Melissa and many Jamaican peoples who wished it was not them, but Haitians who were hit by it. Forty people in Haiti were still killed by Hurricane Melissa but never received aid. In concert with Jamaicans' anti-Haitianist vitriol, Bahamians, too, perceive Haitians with scrutiny and malice. In the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, which left an innumerable count of Bahamians homeless in 2019, followed up with a subsequent response from a nationalist group called Operation Sovereign Bahamas, who demanded that their government evict all Haitians from procuring shelter. In spite of the fact that Haitians and Bahamians have a shared history dating back to the late 1790s, the founder of Operation Sovereign Bahamas, Adrian Francis, staged a protest, stating, “*The Bahamas is for Bahamians.*” Ultimately, it is to say that in the general public, ***no one wants to be Black; however, in the African diaspora, no one wants to be Haitian.*** Moreover, it is through these faux compensatory gestures articulated by the FBA, ADOS, Soulaan, and Pretendian reactionaries (*to clarify, who are not to be conflated with my Black American and New Afrikan cousins*), such as if and when they are interrogated by police and ICE simultaneously, that they'd still support the same white nationalist forces that have been terrorizing them for five-hundred years by having Haitians abducted, killed and or deported. One of the initial responses they'll make is that *they're not an immigrant* — that they are so-called “undeportable.” On one level, it is to exonerate themselves of wrongdoing although, it does not matter what we are doing in the face of anti-Blackness because we need not do anything for violence to be incurred. Blackness itself is transgressive.

On another level, I take into consideration the statement *I am not*. In the face of gratuitous violence, namely, anti-Haitianist violence, the word *immigrant* is used in a pejoratively negative and positive way. In the course of most of the abductions DHS has livestreamed on social media and off, has signaled to people to take actionable steps to resist this current administration, but never in solidarity with Haitians. It was never because Biden and Obama, and those before them were president and ICE, which was created in 2003, were abducting Haitians before. It was never because Haitian migrants were shackled and lined up, processed, and sent to Guantanamo Bay in the same way Haitian migrants are shackled to their ankles with TPS monitors to return to Haiti where Eurowestern-backed paramilitary forces who own the weapons that smaller militias such as Viv Ansanm and Gran Grif wield, continue to aid in massacring Haitians.

In many ways, the word *immigrant* eludes the inculcation of racial Blackness. Why is it, for example, that in U.S. politics and discourse whenever the word *immigrant* is uttered, there is something correlative about the American psyche, the euro-American psyche, specifically, that defaults to non-Black Latino, non-Black, or non-Haitian non-Black? This is not because they value Latino peoples, but rather because they consider them exploitable and expendable to this country. The ways in which non-Black Latino immigrants are exploited and made expendable, however, *cannot* be analogized with Haitian immigrants who have been made fungible. Zionist white settlers such as Elon Musk, is by technicality, a white

immigrant, who liberals, progressives, and right-wing sycophants such as Steve Bannon, have called for him to be deported; nonetheless, like his Boer counterparts — the same white Boers in South Africa who Donald Trump gave refuge to come to America for \$4500, are unstirred by a looming threat of exploitation and dispossession — unaffected by the significations of the word immigrant because it is incongruous to the project of whiteness. The fear of the white immigrant, like all white people, are purely imagined projections that are, in the words of Jared Sexton, *codified* into law and used against us.

Decoupling the semiotics of the immigrant from Haitianness is inhibited by the *condition of possibility*. In other words, this refers to what I mentioned earlier about feeling as if we are existing on a plane of existence and nonexistence. Even when we think we belong *somewhere*, we belong *nowhere*. In truth, *we are strangers*. *We are stateless*. When people have argued in favor of Haitian migrants to be in a respective country, it was never because Americans, Bahamians, Dominicans, Panamanians, or Jamaicans believed that they deserved to be welcomed there. To reiterate, unlike the white and non-Black immigrant, our suffering is not through *exploitation*, but through *accumulation* and *fungibility*. By this, I mean that the reflexive and sadomasochistic processions that foment Black suffering, encompasses a specific usefulness that is not exclusive to the extraction of our labor or the expropriation of our land, but is ultimately “*subtended by the psychic integration of everyone who is not Black*.” To put it another way, the way in which all Haitians suffer is not only through our stolen labor but also our very *being*. Given these points, ‘immigration rights’ are an iteration of ‘human rights,’ that of which Blackness, and by extension, *Haitianness*, are excluded. Even as TPS ended, it is important to examine how Haitians and diasporic Haitians are positioned as *no-citizen* and what that means as we navigate the global plantation and struggle towards ending the World as we know it — in other words — the institution of racial slavery a second time as our people have in 1791.

The Library of Unconventional Lives

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