Paul E. Fallon

Architecture by Moonlight: Rebuilding Haiti, Redrafting a Life. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2014. 224 pp. (Cloth US\$ 29.95)

Fran Quigley

How Human Rights Can Build Haiti: Activists, Lawyers, and the Grassroots Campaign. Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University Press. 2014 pp. (Cloth US\$ 35.00)

Two recent books by authors who were introduced to Haiti and Haitian issues as a result of the 2010 earthquake offer unique perspectives for general audiences curious as to how best to engage the sociopolitical complexities of the small island-nation. If, on the one hand, Paul Fallon offers a very personal account of the impact on his own development while offering architectural services to two small NGOs in the wake of postearthquake rebuilding, Fran Quigley offers a more expansive survey of how human rights activism might provide an avenue, beyond individual efforts, for long-term rebuilding of the nation. All the same, both accounts are personal forays into the field more than they are academic works.

Organizing and titling the chapters of his memoir, *Architecture by Moonlight*, by the stages involved in rebuilding a broken building (from “demolition,” “formwork,” and “carpentry” to the final stages of “plumbing” and “paint”), Fallon reflects on his engagement with Haiti as a result of the earthquake’s devastation. Having done a ten-day stint as a volunteer in the area prior to the earthquake, he returns out of a sense of duty and soul-searching. He admits not knowing where this intuition to return will lead but confesses from the onset that he “will be compelled to document [his] experience in a quest to shape a clear narrative until [he] finally understand[s] that clear narratives about Haiti are misleading. The true spirit of the country lies in the interstices of its inconsistency, its opposition to the rest of the world” (p. 8). Fallon overcomes the compulsion to deliver a “clear narrative” about Haiti by centering the text in his knowledge as an architect, but also in coming face-to-face with his own limitations. He learns from Haitians that “happiness arises not from having things, but from having hope” (p. 20) while at the same time learning to curtail his American cultural expectations. Illuminating are Fallon’s explanations of choices made in the building of an orphanage in Grand Goave—his main purpose on behalf of a Florida-based NGO building the orphanage in the memory of a young American volunteer who died in the earthquake (p. 31):

the American approach to seismic design is inappropriate in Grand Goave and develops a structural system known as constrained concrete. Instead

of flexing with the earthquake, a constrained concrete building bucks tremors by being heavy and rigid. Our foundation is wide and dense, with a low center of gravity. The columns, beams and walls are tied together, so that when the earthquake hits, the structure moves as one entity, like a boat with heavy ballast riding out the waves.

Running through the memoir are Fallon's attempts to grasp cultural differences between Haitians and Americans beyond such structural details, as in the following reflection: "When the earth shakes and buildings fall, Americans say *let's build our buildings better*, while in a land where mysticism runs strong and Voodoo runs deep, Haitians are just as apt to say *the spirits are angry*" (p. 59). Statements such as these early in the text reveal his penchant for reducing that which he does not understand to facile pronouncements that exhibit American ethnocentrism. Gradually, however, through an easy, open writing style, Fallon sheds some of this perspective as he comes to understand the place of Haiti in geopolitics as "set apart from a world run by white men ... so racked by poverty and corruption that it becomes their ward" (p. 161). In one of the more telling passages later in the book (p. 213), he reveals that Haitian cultural mores he once thought meaningless, or the product of ignorance, such as women sweeping their dirt porches, have much deeper cultural and spiritual significance:

Their sweeping is a dignified act, an act of caring, an act that says, *I matter and my family matters*. But it is also an act of defiance, defiance against the trials of this land. Sweeping dirt denies the reality of natural disaster and physical deprivation; it ignores political instability and economic hardship; it rejects every calamity grinding down on these poor people. Sweeping dirt asserts that these women, like mothers the world over, will do everything in their power to create a sanctuary for their family. The will to improve our lot in this life is an elemental aspect of being human, even when our lot amounts to no more than a patch of dirt.

In the end, what is remarkable in Fallon's account is how, through the rebuilding of a physical structure, he demonstrates his own growing consciousness in the understanding of a culture positioned as antithetical to his own. If he begins his tale with pronominal opposition ("we" vs. "they"), he ends speaking *with* Haitians, from the children with whom he develops personal relationships that are strong enough for him to then decide to foster their education long-term, to these anonymous sweepers, having achieved a common understanding through common cause: human dignity in the face of a relentless paucity of resources.

Less personal but all the same concerned with how to bring to Haiti and Haitians a more welcome eye from those beyond the island, Quigley's *How Human Rights Can Build Haiti* presents itself as an academic work but is perhaps more comparable to Tracy Kidder's account of Paul Farmer's engagement with Haiti in the 2009 biography, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. It is essentially a presentation of the history and current work of the U.S.-based NGO, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), an offshoot of the Aristide-created Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI) formed in the late 1990s to support the rights of Haitian citizens and to bring an end to the impunity of the elite classes and the military. Helming IJDH are Haitian lawyer Mario Joseph, who works primarily in Haiti, and American lawyer Brian Concannon, who works States-side. Quigley provides biographical notes on both lawyers as well as testimonies from well-known activists who have worked with either or both lawyers in order to show how well respected the team is in human rights advocacy and to make a case for altering "rule of law investments." The idea behind bolstering "rule of law [is] a centuries-spanning consensus among philosophers and statesmen [that] the rule of law is nothing less than the cornerstone of enlightened human existence" (p. 52). Though various economic and social theorists have shown that there is "a strong link between rule of law and measures of economic development" (p. 54), investments in developing-world countries have been funneled into the very institutions that prevent the development of rule of law. "Social change comes from the bottom up, but rule-of-law dollars have been flowing from the top down ... Social movement history shows that reform-minded organizations like BAI and IJDH provide the platforms on which the aggrieved majority acts" (p. 60). Thus, the text focuses on the efficacy of BAI/IJDH in order to make a case for the redistribution of resources to such advocacy groups, starting with the Raboteau case that brought the post-Aristide military junta to justice for the massacre of dozens from the opposition in the historically rebellious Gonaïves area, to the current pending case against the United Nations for the latter's infestation of the Artibonite, Haiti's largest and cleanest tributary, with an imported, deadly strain of cholera.

Quigley details the actions of the BAI/IJDH leaders from the mundane to the heroic, as well as their capacity-building strategies with other activist groups on the ground, especially those of women and labor organizations. For instance, he notes how Joseph assisted postearthquake activists alarmed by the lack of resources going directly to Haitians in most need by helping them "create and distribute five thousand survey forms to grassroots groups, gathering some of the first data to demonstrate what would prove to be a chronic gap between global donations and those suffering in the ruins of Port-au-Prince" (p. 89). With women's organizations, namely KOFIV and FAVILEK, begun by

survivors of rape and sexual abuse, BAI worked to file suits against their perpetrators after the women's groups assisted with crucial medical care and the filing of police reports, which must be done in person. Throughout the book, Quigley demonstrates how BAI lawyers pursue "a strategy that combines litigation with populist pressure," taking as their example successful strategies in other parts of the globe on behalf of the disenfranchised masses, especially in South Africa; he also takes time to provide historical context for the current state of lagging human rights in Haiti from the U.S. Occupation to the Duvalier regime and post-Duvalier decades, though this history is most often told in a zig-zag manner in order to illuminate the terrain of current activism in Haiti. If the text serves to put a spotlight on the tireless efforts of IJDH and BAI, attracting to it new donors and a better understanding of what work remains to be done in order to support the people of Haiti who tirelessly work to empower themselves, it will have done a great service.

Both books are to be recommended for their authors' intent to provide a more balanced view of Haiti for Americans who may know very little about it or have misconceptions as to the reasons behind its poverty and poor human rights record. Both demonstrate—Fallon through personal engagement, and Quigley through observation—that the work of individuals, whether they are trained lawyers or direct victims of criminal or economic negligence, in tandem with others seeking justice for all, can be a game-changer for entire groups of people with little political or economic leverage.

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