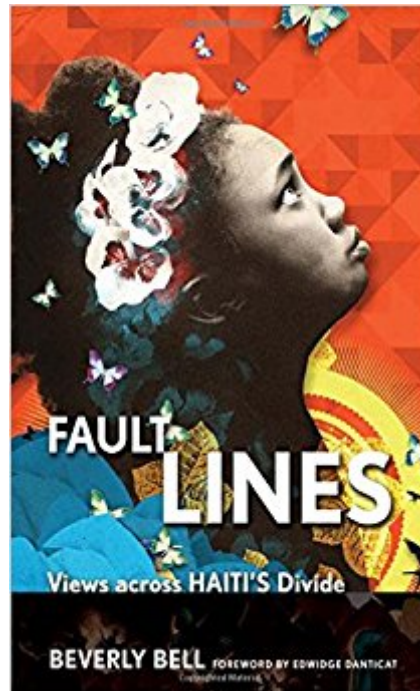




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Fault Lines: Views Across Haiti's Divide



Synopsis

Beverly Bell, an activist and award-winning writer, has dedicated her life to working for democracy, women's rights, and economic justice in Haiti and elsewhere. Since the 7.0 magnitude earthquake of January 12, 2010, that struck the island nation, killing more than a quarter-million people and leaving another two million Haitians homeless, Bell has spent much of her time in Haiti. Her new book, *Fault Lines*, is a searing account of the first year after the earthquake. Bell explores how strong communities and an age-old gift culture have helped Haitians survive in the wake of an unimaginable disaster, one that only compounded the preexisting social and economic distress of their society. The book examines the history that caused such astronomical destruction. It also draws in theories of resistance and social movements to scrutinize grassroots organizing for a more just and equitable country. *Fault Lines* offers rich perspectives rarely seen outside Haiti. Readers accompany the author through displaced persons camps, shantytowns, and rural villages, where they get a view that defies the stereotype of Haiti as a lost nation of victims. Street journals impart the author's intimate knowledge of the country, which spans thirty-five years. *Fault Lines* also combines excerpts of more than one hundred interviews with Haitians, historical and political analysis, and investigative journalism. *Fault Lines* includes twelve photos from the year following the 2010 earthquake. Bell also investigates and critiques U.S. foreign policy, emergency aid, standard development approaches, the role of nongovernmental organizations, and disaster capitalism. Woven through the text are comparisons to the crisis and cultural resistance in Bell's home city of New Orleans, when the levees broke in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Ultimately a tale of hope, *Fault Lines* will give readers a new understanding of daily life, structural challenges, and collective dreams in one of the world's most complex countries.

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Customer Reviews

"When I first went to Haiti in 1990, everyone said I couldn't find a better teacher than Beverly Bell. Now, over twenty years later, the same is still true. Bell's firsthand reporting reveals much to readers about Haiti's history and tragic earthquake, but the real takeaway is about the brighter future that social movements are building there. *Fault Lines* is a must-read for everyone in Haiti or elsewhere who wants to be a part of building that brighter future because, as Bell explains, it is going to take us all."
—Annie Leonard, creator, Story of Stuff

"In this magnificent book, Beverly Bell has captured the soul and spirit of the Haitian people. She brings their experience with the earthquake to life on the page and makes it clear how much energy and vision they have for the rebuilding of their country and how regularly they are ignored, abused, squelched in their fervent desire to be part of the effort. She castigates the government and private interests whose post-earthquake investments in Haiti are in their own interests and not in the interests of the Haitians."
—Ruth Messinger, President, American Jewish World Service

"*Fault Lines* could just as well be called *Hold Strong*. These stories of individual Haitians' resistance and commitment, love, and hard work, compel us all to recommit to social justice and change. Whether our focus is rights at work, community organizing, or democracy, this read while at times heartbreaking is in the end inspirational."
—Larry Cohen, President, Communications Workers of America

"The breadth and scope of observation and analysis Beverly Bell offers in *Fault Lines* is very rare. The length of time she has spent in Haiti, the wide array of experiences she has had there, and the variety of roles she has played both 'on the ground' and from a distance (as a writer and activist in the United States) allow her to provide a level of insight that would be virtually impossible for most observers of Haiti to achieve. The numerous quotations she provides from Haitians themselves are powerful and, again, all too rare in accounts of Haiti."
—Jennie Smith-Parfitt, author of *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti*

"*Fault Lines* is a pathbreaking book. It is very well written and poignant. It is gripping, emotionally rich, and hard to put down. It contains detailed information that will be useful in the classroom and for churches, labor unions, solidarity movements, activists, and aid workers involved in Haiti's recovery from the earthquake. Beverly Bell gives readers an ultimately inspiring account of the disaster from the point of view of the Haitian

people." — Mark Schuller, Northern Illinois University, author of *Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs*

Beverly Bell is associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies and runs the economic and social justice group Other Worlds. Winner of the Outstanding Journalism Award from Women's International Center and the PEN New Mexico Award for Social Justice in Literature, she is the author of *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance* and *Fault Lines: Views across Haiti's Divide*, both from Cornell. Edwidge Danticat is the renowned author of several bestselling books, including *Breath, Eyes, Memory*; *Brother, I'm Dying*; and *Krik? Krak!*

A friend recommended this book when she heard I have a daughter in Haiti and was about to visit her for the third time. I thought I already knew a lot about Haiti's history and current situation. I was wrong. This book was a real eye-opener. The testimonies used by Beverly Bell are so very poignant and real. They really hit home. I feel now that I have a better understanding of the stuff Haiti is really made of. I have only admiration for the fortitude of the Haitian people. I do not see them just as victims any longer. I have great hope that this book will show people who mean well how to truly help Haiti and Haitians have a better future. I highly recommend buying this book and spreading the word. It will change people's views.

Whether you like this book or not will depend on your worldview. If your heart aches for the people of Haiti and all they have suffered, and you yearn for a different future for them but you don't view America as an imperialist bully, capitalism as evil and unable to provide economic relief, or most of those who gave or went to Haiti after the earthquake as dolts at best or more likely nefarious in their motives, then you will almost certainly be frustrated with this book. If you don't view Cuba and the Sandinistas as models, you'll probably want to give up before finishing. And if you think Obama and Hillary Clinton are right wing, or if you believe Aristide was saintly, cared about people and not power rather than view him as the murderer, embezzler, liar and torturer he eventually was — just like so many of his predecessors in the National Palace — then you'll eat this up. The book does have some redeeming qualities, like a handful of wonderful anecdotes about the experiences, post-earthquake of some in Haiti and what they have endured. But like so many writers of all political persuasions, when it comes to providing context or suggesting a path forward, Bell is selective in her material, often telling only half the story or twisting facts. She also has an

annoying tendency to talk down to her readers. And while she rightly notes that Haitians themselves must lead the way to a new Haiti, it is clear Bell, from New Orleans, has already determined what that should look like. This book is worth having in your Haiti library but only as long as you understand it's just one view among many and there are many -- Haitians and others -- who have different views of how Haiti got here, and where she is or should be headed. Very different in some cases.

This book should be required reading for anyone considering a trip to Haiti or any developing nation, for that matter. Actually, Ms. Bell's book should be required reading for high school or college social studies/global studies/economics/political science or anthropology class. Perhaps it should be required reading for everyone. Ms. Bell addresses, with clarity, the now well known fact that billions of dollars in donations received after the January 12th, 2010 earthquake in Haiti have never made it into the hands of the Haitian people. She points out the one cent of every dollar pledged by the US government to Haiti's recovery efforts has actually been given to the Haitian government. Haiti, Across the Divide, documents in a holistic and understandable way how the people of Haiti have had to struggle to survive often because of the obstacles put in their way by US Policies, UN occupying forces, NGOs, and trade agreements that undermine Haiti's ability to produce its own food and which lead to low wages and extremely poor working conditions. Above all else, Ms. Bell highlights the remarkable solidarity and sense of community that is ever present with the Haitian people. This is a compelling story that is told in a language that people who aren't familiar with the complexities of Haiti's history can easily understand. Bravo, Ms Bell!

Haiti comes and goes on the western world's collective radar. The 2010 earthquake brought Haiti's struggle to the attention of the world. Beverly Bell's book, Fault Lines, Views Across Haiti's Divide, tells the post earthquake story in Haiti from the perspective of those that suffered most directly from the catastrophic damage and then suffered the added indignity of a totally misdirected disaster response. As Bell points out, "the disaster aid was an aid disaster." Anyone who cares about what happened in Haiti after the earthquake or is concerned about changing the injustice that exists there on a daily basis should read this book and take to heart the pleas from the Haitian voices that Bell amplifies in her heartfelt accounting of the

post earthquake disaster. And lest people should think that this book bemoans the brutally misdirected earthquake response without offering critical analysis the list of alternative ways to be involved in Haiti, on pg. 109 *À la recherche d'un monde meilleur*, serves as a must read guide for every person who ever considered engaging in humanitarian work. - Paul Miller, Director, The Haiti Justice Alliance

Beverly Bell's "Fault Lines" captures -- like no other book out now -- what the real impacts of the 2010 7.0 magnitude earthquake were on Haiti, a country with an unfortunate history of natural and man-made disasters. But perhaps the best thing about "Fault Lines" is her open challenge to stereotypes about the country, the culture, and its people. Bell's voice and perspective is unique: she has spent much of her life getting to know Haiti, and she has been invested in hearing directly from Haitians; in capturing their stories in their own voice. A definite must-read for anyone willing to accept a different narrative about the country.

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