

A Crime So Monstrous (Face-To-Face with Modern-Day Slavery)
by E. Benjamin Skinner, Free Press (www.freepress.net) (5 quotes selected
by Doug Nichols)

400,000 Child Slaves in Haiti

1. "...slaves are everywhere. Assuming that this is your first trip to Haiti, you won't be able to identify them. But to a lower-middle-class Haitian, their status is 'written in blood.' Some are as young as three or four years old. But they'll always be the small ones, even if they're older. The average fifteen-year-old child slave is 1.5 inches shorter and 40 pounds lighter than the average free fifteen-year-old. They may have burns from cooking for their overseer's family over an open fire; or scars from beatings, sometimes in public, with the martinet, electrical cables, or wood switches. They wear faded, outsized castoffs, and walk barefoot, in sandals or, if they are lucky, oversized shoes....you may see their tiny necks and delicate skulls straining as they tote five-gallon buckets of water on their heads while navigating broken glass and shattered roads... These are the *restavéks*, the 'stay-withs,' as they are euphemistically known in Creole. Forced, unpaid, they work from before dawn until deep night. The violence in their lives is unyielding." (pages 5-6)

2. "Nationwide the number of *restavéks* ballooned from 109,000 in 1992 to 300,000, or one in ten Haitian children, in 1998, to 400,000 in 2002." (page 7)

3. "Out of every 1,000 urban children, 112 will die before ages five; in the countryside, the figure is 149. By comparison, in the neighboring Dominican Republic, it's 35; in war-torn Congo, 108." (page 8)

4. "More than 80 percent of Haiti's schools are private, and urban high schools cost \$385 per year; this sum is beyond the annual income of the typical Haitian, and particularly out of reach for rural parents, most of whose income goes toward food. The average Haitian boy receives 2 years of schooling; the average girl, 1.3. In the countryside, where only a handful of schools exist, most children never attend school at all." (page 8)

5. “And conjured literary irony cannot compare to the cruel irony of Haiti’s history. The French colony of Saint-Domingue was once ‘the pearl of the Antilles,’ the richest colony in the hemisphere, with a GDP greater than that of the United States. Today, Haiti is the poorest nation in the Americas. Haitian blacks, who then comprised over 90 percent of the colony’s population, forged the region’s second free republic by staging, in 1791, the modern world’s first, and only, successful slave revolt. Now Haiti has more slaves than any nation outside of Asia, and more than toiled on the entire island of Hispaniola (including Haiti and the Dominican Republic) when the revolution began.” (page 12)