
Batay La Documentary: Anti-Imperialist Workers Movement in Haiti

Malia Bruker*¹

¹Florida State University – États-Unis

Résumé

Batay La is a short documentary highlighting the workers' rights movement Batay Ouvriye, which organizes all sectors of the working class in Haiti, from "peasants" and poor neighborhoods to international factory zones. Since 1995, the group is committed to worker-led solutions as they confront the Haitian government, Haitian factory owners, and the international brands whose products are fabricated there.

Shot in 2018, the film looks at the efforts of Batay Ouvriye and their affiliate unions-SOTA-BO (Syndicate Ouvriye Tekstile ak Abiman-Batay Ouvriye) a textile union in Port-au-Prince and the Organization for Landless Peasants working across Haiti. While the peasants organize for rights to farm the land, urban factory workers mobilize for an increase in the minimum day wage from 350 Gourdes (US\$4.50) to 1000 Gourdes (US\$12.87) per day. Batay Ouvriye connects these efforts to global and historical fights for economic justice in the face of capitalism. *Batay La* follows the planning for a May Day march, as well as the day to day struggles and small moments that sustain these workers in their fight for systemic changes.

While the movement is the major focus of this film, the documentary also recognizes they ways American policy and other global investment systems have allowed for the exploitation of people who are most in need. The US has been heavily involved in Haiti throughout the nation's history, beginning with the US attempt to suppress the Haitian slave revolution, to current trade deals that include duty-free access.

Many consider Haiti a place of destitution, and while these workers are some of the worst paid in the world, their struggle is also inspiring. The magnitude of Haiti's history as the only nation to successfully revolt against the bonds of slavery is a source of great pride and guides Haitians as they fight against exploitation. They have survived because of their tenacity and their understanding of the importance of solidarity, which can inspire debates concerning the future of political economy as we face global challenges. *Batay La* aims not only to show the true costs of our consumer culture of cheap products, but also to highlight a path for change through solidarity with those most affected by globalized capitalism. The IIPPE conference would be the first academic presentation of *Batay La*.

Director Malia Bruker is a filmmaker, media artist, and Assistant Professor of Digital Media Production at Florida State University. Working primarily in the realm of documentary, Bruker's films skirt the boundaries of non-fiction, drawing from artists' moving image, dance film, and other experimental genres. www.maliabruker.com.

Mots-Clés: film, documentary, Haiti, solidarity, labor movement, international

*Intervenant