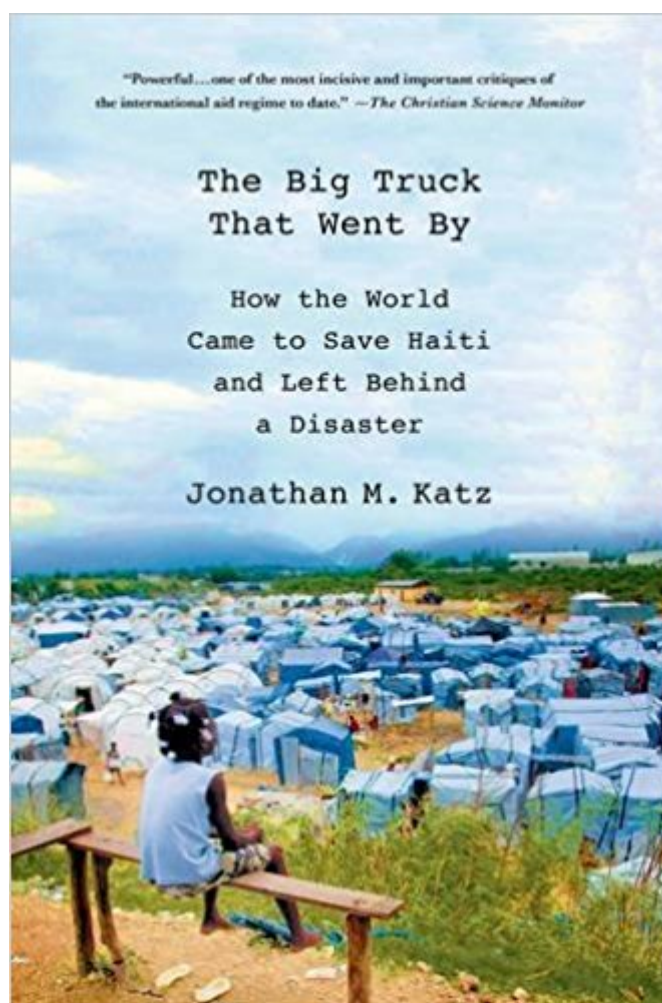


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# The Big Truck That Went By: How The World Came To Save Haiti And Left Behind A Disaster



## Synopsis

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHOR Winner, Overseas Press Club of America Cornelius Ryan Award Winner, Washington Office on Latin America/Duke Human Rights Book Award Winner, J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award Finalist, PEN/John Kenneth Galbraith Award for Nonfiction Finalist, J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize Finalist, New York Public Library Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism One of the best books of the year according to , Slate, The Christian Science Monitor & Kirkus Reviews, and a Barnes & Noble 'Discover Great New Writers' Book Published to glowing reviews and awards, The Big Truck That Went By is a crucial, timely look at a signal failure of international aid. Jonathan M. Katz was the only full-time American news correspondent in Haiti on January 12, 2010, when the deadliest earthquake in the history of the Western Hemisphere struck the island nation. In this visceral first-hand account, Katz takes readers inside the terror of that day, the devastation visited on ordinary Haitians, and through the monumental--yet misbegotten--rescue effort that followed. More than half of American adults gave money for Haiti, part of a global response totaling \$16.3 billion in pledges. But four years later the effort has foundered. Its most important promises--to rebuild safer cities, alleviate severe poverty, and strengthen Haiti to face future disasters--remain unfulfilled. How did so much generosity amount to so little? What went wrong? In what a Miami Herald Op-Ed called "the most important written work to emerge from the rubble," Katz follows the money to uncover startling truths about how good intentions go wrong, and what can be done to make aid "smarter." Reporting alongside Bill Clinton, Wyclef Jean, Sean Penn, and Haiti's leaders and people, Katz creates a complex, darkly funny, and unexpected portrait of one of the world's most fascinating countries. The Big Truck That Went By is not only a definitive account of Haiti's earthquake, but of the world we live in today.

## Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin; Reprint edition (April 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1137278978

ISBN-13: 978-1137278975

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 23.5 x 236 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 149 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #24,406 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in [Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Haiti](#) #10 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Caribbean & Latin American](#) #19 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Disaster Relief](#)

## Customer Reviews

“One of the Best Books of 2013” [Slate](#) “One of the Best Nonfiction Books of 2013” [Kirkus Reviews](#) “One of the 15 Best Nonfiction Books of 2013” [The Christian Science Monitor](#) “One of the 20 Best Nonfiction Books of 2013” [.com](#) “Katz’s blow-by-blow reportage of the quake and its immediate aftermath is riveting. The book’s deeper structure offers a concise and accurate history of Haiti from its revolutionary origins to the present day, and a clear and cogent analysis of how and why the massive, expensive effort to rebuild the country after the quake has, for the most part, failed| required reading for anyone who wants to understand Haiti.” [The Nation](#) “Katz eloquently blends personal anecdotes and Haitian history with in-depth reportage to show how one catastrophe led to so many more, and how, three years later, Haiti has barely moved forward| One hopes that the policymakers involved in helping Haiti read this book and take it to heart.” [Associated Press](#) “Gripping| forces a confrontation with the hubris and double standards of international aid...a critique made more powerful by the perspective it includes. Katz combines the knowledge of Haiti he built over 3-1/2 years working there with his understanding of outsiders’ clichés about poor, impoverished countries.” [The Christian Science Monitor](#) “Katz offers a frank insider’s guide to Haiti.” [The Financial Times](#) “Some of the scenes in Katz’s book rival anything that you would find in Graham Greene’s classic 1966 novel about Haiti, ‘The Comedians.’” [The Seattle Times](#) “Compelling ...damning ...wry...This is a book without heroes -- not Bill Clinton, the United Nations special envoy to Haiti; not Sean Penn, the Hollywood star who runs a huge camp there; not René Prival, the reclusive president; and certainly not the international community and its competing, self-aggrandising NGOs, which got so much so wrong.” [Times of London](#) “Katz succeeds in transporting the reader straight into the midst of the events he describes so eloquently, without attempting to gloss over the harshness of everyday life in Haiti, both before and after the earthquake. He provides excellent background information on the country and its society, and his arguments are balanced and nuanced.” [The Boston Globe](#) “A heartbreaking book.”

“A top-notch account of Haiti’s recent history, including the January 2010 earthquake, from the only American reporter stationed in the country at the time”

“An eye-opening, trailblazing exposé.”

Kirkus Reviews (starred) “Wise, deeply reported”

both a primer on how and why reconstructions fail, and an indictment of the benign paternalism that motivates donors, developers, and other do-gooders

a stark, compelling first-person account.

Justin Peters, Columbia Journalism Review “Beautifully-written, brave, and riveting, *The Big Truck That Went By* tells the devastating story of the post-earthquake reconstruction effort in Haiti. Weaving together his personal experiences with the knowledge gained from his intensive investigative report, Katz offers us an autopsy of a global relief effort gone wrong. But the book also offers us a moving portrait of the courage, humor, and vision of the Haitians he worked with, offering a glimpse of the possibilities for a different future. Anyone seeking to understand Haiti’s current situation, as well as the broader impasses of our current model of aid, should read this book.”

Laurent Dubois, author of *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* “With lucidity and great humanity, Jonathan Katz has written THE book on Haiti’s devastating earthquake and its bungled reconstruction. For anyone who wants to know why the “international community” can’t fix anything anymore, but who still hope to find solutions to global problems, this book is a must-read.”

Jon Lee Anderson, bestselling author of *Che Guevara: a Revolutionary Life* “A brilliant piece of writing”

the best description of living through the Haiti quake I’ve read anywhere.

Jonathan Alter “Katz is a great storyteller who enmeshes the reader in a lively web of history, incident, and examples of humanity pushing through disaster, hard luck, iniquity, and triumph to muck it up all over again.”

The judges of the J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award “The horror of the catastrophic Haitian earthquake of 2010, the adrenaline rush of being a reporter in the middle of dramatic events, the frustration of watching local politicians and poorly informed outsiders combine to paralyze the recovery effort, and the joy of finding love in the midst of the ruins: it’s all here. Katz, the only American journalist on the scene when the earthquake struck, gives us unique insights into the plight of a close neighbor whose fate is vitally connected to our own.”

Jeremy Popkin, author of *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* “Jonathan M. Katz has a passion for the truth. He has shown respect for the people of Haiti by seeking that truth throughout the earthquake and the aftermath... This is an important book, and a page-turner!”

Mark Doyle, BBC correspondent “With every page of Jonathan Katz’s book I cringed, grr’ed and couldn’t wait to turn for the next revelation. Hubris, America! Thought we could

wave a magic wand and save Haiti? Non, merci. Bravo to Katz for telling the real story.

— Laurie Garrett, author of *I Heard the Sirens Scream* — “Jonathan Katz’s strength is his unique combination of heart, history and solid reporting, brilliantly married in *The Big Truck That Went By*. Readers experience the country through his personal roadmap, one that is both sympathetic and yet sharply critical of all that could have gone right, but didn’t.

— Kathie Klarreich, author of *Madame Dread: A tale of Love, Vodou and Civil Strife in Haiti* — “From the exploits of international stars like Sean Penn and native son Wyclef Jean of the Fugees, to the muddled planning that can result in unmitigated disasters like the cholera outbreak caused by insufficiently vaccinated Nepalese peacekeepers, Katz paints a thoroughly researched picture of (mostly) good intentions gone astray, leaving readers suspended somewhere between fragile hope and outright fury.

— The Montreal Gazette — “Excellent will reward any sensitive, curious reader.

— The Dallas Morning News — “On Jan. 12, AP correspondent Jonathan Katz was about to leave Haiti after two years. He survived through sheer luck, camped out in the courtyard of an intact hotel, and stayed to record the impact of the disaster. His new book *The Big Truck That Went By* is the single most comprehensive and understandable account of what happened, and why.

— The Tyee — “Katz makes an empathic, likable guide through this grim catalog of how help can harm. His agile, eye-opening firsthand account, engaging persona and sharp criticisms may help reform future relief efforts.

— The Cleveland Plain Dealer — “[Katz’s] on-the-ground experience makes for a rich account.

— The San Francisco Chronicle — “Katz brings an on-the-ground flavor to his depiction of events that is more vivid than those in the more ponderous tomes published in the wake of the calamity. His minute dissection of the failure of most of the promised aid and the misdirection of much of what did arrive is a valuable contribution to understanding how the international community should respond to such crises in the future.

— The Miami Herald — “Katz presents an engaging first-person account of the quake and the first year of the international response that followed.

— Reason magazine — “Offers a compelling account that is alternately comic and tragic.

— The Louisville Courier-Journal — “Katz was the only American reporter on the ground when the devastating earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. Debunks the assumption that a disaster leads to social disintegration or rioting and observes how media sensationalism prompted unwise giving.

— Publishers Weekly — “A captivating look at Haiti’s history, people and politics ... a great primer on the challenges of reporting the news in a disaster zone.

— June Thomas, *Slate* book

critic

“The despair and love of Haiti in one earthquake story.”

The New York Times Magazine

“Essential... Katz exposes the machinations behind the international reconstruction effort, weaving in a firsthand account of the day of the disaster.”

Los Angeles Review of Books

“Ultimately, Katz’s book is both an eloquent and heartbreaking reminder that it takes much more than good intentions to end a humanitarian crisis.”

The Financialist

“[Katz] is able somehow to create this story that has intense drama even when there’s a press conference with Bill Clinton and some rich donors about how to get money to Haiti ... It’s an amazing story of disaster and survival, and then government and bureaucracy, that I’m having trouble thinking of a comparison to ... Just buy it and talk about it with people.”

David Weigel, Slate

“Julian Fantino, Canada’s minister in charge of the Canadian International Development Agency, recently wondered why Haiti, with so many unemployed, is covered in garbage--despite all the aid money that has poured into the country since its devastating 2010 earthquake. He would probably learn a lot from this book.”

Michael Petrou, Maclean’s

“The best book yet on the earthquake and its on-the-ground consequences.”

Haiti Support Group

“A vivid and disturbing account of how international aid donors, the United Nations and celebrity do-gooders tripped over themselves to help [after the Haitian earthquake] but ended up doing more harm than good.”

Times Literary Supplement

Jonathan M. Katz was the Associated Press correspondent in Haiti from 2007 to 2011. The only full-time U.S. news reporter there during the quake, he later broke the story that United Nations soldiers likely caused a post-quake cholera epidemic that killed thousands. Katz has reported from more than a dozen countries and territories. In 2011, he was awarded the Pew Medill Medal for Courage in Journalism.

I respectfully disagree with some of the reviewers here who say the book becomes boring/text book-ish halfway through. This book to me was a true page-turner. I was mesmerized reading about Haiti’s background & had no idea how bad it was -- once you read it you’ll think of Haiti as the country that simply can’t catch a break. The author provides really detailed, vivid descriptions of what he saw and experienced during and after the quake, so much so that I’ve since changed my views on humanitarian aid relief. The journalist/author nails it and delivers a riveting picture of the upheavals Haiti can’t seem to shake.

If you want a first hand experience, I'd say visit Haiti. However, if this isn't possible I'd suggest reading this book. It took me a while to read it. Not because it's too long, rather, it pulls at the depth of your heart. Demanding you to come out of your American fog or zonbusiness and realize our role in history. Remember, history is written by winners but what about the backs of those who made that success possible. Who declares the cries of those who said, "enough?!"

This is an excellent book that tells the story of Haiti after the earthquake, the feel good pledges and the CNN coverage. It shows the complexity of trying to help in countries with so few resources and functioning institutions, particularly given the weaknesses of the international aid system and the geopolitics that tend to pull poor countries like Haiti in multiple directions.

I chose to give this book 5 stars because the author really did his job. Not only was he in Haiti before the earthquake, he was in it, stayed after & reported during the entire time. He really helps us to understand all the political, socio-economic, & cultural nuisances that helped to shape Haiti into what it is today & how it got there. I really appreciated this book because I have personally experienced a natural disaster (Hurricane Katrina) & I found myself constantly having to explain to outsiders why things went the way they did. There is always so much more than meets the eye when dealing with disasters that many people, unless they are from that place cannot understand. This book was a brutal look at the way Haiti's "help" went the way it did. Unfortunately for the innocent population, they are again paying for the mistakes & misguided direction of foreigners.

I love a true story. And this story is sad but true. I love the descriptions in this book and how he manages to capture the essence of Haiti. The beginning offers a historical and political background which is quite insightful. This book cannot be used to determine responses for other natural disasters, I fear, for the situation in Haiti seemed to be unique in many ways. I spent over 2 years based in Haiti - before, during and after the earthquake. I met Jonathan Katz on several occasions before the earthquake, and we spoke about his reporting in Haiti so far and his past experience reporting in the Middle East, where I had also previously worked. We never met after. He said many things in this book that I felt when I was there and never found the way to put it into words. There was a line about what it is like to have loved Haiti, that by loving Haiti you are left bruised... The sorrow that I had felt while reading it choked up in my throat and came out as I cry when I read that. So often people ask me about Haiti - what it was like, what the relief efforts have accomplished, what it is like now. Now I just tell them to read this book if they truly want to know.

The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster by Jonathan M. Katz--an AP reporter stationed in Haiti from 2007-2012--describes the January 12, 2010, earthquake and its political, economic, and health consequences. The book is fast-paced, informative, shocking, and sobering. Katz says in the introduction that he set out to write a book that answered two questions: How did a serious but not necessarily devastating earthquake turn out to be one of the worst natural disasters in the Western Hemisphere? Why after three years and all the money and help sent is Haiti such a mess? Katz begins with a vivid account of the actual earthquake--as he and his neighbors experienced it--and then describes in detail the days, months, and years after it--weaving in explanations of Haitian history, politics and political realities, culture and economics, various approaches to help Haiti (including the 2009 Collier Report and the work of a wide range of NGOs). The book ends with a complicated but thorough and entertaining explanation of the 2010-11 Haitian Presidential election and--most chilling--the truth about the 2011 cholera epidemic, a truth that the UN still does not own up to.

I enjoyed this book because it exposed the waste and cover-up that took place when the world came to save Haiti. The writer did a nice job showing that less money could have helped far more in the hands of the Haitian government, then goes on to explain why Haiti's "saviors" did all they could to keep that from happening. Rather than pat everyone on the back, he tells the story from the Haitian point of view, as he just happened to be there the day the earthquake hit. This enabled him to see first hand the impact from day one, and gave him the background knowledge to assess the disaster they left behind.

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