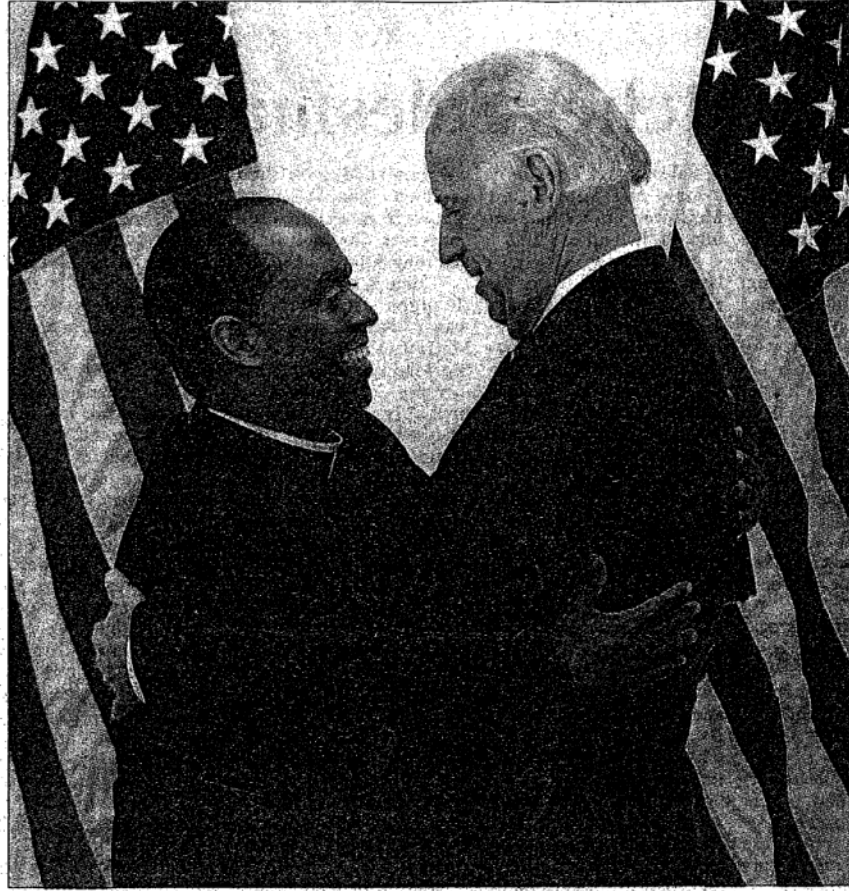


HAITI AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE



C.W. GRIFFIN/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**A RETURN TO MIAMI:** Vice President Joe Biden is greeted by the Rev. Reginald Jean-Mary, of Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church, at the Little Haiti Cultural Center.

# BIDEN'S PLEDGE: AID WON'T STOP

Vice President Joe Biden met with South Florida's Haitian community, restating the administration's commitment to the quake-struck nation.

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**  
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Vice President Joe Biden was all ears on a visit Monday to Little Haiti, reiterating the Obama administration's commitment to Haiti and promising to follow up on concerns by Haitian-Americans who want to be involved in their homeland's rebirth following the devastating earthquake

the people of Haiti, we are going to work with the diaspora, we are going to work with all of you," Biden said, telling two dozen Haitian-Americans that the administration was in it for the long haul.

Biden first met with South Florida's Haitian community days after a Jan. 12 earthquake struck Haiti. He returned Monday as promised, walking

inside the Little Haiti Cultural Center, greeting each of the 26 in attendance as if they were old friends; bear hugs for the Rev. Jean-Mary of Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church, kisses on each cheek for singer Farah Juste and firm handshakes for the men.

Last week, the United States was among the largest donors

# U.S. will keep helping, Biden vows

\*BIDEN, FROM 1B

for Haiti's reconstruction, pledging \$1.15 billion over the next 18 months during an international donors conference at the United Nations. Even before the earthquake, the United States was Haiti's largest donor.

In total, foreign aid donors pledged nearly \$5.3 billion to jump-start Haiti's rebuilding efforts, and \$9.9 billion for the next decade.

The amounts far exceeded what Haitian officials thought they would get, but it was still less than what Haitian government officials say their quake-ravaged country will need to rebuild.

The government estimates that Haiti will need \$11.5 billion for the next 18 months, and \$34.4 billion over the next decade to build everything from hospitals to schools, to government ministries.

"We have no reduced commitment. The president continues to remain committed to rebuilding Haiti, and rebuilding it better," Biden said. "We made a promise and it is a promise just not to pick up the rubble but also to try and get Haiti on its feet, and quite frankly on their feet in a way they haven't been for some time."

Among those joining Biden were several elected officials, some of whom were singled-out by the vice president: North Miami Mayor Andre



C.W. GRIFFIN/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**WARM RECEPTION:** Vice President Joe Biden is met, from right, Marleine Bastien, Rasha Cameau and Rudolph Moise at Little Haiti Cultural Center.

Pierre; City of Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado, North Miami Beach Councilman Philippe Derose, and Florida State Rep. Ronald Brise. The group also included presidents of groups representing Haitian lawyers and doctors.

At the top of activists' lists is the fate of an estimated 55,000 visa petitions the U.S. government has approved on behalf of Haitians to join their families in the United States.

Haitian community activists say the administration can admit the Haitians under hardship exceptions without congressional approval.

"The families are here in the United States, they are waiting for them to come in and I think the government understands they should expedite those visas as quickly as possible," Pierre said. "The vice president said they are looking into it, which was very important for me."

Pierre and others also raised issue with the detention of dozens of Haitians who were being held by U.S. immigration authorities after entering the country illegally right after the earthquake aboard U.S. military flights. About three dozen

were released last week but only after agreeing to a final order of deportation.

Brise and others shared their concerns about the lack of a voting seat for the diaspora on the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission that will guide Haiti's rebuilding. Haitians abroad sent an estimated \$2 billion to Haiti — as Biden pointed out, 30 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

"This would be one of the defining moments for the community," he said.

As for Biden's visit, Brise said: "The reiteration of the commitment is important."