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News

LGBT groups join Haiti earthquake relief effort

by Michael K. Lavers  
National News Editor  
Monday Jan 18, 2010



The San Francisco-based Rainbow World Fund established its Haiti Earthquake Relief Campaign with a \$50,000.

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The San Francisco-based [Rainbow World Fund](#) is among the myriad of organizations around the world that continue to raise money and support the Haiti earthquake relief effort.

The RWF, which has funded numerous projects to improve nutrition and develop access to safe drinking water in the impoverished Caribbean country since 2004, established its Haiti Earthquake Relief Campaign with a \$50,000 donation. The organization has also partnered with CARE, which has provided food, potable water, tarps, blankets, medicine and other items to those

who survived the Jan. 12 earthquake.

"This is the time to help," Jeff Cotter, the fund's executive director, said.

Indeed, Haitian government officials estimate the 7.0 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas last Tuesday killed up to an estimated 200,000 people and left millions more homeless.

Sources in the neighboring Dominican Republic told EDGE via Twitter and e-mail they felt the earthquake, but it did not cause any damage. Cha, a large gay club along Santo Domingo's oceanfront, is among the myriad of Dominican businesses that have raised money and solicited donations of clothes, medicine and other goods to help the victims. And the country remains a staging area for international relief organizations responding to the disaster.

"The truth is that all we can do is pray for them," one gay Santo Domingo resident told EDGE in an e-mail as he discussed the post-earthquake humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold in Haiti.

Back in the United States, other gay and HIV/AIDS organizations have announced their own efforts.

Housing Works announced late last week it has partnered with a coalition of Haitian HIV/AIDS service organizations to assist earthquake survivors--it's president and chief executive officer Charles King continues to blog from Haiti where he and one of the group's doctors are on the [ground](#). Dominican-born promoter Alberto Fermin raised hundreds of dollars at his weekly party last night in Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood. And others around the country have done the same.

"I thought by doing this... we can help the victims of the Haitian earthquake," Fermin said.

Members of the RWF were scheduled to travel to Haiti in September, but Cotter said it remains unclear if his team will make the trip. He remains optimistic, however, the international community's massive response will help the devastated country get back on its feet.

"Even though what we're seeing is really tragic, the situation is not hopeless," Cotter said. "Everything [we] can do will make a huge difference in Haiti's recovery."

*Michael K. Lavers has written for the Advocate, the Fire Island News, the Village Voice, WNYC and other media outlets. He has also provided commentary on LGBT and other issues to the BBC and the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC. He blogs at Boy in Bushwick [www.boyinbushwick.blogspot.com]*

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