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**ONLINE BOOK REVIEW**

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**Laurie Kroshus Medina***Michigan State University****Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs***

Mark Schuller (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012)

*Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs* engages both state and non-state forms of global governance and their relationships. Schuller's ethnography of aid begins with a compelling comparison of two Haitian women's NGOs focused on HIV/AIDS education and prevention. The comparison revolves around differences in participation in the programming of the two NGOs and differences in their degree of autonomy in planning and implementing interventions. These two elements are connected: the NGO that can exercise greater autonomy from donors in its actions is also better able to integrate its target population into its planning processes. The NGO *Fanm Tet Ansanm* (Women United) interacts with its constituents in iterative processes of service provision and brainstorming regarding additional needs that require redress. The other NGO, *Sove Lavi* (Saving Lives), operates in a more top-down fashion. Though it carries out its activities in conjunction with Community Action Councils that represent the communities targeted by its programming, the priorities and ideas articulated by these Community Action Councils do not elicit a response from the NGO. To what should scholars attribute these differences, Schuller asks?

The answer he provides – and the real strength of the ethnography – emerges from the way Schuller pushes his analysis beyond the local NGOs, following the money trail to the foreign donors that fund these Haitian organizations. Schuller is thus able to demonstrate how the donors' modes of operation and agendas shape, and indeed, mostly constrain, the options available to the NGOs they fund. *Fanm Tet Ansanm* receives funding from multiple donors, primarily European NGOs. Because of its diverse portfolio of funders, *Fanm Tet Ansanm* leaders are able to refuse some of the objectives and techniques proposed by individual donors, if they believe these approaches will not work in Haiti. NGO personnel suggest that the NGO donors recognize and respect their on-the-ground expertise. By contrast, *Sove Lavi* is dependent on funding from only two public development agencies, including USAID. Its dependence on a narrower funding base makes *Sove Lavi* more vulnerable to loss of resources and more pliable in the face of changing USAID priorities and policies.

To demonstrate this vulnerability, Schuller traces the history of rhetoric and conflict surrounding development aid in the United States from the Cold War period, when expenditures on development aid were justified in terms of combating communism, to the post-Cold War era, when USAID professionals sought to justify international development aid through the imposition of performance- or results-based metrics, mobilizing neoliberal policy rhetorics to implement new requirements for assessment. These requirements severely limited the autonomy of Haitian NGOs to plan programming; they also made participation in planning by target populations largely irrelevant: goals and targets were set by USAID, and funds were disbursed only when targets were met.

However, Schuller does not stop with analysis of the changing ideology of aid; he goes even further to document the ways USAID programming is shaped by US political processes. Located within the Department of State but dependent on funding from Congress, USAID policies reflect partisan political strategies. USAID policies serve as a battleground for conflicts between Democrats and Republicans, especially if the legislative and executive branches of government are controlled by competing parties.

The strength of this ethnography derives from its analysis of the links among national and transnational political projects in donor countries of the global North, the policies imposed by Northern aid agencies, and the planning and implementation of programming by NGOs in the global south. Both planning programs and implementing them are increasingly accomplished with little input from the groups targeted by this programming. Schuller also explores how these trends constrain the capacity of the Haitian state itself to govern Haiti. Significantly, by identifying broad ideological patterns in US aid policy and tracing the byzantine political competition that shaped USAID policies regarding aid to Haiti, Schuller enables readers to understand how major trends in US aid policy have been shaped, without reducing US policy to these trends.

The conclusion to the ethnography places the study in relation to the bodies of theory on which Schuller's analysis draws. He briefly summarizes political economy and Foucauldian approaches, suggesting that each approach alone is limited by blind spots that can be rectified by recourse to the other. However, this argument received relatively little attention, and exactly how Schuller proposes to integrate these approaches remains somewhat unclear. He also engages the structure-agency debate, drawing attention to both dimensions of the case studies he presents. While he asserts that scholars must account for the structures of inequality that generate and continually reproduce poverty, he also calls for scholars to recognize the agency embodied in the good intentions held by many of the personnel caught within these interconnected institutions. Taking this tack to its logical conclusion, for readers who seek to move beyond critique to suggestions for change, Schuller also presents a number of actions that could enable aid funding to actually contribute to

improving the lives of impoverished groups in the global South in ways that target populations themselves would value.

*Killing with Kindness* offers both engaging ethnographic examples and extensive analysis of the complex network of governmental and non-governmental institutions through which Haiti and Haitians are ruled. Scholars of development, humanitarian assistance, NGOs, and transnational forms of government will find this work valuable as a model for expanding analysis of these institutions and processes. Schuller's clear language and illustrative ethnographic examples will also make this book readily accessible to advanced undergraduate students.