



# Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance

*Beverly Bell*

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Haiti, long noted for poverty and repression, has a powerful and too-often-overlooked history of resistance. Women in Haiti have played a large role in changing the balance of political and social power, even as they have endured rampant and devastating state-sponsored violence, including torture, rape, abuse, illegal arrest, disappearance, and assassination.

In *Walking on Fire*, Beverly Bell, an activist and an expert on Haitian social movements, brings together thirty-eight oral histories from a diverse group of Haitian women. The interviewees include, for example, a former prime minister, an illiterate poet, a leading feminist theologian, and a vodou dancer. Defying victim status despite gender- and state-based repression, they tell how Haiti's poor and dispossessed women have fought for their personal and collective survival.

The women's powerfully moving accounts of horror and heroism can best be characterized by the Creole word *istwa*, which means both "story" and "history." They combine theory with case studies concerning resistance, gender, and alternative models of power. Photographs of the women who have lived through Haiti's recent past accompany their words to further personalize the interviews in *Walking on Fire*.

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