

USAID, America's Helping Hand, Dies at 64, Letter from Gary Newton to the Editor of *Portland Press Herald*, a Maine newspaper, 14 Feb 2025

It can take an obituary to get to know someone — too late. For instance, I knew Charlton Heston as a movie Moses and the NRA's "cold, dead hand" guy. Then he dies, I read his obit and learn he campaigned for Adlai Stevenson and stood with MLK on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963.

Most Americans don't know the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Some may have seen its "helping hand" logo when a famine is in the news and USAID-supplied bags of wheat, marked with the logo, appear briefly on our screens.

So, now USAID is dead, and people are reading its obit, many learning for the first time about the good work done during its 64 years. It took the callous elimination of USAID, the mindless amputation of America's helping hand, to get to know the agency and the value of foreign aid. And the cause of USAID's death was what? Myopia?

I was in Washington, D.C., on 9/11. I thought then, and still think, that the only way to prevent another 9/11, and protect the long-term security and prosperity of our beloved homeland, is for America to be an exemplary global citizen, for us to maintain mutually respectful relationships with as many countries as possible, and for us to win hearts and minds with our decency and generosity. That was USAID.

Perhaps the public's postmortem appreciation of USAID will lead to a resurrection of America's helping hand. Let us hope.

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