



# The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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## **From Renate's Desk:**

A recap of my trip to Haiti at the end of January:

If you assume that it is easy to plan a trip to Haiti, you are mistaken. None of the international airlines fly to Haiti, and there are only two Haitian airlines that make the trip from Miami to Cap Haitian. One of these airlines also goes directly to Les Cayes. To make reservations is another issue. The websites are not very user friendly and not always accurate. When I reserved a flight from Cap Haitian to Jérémie, I received confirmation, and my account was charged, but that flight no longer existed.

Nonetheless, all these issues are forgotten when I arrived in Haiti, and I was reminded of the beauty of this country and its people. The hospitality I experience every time I enter the country is overwhelming. Immediately after my arrival in Les Cayes, my friends took me out to a Haitian meal, so scrumptious and tasty. They welcomed me into their home as if I was a regular guest. It was heartwarming. I got to visit the University of the Grand'Anse which is still functioning well, and I spent some time with the management students. I am always moved by the intelligence and the drive and motivation the students exhibit. We also started our Training of Trainers with nurses for them to be able to work with traditional birth attendants. The technology worked well, and we could continue on zoom even though I had returned to Chicago.

Did I feel safe while traveling from Cap Haitian to Les Cayes? Yes, I did. But of course, I avoided all the major trouble spots, especially Port au Prince and the surrounding areas.

One in 10 Haitians has been displaced, which has led to huge overcrowding in cities like Cap Haitian. Violence in places infected by gangs has increased, especially sexual violence. Sexual assaults have increased by 1,000 percent. Kidnapping is again on the rise. While areas like Jeremie are relatively peaceful, all Haitians are suffering from trauma, because everybody has family or friends affected by the violence in Port au Prince and other areas. This will have an impact for generations to come. In addition, Haiti has no real government since the time for the Transitional Council has come to end. There is one person in charge, a former member of the transitional council, chosen by the United States. Elections are supposed to happen this year, but almost all Haitians express doubt that it can happen.

What can you do? What Haitians need is not pity or praise, but action: accountability from Haitian leaders, concrete security measures, protection for health workers and civilians, and international engagement that prioritizes people over politics. It is important to keep Haiti in the news cycle and contribute to what you can by supporting groups like Haitian Connection. With internet connection if you would like to teach a course or seminar at one of the universities that we are connected to, contact us. If you are part of a sewing group and can sew re-usable sanitary napkins, that would help our period poverty project. A Haitian proverb says, "Many hands lighten the load". Also, the University of the Grand'Anse is looking for a school bus. If you have any leads, again contact us.

Haitians are resilient, lets stand with them in solidarity.

Renate

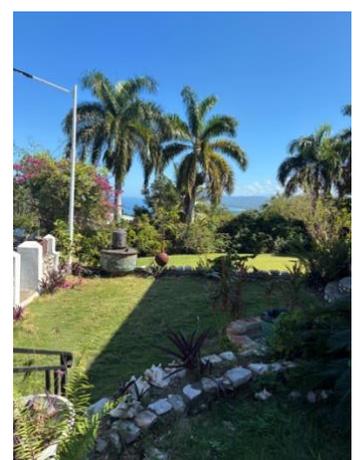
## Welcome to Jérémie



## Spending Time with Dear Friends



## Out and About in Jérémie

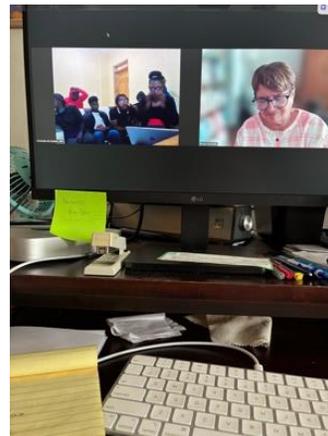


## Partnership Between Trained Nurses and Traditional Birth Attendants



In many remote rural areas of Haiti, the only healthcare access for pregnant women are the traditional birth attendants - midwives. A hospital is almost impossible to reach, and very few clinics exist in these isolated areas. The traditional midwives have long asked for more training and for more supplies. Haitian Connection has listened to them and recruited 4 nurses to train as trainers for the midwives. This training took place remotely and involved 3 nurses from the Jérémie area and one nurse from Cap Haitian. The goal was to strengthen the skills of

traditional birth attendants (matrones) in safe delivery, maternal, and newborn care, as well as discussion of family planning, nutrition, and prenatal and antenatal care. We met every evening for 2 hours and used a participatory approach of instruction. The nurses all participated actively and contributed greatly to the success of the course. This training is the first stage of this endeavor, to be followed by the actual face to face interaction with the traditional birth attendants. Look for updates on this project in the next newsletter.



## Mental Health Education in Rural Haiti

Our community mental health agents do not let an opportunity pass to educate people in the rural areas on issues regarding mental health and stress reduction. About 50 people participated in this seminar. The presentation was welcome, with the request to do it again in a couple of weeks. The participants actively engaged with the presenters, asking questions, and commenting on how they need this kind of training,



because people are suffering because of the state of the country, Hurricane Melissa which created a lot of damage, and violence within families, violence verbal and physical violence. Our mental Health program is filling a gap because mental health services do not really exist in the rural areas of Haiti, and while Jérémie is relatively peaceful every Haitian is traumatized by what is going on in their country.

## Contest Challenges UNOGA Students



At the beginning of this year Haitian Connection challenged the management students at UNOGA to come up with a proposal of a project that could realistically be implemented. The best proposal would receive a monetary prize.

The students submitted their proposals, and we were pleased with the quality of the submissions. Therefore, it was difficult to decide which one was the best. We focused on the one project that could begin immediately and did not need much equipment. But each student who entered the contest received a small monetary compensation.

The projects submitted were as follows:

**Goût lakay** – *Taste of home: Natural Spices: Processing natural spices for local consumption and reducing waste. Introducing new **Cacao Products**, cocoa powder for hot chocolate, chocolate bars and cacao butter.*

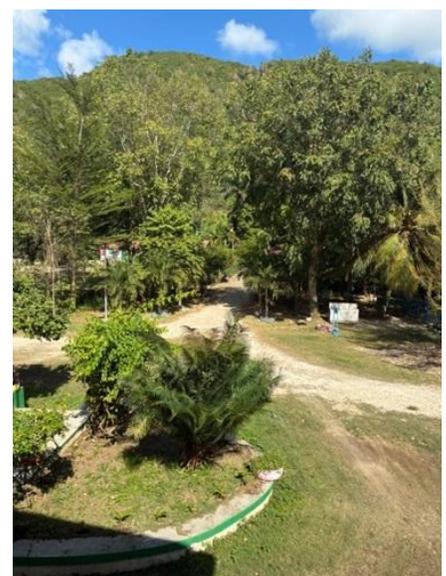
**Grenadye** - *Local Production of Juices, vines, and dried fruit.*

**Sustainable and Organic Gardening:** *Vegetables, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers*

*Establish a small income-generating activity through the production and sale of pâtés at the university.*

During my recent visit at UNOGA all the 4<sup>th</sup> year management students assembled, and we discussed the merits of each project; then they received their prizes, certificates were also awarded. Academic personnel was also in attendance. It was a joy for me to visit the university and I am deeply grateful that it is still functioning very well.

*(The university is looking for a used school bus, if anyone of our readers has an idea, please contact us.)*



## New Projects Address Period Poverty



Period poverty is a major and often overlooked problem in Haiti, particularly affecting young girls and women in economically vulnerable situations. Lack of access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, and menstrual health education leads to absences from school, work, and other activities, increased health risks, and an attack on the dignity of those affected. The use of unhygienic solutions and social stigma further exacerbate this situation, perpetuating the problem in silence and exclusion.

Aware of this reality, Haitian Connection seeks a sustainable and inclusive approach based on social entrepreneurship, aiming to make menstrual products accessible at a lower cost, to provide education to schools and churches, and to encourage sustainable innovation. We seek not only to meet immediate needs, but also to create a long-term social, economic, and health impact in the Fondwa area. To that end Haitian Connection is working with 4th year management students at the University of Fondwa to develop a plan, and have taken the first steps toward implementation.

They write: “Often young women cannot afford the expensive imported disposable pads. In Haiti, this creates a systemic barrier; girls aged 12-24 miss 4-5 days of school per cycle (20-25 days/year), increasing school dropout rates in rural areas (60% of girls live in poverty). It is proposed to establish a production and sales unit for menstrual hygiene products in Fondwa, to locally manufacture reusable sanitary pads (local cotton), cotton underwear, complete kits (natural soaps, washable wipes, educational guides), and educational accessories, while also selling affordable imported or locally produced disposable sanitary pads to meet immediate needs.”



A friend of ours here in the US has sent us models on how to manufacture disposable pads, and we will make sure that we pass this information on to our Haitian collaborators. If you are as excited as we are about this project and would like to offer financial support, see the bottom of this newsletter on how to contribute, or use the “Donate” button at <https://haitianconnection.org/>



The project has also taken root in Jérémie, where Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery has an established sales force, and 15 women among that sales force will add the sale of menstrual hygiene project to their business. We began with an educational session where these women received information on why women menstruate, what happens in their bodies, general hygiene and how to market these pads. We have already received feedback and the sales are going well. In addition, we have contracted with a small store in Jeremie, and the store manager is adding sanitary napkins to her inventory. For now, these are disposable products, but we will add reusable products to the inventory as they became available.

**Update on sale of period products with the sales force of women:** I just received a report on how the sales with sanitary products are going. We had initially chosen 15 women to be part of the sales force, but we ended up with 25 women. They are very happy with how the sales are going, and have already sold all they had received. This project helps women increase their income and also provides a service for women and girls in rural communities where access to sanitary hygiene products is extremely limited.

## Youth Empowerment Project



In a world where injustice is normalized and rights are disregarded, some have never allowed themselves to be dominated by these constraints and continually fight for change. In this spirit, during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a group of young people, members of the YHEEP 2025 cohort, in collaboration with CEPRODEH and AFASDA, decided not to remain passive. They committed to making their voices heard, primarily within their communities.

On November 29, 2025, at the Père Médaille Institution in Cap-Haïtien, a meeting, an exchange, and a discussion took place between young people from the Père Médaille Institution (IPM), the Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours College (CNDPS), the Saint François Xavier Institution (ISFX), and the Martin Luther King College (CMLK). A very warm welcome was extended to them. Ms. Cassandre Saintilma, a gender expert and resource person from AFASDA, presented key points such as the concept of gender, the different types of gender-based violence, their manifestations, causes, and consequences. This presentation was followed by a significant number of questions, comments, and arguments reinforcing the viewpoints of some audience members; it was a truly engaging session led by the speakers. We achieved our goal, and the event was a great success. It was a significant achievement, certainly, a major accomplishment in our involvement in social action.



## Gender Based Violence Prevention

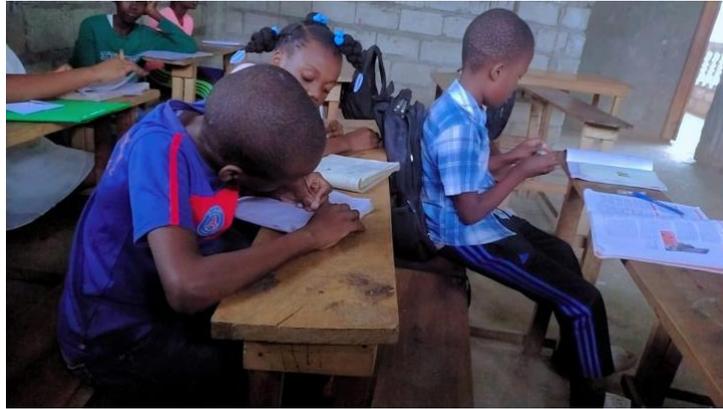


The activities against Gender Based Violence were planned and executed by the young people enrolled in the Summer 2025 Youth Empowerment Program. 16 young people participated in the campaign against Gender Based Violence, and events of a similar nature occurred not only in Cap Haitian, but also in Leogane, Croix Martyr les Cayes, Torbeck, Jérémie and Petion Ville.



## After School Program

While Haitian Connection has started some new project other projects are continuing. Our After School Program is successful, because all the students have worked hard and received better grades this grading period. Please enjoy the gallery of photos below.



## Partnering with the Haitian American Museum of Chicago (HAMOC)



In a growing partnership in Chicago, Renate represented HAMOC at the Field Museum's opening ceremony for Black History Month in February. She continues to broaden her relationship with the organization through a variety of activities and involvements.

## New Location for Jérémie Breadfruit Flour

Jérémie Breadfruit Flour is growing. They have been able to purchase land and construct a brand new facility in Jérémie which contains an office, and a breadfruit flour factory. This makes pick-up and delivery of breadfruit flour much easier, because the new location is in the town of Jérémie. The former location will remain as a satellite. The road to reach the old facility is not asphalted and washes out after every rain. We are very happy with this new facility, and will let you know when the grand opening takes place.



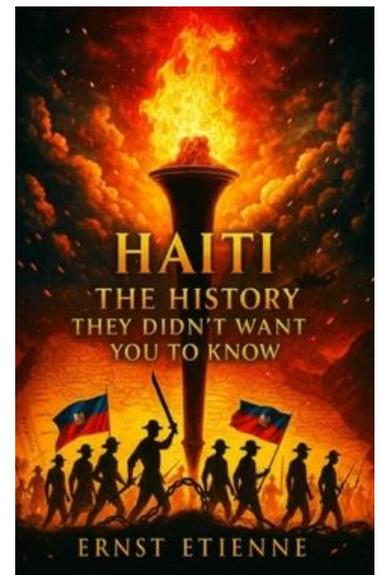
## Book Corner

### **Haiti: The History They Didn't Want You to Know by Ernst Etienne, 2025**

This book serves as a crucial and powerful correction to the often-misrepresented history of the Haitian Revolution. For too long, the narrative surrounding Haiti's struggle for freedom has been crafted by the very colonizers who were overthrown by the enslaved population—those who falsely depicted themselves as invincible. In truth, the Haitian Revolution not only abolished slavery in Haiti but also proved to the world that colonial powers could indeed be defeated.

The author carefully dismantles the long-standing propaganda that has cast Haiti as merely an extension of other revolutions. Instead, the book argues for Haiti's central role in the fight against colonialism and slavery, showing how the Haitian victory sent shockwaves through the world, challenging the established power structures.

This book is not just a correction of historical inaccuracies, but a reclaiming of truth. It is a powerful testament to the resilience and agency of the Haitian people, who defied the might of their colonizers and shaped their own destiny. For anyone seeking an accurate and nuanced understanding of the Haitian Revolution and its profound impact on global history, this book is a must-read. It exposes past distortions and restores Haiti's rightful place in the story of liberation.



## Haitian Connection

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization founded in 2005, which focuses on the needs of women, children, and young adults in the Jérémie region of southwest Haiti. A variety of projects have already touched thousands of lives: houses have been built for more than 104 women and their children; a cash without condition initiative is providing hope for women in 2 communities; our summer camps for children help them take their minds off the difficulties they see all around them, and our after-school program inspires the necessary motivation to keep the children's minds focused on learning.

As a response to the earthquake in January 2010, and its psychological aftermath, Haitian Connection has established a mental health program in Jérémie to provide counseling as people resettle, tally their losses, and adjust to a new reality. 27 members of the community have been trained in psychological first aid. This served the greater Jérémie area well after Hurricane Matthew in October of 2016. Our mental health agents were able to hold community meetings to give people an opportunity to debrief and receive some training in stress reduction techniques. During the current crisis in Haiti, the mental health program is a necessary tool to help people in the community cope with ever mounting stress

### Support Us

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation registered in Illinois and your gifts are tax deductible. Our projects depend on volunteers and the financial support of people who desire to help.

**Scholarships for needy students from elementary to secondary schools** help to develop a cadre of educated youth who form a resource for the future of Haiti.

**Teachers' salaries.** To help students learn and advance we need teachers who are paid and motivated. Many rural schools do not have any means to pay their teachers, and the students do not have the possibility to pay tuition.

**Summer Camps and Afterschool program** need financial assistance so we can offer more children participation in these programs.

**Cash without Conditions** is providing poor women with a monthly stipend to help with school expenses as well with the ability to provide food for the family and pay medical expenses when needed.

**Mental Health Program:** This is crucial to provide more outreach and also to train additional community mental health agents.

To support our projects financially, donate online by visiting our website at: <http://www.haitianconnection.org/> and clicking on the PayPal button.

If you would prefer to send your donation by mail, please address checks to: **Haitian Connection**  
**5300 South Shore Drive # 27**  
**Chicago, IL 60615**

### Get Involved

We are looking for volunteers to search for grants and help with grant writing, as well as groups and organizations interested in having us give a presentation on the situation in Haiti, mental health in Haiti, leadership development, remote English teaching, or infrastructure development for computer literacy. Contact **Renate Schneider** at [haitianconnection@gmail.com](mailto:haitianconnection@gmail.com) or by phone at **312/493-3719**.

