



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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From Renate's Desk:

The Danger of a Single Story

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a well-known Nigerian Novelist and writer, gave a TED talk on the danger of a single story, where she explores how a single, one-sided perspective about a person, group, or country creates incomplete stereotypes and robs people of their dignity. I think about this whenever I tell people that I am going to Haiti.

Yes, the violence in Haiti is real. What happened in Kenscoff and elsewhere is heartbreaking. Families are grieving, people are being displaced, while communities are being terrorized. None of that should ever be minimized or dismissed. But Haitians living in Haiti are not all experiencing the country the exact same way at the exact same time. Some people are directly affected by gang violence. Some are living with the constant fear of it.

Others are trying to go to work, raise their children, run their businesses, go to church, go to the beach, celebrate birthdays, eat with family, and hold on to whatever joy they can.

The Haitian people deserve to experience joy, not just survival. When I show pictures of Haiti's beaches, food, hotels, guest houses, restaurants, art, music, and culture, that is not automatically disingenuous. It is instead a necessary correction to a global narrative that has reduced Haiti to violence, poverty, disaster, and despair.

Haitians' right to experience joy, beauty, and leisure does not disappear because the country is also in crisis. Two things can be true at the same time. The human experience isn't one dimensional because someone says it should be.

Haiti is facing a serious security crisis, yes, and Haiti is also filled with beauty.

Haiti needs reform, security, infrastructure, accountability, and leadership. Haiti is also still filled with beauty.

I will not tell people Haiti is perfectly safe, it is not. But let's not mistake honesty for hopelessness. Haiti is hurting, but I cannot support a narrative that says Haiti must only be shown when she is bleeding.

Haitians deserve joy, beauty, dignity, and the right to be seen as fully human, not just as victims, or headlines.

If we cannot hold the multi-dimensional sides of Haiti, then we are not having an honest conversation. We are just choosing which half of the truth makes us feel more righteous.

For Haiti,

Renate

Second summer camp in Deschamps



This year Haitian Connection was able to sponsor three summer camps, one in Jeremie and two in Deschamps. The photos from the second summer camp in Deschamps really show the joy that the children had in participating.

Pastor Erik prepared an introductory biblical course taken from Ephesians where it says children are our responsibility. This introduction was followed by a lesson on physical hygiene and how important it is to take care of our bodies. Afterwards the children sang songs and had time for recreation followed by a wonderful, plentiful lunch. Lots of joy was evident.

According to Pastor Erik summer camp is different from regular school. The children do not sit in class but are able to move around and enjoy being outside while they also learn a few things. Pastor Erik stresses that the summer camps are a way of marketing for the school also, because schools in the rural areas do not have activities like that.



One activity the kids enjoyed was learning how to make liquid laundry detergent using a solid clump of soap/detergent. After adding water, they stirred into a liquid concoction and then poured it into different



size bottles. The containers of liquid detergent can then be sold at the market. This way the kids can make some money to help the parents pay their school fees.

The children also learned how to make bracelets for themselves, but also with the idea of possibly selling them. They learn very practical things, and they also discuss mental health issues and how to reduce stress. In addition, they talked about violence, the different types of violence - physical, verbal, psychological.

In Haitian fashion the meals the children received during camp were plentiful, so that they were able to take some of it home to their siblings who were not part of the camp and even to their parents. That way many people benefitted. Our thanks to Pastor Erik and his team for an amazing job.



Summer 2016 Youth Empowerment Program



For the last 3 years the Haiti Youth Empowerment program has been able to unite young people from all over Haiti for two weeks to discuss policies, government, citizen's participation, and how to move Haiti forward. High school students from all over Haiti go through a rigorous application process, assessing grades, personal leadership, writing an essay as well as a personal interview. From over 250

applicants, 25 are selected to participate. All expenses for the students are paid, with Haitian Connection as the major financial contributor. This year, the program took place in Jeremie. Enjoy the gallery of photos below, and read on to hear from some of the participants.



Please read below for comments by five of this year's Youth Empowerment Program participants. Haitian Connection is proud to be a sponsor of this event preparing tomorrow's leaders.

Badin Ann Techa Jassley

My Name is Badin Anne Techa Jassley. I am from Les Cayes where I am a student at Frere Odil Joseph school. Since forever, reading is an important part of my life. That is basically how I developed a passionate love for international management which will allow me to accompany Haitian enterprises at an international level. I chose to participate in the Youth Empowerment Program 2026 because the themes of the program correspond to my interests. I see this as an opportunity to acquire further knowledge and confront new ideas and prepare me to help my community and my country. Thanks to this program I understand better the issues confronting young Haitians, develop my leadership capacity, talk in public, and learn how to work in a group. Meeting others in the program from all over Haiti will be helpful, because we are forming a network and can help and encourage each other to help move our communities forward.



Joe Sebastien Ustache



My name is Joe Sebastien Ustache, a senior at Institute Abelard in Leogane. I feel passionate about justice and how institutions function. I want to study law to transform my love for the law into a career to serve society. The two weeks spent with the Youth Empowerment Program surpassed all my expectations. I strengthened my knowledge in living together with others, human rights, community project management and leadership. I am already working with a friend on a community project which will be completed by the end of this year. I will also share what I learned here with other young people in my community. My participation in the Youth Empowerment Program responded to a need I felt to integrate my potential and my capacities into an effective framework. The two weeks I spent with the Youth Empowerment Program surpasses all my expectations. I deepened my understanding regarding living in community, human rights, project management, and leadership. Today I feel that I not only wish to become a leader, but that I am already a leader ready to act. I am calling together a group of young people in my community to share with them what I have learned and to work together so we can change my community for the better.

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Myssarha Alene Toussaint



My name is Myssarha Arlene 'Toussaint. I am from Jeremie in the Grand'Anse Department. To be perfectly honest I am not sure what I would like to study after I finish high school. But what I do know from the bottom of my heart that I want to devote myself to a field of study where I can make an impact on those people who make the decisions that impact other people whether it is in business or, why not, in public policy. I participated In the Youth Empowerment Program with the goal of learning and acquire news knowledge and competencies with the hope of finding the keys to a direction that can help me to serve my community. I have learned a lot, especially regarding human rights, social protection, gender based violence, how to debate, consent and personal development, how to write an advocacy statement, how to conceive and start a community-based project, and how to do scientific research. But above all, I learned how to live in community, and how to live in harmony with people from different parts of the country, people I did not know before. I learned from other participants about their knowledge, their experiences, and their personalities.

Saint-Vilmmar Gamaliel

I am Saint-Vilmmar Gamaliel. I am 17 years old and live in Cap Haitian. I am passionate about law, politics and finance. I want to study law. I participated in the Youth Empowerment Program for three reasons: I want to learn something new, I want to develop my leadership abilities, public speaking and project management. and I would like to strengthen my network both nationally and internationally. During the program I learned about human rights, gender based violence, personal development, democracy, and debating techniques. The Youth Empowerment has already helped me serve my community by enabling me to pass on the knowledge that I acquired and being ready to serve if called upon.



Mariska Pierre



My name is Mariska Pierre. I am 17 years old from Cite Soleil in Port au Prince. I am in my senior year in high school. I am passionate about law and all questions related to human rights. After I graduate, I would like to study political science and international law. My goal is to become a spokesperson for those whose voices are reduced to silence. It is with these thoughts in mind that I participated in the Youth Empowerment Program 2026. This program is designed for young people and future leaders. My experience with this program has been very enriching. I had a chance to meet with lawyers, public servants, and businesspeople. I discovered another image of Haiti, a Haiti that I do not know very well. A Haiti where people, despite the difficulties work, innovate, and are engage in believing in the future. The program also reinforced my leadership abilities, public speaking, human rights and civic engagement.

Renate Presents Paper at Silicon Valley Peace Conference



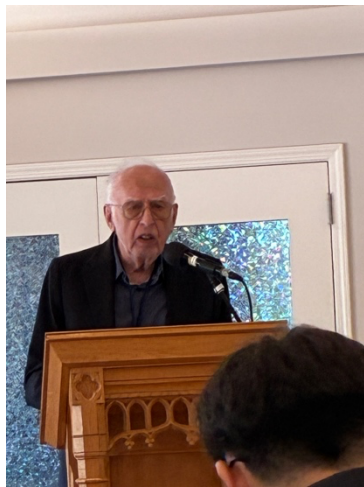
The inaugural Silicon Valley Peace Conference focusing on AI development, especially in underserved regions, took place in Palo Alto from September 17-19. Palo Alto was an appropriate setting because it is widely considered the heart of Silicon Valley, driven by its deep connection to Stanford University and a long history of tech innovation. The conference was sponsored by the Global Ministries University, the Bay Area Cultural Connections and the Pacifica Institute.

The conference looked at AI through a lens focused on the benefits that AI could bring to those not included in the mainstream of technological advances. 100 papers were submitted, and 49 were accepted, including our paper on **AI and Development in Haiti**. The co-authors of the paper were Lesly Joseph, Dean of Agronomy at the University of Fondwa and Moise Iraus, head of the Computer Science program at the University of Fondwa. Without their diligent work it would not have been possible to get the paper over the finish line.

In Haiti, AI barely exists. Necessities to support AI are lacking, such as reliable electricity, digitized record keeping and trained personal. But this gap can become an opportunity to build an AI infrastructure that focuses on Haitian problems and Haitian issues as determined by Haitians. Lacking a functional government, that task would need to be taken up by institutions such as the nation's universities. A key point made in the paper is the necessity of incorporating Haitian Creole in any AI infrastructure. Haitian Creole is the language of all Haitians, and using exclusively English or French could develop into a new form of colonialism. Therefore Haitians must set the foundation using Haitian Creole. We envision this as our next step: joining with the universities in Haiti to create an AI infrastructure that is just and fair and responds to Haiti's needs. **AI and Development in Haiti** is available on request by emailing Renate at schn067@yahoo.com.

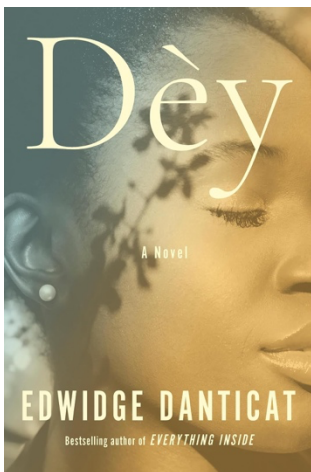


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Book Corner

Dey: A Novel by Edwidge Danticat; Knopf, 2026



“Is home the place where we are born? Or is it the place where we die?” These questions haunt Magnolia, a successful Haitian American real estate agent in Miami. When she hears gunfire while at a shopping mall, she takes shelter in a nearby restaurant, cowering with fellow shoppers and diners. Once she’s safely home, Magnolia keeps this traumatic event from everyone. But given her life back, she begins to see everything clearly: her extraordinary bond with her daughter, Zoë; her nearly broken relationship with Zoë’s father; the challenges of her mentally troubled mother, whose unraveling patterns Magnolia worries she’s spiraling toward herself; and her father’s affair with a woman who has borne him a child. While struggling through the labyrinth of her

past, Magnolia must also come to terms with the losses sustained that life-altering day, and nearly every day by her parents and sibling in Haiti.

Can love or family protect us from harm? Does optimism or fear win out in one’s heart? Which side will prevail for Magnolia? Pulled between these questions, each of which involves a high-stakes choice—Miami or Haiti, single or married, mortal or ghost, before or after—Magnolia is a narrator who is “yon pati koukouy, part firefly”: flitting and shimmering between different worlds.

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 or by phone at **312/493-3719**.

