



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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Living on the Edge of Disaster

Everywhere in Haiti the chants of Tenebrae, ancient and soulful chants, well up:

“Look, O Lord, and see my suffering. Come quickly to my aid...

You have fed us with the bread of tears; you have made us drink tears by the bowlful.

Restore us, God Almighty, make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.”

Stamara is a first-year medical student in Port au Prince, Reginal is a second-year medical student. Both decided on medical studies, because they see a great need for better medical services for their people, and both have worked very hard to get where they are. They live alongside disruption, violence, fear, and insecurity. Stamara writes that her university had to close its doors, because “they” threatened to burn it down. Reginal received an offer of an internship, but he is not sure if he will take it, because it is in area beset by violence. While some courses are supposed to be offered on line, there is no electricity, and access to the internet is spotty. University and high school students are targeted for rape. Of course, nobody is ever prosecuted for those rapes. Schools are being attacked to prevent the important 9th grade exam from taking place. The Finance Minister just announced that state employees will not be paid, because there is no money. Truly, we are living on the edge of disaster.

And so it goes. Haiti has not had a functioning government since the dismissal of Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant in March. One significant consequence of the delays in confirming a new prime minister is that Haiti has been functioning without a national budget. A loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund signed earlier this year was initially suspended pending the Céant-Lapin transition but expired at the end of May due to the absence of a ratified budget.

The political and economic dysfunction has created dire consequences in the streets of Haiti. There have been a series of public demonstrations, not only in Port au Prince but nationwide, for the past 12 months, including three violent explosions that partially shut down the country.

Any kind of planning is virtually impossible, because it is not known what the situation will be from one day to the next. Even here in Jérémie, classes are cancelled, people cannot make it to the doctor or the hospital, graduations cannot take place, and trucks that bring goods to Jérémie cannot get through. I have been in Haiti 21 years, and this is the worst I have seen it.

Hats off to all Haitians who struggle valiantly to survive and to keep a semblance of normality in their lives. Who dress up for church, who perform in school plays, who sing in the choir, and who thank God they are alive.

Yesterday I was looking out of my window and saw a little boy less than 2 years old chasing a chicken. As he was chasing the chicken he squealed with delight. There is light somewhere.

Renate

The Joy of Accompaniment

Haitian Connection's work is not always about programs and projects, but also and maybe even foremost about accompaniment. Participating in the lives of the people that we serve. June was full of such opportunities: confirmation, baptism, first communion, graduation. What a joy to be able to celebrate even in the midst of such turmoil. I could not make it to the graduation, because the roads were blocked. So the graduate came to me, I am her godmother. Haitians just do not give up.



Jérémie Breadfruit Flour Earns High Praise

Laura Gold, customer of Jérémie Breadfruit Flour, made these tasty energy bars. She commented: I just want you to know I received the Jérémie Breadfruit Flour yesterday and made my first batch of delicious Sunshine Energy Bars today. Opening the new bag of flour, I knew it was fresh when, to my delight, I caught the scent of breadfruit I remember so well from life in Hawaii. The flour is wonderful and the bars are very good, perfect for that right amount of energy push without the gunk of commercial food. I'll search out more recipes.



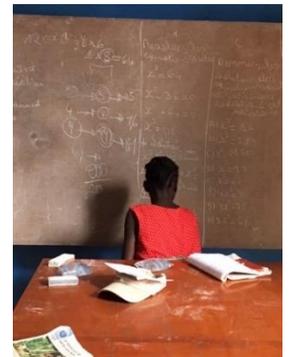
Jérémie Breadfruit Flour is now ready to export. Contact us via our website.

After-School Program Ends the Year Strong



As the school year came to an end, so did our after-school program. Despite the continuing unrest we were able to keep our doors open most days. We realized how important this center has become to the children that attend regularly. Even when there is a school holiday, they come. They have also adopted a love of reading. When they're done with their homework, they ask for a book. They have finished preparing for the final exams, and we are sure that most of them will pass. Their grades have significantly improved over this past year.

We do provide water, but we would also like to give them a small snack, and celebrate the opening and the end of the school year with a special activity. If you feel so inclined and would like to contribute to that effort, we will be grateful.



Migratory Madan Saras (2018)

Birds / women wholesalers and retailers

Soaring, searching for seeds, insects,
twigs, together
from tree towns near rivers, near sea
sunlight orange through spread wings

Walking, weighted with avocados, mangos
in boats, riding out churning waves
from mountain tops to cities
through balmy blackness

swoop and snatch, swoop and snatch
strips of palm leaf, of banana
breadfruit seeds, watermelon
to and fro, to and fro, with song

market stalls, street-lined blankets, mats,
woven basket after basket, basket upon basket
unschooled *machann chita* cast
word dreams for broods into foul air
cheeping voices haggle in gourdes and dollars

Madans' fly home
to woven-globe nest colonies,
branch neighborhoods
of black beating wings,
networked chirps.

Sleepless Saras' trudge home once goods are sold,
travel memory-mapped rural routes, never stopping,
earnings tucked and slung and gripped
for rice and reinvestment that very night.

This poem is from Janine's new book **The Weight of Silence**, which will be published on September 24. She has graciously designated all the proceeds to go to Haitian Connection. Thank you, Janine!

There will be two launch parties for the book. The first will be at Paul Henry's Art Gallery in Hammond, Indiana on Saturday, Sept. 28th from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The other will be at the Haitian American Museum on Saturday, October 12th, from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm. Do come!

Renate Honored by Law School Students



Renate Schneider, President of Haitian Connection, and Professor of English at the law school here in Jérémie, received a plaque of honor from her students in this year's English class. She was quite touched and moved.



Women's Literacy Program Prepares for Fourth Year



Our literacy program follows the regular school year. We have women in the program who are there for the third year, and women who just started. They all share the same motivation and effort to become literate. They also often come to the class dancing (see picture). The two valiant women who keep this program going 5 days a week are Esther and Milourdes, both pictured with me and by themselves. They present an amazing collaborative style and model that for the students. For the new school year, we would like all of the students to have T-shirts, and

we will start the school year off with a Mass. They are already excited, because some of them will serve as lectors, and all of them will be the choir. If you would like to contribute to the T-shirts, that would help. Thank you in advance



New Vistas for Haitian Connection

Renate took the first step in applying for Haitian Connection to be awarded special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN. The hope is that this will bring more visibility for Haitian Connection and also more connection with other NGOs working for poor and marginalized peoples in other parts of the world. Here is the exciting response:

Subject: 2019 Resumed Session of the Committee on NGOs - Application Recommended

Dear Sir/Madam,

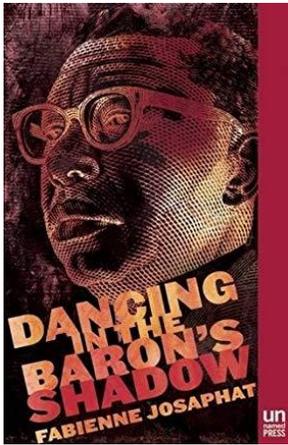
We are pleased to inform you that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations at its 2019 Resumed Session, held on 16th May and from 20th -24th May 2019, decided to recommend special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to your organization.

Please note that this recommendation is subject to the endorsement of the Economic and Social Council, which will consider and take action on the Committee's recommendations at its Management Segment scheduled to be held from 23-24th July 2019. Additional information on the outcome of the 2019 Resumed Session is available on our website: <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=80>. You will be informed of the final decision of the Council in due time.

Yours sincerely,

Marc-Andre Dorel Acting Chief, NGO Branch Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Book Corner



Dancing in the Baron's Shadow: A Novel by Fabienne Josaphat; Los Angeles: The Unnamed Press, 2016

Haiti, 1965. Francois Duvalier, known as Papa Doc, is the impoverished island nation's brutal dictator. Relentless curfews, and Papa Doc's terrifying Tonton Macoutes militia, have made life in Port-au-Prince increasingly difficult for struggling taxi driver Raymond L'Eveill . But it is Raymond's brother, Nicolas, a wealthy professor at the local university, who is stirring up trouble. A secret manifesto penned by Nicolas is rallying opposition to Papa Doc. After a tip-off from a disgruntled student, Nicolas' home is raided and the manifesto discovered, landing him in Fort Dimanche, a notorious, disease-ridden prison many enter but few ever leave. Meanwhile, Raymond's wife leaves him, taking their children and escaping the island. With his family gone, Raymond gets himself arrested as part of a death-defying plan to break his brother out of jail.

Fabienne Josaphat's electric prose brings to life a horrifying and not so distant time in Haiti's past while exploring the best and worst of humanity. The novel examines power's tendency to corrupt, the impulse of nationalistic pride, and, above all, the human desire to survive, while describing in rigorous detail the shocking realities of life in the Baron's shadow.

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 97 women and their children; a small microcredit program is providing economic opportunity for women in 2 communities; a potable water initiative is giving healthy water to one thousand families; and local school teachers have received training in the Child-to-Child method. In 2016 Haitian Connection trained four facilitators in Divergent Thinking, and now Haitian Connection through its Divergent Thinking Institute is providing Divergent Thinking seminars all over Haiti.

Several new initiatives have been launched in 2017 such as a Language Institute to teach foreign languages to children and adults as well as provide training in pedagogy and methodology in the teaching of foreign languages.

An additional Continuing Education Institute has also been developed to provide continuing education in a variety of fields through seminars and conferences.

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. For 7 years Haitian Connection has also worked to strengthen the University of the Nouvelle Grand'Anse by partnering with professionals in the US and other countries.

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.

The cost of building a home for a woman and her family in Jérémie is \$2,000. The houses have three rooms and a latrine. You could contribute to a house, or even get your church/organization to sponsor a whole house. After Hurricane Matthew, this has become a priority for people in the region.

Scholarships for needy students from elementary to secondary schools.

Microcredit group: contributions accepted.

Mental Health Program: contributions to mental health center accepted (total cost for one year \$10,000)

Support for training programs in Divergent Thinking, mental health, Child-to-Child, and continuing education. For every program for 25 people we provide a meal for all participants and give the facilitators a stipend (about \$500 per training).

To support our projects financially, donate online by visiting our website at: www.HaitianConnection.org

If you would prefer to send a donation by mail, please address checks to: **Haitian Connection**

5300 South Shore Drive # 27

Chicago, IL 60615

When you order from Amazon.com, giving to Haitian Connection is easy! Simply go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> to get started!

Get Involved

We are looking for volunteers: English teachers, educators, specialists in various fields to give short conferences or seminars.

To volunteer, contact **Renate Schneider** at haitianconnection@gmail.com or by phone at **312/493-3719**; in Haiti: **011/509/3463-7532**

