



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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Two More Houses Completed

Recently, Haitian Connection has finished two houses in the community of Terre Rouge, which means that we have achieved our goal of building five houses this year. With all the challenges 2020 has delivered, I am so delighted with this.

Haitian Connection built this house for Marilanie. She is 57 years old and has 7 children. Her children are all adults, the youngest is 19 years old and is still enrolled in school. A number of Marilanie's children have children of their own. They live in extreme poverty. There are nine people living in the house. The husband abandoned her long time ago. She is a small vendor and has a little money coming in. The family is delighted to have a roof over their head to protect them. The last picture is a photo of the house they used to live in. Also, one of the pictures is the latrine. Along with the house we always build a latrine.



This house was built for Guilene Jean Louis. She is 45 years old and has 8 children, two girls and six boys. They range in age from 28 to 8. Four of her children are in school. The family of ten lives in extreme poverty. Guilene supports herself by working as a small vendor.

Our goal for 2021 is to build an additional five houses. Donations are so appreciated by the families who receive a new home. The whole cost of building a house with latrine is \$2000. If you or your church or club would like to sponsor the building of a house, please let Renate know. Smaller contributions indicating "housing" are also welcome and will be put in a fund until there is enough to start another house.

Haiti Tech Summit Features Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery



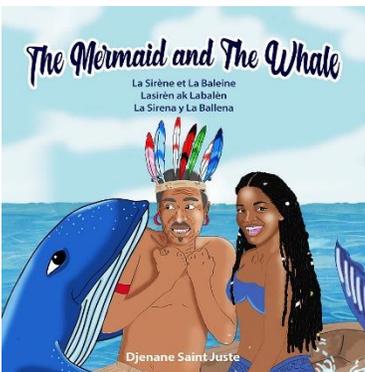
Pierre-Moise Louis, the CEO of Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery, had the honor to present at the Haiti Tech Summit. Deemed the “Davos of the Caribbean”, the Haiti Tech Summit brings together thousands of entrepreneurs, investors, celebrities and creatives under one roof together to address humanity’s greatest challenges via tech and entrepreneurship. It is a part of a 13-year initiative to turn Haiti into an international tech hub by 2030. Pierre-Moise was selected as one of 100 businesses to apply for a presentation. Ten Candidates were selected out of the 100 for a presentation, and Pierre-Moise was one of them. We are very proud of him. Jérémie Breadfruit Flour started as a branch of Haitian Connection. It is good to see this endeavor bearing fruit.

New School Year Begins

After catching up and finishing the previous school year in October, the new school year has started up in November. Haitian Connection is sponsoring several promising students for enrollment in the Up to Date English School in Jérémie, which is the best English school locally. The kids are eager to learn and improve their English. Two of the students, Fadia and Rose Darline, are pictured below.



Book Corner



The Mermaid and The Whale by Djenane Saint Juste

The Mermaid and the Whale is a story about love, integration, resilience and true happiness.

Written by Djenane Saint Juste, a native of Haiti, The Mermaid and the Whale is a story inspired by the Haitian folk song of “Lasirèn ak Labalèn” a song that have been passed down from generation to generation through traditional dance, music and oral storytelling in Haiti.

This is a book for youth for all ages to inspire them to discover their inner gold and inspire them to connect and value others despite their differences. Written in four languages (English, Haitian Creole, French and Spanish) with a CD with audio storytelling to discover a bit of the island of Lagonav in Haiti.

To order: <https://www.afoutayidmaco.com/>

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. Haitian Connection's Divergent Thinking Institute is providing Divergent Thinking seminars all over Haiti.

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.

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 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

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: **011/509/3 463-7532**



Evelyne Sincère's murderers knew that they could kill her with impunity and without consequence. By Edwidge Danticat

I first saw her in three stages—her entire life summarized in a trio of images. In the first photograph, we see her beaming, smiling face, with the sky-blue flower in her hair. She looks like she could be any of us, when we were young, looking playfully at a camera, and eager to see what we look like on the other side of the screen. Behind her, on a wall, is what looks like a geometry lesson. Was that picture taken at her school? What was making her laugh?

In the second picture, she barely looks like the same young woman, except for the short twists in her hair. Her hands are bound with the same bright orange cloth that's being used as a gag across her mouth. Her eyes are covered with a piece of purple cloth. This is the hostage photograph that was sent to her sister, the one that accompanied the ransom demands. Trying to imagine what she might be thinking is heart shattering. Who knows what horrors she had already endured?

We soon find out from the third photograph, the one we have no right to see, but from which we cannot look away, the picture of her lifeless body, lying on a pile of garbage on the side of the road, wearing only a bra. The twists are still in her hair. As the mother of two daughters slightly younger than her, I know all the time and patience that goes into twists like these. I know every moment is an act of love.

Her sister, Enette Sincère, spoke for all of us with her cries and her tears. Enette was forced to absorb the unthinkable along with everyone around her. She described her negotiations with the kidnappers, her pleas for them to spare her sister's life. She even gave out the phone numbers the kidnappers used to negotiate with her, for a ransom that initially began at 100,000 US dollars and ended at 15,000 gourdes. She was about to pay when she learned of her sister's murder. Enette Sincère alternated between speaking to her sister's corpse, and to the rest of us. She called her sister her princess, her darling, (*cheri mwen*), her beauty (*ma beauté*), all while answering reporters' questions. With a groundswell of grief that reminded me of birth pains, she was at times miraculously composed, then the wave would hit her, and she would want to photograph, then touch her beloved Evelyne, her *doudou*.

Evelyne Sincère was twenty-two years old and had just completed her secondary school exams at Lycée Jacques Roumain. She had not yet even received the results, her sister stressed. Their mother died in the 2010 earthquake and Enette seemed to be the kind of sister who was also a good friend. When Enette Sincère was asked by a reporter how she felt seeing her sister's body, she said:

“Se paske l ap viv Ayiti. Se paske l ap viv Ayiti. S il pa ta p viv Ayiti mezanmi, èske l ta p sou yon pil fatra?”
It's because she lives in Haiti. It's because she lives in Haiti. If she didn't live in Haiti, would she be on a pile of trash?”

This should bring eternal shame to Haitian officials, from President Jovenel Moïse, to Prime Minister Joseph Jouté, to the Minister of Justice and Public Security, Rockefeller Vincent, and the head of Haitian National Police, Normil Rameau, all of whom hash out the same declarations and press statements assuming no responsibility, rape after rape, killing after killing, kidnapping after kidnapping, assassination after assassination, and [massacre after massacre](#).

The President's initial lukewarm response, [via tweet](#) nonetheless, makes him sound like a mere bystander.

“En tant que père de famille, je suis profondément choqué par l'enlèvement suivi de l'assassinat de la jeune écolière Evelyne Sincère. De telles atrocités sont inacceptables. Les autorités policières et judiciaires n'ont qu'un seul choix: mettre les bandits hors d'état de nuire.”

“As a father, I am profoundly shocked by the kidnapping, followed by the murder of the young student Evelyne Sincère. Such atrocities are unacceptable. Police and judicial authorities have only one choice: to neutralize the bandits.”

Would he be so profoundly shocked if he were paying attention? According to the advocacy group, [Nou Pap Dòmi](#), there have been more than 124 cases of kidnapping from January to August 2020, including ones in which young women have been abducted. Would he merely tweet a platitude, if this were his daughter? Or the daughter of one of his friends? It's fine to acknowledge, as he does later, [again by tweet](#), that Evelyne could have become yon “gwo fanm” (I am assuming he means a great woman) in the future, but what has he done to keep young women like her safe, much less to help them thrive?

My uncle, who spent most of his adult life as a minister in the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Bel Air, used to say that poverty is criminalized in the poorest neighborhoods in Haiti, and the people who end up punishing those who are poor are the actual criminals. Evelyne Sincère's murderers knew that they could kill her with impunity and without consequence. To those in power, and to those who brutalized and murdered her, Evelyne Sincère was disposable, like cargo, as was shown by the kidnappers' response to her sister when she asked for extra time to piece together the ransom: that they couldn't keep her too long because they didn't have enough space, and presumably too many captives, as though she were a prisoner of war.

[In his own statement](#), Haitian Prime Minister Joseph Joute declared:

“En temps normal, les enfants enterrent leurs parents; seulement en temps de guerre qu'un parent devrait enterrer son enfant. Or, nous ne sommes pas en guerre en Haïti.”

“Normally, children bury their parents; only in time of war should a parent bury a child. Yet, we are not at war in Haiti.”

Though the Prime Minister appears unwilling to acknowledge it, Haitian gang leaders, and their funders, are acting as though they are at war. They are certainly armed for war.

The Prime Minister also took great pains to add:

“Le Chef du Gouvernement profite pour enjoindre les pères et mères de famille de garder un oeil vigilant sur leurs enfants en tout ce qui concerne leur déplacement et surtout leur fréquentations.”

“The Head of Government takes this opportunity to urge fathers and mothers to keep a watchful eye on their children in all matters concerning their movements and especially the company they keep.”

Here he skirts around something that often emerges after young women are beaten, assaulted, brutalized, raped, and even killed. He hints that it might have been her fault, as if the girls with the mothers and fathers keeping a watchful eye on them don't ever get murdered, or kidnapped, or raped in the country, under his watch. And how can parents protect their children when the government can't protect the parents? What about the [babies who have been murdered](#) in their mother's arms, the toddlers assassinated at their father's sides? Is it because the parents were not watching closely enough?

These days, the way images are circulated at lightning speed makes both willing and unwilling witnesses of us all. We did not watch Evelyne Sincère die, the way we did George Floyd for example, but because of her sister's testimony and the images she left behind, she has entered our lives in the most shocking way, both as her own unique self, and as a symbol of so many other women, men, and children who have been assaulted, kidnapped, and assassinated in recent weeks and months. [Some whose names we know](#), and many more whose names we will never know.

There are scores of potential Evelyne Sincères living in fear in Haiti.

There are scores of potential Evelyne Sincères living in fear in Haiti. We know them because they are our sisters, our cousins, our nieces, our goddaughters, our friends, women—young and old—whose dreams we encourage and support in whatever way we can from the Haitian diaspora. We are tired of seeing them die like this. We are tired of the mediocre and inhumane leaders who create and tolerate the circumstances that lead to those deaths. We long for a day when Haiti will have conscious feminist female politicians who will understand all that has led to a young woman ending up on the side of the road on a pile of trash. And leaders who are willing to do something to stop it. We long for a day, when, if she had lived, Evelyne Sincère could have looked forward to a safe and promising future in her country.

As we recover from our haze of the turbulent US elections, and ponder what the outcome will also mean for Haiti, let us not forget Evelyne Sincère, because Evelyne Sincère is Haiti, and, as clichéd as it sounds, Evelyne Sincère is also us. But most of all, for those who loved her, she was a smiling young woman with a sky-blue flower in her hair. A darling beauty, a doudou, whose future has been taken away.

Haitian Gourde Rises as Regulation of Local Money Exchanges, Banks Increases

Overdue currency regulation caused rapid rise of gourde against dollar, Haiti central bank consultant Eddy Labossière says

By Onz Chery and Samuel Louis



A money exchange place in Port-au-Prince. Photo credit: Garry Pierre-Pierre

When Timé went to pick up her monthly money transfer at MoneyGram on Sept. 30, the Port-au-Prince resident expected about 10,000 Haitian gourdes. But to her great surprise, the \$80 in U.S. currency converted to approximately 5,000 gourdes. Anxiety instantly filled Timé, 21, who has been receiving the remittance from her [Among The Reeds](#) sponsor for three years. An exasperated Timé did not bother asking what caused the big drop. She already knew: The gourde value's had skyrocketed.

“When you have 5,000 gourdes in your hand [for a month], you can't really buy anything with it,” Timé said. “And prices didn't really drop, it's basically the same. I try to adapt, I made a plan. I can only buy things I need and can't think about next month.” The Haitian gourde's value against the U.S. dollar went from 120 G in mid-August to 62 G in October. With the gourde's rapid appreciation, scores of Haitians like Timé who rely on money transfers from the United States were left doing quick currency

conversions to keep up with the values as they rose. The answer was always the same: their transfer was worthless.

Businesses have also been greatly affected, particularly the textile industry. Many businesses in that sector said they plan to shut down by December because they can't afford to pay employees the resulting higher wages.

Various economists were stumped by the rise of the gourde. After mulling over it, some presumed that the rapid rise is the result of monetary policy being implemented to repair Haiti's economy after years of freewheeling money exchange transactions in the informal market and the banking system.

Eddy Labossière, Haiti's central bank BRH's consultant, doesn't have all the answers himself, but did confirm that the rapid rise partially happened because monetary policy was needed. The government also said so in a note they wrote to foreign diplomats, and they needed to pour \$150 million into the economy between Aug. 10 and Sept. 30 to buy back gourdes, according to the [Miami Herald](#).

Some banks weren't following the exchange rate policies set by Haiti's central bank BRH, said Labossière. Banks were applying their own rates to currency exchanges to make higher profits off their clients, a widespread practice known as [currency speculation](#).

Between January 2019 and August 2020, the gourde's value dropped from 77 G per \$1 to more than 120 G. The more gourdes people needed to receive U.S. dollars in return, the more gourdes went into the exchangers' coffers. And the more the gourde's value decreased.

"Once there is money speculation, there needs to be a correction," Labossière said. "The banks were making profits from the gourde. They were making five gourdes in every single dollar in the transactions they were doing. That wasn't normal."

Money manipulation versus monetary policy

BRH's latest move in repairing the economy is that they injected \$12 million into the foreign market to maintain the exchange rate of the gourde on Wednesday.

In August, BRH took action by issuing [sanctions](#) against UniBank Haiti and Capital Bank for not complying with money exchange regulations. It fined UniBank 864 million gourdes, about \$13.7 million, and Capital Bank 3.9 million gourdes, or \$62,144.

Capital Bank and UniBank have not returned emails seeking comment on their currency exchange transactions.

But after they were fined, the value of the gourde began to increase. This indicates that the banks started to comply with BRH's currency exchange regulation.

To determine the value of the gourde, factors such as the number of exports and imports, the amount of money being printed and circulated, and whether the country experiences a huge deficit or is stable play a role, economists said.

Labossière, who also heads the Haitian Association of Economists (AHE), said none of that criteria was at play. In his 20-year experience, he has never seen such a rapid rise in Haiti. The gourde's value is now higher than what it was over a year ago before depreciating, which was about 70 G per U.S. dollar. Authorities are thrilled and plan to

keep raising it until it reaches 25 G per U.S. dollar. Labossière senses that currency manipulation is at play.

“I feel like it’s the government and the central bank that are manipulating it [the gourde] now so it doesn’t depreciate,” Labossière said. “The president always says he’s happy in his speeches because before 70 gourdes was worth a dollar but now it’s less. That’s a victory for the president. If he considers it as a victory, he will keep it low.”

Winners and losers

One positive outcome of the gourde’s appreciation is that consumer goods prices went down — something that Haiti President Jovenel Moïse often says he’s fighting for.

“What I want is what you’re seeing. I want to break the high cost of living,” Moïse said in a [public address via Facebook](#) on Oct. 9.

A 50-pound bag of rice dropped from 2,500 G to 1,500 G, a bag of flour went from 3,000 G to 1,500 G, and a can of milk from 45 G to 25 G. The prices of spaghetti, macaroni, sugar, other food products and beverages have also gone down.



The price of many food products and beverages has decreased since the gourde went up in value on the currency markets. Photo credit: Georges H. Rouzier

“In an economy, there are always winners and losers,” Labossière said. “Everyone who receives money in American dollars dies in the movie.”

Residents who don’t rely on remittances are having less trouble purchasing food now. But the 1.1 million people, or [31 percent](#) of adults, living

in Haiti who do receive money from overseas regularly saw their funds cut in half.

Timé, who receives sponsorship because she lost her parents in the 2010 earthquake, is one of those recipients. She only buys essentials now.

Merchants and entrepreneurs, who barely had money saved, can purchase only half the amount of products they used to from overseas. Textile industry businesses, which did not exchange their U.S. dollars to gourdes before the appreciation, are in financial crisis now, Labossière said.

Fernando Capellan, president of the Industrial Development Company (CODEVI), has predicted that [25,000 textile employees](#) will lose their jobs by December. Patrick Boisvert, Haiti’s minister of finance and economy, said he is in discussions with textile officials to address the issue.

Another group decrying the move are the money exchangers, whom the government told to pay out remittances in Haitian gourdes instead of in U.S. dollars, the longstanding practice. Many money exchange agents closed their businesses in protest, insisting that they need to conduct transactions in U.S. dollars to survive, according to a [VOA Creole report](#).