



# The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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## A Note from Renate

After the major earthquake in August, earthquakes in the Jérémie area are continuing. On January 24, two earthquakes hit the area, one measured 5.3, the other measured 5.1 on the Richter scale. Two people died and some houses became uninhabitable. Children were sent home from school. There was great panic in the streets, some school children jumped from the second floor to safety. There is no letup in the insecurity situation and people are waiting anxiously for February 7, which is the normal date for a new administration to take over. In addition, the floating bridge that is supposed to be built so the river can be crossed and goods can get to Jérémie again, has not been started yet, even though some of the material has already arrived in Jérémie. Due to this situation all prices have gone up, especially for food and gas. Life is difficult. But Haitian Connection continues to work side by side with our Haitian colleagues.

## A New Year - a New Project



The women's empowerment project has been initiated by The Trees That Feed Foundation in conjunction with Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Haitian Connection. The goal is to create economic sustainability both for Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and women in the Grand'Anse. We have recruited 25 women for the initial pilot who have committed to sell 50 konparets (Haitian sweet roll) per week. They purchase the konparets from Jérémie Breadfruit Flour at a discounted price and then sell them for 25 gouds a piece. They make 10 gouds on each konparet they sell. The results are very encouraging. This week they sold 7,000 konparets. This is encouraging and empowering for the women and both Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and the women are winning. Once the pilot is completed and we have been able to evaluate the program we would like to expand to more

women and communities within the Grand'Anse.



## Earthquake Damages School, Delays School Opening



Due to the damage the August 14 earthquake caused, the school in Jean Bellune could not open on time. With the help of Haitian Connection, they were able to procure some tents for the preschoolers and elementary school age children whose building had to be completely gutted. Everybody was happy for school to start up again, the kids, the teachers and the parents. Hope fully the weather will stay calm so the tents can last for a while. Thank you to all who made this possible.



## After School Program Resumes



With the re-opening of schools in Jérémie we are glad to announce that Haitian Connection's after school program has been able to resume and we have enrolled 15 children. Many more would like to come, but we want to meet each child's needs, and therefore have to limit the number of children we can enroll. But the children as well as the parents are very grateful, because they would not be able to pay for tutoring.



## Pierre-Moise Louis Completes Master's Degree

Haitian Connection congratulates Pierre-Moise Louis on finishing his Master's degree in Brazil at the Universidade Estadual de Mato Grosso do Sul (UEMS). Hats off! The classes were held in Portuguese, which Pierre-Moise had to learn, and he finished all his course with As and only two Bs. An amazing accomplishment. Pierre-Moise was a Haitian Connection scholarship student when he studied agronomy at the University of the Nouvelle Grand'Anse (UNOGA). He then started the Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery company which is still providing konparets and flour as well as breadfruit seedlings to the community. We wish him continued success in all that he is doing.

## House Repairs in Earthquake-Ravaged Deschamps.



The August 14, 2021 earthquake in the Grand'Anse hit the community of Deschamps hard. This is one of the communities that Haitian Connection has maintained a significant presence. We have built several houses there for women and their children, established a community mental health



program and a micro credit organization. After the earthquake a number of houses needed repair. Thanks to our generous donors we are able to send funds so that the repairs could be done. The photos show the grateful homeowners who can now sleep better because their homes have been restored. We sent a second contribution at the end of January to finish repairing the rest of the damage in Deschamps.



## New Location for After School Program



Towards the end of the past year, Haitian Connection was asked to vacate the premises of a building we had rented for at least 5 years. The owner died and her children wanted to sell it. Fr. Jean, founder and director of John Bosco school, offered to let us use one of his classrooms, and thanks to him, in January we were able to move at into a more secure environment with a gate and security guard. Unfortunately, in Haiti these days that can be important. We are quite satisfied with the new location, which is closer to where most of the students live.



We are also grateful to retain our dedicated staff: Eliasme, the coordinator of the after-school program and teacher of languages; Flore, a primary teacher; and DeGraf, our math and physics teacher. This dedicated staff has been able to keep the program going, despite the extraordinary obstacles they were confronted with this past year, from the earthquake in August to the continued political insecurity and a huge wave of corona virus infections.

The parents are so grateful for this opportunity for their children, because tutoring is an expense they cannot afford. And, as you can see from the photos, the children are very motivated and enthusiastic about learning.



## Five New Houses for Women Built in 2021

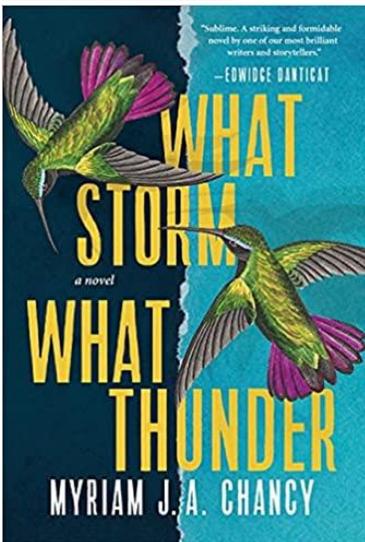


Gelsomine Pierre, mother of two, is the proud owner of a new house. Her first child was with a first man whom she had been married to for about 2 years. He left her after two years. After taking another husband to help with the first child, she had a second child and like the first husband, he abandoned her, saying he found another, more beautiful woman. In addition, Gelsomine takes care of two children who are children of other family members. She sells peanut butter and bread, and buys small items on credit to resell in the

market to make a living with her children. She is very happy with the house, and grateful to Renate and Haitian Connection. She says that it is the greatest gift you can give to someone who is in need of a home. Now that she has her own home, she is respected in the community, and her second husband has even asked to come back.



## Book Corner



What Storm, What Thunder by Myriam J. A. Chancy, Tin House Books, 2021

Longlisted for the Aspens Words Literary Prize

Finalist for the CALIBA Golden Poppy Award

A NPR, Boston Globe, New York Public Library, Chicago Public Library, Kirkus, Library Journal Best Book of the Year

“Stunning.” —Margaret Atwood

At the end of a long, sweltering day, as markets and businesses begin to close for the evening, an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude shakes the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince. Award-winning author Myriam J. A. Chancy masterfully charts the inner lives of the characters affected by the disaster—Richard, an expat and wealthy water-bottling executive with a secret daughter; the daughter, Anne, an architect who drafts affordable housing structures for a global NGO; a small-time drug trafficker, Leopold, who pines for a beautiful call girl; Sonia and her business partner, Dieudonné, who are followed by a man they believe is the vodou spirit of death; Didier, an emigrant musician who drives a taxi in Boston; Sara, a mother haunted by the ghosts of her children in an IDP camp; her husband, Olivier, an accountant forced to abandon the wife he loves; their son, Jonas, who haunts them both; and Ma Lou, the old woman selling produce in the market who remembers them all. Artfully weaving together these lives, witness is given to the desolation wreaked by nature and by man.

Brilliantly crafted, fiercely imagined, and deeply haunting, *What Storm, What Thunder* is a singular, stunning record, a reckoning of the heartbreaking trauma of disaster, and—at the same time—an unforgettable testimony to the tenacity of the human spirit.

## **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](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**

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](mailto:haitianconnection@gmail.com) or by phone at **312/493-3719**; in Haiti: **011/509/3 463-7532**

