



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

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Letter from Renate: “State of Emergency.....Haiti is imploding”

Flaming barricades are going up in all the major cities. Banks are closed; embassies are shutting down. Protesters are filling the streets. Some are ransacking stores. The police and gangs are gearing up for more violence — against and, as often, in concert with each other. The major Port-au-Prince newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*, summarized it simply: “A new leap into the unknown.”

Former ambassador to Haiti, Pamela White, said “It is time to throw away the gloves and stop pretending that ‘normal’ diplomacy will work in Haiti. Haiti is a failed state. There is no legitimate government, no judiciary, no parliament, and a weak police force incapable of stopping the gangs that now rule Port au Prince and many outlying areas.” There is no chance of planning elections under the current security crisis. Port au Prince has the highest number of kidnappings in the world. A medical student that Haitian Connection supports, who lives in the dormitories of Aristide’s University told me that people, and he does not know who these people are, but they are dumping bodies behind the dormitories. Nobody is in charge or even trying to remove the bodies so the stench is filling the building.

But these things do not only happen in Port au Prince; all towns in Haiti are impacted. Banks in Jérémie have been closed for over 2 weeks. Last week, they opened up timidly for a half a day, but were unable to serve all the people needing money. Right now, people have no cash in hand, shops are empty and so goods are not available. The market is not functioning. There is no fuel. No fuel, means no electricity. Over 30% of the phone companies’ antennas have no fuel and are not functioning. Phone service as well as internet service is sporadic. One of the major gangs in Haiti has dug trenches around the fuel depots in Port au Prince, and nobody can access them. Consequently, transportation is non-existent, and drinkable water is getting scarce. The businesses that purify water can no longer do so, because their equipment requires fuel. All major NGOs in Jérémie and Haiti, for that matter, have been attacked and pillaged. Lots of food has been lost. The hospital in Jérémie is no longer functioning, and all roads are blocked, so if somebody needs medical attention they are out of luck. Two of the major hospitals in PAP have only enough fuel for the next 2 weeks, then they will have to close their doors. That means no newborn ICUs, no adult ICUs, no oxygen. A number of clinics and other medical facilities already are shut down. School was supposed to start Monday, October 3, but that is not possible right now. People do not leave their homes because they are afraid, streets are empty.

In my 23 years in Haiti, I have never seen anything like that, neither have my friends in Jérémie. As the writer Jonathan Katz describes it, “In the year since Moise’s assassination, Haiti’s cities — especially the capital, Port-au-Prince — have been taken over by marauding and brutal gangs, the most powerful of which had operational connections to the slain president’s administration and the Haitian National Police. Over just the last week, a 17-year-old girl was killed in the district of Cite Soleil. Then a group of Haitian journalists who came to investigate the murder was ambushed by gangs: two journalists were killed, five others escaped. During a protest, another Haitian journalist was shot in broad daylight by a police officer, whose personal sense of impunity was such that he was unfazed by the fact that the reporter filmed the whole assault as it happened. (As I understand

(continued from page 1)

it, the journalist survived.) Haitians are also up in arms about the murder of an employee of the cell phone utility Digicel near the U.S. Embassy in an apparently botched kidnapping attempt.” Even Catholic institutions are under attack, schools are being destroyed and churches attacked.

Former ambassador to Haiti, Pamela White, says, “Before we can talk about anything else in Haiti, we need to address the security situation, and don’t be fooled, it will not be cheap. ... There must be a force of trained professionals who can outgun the thugs. Perhaps the private sector can finally step up to the plate and instead of playing games with the gangs, they can pay troops to save Haiti – the very country that made the titans of the private sector incredibly wealthy.” Even desperately needed humanitarian aid is under siege. Gangs are hijacking trucks, boats, and planes as they are attempting to deliver critical food and medical items to the most vulnerable. But as the ambassador says, the situation in Haiti is complicated, but complicated does not serve as excuse not to engage. Haiti needs help right now, not in 3 months or 5 months, but the time is now. If nothing is done nothing will move except the whole sale takeover of a nation by thugs.

The Commission to Search for a Haitian Solution to the Crisis has drawn up a blueprint for an interim government — including a representative body that would act as a check on executive power. It also includes safeguards against self-interest, such as a provision that members of the commission cannot take leadership positions in the transitional government. As the group’s spokeswoman, Monique Clesca, has written: “Facing no perfect alternatives to a corrupt, illegitimate government that rules by decree, we believe the country’s best hope is a political transition in which inclusion provides legitimacy, leading to free elections. We can create a free, secure, democratic Haiti on our own, but we need the United States and other nations to abandon the status quo and back the work we’ve been engaged in for months.”

But to put this in place will take time. Haiti does not have time. The lack of food will cause a major famine, prisoners in Haiti are already dying of hunger, as are people in the country side. Famine and misery will increase violence. Again, the time to act is now, not tomorrow. People who still can, are leaving, and those who remain are condemned to desperate misery. The world cannot just stand by and watch, intervention is called for whether by the UN or a consortium of nations, like Caricom. It must happen now.

Despite all this, Haitian Connection stands in solidarity with our Haitians friends and collaborators. We will not abandon you; we will continue our work with you. Donors, please, do not give up on Haiti, you are needed now more than ever. Your donation made it possible to have enough funds to available to build the oven in Latibolye, allowing the women there to engage in their own business without having to rely on imports and being held back by road blocks. They will have the power to feed their own community. No pictures are available at this time, but they will be available in due course.

Sincerely,
Renate

Action Urgently Needed Now! To draw attention to the plight of Haitians, we implore our readers to call/email the White House at 202-456-1111 or <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/> and the UN at 212-963-1234 or sgcentral@un.org Let us show our support to our brothers and sisters in Haiti!

Renate's Activities and a Personal Note

Haitian Connection's founder and president Renate Schneider will be a panelist at a conference October 6, 2022, sponsored by the Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance. Participants of the conference are coming from all over the world.

Renate has taken the course to become a Laudato Si animator. Laudato Si is the letter Pope Francis published to encourage all, not just Catholics, to engage in the taking care of creation, to work for environmental justice, and to promote the vision that we are not masters of creation, rather that we are all interconnected. Renate will graduate from this course October 12 and has joined the Laudato Si movement in Haiti. Yes, despite all the hardships and misery Haiti is suffering, there are people there who care about the environment and who are engaged in small ways in their homes and communities to care about our common home.



On a personal note, even here in the US we are not immune from violence. My son-in-law was brutally stabbed to death in downtown Chicago September 6. The perpetrators of this senseless crime have been arrested and will be arraigned October 11. Your prayers are appreciated as my daughter and her husband's family continue to go through this terrible time of grief.

Health Emergency: First Case of Cholera Identified

As confirmed by Haiti's Ministry of Health the first cases of cholera are beginning to emerge in Haiti. Cholera is an often-fatal bacterial infection that is primarily spread by contaminated drinking water, and due to the current conditions throughout the country, many people already lack access to clean drinking water. At the same time, the Caribbean Bottling Company, the Culligan distributor in Haiti, has announced that they have run out of diesel fuel and can no longer produce or distribute clean drinking water. This amounts to an impending health crisis whose effects are likely to be wide-spread and disastrous.

Deschamps Baptist Church Supports Area Families



Pastor Erik, pastor of the Baptist church in Deschamps met with parents who have a child or children in Port au Prince. The insecurity in PAP causes a great deal of stress for the parents and a lot of anxiety also. Pastor Erik talked to the worried parents about mental health issues and how to reduce stress in these difficult times.

The Baptist Church in Deschamps also had their annual assembly from July 5 to July 14. One day was solely dedicated to Youth. Anybody who wanted to come could join. Pastor Erik talked to the young people about hygiene, environment, as well as physical and psychological violence, and mental health issues. The kids really valued these conferences.



Positive News from Jérémie



The news coming out of Haiti is very discouraging, but there are powerful examples of efforts we do not hear enough about where people take initiative under very difficult conditions. One such initiative was put forth by young friends of mine, Love Kendy Jourdan and Berlensky Leger, who planned and executed the Youth Empowerment Project in Jérémie with young people from all over Haiti. Haitian Connection supported this effort with substantial financial support.

The program began on Saturday, July 16, 2022 and lasted for two weeks. Thirteen young people came from different corners of Haiti and arrived by plane in Jérémie. College St. Louis hosted the two-week program and found a room for the visitors in one of the guest houses. Other teenagers from Jérémie joined their guests there. Participants received training on land development and afterwards cleaned up the Anse, Azur beach that charmed them with its exotic beauty.

According to Love-Kendy Jourdan, it is imperative that today's youth get involved and take control of Haiti's future, which has been paralyzed by individualism for too long. This program teaches young people respect for human rights, how to build a society in peace and how as young people they can contribute to the development of Haiti.

One of the goals of the Youth Empowerment project is to develop change makers who can work together to make Haiti a better place. As part of the program the young people visited the prison in Jérémie as well as the hospital. These visits were eye opening for the young change makers as they reflected on the conditions for those most vulnerable in society. These are transformative experiences for those who will work for a better future for Haiti. Fr. Luxo, who oversees the youth in the diocese of Jérémie, and recently received his MBA, gave the group a seminar on project development, which will help them as they develop their own projects in the future. They also attended and participated in a seminar on human rights. The young people also had time to relax, play games, go to the beach, and get to know each other.

The Youth Empowerment project was a huge accomplishment and an organizational feat with the help of many groups and people. Hats off to the organizers, especially Love Kendy Jourdan the originator of this whole project. This will be a yearly event. And we will continue this initiative which gives hope when hope is rare to find.



Please enjoy more photos of this exciting and empowering event on the next page.

Gallery



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: **011/509/3463-7532**

