



Winter 2011 Updates

Dear Friends,

A recent trip to Qatar with Anne–Martine, Daphnee, and Ronel has me thinking about internationalization at HELP. As one of the few local scholarship programs in the developing world, HELP is committed to offering opportunity to Haitians in Haiti. But staying close to home doesn't mean remaining isolated. We are also committed to helping Haitians find their place in the world and showing the world all that Haiti has to offer. Since March 2010, when we sent our first students to Dartmouth College, six students have studied abroad, and we have welcomed five international teachers and one volunteer to Haiti, two of whom we hear from in the articles below.

While some may fear that in a country with the highest rate of brain drain in the world, international exposure could spur emigration, these experiences seem to help our students place themselves and their country in an international context. "I didn't really think about what it meant to be Haitian until I came to HELP," Anne–Martine told me, and Daphnee, who spent six months at Dartmouth last year, concluded, "I like the United States very much...but I love Haiti."

As we approach the 208th anniversary of Haiti's independence on January 2, I want to thank you once again for enabling us to instill this sense of patriotism and purpose in Haiti's rising generation. A special thanks for those of you who have contributed in so many ways to our successes of 2011.

Happy Holidays to the entire HELP community,

Conor

WISE Learners: HELP Students in Qatar

CONVERSATIONS WITH WORLD LEADERS IN EDUCATION & REFLECTIONS ON A FIRST TIME ABROAD



In November, HELP students Ronel Lefranc, Daphnee Charles, and Anne–Martine Augustin were invited to participate in the Learners' Voice program at the WISE Conference on international education in Doha, Qatar. As part of Learners' Voice, Daphnee, Ronel, and Anne–Martine had the chance to interview Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the founder of BRAC and winner of the inaugural WISE Prize. They also spoke at length with former Haitian Prime Minister, Michele Pierre–Louis, who is

Donate Now

New MCC Partnership Supports HELP Students over 4 Years

HELP is pleased to welcome the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to our community of donors. MCC is a worldwide Anabaptist ministry that partners with local churches and

now the Executive Director of FOKAL, a long-time supporter of HELP.

After returning to Haiti, Anne-Martine sent us her impressions:

I was in New York for three days. Of course, I didn't visit the entire city but I was surrounded by the public transportation system. It's really well organized! Each train, each bus, has its own itinerary. The highlight in New York was an event organized for HELP that I went to. The musicians were so talented and played so well! I enjoyed these days in New York so much!

I left New York on October 28 for Qatar. Twelve hours of flight! I spent most of my birthday in a Qatar Airways airplane, sleeping, eating, or watching movies. It was a crazy birthday!! In Qatar, I participated in the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). It was a great experience. I was one of the 30 students from all over the world. I had the opportunity to share my ideas with people from different cultures, learn from them, interview some attendees, and, of course, meet a lot of people. What an instructive and inspiring summit!

For my first time out of Haiti, what a trip!

"You are the Future"

AN OPEN LETTER FROM A HELP VOLUNTEER



This summer, Ivanley Noisette generously offered to travel to Haiti to interview and create student profiles for all the members of the incoming class of 2011–2012. Ivanley spent three weeks at the HELP Student Center, working closely with the staff and students to complete this project. Upon his return, he was inspired to write the following open letter to the HELP community:

To the staff of HELP, I must first offer my sincerest thanks and gratitude to all of you for allowing me to be a part of your team. Even though our time together was short and the collaboration limited, our mutual commitment to the education of

community organizations in more than 50 countries worldwide to carry out disaster relief, sustainable community development, and justice and peace-building work. MCC also seeks to build bridges to connect people and ideas across political and economic divides.

MCC has a long history of work in Haiti, supporting efforts in reforestation and environmental education, human rights, and advocacy for food security, and their dedication to education, job training, and literacy make them a perfect partner for HELP. The recent grant will sponsor a total of 18 HELP students over four years, and represents the first time MCC has funded university scholarships. Speaking about the new partnership, MCC Policy Analyst and Advocacy Coordinator Wawa Chege told us: "HELP is passionate about the work they do, and that passion is grounded in a concrete understanding of the Haitian education system. HELP is creating a network of committed, well-trained professionals equipped with the necessary resources to improve and strengthen their communities. MCC and HELP both envision long-term strategies and solutions for Haiti's recovery and development, and see this as a key partnership in establishing a permanent impact. It is important to MCC that HELP continues its work in strengthening students' vision of being agents of change in Haiti."

We are grateful to MCC for their confidence and support, and we look forward to continuing our important work together!

Haitian youth is boundless and, I imagine, for most of us it is a lifelong endeavor.

I hope you all realize how special your work is—especially in these transformative years after 12 January 2010. There are some idealists who imagine a better world and show us a glimpse of what it may look like through their art. These people give us hope that the light of tomorrow can shine through the darkness of today and illuminate a path to progress for all who choose to walk. There are also realists or ‘pragmatists,’ those largely indifferent to the state of affairs that focus on a narrow set of self-interests. Our brothers and sisters of this persuasion, although myopic in scope, show us that perseverance and commitment to a set of goals can produce results. Then there are those who build a bridge—the pragmatic-idealists. This mixture of vision and action works towards a more just, equitable, and dignified tomorrow by taking concrete steps to bring that vision closer to reality today. Taking these steps requires intelligence, creativity, and dedication.

The mission of HELP aligns with the principles of pragmatic-idealism and the fact that you all—the members of the staff—devote yourselves to creating a “community of young professionals and leaders who promote a more just society in Haiti” is noble. I hope with all my heart that you remember this mission each and every day— even when the circumstances are difficult and you’re tempted to consider your position as solely another job or point in your career. Remember why the organization exists and the problems it seeks to solve.

You, the person reading this letter, may not be able to change your community, country, or the world on your own, but as part of a team, your impact can be remarkable. Even alone, if guided by love, person by person, your impact may be greater than you could ever imagine.

To the current HELP students, alumni, and candidates, I am as proud of you all as an advisor, fellow member of the diaspora, and friend can be. I am honored by the personal stories that many of you have shared with me. In parts of West Africa, the lands of our forbearers, griots were the record keepers within the oral tradition who mastered the art of storytelling. I felt the fruits of those roots manifest through some of the deep, introspective, and eloquent stories many of you told me. As you continue writing your story, remember who you are, where you came from, and where you are going.

You will be the leaders of tomorrow, both here in Haiti and in the world. Some view leadership as telling others what they should do—dictating a path and rallying people to follow those directives. Yes, conviction, at times, does play an important role in leadership. Great leaders, however, often view their mission to be empowering others. The visionaries among you will have brilliant plans for Haiti and will instruct others on what must be done to bring those plans to fruition. As you plan, manage, and govern, remember the importance of listening. Be aware that academic credentials and status do not place any individual above another. Status or job titles do not make one story more valuable than another.

Poverty and wealth do not simply relate to the amount of money in one’s bank account. One can be rich in many things—love, kindness, compassion, intelligence, or beauty, for instance; and one can be, unfortunately, poor in many things—lacking respect, purpose, or understanding, among other deficits. As future leaders, be mindful of what it means to truly be wealthy. Develop the ability to truly see others, not just their job title, material wealth, or status, but their true selves with all the strengths, weaknesses, gifts, and potential they possess. Learn to listen to another’s story: we all have them and they all deserve to be heard.

To everyone, remember that “Haiti” is not just an abstract concept floating at sea with static attributes. Haiti is defined by the relations between each individual person living in the western part of Hispaniola and the diaspora at large. Haiti, like all of us, has a story. While a few chapters have already been written, there are numerous pages waiting to be filled.

Whether you want it to or not, your story will be part of those pages one day, and it will be part of Haiti's story. What would you like it to say?

In the lands of our ancestors, there is a philosophy called ubuntu, which, roughly translated, means, "I am what I am because of who we all are." A brighter tomorrow will undoubtedly arrive—the toils of so many bright and creative Haitians will not be in vain. But, a brighter today, one that loves, respects, and recognizes the dignity of everyone's story is possible right now. Haiti can and will rise, but it will happen with everyone working together, not through fear, divisiveness, or isolation. Haiti is you, me, and every one person living in it, or as part of the diaspora. How will we define it? As our forbearers and their rich history cry out to us, "Honor!" how will we respond? Let our generation reply through our words and deeds, with an emphatic, "Respect!"

Cordially,
Ivanley Noisette

Leadership Inside & Out

LEADERSHIP STAFF MEMBER MEAGHAN BALZER



Meaghan Balzer arrived at HELP in July as our first Leadership Program Manager. Although she is a native of New Brunswick, Canada, Meaghan came to us from the Union School, an international school in Petion-Ville, just three miles up the hill from the HELP Student Center, where she taught for two years. In this article, she talks about the leadership curriculum and her experience at HELP so far.

Meaghan Balzer, HELP's first Leadership Program Manager, reflects on the evolution of the leadership program curriculum and her experience working at HELP.

Last July when I joined HELP, I walked into an office full of supportive people who make personal sacrifices every day in order to advance HELP's mission to "promote a more just society in Haiti." Our mission is not only to provide scholarships to individual students, but to inspire the students to use their education to become agents of change. This is where imparting effective leadership skills will have exponentially positive results.

With this goal in mind, I've been developing the leadership program at HELP. Over the past several months, I have taught leadership orientation courses for incoming HELP students, organized and participated in service projects for students;

developed the leadership library and course resources; and tackled the administrative responsibilities involved in managing a program. My greatest project, however, has been to develop HELP's four-year leadership curriculum. In order to assist with this process, I have engaged local and international experts to learn more about the Haitian context for leadership, and to critique my work as it evolves.

The curriculum is divided into two sections: Leadership Inside and Leadership Outside. Leadership Inside, for students in their first and second year at HELP, focuses primarily on improving students' sense of self-efficacy, encouraging them to become comfortable with their backgrounds and see their personal experience as a source of pride rather than a source of shame. These concepts of awareness, acceptance, and pride in self, are the foundation of the HELP leadership program.

Leadership Outside, a course for students in their final years at HELP, continues to promote theories of effective leadership. Its focus is expanded, however, to engage more directly with the practice of leadership through experiential projects. It guides students through the process of identifying a need within the community, designing projects to help improve the condition, and mobilizing others to do the same.

Leadership classes for all students began in early November, and it's already been really rewarding to see the results of my efforts at HELP! I firmly believe that, with solid curricula, we can construct life-long, socially conscious Haitian citizens and leaders. Living in Haiti is not without its challenges, but the support that the staff and students at HELP have provided has been empowering, positive, and respectful. I am privileged to be working with this group of considerate, socially conscious staff who model effective leadership every day.

A HELP Romance: Ermine CIVIL & Monil PARAISSON

AN INTERVIEW WITH HELP ALUMNI



At HELP, students learn about collaboration, teamwork, and communication. While these are important skills to hone for the business world, they are also essential to practice in a relationship! HELP's Fedorah Pierre-Louis sat down with Ermine and Monil to learn the story of the first-ever HELP marriage.

How did you two meet?

Ermine: We met at HELP. We were both interning at the American Institute for Research. I didn't think that Monil had feelings for me until I started coming to the HELP Center every day to finish my thesis. Every time I left the Center, Monil wanted to come with me. He became my confidante and I explained my romantic problems to him.

But he never told you he liked you?

E: After I finished my thesis, I got a job at SOGEFAC, the consumer loan branch of SOGEBANK, and Monil began working at SOGEBEL, their home mortgage affiliate. He started calling me on the internal phone line. He called every day after work to ask me to walk home with him and we would talk. We flirted...that's how it began.

Monil: We were together for one year before we got married on June 11 this year.

How did he propose?

E: He asked me the question during every conversation we had! He was a good writer and a good poet, so he would speak very well when he asked me.

And Monil, when did you know that you wanted to marry her? Was it love at first sight?

M: No, I spent a long time analyzing my candidacy and thinking about the different possibilities. We flirted... I wrote her poems, because I knew she loved to read and I love to write poems. I wanted to tell her my feelings...indirectly. I sent text messages. I was really scared to tell her I loved her. We used to work together, and share ideas. I would ask her for advice about someone that I loved. I would say "I want to tell this person how I feel, but I'm scared." And she told me to be brave and share my feelings. So I said "The girl I love is you." There was complete silence! I thought she was going to run away...but she didn't.

Does he still write you poems now that you're married?

M: Yes

What did you study?

M: I studied accounting at INUQUA.

E: I studied accounting at Quisqueya University.

How has HELP prepared you for your current professions? How have you changed, professionally and personally?

E: It has helped me a lot - in my English, for example. I knew a lot of vocabulary but it was at HELP that I began to really practice speaking with my friends. I was an accounting intern at HELP, which is where I learned Excel and QuickBooks. But the most important thing I learned was discipline. HELP has really supported me.

M: It has greatly influenced my professional and personal life. You learn how to share with people, how to work with them, and it helps prepare you to enter the workforce, to get internships and a job. HELP is not only a scholarship program, it's a community.

What are your goals for the future?

M: We're trying to save for the future, to get enough money to start our own business. We want to help create jobs for other people. If we build our own business, we can help others and contribute to our country, too.

HELP wishes Ermine & Monil great success, both in their budding entrepreneurship and in their marriage!