

Institution: University of Florida; **Student participants:** Michelle Albert (UF, Public Relations), Bertrhude Albert (UF, Latin American Studies), Brian Focazio (UF, Finance), Daniel Ko (UF, Finance), Emily Moschner (UF, Journalism), Autumn McCurdy (UF, Journalism), Joshua Bastian (Rollins College, Finance); **Title:** P.E.A.C.E: Partnering in Enterprise And Cultivating Empowerment; **Dates of Project:** June 300-July 4, 2014; **Country:** Haiti

What is peace?

Peace is not merely the absence of ammunition, grenades and blood. For us, the definition of peace reinforces the right of every human being to live with dignity and security. Peace cannot coexist with abject poverty. It does not share its bright glory with the same dark force that claims the lives of millions of people on this planet. Less than 500 miles away from Florida's most southern tip lies the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti has been wrought with the sting of abject poverty for over a century. Day after day its people are forced to live in circumstances that deny them the opportunities to live with dignity and security. 80% of the Haitian population lives in poverty while 60% live in abject poverty. Of this population, 40.6% of the people are unemployed and two thirds of the labor force do not hold formal jobs. These staggering statistics leave us impassioned to fight for peace in Haiti, not with force, but with intellect and entrepreneurship.

Our goal is to (P)artner with Haitians in (E)nterprise (A)nd (C)ultivate (E)mpowerment. In short, our goal is P.E.A.C.E. Through a five-day seminar we will be summoning 50 promising entrepreneurs to train and equip in best business practices in the context of Haiti. This intensive training will end with a microloan for each of the 50 participants. This conference will infuse cultural practices with theoretical foundations in starting a business. Participants will receive instruction on creating a successful business model and managing their finances. We desire to fuel economic stability through empowering the small business sector.

Who are we?

We are a group of individuals who stand behind the belief that aid is not the substance of giving, but of partnership and vocational training. We are beckoned together under the banner of Projects for Haiti, Inc. (P4H). P4H is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization as outlined by the IRS. Two UF graduates, Bertrhude Albert and Priscilla Zelaya, founded it on July 6th, 2011. Currently there are 10 Directors, 11 individuals on staff, 11 interns, and countless volunteers. Since its incorporation, P4H has taken over 100 people to Cap-Haitian, Haiti. Each of its projects are crafted to meet the vocational needs of the Haitian people. Projects for Haiti, Inc. seeks out skilled experts to train others in Haiti. Available funding enables these seminars and conferences.

Most recently, P4H brought eight teachers from the United States to Cap-Haitian, Haiti in order to train and empower Haitian teachers. The 4-day conference hosted over 135 Haitian teachers and trained them in best pedagogical practices in math, reading, science, and social studies. Trips such as these serve to equip the powerful people of Haiti to positively impact their villages, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Projects for Haiti stands firm in the belief that countries such as Haiti are not built upon old t-shirts and shoes, but from training and enterprise. While the sentiment of giving is a powerful and inspirational one, this organization recognizes that sustainable development, training a country's people, is key to raising a nation out of poverty. With that notion, we make it a point to have Haitians involved in all aspects of development.

What have we done?

In June 2013 P4H piloted its first annual Business Seminar. Led by the Chief Financial Officer of P4H, 45 Haitians gathered together for a 4 day seminar on best business practices. Every day, each attendee was commissioned to put their acquired knowledge to practice and create parts of their personalized business plan. From creating a slogan, to creating an S.W.O.T analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to discovering their competitive advantage, attendees were

challenged to produce excellent business plans that reflected their readiness to start a successful business. At the end of this conference, 15 Haitians with exceptional business plans were selected to be recipients of a \$90 microloan. This loan was given at an 11% interest rate, which means that recipients would be paying back \$100 at the end of their 10 month payment plan. The 11% interest rate has been used to pay the wages of a loan collector and an insurance for unpaid loans. This model paves the way for a second cohort of Haitian Entrepreneurs.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, many aspiring entrepreneurs are continually inquiring about the next seminar. While the response has been positive many previous attendees hoped for more seed money to fund their businesses. With a repayment rate of 100%, P4H is now looking to expand the cohort of entrepreneurs. With support from Projects for Peace, this vision can come to pass!

How does it work?

Recruitment begins with a calling for entrepreneurs and a sign-up list. In a country where unemployment is over 40 percent, finding willing participants is not challenging. Because P4H has worked in the same community for over two years, relationships with Haitians enable us to be connected and trusted. Sifting through the potential attendees will be joint effort between the P4H staff in America and in Haiti. We will be looking for Haitians with big visions and reliable reputations. Because the community in Cap-Haitian is so tightly knit, the majority of people in the community have a reputation.

The conference will be led by our Chief Financial Officer and a team of 4 successful American and Haitian businessmen. A 40-page business workbook will guide these aspiring entrepreneurs through the five-day seminar. At the end of this seminar, the 50 attendees will be given a \$150 loan with an 11% interest rate. The same payment plan and collection of money model used in the pilot seminar will be followed. The impact of this grant will cycle through endless numbers of cohorts in the future. Annually, as each cohort repays their loan we will induct a new cohort. This model perpetuates a continual cycle of (P)artnering in (E)nterprise (A)nd (C)ultivating (E)mpowerment - P.E.A.C.E.

What do we expect?

We expect to see the embodiment of **P.E.A.C.E** throughout this seminar. We desire to see Haitians awakening their desires to innovate and succeed in the business market. We desire to see Haitians, fueled by newly-gained training and passion, thriving in the marketplace. We desire to see Haitians using the microloans to fund their visions. We desire to see Haitians moving forward with their dreams while stimulating the economic atmosphere of Haiti.

When?

This seminar will take place on June 30th - July 4th, 2014 from 9:00am-2:00pm every day.

Where?

The first capital city of Haiti, Cap-Haitian, is the location of this seminar. Although it is no longer the capital, Cap-Haitian continues to be a beacon for intellectual progression and historical pride in Haiti. Its close proximity to the Dominican Republic and nearby ports make Cap-Haitian a paramount city for entrepreneurial advancement.

Why?

The power of innovation goes beyond the financial benefits. The freedom to create and to see creativity come to fruition solidifies a need in humans to thrive. This seminar will do more than simply seed small businesses, this seminar will seed the dreams of 50 Haitians that previously had little resources to see them come to life. When people are given the opportunity to be the innovators and entrepreneurs they envisioned, P.E.A.C.E is achieved.

In a generation where social entrepreneurship is at its peak, the stakes are increasingly higher in Haiti. Thousands of organizations flock to the shores of Haiti in order to offer their interpretations of "help". If the international aid system cannot work in the poorest country in our hemisphere, where will it work? As we forge the way for future social entrepreneurs, we can proudly say that there is no other place that we desire to invest than in the country of Haiti.