

University of Florida // Michelle Albert // Peace through Partnership: Educational Reform in Cap-Haitian // June 22-30, 2013 // Haiti

The goal of this project is to partner with Haitian teachers in order to strengthen and secure a brighter tomorrow. Education levels in Haiti are strikingly low. The literacy rate is at 53 percent and the retention of students past the sixth grade is below 30 percent. This beautiful country faces a great shortage of educational supplies and qualified teachers. Our aim is to support and equip teachers through educational seminars. We affirm that children are the future of every society but teachers play a critical role in preparing, encouraging and securing *their future*. The war in Haiti is not fought against flesh and blood, but against a hopeless and poverty-stricken future. Alongside our Haitian friends, we boldly and proudly combat this lack of peace with educational reform.

Who: Projects for Haiti, Inc. Projects for Haiti, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization as outlined by the IRS. Two UF students, Bertrude Albert and Priscilla Zelaya, founded it on July 6th, 2011. Currently there are eight individuals on staff and five directors on the board. Participants envision a brighter and more sustainable Haiti, one that would be birthed from partnerships and vocational training. Since its incorporation, Projects for Haiti Inc. has taken over 65 people to Cap-Haitian, Haiti. Each project is specifically geared towards the availability of skilled workers and funding. In March of 2012, Projects for Haiti took a team of 32 UF students, doctors and a UF English teacher as a second language lecturer to Haiti for a four day medical clinic, English language classes and other community service projects. These trips are strategically designed not only to expose Americans to the beauties of Haiti in order to redefine perceptions, but also to support Haitians through training and empowerment.

We believe that the best gift is not to give, but rather to partner with and equip. While the sentiment of giving is a powerful and inspirational one, we recognize that sustainable development is not the product of giving but training and supporting. With that notion, we make it a point to have Haitians involved in all aspects of development.

What: Teachers Conference On June 23-29th, 2012, Projects for Haiti Inc. took a team of 10 US teachers to Cap-Haitian, Haiti for a 3-day Teacher's Seminar. We pre-registered 60 Haitian teachers to participate in this conference. Most of these teachers had never received formal training and almost all of them were discouraged and belittled because of their profession. We were honored to partner with them! By the end of this 3-day training, they were equipped, encouraged and connected. To this day, the effects of the conference resound loud and clear.

Every teacher was given a 65-page binder of resources that outlined all the material that would be covered. They were also given a 60-page supplement packet, which was compliments of Teachers Without Borders. This packet served as the text for homework and group discussions. The conference was structured into three parts: breakfast & morning session, lunch & afternoon session, and collaborative group work. The morning sessions were dedicated to empowering the teachers to develop a new vision for their classrooms and ultimately schools. The afternoon sessions included the practical applications of being a teacher. Subjects covered included classroom management, behavior management, rules and procedures in class and special needs training. Teachers were then asked to implement their knowledge through collaborative group activities.

In order to receive an accurate evaluation of the conference, an evaluation form was distributed and collected at the conclusion of the conference. Every teacher and aid filled out the form. Through the collective results of these evaluations, we have improved the structure of the program for the 2013 Teacher's Seminar. The funding from Projects for Peace will serve to meet the financial needs of this powerful event.

What Part 2: Teachers Conference 2013 While every teacher acquired a vast array of practical teaching skills and felt a stronger sense of confidence, over 80 percent of them commented on a need for longer sessions and more conference days. In 2013 we will extend our conference from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday to Friday. These changes will enable our US teachers to provide pedagogical analysis in greater depth. In addition to the subjects addressed last year, we will add more time for group collaborative work and additional subject-focused sessions, such as math, science, and reading instructional training. Just as last year, the US teacher will create the curriculum and provide the supplement material in French.

Another change that will be made is that we will increase the number of attendees to 120 Haitian teachers. Since the conference, we have kept in touch with the Haitian teachers and they are eager for our return. They have created an informal networking system among themselves and they plan on attending together. By increasing the number of attendees, we will allow 60 new teachers to join in this movement while continuing our partnership with our first cohort. In effect, we will have two levels of teachers that will be meeting in two separate conference rooms for most of the day. Naturally this will call for more qualified US teachers (those who have at least a Masters in Education).

The focus of the overall conference will be envisioning, equipping and connecting. We hope that this conference will not only inspire and train Haitian teachers, but also encourage them to work collaboratively. The lack of training and resources in Haiti has created a culture of individualism and this prevailing mentality cripples many teachers. However this movement seeks to create a networking system that shares resources, knowledge and support. One of the greatest skills they will learn is how to collaborate and support each other. As we partner with them, they are encouraged to partner with each other.

We certainly hope that one day the ripple effects of this movement will reach thousands, if not millions of Haitian teachers and students. After the 2013 Teacher's Seminar we hope to partner with the Ministry of Education in order to expand this program.

When: June 22-30, 2013 We will arrive on Saturday June 22nd. We will spend Saturday and Sunday preparing. Then Monday –Friday will be our conference. We will then leave on Sunday.

Why: Hope and Peace Haiti stands alone as the poorest country in our Hemisphere. Daily, Haitians are dying of hunger and starvation. The desperation of my people beckons me to move--to change. Although the abject poverty of Haiti prevents it from being an international war zone, the physical and internal struggle against hunger and desperation presents a far greater enemy than what most of the world knows. Every day, over 80% of Haitians wake up on the deadly battlefield called life- as they fight for hope and peace.

How do we combat this? How do we give back to my country? We partner with them. For that reason, I am an advocate for Peace through Partnership.