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ATOP Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Mission to Haiti

Sustainable Community Healing, Peace-Building, and Meaning-Making for a Healthy Haiti

Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Michael Reda and Lorraine Simmons

In the summer of 2016, Meaningfulworld will travel to Haiti for its 10th Humanitarian Outreach Mission, since the devastating earthquake in 2010. A team of three Meaningfulworld Ambassadors lead by Dr. Ani Kalayjian will focus on Meaning-Making, EQ awareness, Empathy, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and establishing Peace and Forgiveness Gardens in new locations.

Six years after the January 2010 earthquake that devastated much of the country, Haiti has transitioned from a post-disaster era to a period of rehabilitation and long-term development. As of January 2015, more than 95 percent of the 1.5 million displaced persons in camps have found alternative housing. Nearly all earthquake debris that obstructed recovery has been removed. Thousands of needed jobs are being created in Haiti's growing export apparel sector. Since 2011 Haiti has achieved positive annual growth rates, including 2.9 percent in 2014 (CNN 2016).

As the poorest country in the western hemisphere, Haiti has been in a state of turmoil for decades. The problems the people of Haiti face on a day-to-day basis are enormous. Haiti is ranked as one of the world's poorest countries when it comes to economy, healthcare, and resource distribution (globalissues.org, Shah, 2010). Even acquiring basic necessities such as food and untainted water is a daily struggle.

A recent crisis to challenge the already overburdened Haiti is the migration of tens of thousands of Haitian migrants and their families who have returned to Haiti after the Dominican authorities announced that deportations of irregular migrants would resume from 17 June, 2015. Thousands settled in makeshift camps at the border. Haitian and international human rights organizations, as well as the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti, raised concerns about the lack of access to services for people living in camps in the Anse-à-Pitres municipality (Amnesty International, 2015/2016 report). Recent reports however, from an undisclosed source suggest, the refugee camps in Anse-a-Pitres will be closed by June 2016 with the surrounding area of Anse-a-Pitres hosting many of the refugees (3/2016).

Another source of discord and instability for the Haitian people is political unrest. On February 7, 2016 - After five years in office, President Michel Martelly stepped down, leaving Haiti with no successor after elections marred by allegations of fraud were postponed twice. Under the terms of an agreement for a transitional government, Haiti's parliament elected an interim president for a term of 120 days. And on February 14, 2016 - The Haitian Parliament elected a new interim president, former head of Parliament Jocelerme Privert(CNN 2016).

These many unresolved issues and conflicts leave the people of Haiti in constant unrest, unable to live their daily lives safely and in good physical and emotional health.

Association for Trauma Outreach& Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld is a not-for-profit NGO affiliated with the UN, which helps aid in emotional well-being of people who have experienced both political and ecological trauma. Meaningfulworld is dedicated to fostering a meaningful, peaceful, and just world in which every individual enjoys physical, mental, social, ecological, and spiritual health. A sense of meaning, peace, and justice, although unique to each individual, is achieved through a transformative journey that integrates knowledge and experience with a sense of responsibility and reflection. This transformative process is also attained through healthy relationships that nurture open, honest, and transparent communication, insight into forgiveness, love and spiritual connection, and active collaborations (Kalayjian, 2014). In Haiti we wish to continue inspiring such communication and connection through workshops, group discussions, meditation, and energetic chakra balancing exercises.

With the help of our 7-Step Integrative HealingModel, previous teams were able to facilitate forgiveness, and meaning-making, therefore, decrease the trauma symptoms (Kalayjian, 2012). The past nine ATOP Humanitarian Missions to Haiti, which began in 2010 immediately after the earthquake, have served over ten thousand survivors, including children. Our team has also been training students of psychology, social work, nursing, as well as faculty, administrators, lawyers, seminarians, and teachers in the integrative healing model. In this mission we are planning to continue our collaboration with the University of Notre Dame, the Mind-Body Institute, University of Haiti, Episcopal seminary, Voix et Actions, Lakou Lape, WOZO, the Minister of Health, orphanages, & Civil Society at large. It is also, our goal to reach thousands more through interviews with local and national radio and TV stations.

As part of this mission, we bring donations of clothing, medical supplies, basic hygiene supplies, and crayons/art supplies. Your donations are greatly appreciated and all are tax deductible.



I am ***Dr. Ani Kalayjian***, President and Founder of ATOP Meaningfulworld, and Professor of Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University. Haiti has been in our hearts and souls and has motivated us to plan an outreach annually since 2010. We have a deep connection with the people, and we empathize with their suffering from the devastating earthquake, the political dysfunction, the horizontal violence, as well as the everyday human- made traumas. Our goal is to nurture a generation of conscientious Haitians who are motivated with love, inclusion, forgiveness, and unity.



I am **Michael Reda**, the Meaningfulworld Newsletter Editor and a graduate student in Clinical Psychology, studying at Long Island University and Fuller Theological Seminary. As a student, I am interested in learning about a variety of healing modalities, bearing witness to all suffering, and help transform trauma. In my short twenty-six years of life I have had the privilege of learning from my yearlong volunteer service in India. I am looking forward for our humanitarian outreach to Haiti and contributing to the continuing mental and spiritual healing.



I am **Lorraine Simmons**, Clinical Coordinator of education and trainings for Meaningfulworld. As a Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach Ambassador this is my 2nd mission to Haiti. I received my BFA in Fine Arts and a BS in Education from the University of Southern Maine in 1982 and am certified in Art therapy. I have worked in the New York City school system as a teacher and a parent coordinator. I volunteer at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine as a licensed Lay Eucharistic Minister, Altar Server, & member of the Order of Urban Missioners. I am proud to make Meaningfulworld Heart-Hug-Dolls which are donated to the children around the world.



I am **Kyle Rundles**, the Meaningfulworld Intern Coordinator and a staff psychologist at Emerson Counseling and Psychological Services. I am trained in international psychology and human rights, trauma work, and community psychology and I have participated in international humanitarian work in Nepal, through the Kevin Rohan Memorial Eco Foundation outside of Kathmandu. This will be my first mission to Haiti and I am enthusiastic to engage with and learn from the community, as well as work towards social justice, positive change, and healing. I am looking forward to both training and mutual learning with Haitians through this experience.

Our motto is: **When one helps another, BOTH become stronger.**

SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

As discussed above, this project is organized and supported by the Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld in collaboration: **Your or your Organization's name will be here when we receive your generous donation.** Your donation is tax-deductible, and you could donate on line on www.Meaningfulworld.com, or mail us your check to ATOP 135 Cedar Street, Cliffside Park, NJ 07010-1003