

## **Thank you, Ayiti, for opening our hearts and minds**

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*“The measure of love is to love without measure.”*

*—St. Francis de Sales*

We are back from our Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Mission,  
It was our 11<sup>th</sup> Mission in Haiti for community healing,  
Resilience, EQ, transforming violence,  
To establish Peace and Forgiveness Gardens,  
And we started a new campaign to keep Haiti healthy and happy.  
“Ayiti se lakay mwen,” Haiti is my home.

Once again, I am sequestered in my comfortable, safe home,  
Experiencing the extreme high of enjoying daily comforts;  
I feel endlessly grateful to have consistency of basic amenities—  
Unlike in Haiti—such as air-conditioning, electricity, clean running water,  
Flushing toilets, an abundance of food, and a bug-free house.  
I’m also mindful of my freedoms of thought, expression, and interdependence...

I experienced scorching heat and humidity, feeling temperatures of over 110°F.  
I traveled on roads with holes as big as a vehicle, which stops traffic and creates chaos;  
I witnessed women with their voluptuous bodies,  
Rolled-up skirts, and bosoms partially covered  
Sitting on the ground or squatting all day long,  
Just to sell a dozen mangoes, bananas, or pineapples.

Their sweat was not dripping but rather gushing down their bodies,  
While they seemed to glisten in the blistering sunshine;  
They showed no emotion: despondence, maybe apathy,  
With urgency to sell, pretending as if all is ok;  
In fact everything is the same as it ever was in the last 7 years of our missions:  
Thousands of women sit all day on sidewalks and at the end of the night burn all their trash.  
They barter to get some rice and beans to take home to their families!

Life goes on, while Ayiti has endured a lot of suffering, such as:  
Colonization, bureaucracy, corruption, poverty, illiteracy, and political violence,  
human-made traumas that resulted in suffering. And then there were the  
Natural disasters: earthquake, hurricanes, cyclones...  
Holding their traumas inside, keeping their emotions proudly bottled up,  
The people always bounce back, as they outwardly praising the Lord—“Hallelujah,”  
and practice Voodoo, healing plants, and/or Buddhism secretly.

The trauma of repeated abandonment and separation has caused  
A generalized and learned helplessness exacerbated by Horizontal Violence,  
aka “crabs in the bucket syndrome,” which all Haitians we worked with agreed

That not only it is rampant in Haiti, it is also on the news;  
That they cannot trust one another, and that they  
Pull one another down with gossip, envy, and greed.

We taught them about compassion, for the self and for one another.  
We reminded them about their resilience, their strength to be first to abolish slavery.  
We reviewed the impact of Horizontal Violence, and how violence of any kind  
Begets more violence and forces us to pull one another down.  
Pulling one another down, we bury ourselves alive.  
We succumb to the dark side of the human condition.

We used candles to demonstrate how empathy is healing.  
We used natural essences to demonstrate the healing powers of Mother Earth.  
We used flower remedies after they were terrorized at gunpoint.  
We showed them how to manage their emotions through EQ.  
We role-modeled assertive communication and expression of feelings,  
Reinforcing that we are not our emotions and our emotions are not us; and  
We moved their bodies and showed them breath-work to alleviate their physical pains.

We shared our emotions, to show how the release lightens our load.  
We then can fly high, with less weight pulling us down into the abyss.  
We hugged them with unconditional love,  
While they cried in our arms and shared:  
“You opened my heart; I thought I could never feel again. Thank you!”  
“Through your workshops over the last 6 years, I have transformed, and enjoy where I am!”

Thank you, Ayiti, for opening our hearts.  
Thank you, Haiti, as you have opened our minds.  
Thank you, Ayiti, for your commitment to change.  
And thank you for embracing a journey of healing, both inside and out.  
For as we believe at Meaningfulworld,  
When one helps another, BOTH become stronger!

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