



# Hope for Haiti®

– June 2009 –

## Haiti Inspires



I arrived in Haiti one week ago with a textbook understanding of the developing world. Having graduated college less than three weeks prior, I knew that I was only partially prepared for what I would see upon arriving in Port-au-Prince and throughout the first few days of my stay in Les Cayes. The initial shock I experienced in the streets of the capital and the outskirts of Cité Soleil – an unbelievable mix of things at once colorfully vibrant and heart-wrenchingly devastating – suggested that any partial preparation I was hoping to rely on had been entirely imaginary.

After one week with *Hope for Haiti*, I suddenly have a lot more meaning to attach to the idea of the “third world.” Sure, I read about Haiti. I researched, looked at pictures, and even specialized in international development in college. But having never really spent time in a developing country, I knew poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and failing education systems from afar. In Haiti, however, these concepts are alive and manifest – walking, working, living, and breathing in many of the Haitian people. People in Haiti really are really, really poor and it’s really hard to see. It makes me sad. It makes me furious. It makes me frustrated, confused, and unable to understand. Everyday life here is unbelievably sobering. It’s really, really...real.

At the same time, however, I have realized that there are many other aspects to Haiti that defy and challenge the generalizations circulating about its poverty and destitution. Our visit to a primary school in a community called Ravine Sable explains why. The original open-air school building consists of a rusted, corrugated metal roof held up by thin wooden poles, and divided into smaller rooms by chalkboards that face rows of thin wooden benches. Filling the benches are the 300+ students who come from miles around – matching uniforms on, seated eagerly before teachers, small pencils and frayed notebooks in hand – to learn for a few hours each day. Most impressive is the construction project that *Hope for Haiti* is funding to build three more classrooms through a collaborative effort to improve the quality of and access to this community’s education. The energy and passion at Ravine Sable on the part of the teachers, students, and community members helping to build the new classrooms was remarkable. Their determination, excitement, and motivation were palpable, and their self-reliance and self-improvement measurable. Put quite simply, I was inspired.

And so far, that is what I think of Haiti. Inspiring. Held back by numerous economic, historical, social, and political challenges, but ultimately positive about today and hopeful for tomorrow. (By: Patrick Eucalitto)

*Ou wè zwazo ap vole, men ou pa wè traka van ba li.*

**“We don’t always recognize how hard other people work for what they have.”**

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