

P.E.A.C.E: Partnering in Enterprise And Cultivating Empowerment

Haiti

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Project Goals:

Our goal was to Partner with Haitians in Enterprise And Cultivate Empowerment; in short, our goal was P.E.A.C.E. Through a five-day seminar we trained and equipped 70 promising entrepreneurs in best business practices in their home country of Haiti.

Other Fundraising Efforts:

In order to fully fund our project expenses we fundraised through Projects for Haiti, Inc. (P4H), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Florida. The organization's fundraising efforts allowed us to meet the needs of our project's budget. In addition, other team members paid for their own airfare to Haiti, which subsidized our cost and left more resources for the Haitian people.

Section I

The Project:

Recruitment began with a calling for entrepreneurs and a sign-up list. In a country where unemployment is over 40 percent, finding willing participants was not challenging. Because P4H has worked in the same community for over two years, relationships with Haitians have enabled us to be connected and trusted. Sifting through the potential attendees was a joint effort between the P4H staff in America and in Haiti. This proved to be a wonderful process because we identified dedicated businessmen and women who were passionate about bettering their lives and improving their skills. We found Haitians with big visions and reliable reputations. Over 90% of the participants were women in the Cap-Haitian community. The oldest participant was 80 years old and the youngest was 17 years old.

The conference was led by the Projects for Haiti Chief Financial Officer and a team of 3 successful American and Haitian businessmen. It took place on June 30th - July 4th, 2014 from 9:00am-2:00pm every day at a local school in Cap-Haitian, Haiti. A 40-page business workbook guided these aspiring entrepreneurs through the five-day seminar. At the end of this seminar, 49 attendees were given a microloan ranging from \$70USD to \$200USD. This loan has an interest rate of 10%. Individuals who received loans will be paying back the loan over a 20 week period. Each individual is required to attend weekly meetings with the other participants who received a loan. The meeting will serve as an open forum, a networking system and support group for small business in the Cap-Haitian area. 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 Partnering in Enterprise And Cultivating Empowerment - P.E.A.C.E.

Section II

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% is 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. We believe that entrepreneurship is a gateway to lasting peace within any society. When individuals are empowered to create businesses tailored to their strengths and the needs of their communities, peace is at hand. Individuals no longer have to rely on outside help, they can fully rely on their own intellect and abilities.

Contribution to Peace:

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This week was a phenomenal glimpse of the limitless possibilities of the Haitian people. Even though the summer is over, we desire to see more. We desire to see Haitians awakening their ambition 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.

The power of innovation goes beyond financial benefits. The freedom to create and to see creativity come to fruition solidifies a need in humans to thrive. This seminar did 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 addition to the freedom given by entrepreneurship and innovation, individuals participate in a cycle of peace that transcends generations. Children will grow up with parents who are using their skills and talents in creative ways to solve problems within their communities. Through the different cycles of repayment we will see more and more growth in innovation and peace.

How has it changed you?

I stand firm in the belief that countries such as Haiti, are not built upon old t-shirts and shoes, but from enterprise and training. While the sentiment of giving is a powerful and inspirational one, I recognize that sustainable development, training a country's people, is key to raising a nation out of poverty. With that notion, I will continue to make it a point to have Haitians involved in all aspects of development. This trip has only reignited my passion to see countries like Haiti rise upon the feet of their resilient people.

Personal Statement

"Haitians don't need us to dream for them. They've already done the hard work of dreaming, all we need to do now is come alongside them in partnership." - Berthude Albert