

Spring 2021

Haiti Outreach



IN THIS ISSUE



Little Sisters of St. Therese	1
Two years of turmoil	1
Building compassion	2
Haiti action alert	2
New PSST infirmary	3

Little Sisters of St. Therese Riviere Froide

Sister Denise Desil Psst has kept in touch with the Haiti committee since our trip to Haiti was cancelled twice in the past year, due to violence and COVID-19. The Little Sisters join the majority of Haitians in expressing fear for the country. They are afraid to walk about as before let alone work in their various missions in isolated areas.

In January 2021, a sister was kidnapped at the Motherhouse by nine armed men. Her return depended on a ransom. With assistance from the bishop and others in the area, the sister was finally released but is traumatized. Men and women religious, according to *Vatican News*, reiterated the alarm raised by a bishop in January that life is explosive and unsustainable. Gangs are everywhere. 59% of Haitians live below the poverty line. People are desperate due to food insecurity, lack of fuel and the corrupt government of President Moise, who should have been replaced this February.

The Little Sisters have just completed a small infirmary of eight beds for their aging/ailing sisters. Our financial support helps them continue their ministries (clinics, midwifery, education, farming, tree planting) among the peasants all over Haiti as well as their own needs for food, water, medicine, etc.

Two years of turmoil

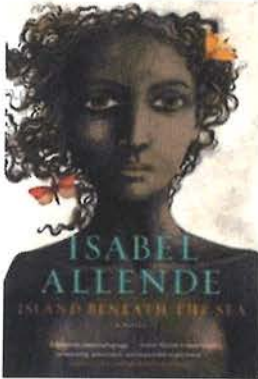
Trouble escalated as residents learned of the “evaporation” of Petrocaribe funds in 2018. This was a program started in Venezuela to defer payment on oil for up to 25 years, letting governments use the funds for social improvements. Slow investigation showed that most of the \$2 billion Haiti had gained had been siphoned off by corruption in high places. Even President Jovenel Moise, elected in 2017, is suspect.

Protests and strikes have made life in Haiti more chaotic. Inflation has increased. Elections due in 2019 were never held. Gang violence has terrorized residents and prevented visits from groups that travel regularly to Haiti to provide service. President Moise has increased governing by decree as members of parliament’s terms expired without elected replacements. Residents and observers note inroads in the autonomy of various institutions as the specter of dictatorship.

Best resources for news regarding Haiti: *Miami Herald, New York Times, Partners in Progress (PIP); Fonkoze, Rich in Mercy; Quixote Center*

Building compassion

How do we talk to people about the troubles in Haiti? We can tell of our own experiences or refer them to credible sources of information. Another avenue might be using art to help people construct their own emotional understanding of tragedy. "The Afterlives of the Black Atlantic" exhibit at the Allen Art Museum in Oberlin, Ohio (2019) included the "Candy Spill" installation based on the instructions of Cuba's conceptual artist Felix [Gonzalez-Torres](#) (1957-1996). Viewers could take a piece of the cellophane-wrapped blue candies to remind them of the ocean crossed by captive Africans and Europe's addiction to sugar that underlaid the slave trade. Gonzalez-Torres's carpet of hundreds of candies was initially attractive but confusing – it shimmered and allured. Gradually one thought how sugar became a part of our culture that often ensnares us from our earliest experiences and has spawned such a complex web in the evolution of society.



Another lens is that of novelist Isabel Allende's *Island Beneath the Sea*, the story of a woman born into slavery in Haiti in the late 1700s. Allende's heroine, Tete, becomes a house slave in this wide-ranging epic that explores relationships between Africans, Europeans, people of mixed race and every level of power in an incendiary culture. Set in Haiti, Louisiana and Cuba (to a lesser extent), it enriches our understanding of the background to the OSP-IHM story.

Haiti action alert

Stand with Haiti

The Haitian people are facing one of their greatest political crises in decades. After dissolving the nation's parliament one year ago, Haiti President Jovenel Moïse has ruled by decree, leading to a spiral of corruption, human rights abuses, violence and kidnapping. Now he has chosen to remain in office after the end of his constitutional term and further delay elections. The Haitian Catholic Bishops, Federation of Protestant Churches, Bar Association and leading civil society and labor organizations have all opposed these measures and urged a return to democracy and human rights.

Yet the United States has continued to operate deportation flights to Haiti and expel Haitians who are seeking asylum in the U.S. The U.S. State Department has expressed support for the Haitian president. Leading members of Congress with a long history of working for democracy and human rights in Haiti have called on Secretary of State Blinken to reverse course and condemn the anti-democratic actions and abuses in Haiti. Please add your own voice to the call for the U.S. government to end deportation flights to Haiti, allow Haitians now in Mexico to apply for asylum and stand with civic and faith-based organizations working for democracy and human rights in Haiti.

Click [here](#) to send a message to the Biden Administration, using the Faith in Action International website.

New PSST infirmary: from start to finish!



Haiti Update is published by the OSP-IHM Haiti Committee. Contact jps@ihmsisters.org