

Thoughts on Development, Haiti, and Return

Personal Notes from 2001 Fieldwork

By

Tara DePorte

I don't know how to begin to talk about my trip to Haiti. The reality of the place is already beginning to escape me after only a few days. I am reminding myself everyday of what I learned, what I saw and what I did. In many ways, I don't think I can describe what wealth of experiences I had in a mere 13 days. I know they had a deep impact on me in ways that I have not fully comprehended yet. I know that what I did, even though it may seem minimal in my own personal scrutiny at times, was something real, something that really did make a difference. And this "difference" or impact that one desires to make, especially at this age where we're supposed to be idealistic and radical, this difference was more to me than fitting an age specific stereotype. I was real to the people I was with, and this was not an easy thing for me to accomplish. Yet, as I will try to explain the plentitude of paradox entrenching Haiti, this accomplishment of acceptance was hard, but took a surprisingly short amount of time. I did a lot of doubting during my trip. Doubting of myself and doubting of others too, of our reasons for acting, our reasons for being. It was only when I started to look past my initial misgivings or attitudes towards people that I began to see their possibilities. As a young, western raised anthropologist, I questioned people like myself, foreigners, wealthy more than I questioned peasants and the everyday person on the street. In odd ways, our questioning of society, how I've been raised to fight against ideas of prejudice, of differences...it turns around on you in a weird way. I questioned the workers that were there from foreign countries, the aid organizations, the church groups, and the other whites in the airport. Then I can only imagine how Haitians question their motives. On the other hand, I think I may have had too many expectations and not enough for the peasants. Although I cannot describe the poverty I saw, at times I didn't think it was 'that bad'. I'm ashamed almost to acknowledge that I saw and lived with people that really have nothing compared to the materialistic culture of our country, even nonmaterial things like education, medicine, transportation, government...these are things that are luxury. And yet, I would find myself thinking sometimes that 'they don't have it that bad'. It's cliché, but it is relative. And I have the luxury of being an observer, a transient if you will. I had the luxury to see, to judge to learn, to share, then to leave. No questions asked, no real commitment, nothing. And this is what every foreigner represents, potentially. Someone who can come in, with new ideas, good or bad intentions, money and support, possible routes to new worlds and they install themselves however they see fit. Whether it be a development organization, a church group, or a student working on

her thesis, in many ways the people being helped are mere shadows, ignorant to be changed... that is one of the things I came across. So, as a person playing this transient role, how can we present ourselves in a way to be trusted and welcomed? I struggled with this throughout my trip. Wondering how and why I was there. What my real motives were and what others might think my motives were. I decided that the only thing I could really do was represent myself as honestly as I now how. I have talked to many of my friends about how I was feeling not at peace with myself, my actions, and my life. I don't think I have been happy with what has been going on inside my head and my emotions have been so muddled and unpure, confused and dull...not real.. Life in Haiti is real. It is so real that there is no escaping. And as a person there that could not stick out more as a foreigner, I was constantly being judged and questioned. There was no avoiding it and no way of defending against it except for showing. I had to earn my place everywhere I went and I wasn't always sure that I would be able to. I didn't succeed with every person I met on the street. But I do feel that I was successful with those that I let into myself. I had to show that I was willing to give of myself, that although I was transient in my actions...I was only there for weeks at most, that my heart and a piece of myself was not something that could ever leave these people that I worked, played, talked with and learned and taught from. I hope this is something that I was able to communicate to others and not just a feeling that I maintain inside of my mind and body.

In this thought, I would like to continue and open up my own vulnerability by sharing my personal thoughts, doubts, criticisms that I felt throughout this trip. They are very personal, not all fair, and waning, changing, but they are so real. I did not write them contemplating that I would share them, and I know I might like to sensor them...indeed I have not even read them since they were written, but I want them to maintain their liveliness, their honesty...to be true to myself and my feelings. And through reviewing these accounts, I would like to delve deeper into the knowledged shared between us, as it is plentiful and all encompassing.

Field notes/personal reflections

Day 1 Miami Airport January 8th, 2001

My thoughts tend towards fear- I have really never done something so alone. I don't know what to expect, where to go, what I'll see. At the same time, I feel excitement...of course I wish I spoke the language that would make quite a difference. This is good though. It will give me some real time to think-about myself and my relationships. I really want to be respectful-to learn-

to try and understand. I really hope there is some way I can escape being the “blan” that is rich and has everything. Unfortunately, I don’t think I can, nor will I ever be able to. I can’t stop thinking about my mom. I really don’t understand why she gets like this...it really hurts me. I don’t know if she really thinks that I never do anything or if it’s just that she cuts off...It’s been all my life that she’s been telling me what a “taker” I am. Maybe I really am. In some ways, I think so, but at the same time, I really do enjoy doing things for other people too. I feel like I’m not going to be dressed properly or I’m not going to act properly...or I’m taking advantage of people and really can’t decide if I’m internalizing things or am really doing these things. I’m really not sure what I’m doing right now. That’s funny. I meant to say that I don’t know what I’m feeling...I’ve had this a lot this past semester...I’m feeling very insecure right now—incidentally self-conscious about the hole in my jeans—of all the things I just need to clear my mind. How? I’m not sure—I’m feeling shy

What does a hole represent—my own insecurity—poor upkeep—reuse—We’ll see.

I’m amazed at the disparity of what people say. How so few have so much and so many have none---as a Haitian citizen wouldn’t you want to be working somehow to fix that. People laugh when I say I’m going to look at water quality...Maybe I will too.

Y sheltered. But I don’t want to be going to Haiti just for myself at the same time—I didn’t like to think that I could represent that sign of “good” or “bad”... can’t ever escape myself. And in some ways, I can’t be myself either. I know I am a strong woman, person, girl. I also know that I have fear...I feel like this naïve child everyone looks at and decides is silly, going on her little whim. I hope that’s not what I’m doing. I want to be more than that. (what does that word mean “want”) In some ways, I feel it’s stupid to be even testing water or talking about deforestation...if people are so desperate don’t they just want to survive? Tara’s world in Haiti sounds so pretentious. I think those are the people I want to stay away from—but at the same time—I guess I don’t want to be prejudiced against them either. I just don’t want to wait right now. I want to go. It’s like before a basketball game—I feel anxious—I’m thinking too much—I want to jump in and run on instinct for the next few days. I think we should help parents to give to their children. They should look up to them and both may have pride in each other. I look at a lot of the whites on the plane and I’m questioning their motives for going to Haiti. I’m judging them because of their color—wondering which are “missionaries”—or whatever. Then I see how much I am “one of them” and I’m stuck questioning my own motives again. Questioning my thoughts—questioning how skin color can mean so much. My mind is racing. Part of me wanted to turn around and go home—part of me wanted to sell the ticket—part of me wants to cry—part of me...all of me wants to learn.

It's amazing that Rosemarie Chierichi happened to be sitting next to me. What a small world. And she thinks Sebastien may be her cousin...? I feel so different all of a sudden, yet not very able to communicate fully. I'll have to work on that.

I'm here. I'm at Sebastien's---it's so beautiful here. God---there's so much to say and it's only the first evening. I can start with the fact that I'm listening to crickets, fogs in the distance, writing by candlelight as there is no electricity tonight. The sky is crystal clear---I spent about five hours in a bar with Georges---who picked me up and is extremely nice. We talked and talked in French and English about life---himself---everything. Then at this bar---I had strawberry juice---the place "Guess Who" was definitely nowhere I wanted to be---it wasn't fitting my stereotype---nor was Georges cell phone, etc. But then I told myself to relax---to not judge so quickly---to not classify everyone there as a bourgeois that didn't care---So I met a musician that said he was famous and we shared talking about the beauty of creating for oneself because if you create for anyone else---you're selling yourself short. And we spoke some of perspective---he said for him there is today---the present. The future is all in your head. How can we say what affects our actions will have in that we don't know what tomorrow will bring. He has a point but yet my insides want to fight it. No, we have to have long-term thinking, planning, but at the same time aren't we spending our lives thinking about tomorrow, the next step, etc.? We do think long-term it's there..we just don't think about the right things maybe. So, then there's Sebastien---he's really quite amazing---very bright, and he knows it, very in your face as Georges said, almost like a coked up brilliant person...but all this and so intriguing---we've already talked about so much. We talked about the extreme social divisions, but how they exist on every level---there's always one loner...and how lean is monopolized and "sharecropping" land-tenure landlord situations are setup. We talked about human development---how the brain just might develop between 0-3 and malnutrition makes them not as bright..I'm not sure if that doesn't anger me---but I wanted to keep my mind open different worldview about the systems the incredible hoops one has to jump through...there's so much to think about. I'm so tired though. I think I'll have to sleep.

January 9th, 2001

I just awoke to the beautiful sunshine. I had a very interesting dream,. I dreamt I had gone somewhere---I think it was here in Haiti but Katie, Maria, Tina, Nora and Matt had come , too. They were to stay the first week with me, but they (the girls) decided to leave early. I was getting so upset---so scared...and I didn't know where Matt was. I wonder what this all means. Maybe a reflection of last weekend and going to New York.. Maybe it's my fears playing out in dreams.

Today's so beautiful. We'll see what it brings. Georges is coming to pick me up and bring me to the CDRH office... I should call people then and organize what's going on. Danne Ogou is Sebastien's maid and I was talking with her---trying to talk really, but I'm not so sure if we understood each other completely. I really am not sure how to talk and do things without being stupid and demeaning, whatever. I'm riding on a weird roller coaster up and down, shy and not shy..What do I say?

It's almost 10:30 and I'm waiting for Georges—Things do go slowly here.

January 9th (pm)

Walking...drumbeats in the distance—mansions around followed by shacks. A boy sitting by a fire, man standing in the doorway—wondering who I am and why I am there—suspicion on both sides—regretfully. Darkness here on Pelerin—overlooking the city—hearing shouts in the distance—masses. Again, sitting in candlelight. Nannan purrs. Cows...beeps...crickets.

I walked down the main highway day-during “lunch” and felt so bizarre. I was the only white—everyone looked with harried expressions. A woman shouted something from a bus.. not in a friendly way, with a look in her eye. Then men passed—one said something—then they all laughed. Some smiled, many scoughed. I've never felt so out of place and the fumes poured around black clouds but women sat there all day, everyday selling their bottles—candy—chicken....I saw one blonde woman and wondered “what's she doing here..she must be rich, a tourist-lives in Petionville. I just heard a frantic child screaming in the distance. A crash-then silence. I wonder what it was. No one will ever know. It's everywhere, violence—but we expect it more when they're poor. You know, “It just goes with the territory”

I met the woman , Mona from Assets today and they're very excited for me to come to Bellefontaine on the 19th, after Fondwa. But your know I can't figure these people out. They're doing great things-like Sebastian—god he's doing, trying so much and works so hard, but they have something disconcerting about them at the same time. The “superiority” seems to be there somehow. I mean Sebastian actually thinks that many Haitians just might be “slow” and just not able to comprehend “perspective” or whatever. I mean, Jesus, it's our way of seeing the world they might not comprehend, but our way is not the “right way”. I don't think we're listening enough. We're way to quick to decide that, well because these people are peasants they don't know anything about our world—they couldn't understand...

But you know what? We don't understand their world either. We're just as naïve, and it's our world that is destroying more things—we just have the privilege of not feeling the results yet. We can just pass the shit on to the people living in the cardboard houses. So, there re times I'm sitting there wondering...how can they treat Danne like that. She lives here at the house, all the time—no family—isolated. I guess—illiterate, ordered around. Staying in a not so great part f the house. But maybe I don't have the whole story I don't want to judge, but it's awfully hard not to. And Mona going on about how she filled out college applications for her daughter—she's fucking 18 right—it's her life—what is this “we applied to Princeton, Yale...” But it's great re. Everyone seems to know everyone else—so tight knit, maybe because they're the small “elite”. Yet, they speak of more elite?

So, tomorrow I leave with Sebastian and David to the south to join the training camp. I think I will stay until the 13th then go directly Fondwa. It's nice here, but I want to get immersed—have my freedom without being afraid to wonder around the city.. It's not like anything you've ever seen. Really not...and I was in the better areas of Delmas—not the slims. I'm getting tired and we're leaving early

Oh, and I'm not afraid of the hole in my jeans anymore.

January 10-Ready to leave for Jacmel

La richesse: In the Hotel de Villa- so austere-dying to leave it. Something in me feels very confined. I do need to get out of the city-be more independent, not staying with Sebastien, although it's great. Not talking about flood prevention, they're running circles—but where to start. Earthquakes, floods, what about everyday life first?

I'm feeling ill staying in this hotel. I need to be more assertive. Really, I'm feeling caged and I hat having to be cautious, afraid , separated from the majority of people. If I come back to PAP- I will spend the money to stay at the hostel-but it's probably the same. I think my skin color delineates me from the rest of the crowd. But I want to break through tat-I feel as if maybe I need some guidance-I'm not sure what I'm supposed to expect-but I don't want to be sheltered-you know. Tennis courts, banana pancakes-Evian. This is not what Haiti is to most, but the fact that it is to some—that's what matters. Waiting. I'm not good at that. How can one escape when all of the people controlling are the minority and most of them couldn't hive a damn about the rest? How would I live if I was here? Where would I send my kids? How can I explain that I want to live with a family—if I can give them money instead of some hotel that,

I'm sure has enough. Look at Georges—a very nice man, but yet he says “I have no money”—travels all the time, wears Oakley's and pays \$250 US to have the lenses fit...How much do I do this? Isn't this what we're teaching---mass consumerism? The only way to go. Maybe I'm naïve, in fact I know I am—but there has to be something else out there. I want to be in Fondwa right now. Whatever that means.

I'm an impatient person. Don't like to be in other people's control.

Jacmel, Jan 10th

So we came. Be true to your convictions. We went, after waiting forever to Cayes-Jacmel, a small village which is so beautiful. Crashing oceans, trees—beautiful colors. It was so interesting to see the immense change in vegetation between here and PAP. Really, it was crazy...there was no vegetation no trees, until we approached Jacmel. Supposedly, this area had always been targeted as special “zones” to protect in some ways. There look to be quite a few old, dying attempts at terracing, but there's really not much. So, we talked—Sebastien talks a hell of a lot, but he's so passionate too. Paradoxical, just like the country. I really love it here in Jacmel. It's so much softer here—PAP is really harsh, mean in a lot of ways. I'm dying to do my “thing” but at the same time I'm really seeing how my patience and nonjudgmental approach allows me to learn. I'm learning Creole---thought it was French. I think I'm going to stay with a woman and her family from Cayes-Jacmel. I hope I can. I think it would really help to get started early.

Anyways, Sebastien and I had a beer, Prestige (?) which is really good, but we talked about so many interesting things. He had a lot to say about social change---the situation here, what the US has done here. Opportunities I may have here...the type of people we are. Me? I'm being more patient and have discovered that I underestimate people because I'm in such a rush. Like David, he has a lot of interesting things to say about disaster relief. And it's all so related to water. I hope I can talk to people about how these issues affect the water sources first. All of them----and we can't survive without this. We're made of it and I want to understand at what level the Haitian people understand this. What do they think the problems are? Where are they coming from? Do they know what to do? Illness?

So, I'm not staying with Suzette...it was too late when we finished. I'm sharing the hotel with Gabriel. She's a really nice woman who works at CDRH.

Today, I was kneeling in the grass and I heard a buzzing near my head. I looked up and there was a hummingbird right in front of my face—looking at me curiously. It was so adorable. Tomorrow, I will start doing tests, talking with people, etc. I'm getting more confident as the time flies by.

Jan 11th Cayes Jacmel

I'm so lost right now. I really at some point today felt really good. But now, I feel like there's no reason for me to be here. I'm not a specialist—I'm not helping these people. I'm just a 'blan' who is laughed at, called a racist, advanced upon. I can't escape it. They look at me as if I have no reason to be here. And they're right. What is this? Some way for me to "explore" myself? How is it that our "studies" are so demeaning and what am I doing other than doing that more? They gave me food and I didn't want it, but I have no choice. The only reason they would be interested—men at least---in talking to me is because I'm a tall blonde. I feel hated and I'm hating myself for being here. I was talking with this guy---hiking through the forests with Lissage and this guy and I thought we were having a very interesting conversation. Suddenly, he starts coming on to me...asking about Matt. Why and American? And then he likes me, etc. I finally say enough—I've already explained...please stop. Then he tells me when we stop that I can take a child home with me. I say no, I don't want a child. He says that it's the color of his skin that's not adorable. That I have talked a lot and revealed how I think. That he studies psychology and all American's are racist. I'm racist, there are no exceptions. I just don't know what I can do. I couldn't keep from crying while I forced food down my throat. Who's the mean one here? He asks. I guess me. Then I watch as little kids throw all their trash to the coast. Just piling it up—but who really gives a fuck? You know. Then someone just came—they're inviting me into their house and it was very nice. Welcoming. But then again—I just gave kids some gifts and it was crazy. Some, like Raymond were very sweet as is Janita. But I guess like all kids—they were crazy and then, many of them very nice. But at the same time, I feel like the rich white girl who gives gifts. At the same time—I think if I gave them to the parents, they would disappear...Then again, there's something really nice how they're sharing and giving things away—no fights. And yet again, a woman wanted to give her child to me again. How must this make the child feel about herself? And she's this beautiful little girl right next to me---so sweet. I guess like my moods are paradoxical, it goes with what Sebastien was telling me----opposites at each point. I'm so conscious of myself. I don't know what I'm doing---well I know, I'm staying at Jacelyn's—the sister of Gerald. And I know that tomorrow I'm going to Marigot to test more

water. And the mayor's office tomorrow...So, I should prepare. Jeanita made me some corn meal with sugar and coconut milk—it was very good. So now I'm feeling better again. But at the same time, I just don't know what to say...I guess I'm learning. I started talking about how I use condoms when I have sex because I don't want children and it's the women who end up taking care of the children..I'm tired.

Jan 12

Why would it be better for kids to come with me? To them—well it would be. They would eat, have clothes, have school, have water, medicine—it's not here. I thought things were similar, but they're not. I think the sense of self is much different. These kids do a lot, yet there isn't enough to do---with everything there's such an opposite side. In school , they're learning French, English, Spanish, but have they really learned?

For each test I have learned that I need to ask an authority. There are the responsibilities for each. When I fist tried to test the water—someone came to tell me that I really needed to talk to the mayor, community counsel, etc. We marched through the forest yelling to ask for permission for seeing the water. Having a role, or position...

Now, I feel like I have been in a wonderful paradise. All day I hiked around with a man from Cayes-Jacmell who was so nice. I got his address so I can give it to Stuart for his list. What he is trying to do is so wonderful. It is so similar to what I would want to do. He's studied psychology of children and has organized a grassroots organization for artisans, cooking, agriculture, water capture. All sorts of things. But he doesn't only want to do that. He wants to bring in people from the mountains who have nothing and he wants to give them as much as he can---community support. It's really so wonderful to meet people who are like this. They do have something in a place where it is really hard to get anything and all he wants to do is give back. I hope to help him as much as I can...and staying last night with Jacqueline was very interesting... Think I'm learning that really doing what you say and really saying what you think is best. Lafond and I were talking about politeness and how I have been feeling a little lost. He told me how it was just a learning experience all of it. And that people can tell if I'm trying. Then I ate mangoes under palm trees with all these wide-eyed kids around. I hate to think of how many of them don't believe in what they are capable of. Someone needs to let kids know how wonderful they are. That's why I like spending time with them—responding to their curiosity, showing they can do the things...Then we returned after he had given me food that the women of the village were preparing for the group meeting---just as a way for them to help out. So, I sat by the beach

testing more water and writing. Then these little boys came up to me and I showed them my tape recorder. They were so excited to hear their own voice. They start singing and drumming carnival songs. It was so wonderful. They laughed and I laughed. We could communicate...Children are so open and curious—life has not worn on them and it doesn't have to wear on us—It's when you meet those people that haven't let things get them down, but have pushed through and given, loved, accepted others. That's when we open our lives, our hearts and our minds to new people and ideas. I think that's when you're "successful"—that weird word that we're so obsessed with in America.

So, then I went to Jacmel and went to the artisan houses---and again met a really nice guy, Dieucibon, who is a painter. He showed me around and we talked about being artists and how it is hard---and it makes me want to create. We talked about voodoo as he showed me a vacuous painting he had done about the strength of Nago. How real it all is...he said if I returned I could better understand voodoo—and we also talked about the Peace Corps volunteers, what they do, what he's learned. I said I would come back tomorrow—and that's what I want to do. I will, therefore, go because I said I would.

Then I went with Harold and Eric to Cayes-Jacmel and they dropped me off at the beach and a girl, Constante, came with me. My God it is the most beautiful beach that I've ever seen. And she had such a wonderful disposition. All of the people I have met have been like that today. Contrasting very much to yesterday-where I felt like I never have before. I felt like someone was hating me and he said "I'm psychoanalyzing you, you've said a lot, you're racist" and I couldn't keep the tears in. . I couldn't communicate and I realized that the entire conversation had been like that-a person I'd rather never see again. I've never wanted to know what people thought of me more than I do here. I know a lot of them don't like me. That's not even a question and I know that they don't have any idea who or what I am. Some of the time I feel like I'm talking bullshit—I'm holding back. Because I'm afraid of asking what I want to know, what do you think I'm really doing here? What do you think my motives are? What are your ideas of me because I'm this white girl who obviously has a lot, right? At the same time, I want to ask myself the same things.

I played in the ocean with some young boys swimming naked around curious, wanting to play. I think I'm breaking through some barriers in my own head. And am realizing that acceptance is not something that is immediate, it's something that we have to earn. And if someone gives something to us—we give back what we can. I'm lost in this trap—am I helping them or are they helping me? I think the problem is it's both.

And now I'm here in a woman's house—we talked politics, then listened to an Italian singing French songs, in Haiti. With two sleeping children on the couch.

Education. That's what's most important to all of them. That's what's most important to me—to learn and to share with others the things I have learned and that I think are worth sharing. Generosity...that's important too. To give to others without hesitation. To not be afraid of being myself...to speak what I think, but to listen because people surprise you—in good ways and bad. But I think I can learn from both. I don't want to be “blan” and I'm becoming “Tara” to more and more people. That means something because it's not just a name—it's who I am. A person, each of us a living, breathing person that only knows how to be themselves—if we're lucky. Some don't even know that.

Tomorrow

Call edrix

**basketball w/kids (?)

*Present results that I have to mayor-get address so I may send my whole report in summer

*Take another sample of robinettes in town

*Do soil analysis for soil near banana and mango trees, agricultural fields...

*Tell results for Raymond also

*Give gift to Suzette for her children

*Change money so I can buy more artwork—have him describe more about painting

Jan 13

So, I feel like crying again. But this time it's because I have to leave Cayes-Jacmel. Today was such a wonderful day. I wrote my report—taught at least 20 community leaders about how they can protect their water source, then I talked and played with kids. James climbed a tree for me and they opened a fresh coconut for me. I drank the milk from the coconut while Christbita made fresh juice. I played with the boys this morning—we played basketball at the “school” I was so wonderful-I felt so accepted as I spoke French and the kids spoke kreyol. They were joking with me, asking me if I could stay with them again—when I was coming back, etc. They made me present, brought me food...The grandmother and people who liked suspiciously at me welcomed me and looked as if they didn't want me to leave. When I spoke to the seminar—everyone really listened-they were concerned about what I had found and according to Harold-they've already started planning. It's one of the first times I have really felt my impact somewhere. And

although I don't know as much as I should—I know enough to help these people at least to educate them about their own health and their children. People were coming up to me left and right asking what I had found and wanting to know what they can do...On man, older and with this wonderful smile, came up to me and asked me something in Kreyol. I couldn't quite figure it out as he held my hands in his. Then someone told me that he had asked—since I was studying medicine—he had a sickness in the head and could I tell him what it was—I was touched and almost wish I had even tried, just not to let him down. Afterwards, Raymond convinced me to come swimming with them—They have no care, these kids, yet at the same time, they have all the hardships. They are the ones that have to deal with all of this disease, poverty...upheaval. It made me want to cry when Raymond had a condom and told me they use it as a ball for football. He asked me if we had those too. He wanted me to explain it to him...I don't think I did. I wanted to stop right there and teach all of the community especially the children and the women about sex, respect, AIDS, life...The life that I know about and I want them to show me more of the life they know about.

I felt and feel like crying right now. Because I don't know if I'll ever see these kids again The ones that drew beautiful picture for me, played with my hair and leaned against my shoulder. I miss my little sisters. Here I have learned so much in five days. I've fallen apart and frown together—probably to happen again I realize that I have been so lucky. I have done and lived so many lives and I'm only 21. I guess I am paradoxes. Maybe that's why there's such confusion inside. I need to earn things more, I'm leaning patience, not to judge quickly and that difference do count. I've learned that stereotypes hurt—people are very different and culture have many similarities—but we are very different too.

Now I have arrived in Fondwa. It's really a luxury place. The people seem nice—I feel confident. I'm learning to decide too. It's beautiful ere in a different way from Cayes-Jacmel. Although I haven't yet seen it by day.

Tomorrow, I'll go to church—singing I hope. We're international here. Another interesting experience. Goodnight. Bonne nuit.

Jan 14

I'll right more later—but Edrix and I just went for an evening walk—went to the orphanage and I sang with some of the girls. They taught me some kreyol songs. Anyways, Edrix showed me many medicinal plants and I want to jot them down—this could be something very important for preserving land—getting money for Haitians, etc. Maybe even, there are some people at UVA who are interested in chemical makeup of these plants...

The visiting Cubans and Roberto (Agroforestry) and Simone (animal vet), the Cubans who are working here in Fondwa just explained their project and what they are doing here. It was amazing how much I agree with their philosophy and approach here in Fondwa and in Cuba. My thoughts are racing as to how I might work with them one day...International agroforestry and ecological restoration (IAER)—would be a good nonprofit, eh? Anyway, then we sang Cuban, French, Dutch and American songs. It's been great here in Fondwa—the only thing that is even slightly perturbing is the American couple here—they're just not overly friendly—rather antisocial and seem to give me a disapproving look...I won't let it get to me though. It's me being concerned about what other people think—oh well, you can't like everyone. Everyone else here is wonderful. Unrestricted, able to enjoy themselves without feeling stupid. I should learn that—I will not decide not to do things because I feel stupid-relax, enjoy...no embarrassment—that's a silly concept anyways.

Today felt like a good day—we went to church, which wasn't all I expected but the unrestrained voices of the people of Fondwa was beautiful to hear. If I was a preacher—I would want people to feel like they could really rejoice in my church. Just like I'd like people to feel like they can rejoice in my presence. Sometimes I worry about overpowering people---but at the same time I feel like speaking out—being active and learning is basic to living...So, I won't let it bother me.

I went to the orphanage today—would like to go back and play with the kids more. So loving and accepting, nonjudgmental. We sang songs in kreyol, they put flowers in my hair and they took some pictures.

How much am I growing? Good question.

I'm almost afraid that I'm going to find something that I'd love to do before Matt does. I want him to find for himself, not follow me. But at the same time—I don't know if I would “follow” him. Ideally, neither will happen, but how likely is that? It is in our control, however. I'm not sure how much I've consciously thought of him on this trip—it's there, but so are so many other things going on in my mind. I wonder if he's been thinking of me—wonder what it has been—where we will grow. When and how...

I don't like wondering because things in my mind are endless and never come to a resolution without action of some sort—but yet it can enrich the wiseness of my actions—now I will read some 'Che'.

I forgot to mention that yesterday we met with a youth group too—which was very interesting. We asked questions as they asked back. Women definitely have a specific role here—but supposedly they have “the same rights”. But still you see these women with many kids, the men have left and they track care of everything—that doesn't seem like “social equality” to me. In

many ways it's about empowerment, but at the same time, it may be that the profession of mother is more important of respected that in the states. I think my mom is right women and men alike who decide to make family their business should be paid by the state of the community for gratitude. After all, that will cut down on the amount of people on welfare, even kids 'causing trouble'.

Jan 15

7 thousand people—one small clinic.

There are so many nationalities here—it's really amazing. I'm wondering if this stay in Fondwa is not too culturally isolated. We're in the big white community center—and the rest...Haiti is beautiful and I like many things here, but at the same time I'm missing that spiritualism that everyone talks of. I don't feel exposed to that, maybe because that takes time trust, etc. I do feel that I am missing home—although I felt a community forming some in Cayes-Jacmel. I enjoyed being right in the middle of things living the same lifestyle as those living here. But I'm also being exposed (or exposing myself) to a lot of very interesting people—American, French, Dutch, Cuban, and Haitian. We just had a dance party with six of us. Joyce and I had a really great conversation today—We talked about so any interesting things—basically about ourselves. I like her a lot, and would like to try and keep in touch—ideas are important. It's so interesting to see how many intersecting cultures there are here—very opposites. Today, Thomas and I took a long walk—hiking in the rain to Minik's house to see the pigsty—Tomorrow, I think I'll go back to the orphanage in the afternoon, finish my tests during the day and sit in on the Cubans' seminar with the groupmen...I'm very interested in hearing more about their farming systems...

Jan 16

I slept a lot last night, but not so well because I had bad dreams that made me tense. I dreamt about fighting with Matt because he was with other girls...the same old thing. I think maybe by writing these things down I may be able to clear my subconscious and maybe my conscious of these things—to be able to trust each other and not be possessive of one another—will make us both happier. Then I dreamt I was in a play where some women, a mother, was going to kill her son to get his money and because the son had done something bad to her. I was pleading and sobbing with her as she was going to stab him—it was supposed to be a knife, but was really a comb. I wonder if this is reflective of something I'm thinking about here—about how children are treated how there are too many of them and many of them don't have people that really care about them.

I'm really missing home right now, maybe it's because I don't feel as useful here as in Cayes-Jacmel. But I think it's mostly because I want to be with my friends, in my house, at school. I don't think there's as much as I expected here for me to do—etc, but I've also learned a hell of a lot—I think. It's not all synthesized yet. I definitely feel more attaché to Cayes-Jacmel than to here...again maybe it was the circumstances—being completely immersed...I'm moving up to Joyce's room today—and I think I'm going to go to see Chet and his projects in the next town..I want to hike...and maybe go back to the orphanage too. It's great how much a part of life singing and dancing is...in meetings, bringing people together.

Jan 17

The sun may shine

Smiles sincere?

I feel understanding, clearness but longing. Not the same as before. Needing, wanting to be back—feeling surrounded by people...Counting pills which equals the days two more from today—but with today equals three. How many languages? I don't like the new people and I'm not quite sure why—there's some weird feeling. The horse struggles with hundreds of pounds---the rest, rest on their heads---the future on their shoulders. Falling earth from years of slavery. Injustice is forever, forgiveness is rare. “We”—reenact the feelings through misunderstanding, ignorance. A baby cries like the chickens ready for slaughter—tonight's dinner—keeping the fashion while poverty is everywhere. Beautiful blue-phalo on school children's swinging arms and grandmother's with kilos. Foreigners abound—what are they doing—who can we trust? No one really knows. I'm bored...people sit around so mach at this center==other places, I don't know...

Jan 17th

I have so much. I feel guilty when I talk to Haitians. They can't travel, they live in shacks—education is a minimum and yet they still give. The “shacks” are beautiful and I don't think they feel shame when they invite you in. They shouldn't, I think our culture would want them to. Pride is a funny thing, yet quite important . I meet kids at APF my age, then I see the house they live in, the size of half of one floor of my house—for five children, a cousin, grandmother, grandfather and mother. What happens when it rains? We cry if there's not enough air conditioning---what about clean water, food enough for your children, and communication. I don't think I can comprehend their world and likewise, I

don't think they could comprehend mine. I live in a very large world—other's don't' in my world I see very little obstacles. In tiers, few options. I don't think I'm comprehending how hard life is...because it's never been hard for me. It's me who feels ashamed for what I have, but I'm not sure if that's the right reaction either. I'm a transient...how long do I want to be one? A white horse walks towards me—out of the sunset. We don't know each other, but we still say hello. I don't think she trusts me as she canters away—her leash dangles behind—and on the hill I still remain.

I think I have seen the desert and it was in the ghosts of the rainforest. I didn't know her either, but she spoke to me. We didn't understand each other. She is vulnerable but cannot cry like I do. We haven't been raped, but have felt used...powerless and dull. But we don't give up—don't ask us why. There's something about solitude—it gets lonely. It's nice to give without forgetting who you are. Stones break and they build, we are synonyms. I'd like to build without erasing what others before me have made. Not all paintings are beautiful—only the ones from our soul. They talk—we can communicate. That is the key. But different keys match different doors—and I prefer ones without locks or better yet, without doors, or even, better yet, without walls.

Physical growth is inhibited, but how about inside? Are there limits? Who made them and do I choose to listen? Maybe, maybe not.. I don't have to answer do I---It's nice to say hello—restructured, detached from our script. Even if the lines are nice—they aren't ours—whose are they? Even used she is beautiful, isn't she? Sienna—a beautiful color. She longs to be caressed. She is lonely, I think. Maybe she's tired of endless fertility, her work is done. I would be tired. I would want myself back even if they didn't want to return.

Jan 18

This guesthouse has an odd feeling of cultural tensions and probably misunderstandings. The sisters want to maintain control—and others want to be free to do some of their own things. I miss the children of Cayes-Jacmel. I feel sorry for Gerdine, Franz, Joyce for having to work through all this, but I admire them at the same time. It's too bad that this is going to become a tourism place—I hope it's well controlled, otherwise all work will be destroyed. Plans and schedules, yet nothing to do.

I've just come from the orphanage and I just feel like crying. They're so innocent—so gentle, but they're living in such complete and total poverty. I realize how many kids there are—with nothing but their smiling faces—as they are abused, beaten, disregarded. I feel sick just being there—it smells of urine, one young girl was naked and crying because her leg was horribly

infected because she had been burned. I drew with them and sang—they smiled and so did I, but now I want to cry. The girls come up and just want you to give something—I want to , but it's not the right thing to teach them—they think that strangers are the ones who give—I don't know what the thing to do is...It's a complicated subject, I have to think more. Singing is a great thing for the kids—and adults. They're not afraid to sing out. "If you want to sing out, sing out" What is the best thing to do? I don't think there is one answer, but you have to be yourself. That's what I can give—honesty and trust—and nothing is fast. We expect things to come so quickly—but waiting is a way to grow, to be sure what you want and to be true to yourself. I want to be true to who I am and I think these past days I have been. I haven't been afraid to show who I am inside because I so want to show here that I'm not what they assume of my outside. I think I've done this pretty well, as best as I can right now. I feel like smiles have become genuine where I go...I want that to continue.

I don't think I trust enough because I feel like I need to protect myself from injury. But by doing that I am closing off a beauty that is within me—that comes from acceptance of myself and of others (neither one is more important than the other_

A few nights ago, I had two dreams about my birthday—two very opposite dreams. One was full of happiness, luxury and surprise. The other mistrust, sadness.

Things pass so quickly. I am in *Porte au Prince* again. This time in an extremely wealthy house. I cried leaving *Fondwa*. I will miss everyone a lot and I really got the feeling that they will miss me too. I got big hugs from everyone and smiles—I think I did more than I thought. And I think we communicated more than I thought. My fears of religion are dwindling. It's an irrational stereotype that has merit but is very prejudiced of me. There are good people and bad and it is not a "black" or "white" issue—it is always gray. There is something magical about this place, but I don't think I'll truly realize it until I have left. My heart is full-I am lucky to meet such people knowing them makes me proud in who I am and in who they are. On this trip I am seeing so many forms of "developments" or aid. "Helping" is not an easy thing and I think it is often paradoxical. I resolve to search for good in an out...and I know that can be found most anywhere. Caring in the way you know best is important. I don't feel like I'm hiding right now—I feel the opposite, not dulled like I had been before. Afraid...Maybe it is the "wild woman" inside, as the book says. But I think it's an acceptance of uncertainty—of not being strong, of not being accepted and of letting all those things be okay. It's true that I need to choose my battles, but not everything has a battle to be fought. Kids can teach you that. Haitians have taught me that time is a relative thing and something to be cherished and used too. It really isn't ever wasted unless your attitude makes it that way. We create our own 'world', our own

perception as it were. I feel healthy right now and I think I can stay that way. Stress is something I create for myself and sometimes give to others.

Today I went from a urine-stained mattress and runny noses to an Italian leather couch and I think I can learn very much from both of them. I too, can share who I am. It hurts to leave. But I know a part of me stays and they come too. I can make promises, ones that I keep—they are beautiful. I mustn't forget smiles—as I hope they don't forget mine. I have a lot of wonderful things to do. And I do want to cry. Genuineness. Openness. Touch and feeling. If it doesn't click, then no big deal.

Instincts are everything—but yet they too can be wrong. Just listen a little before you decide.

Think for a while—take your time, don't commit.

I am a woman and a girl. And I miss things and people and always will. They have made me, piece by piece—Cake is good, but so are mangos. There is no real better or best.

I am alone within myself, but that is the only place.

Jan 19th

So, oddly enough, here I am where I first began. At Sebastien's in the candlelight. But so much has happened since. Today, I went to Bel Fonten—really, the most rural place I've been. Somehow, after hiking for an hour or so for water sources—I ended up in a discussion of voodoo which was amazing. So spiritual, yet not offensive, and I wonder why that is... Then, as we have 9 people in the SUV and we bound through rivers, I think of so many things—as I try to understand some kreyol. Tonight—I ate chevre and drank champagne—danced and spoke of art, perception and light... Such different worlds—It's hard to believe that I transitioned from one to the other so quickly. I'm not sure how to feel. Francois was really nice—quite an eccentric artist, but interesting all the same.

I'm tired and tipsy. Tomorrow...

Jan 20th

Last night I dreamt of different scenarios after coming home—I couldn't explain what I had felt here—and I was grumpy. That's all I can really remember—luckily not reality.

In a plane again and feeling healthier—not rushed, not angry. I have a lot to do when I get back—promises to keep but it isn't overwhelming. Sebastien is really a wonderful person—all the people I worked with—almost all of them at least. Il y a partout des gens religieux—mais he

ne veux pas les judges. Love and care comes from all walks of life—all cultures, all religions or lack thereof. I don't think everything will really hit me until I get back. I miss everyone— Everyone asks me when I'm coming back to Haiti—and I don't know—if I will at all. Throughout, my mind has been racing. Summer work, living—international al with travel...I don't know what I feel like stepping into . I don want to work with kids, but I don't feel like committing to anything right now. It's nice to have open options...maybe modeling too....

Jan 22

I guess it's my birthday and I don'ts know what to feel. I feel part of me getting down—being back here. But I think once I start writing tomorrow, I will feel better. I learned so much in Haiti—I must not forget and I must continue these things—working towards them. Tomorrow I'm going to make myself feel special—in a quality way. I do feel at peace with myself and that is something to remember—to listen inside and show outside. I want to paint.