

Booker T. and Me: a sabbatical year in Ranquitte, Haiti

Scenes from a 2006/2007 visit by

Andy, Anna, and Thad Long

A glimpse of experiences and projects
made possible through
the generous support of
Northern Kentucky
University,
its faculty, and our family and
friends.




And you may ask yourself: “Well, How did I get here?”

- ▶ I'd intended to take my sabbatical to South-East Asia – to expiate the sins of my ancestors. But life is a sequence of actions with unintended consequences. One day you go to church, and Scott Mandl from Richmond, KY is talking about the Christian Flights International (CFI) mission to Haiti: a few years later, you're there.
- ▶ CFI (and NKU) gave me the opportunity to – well, help to expiate the sins of my ancestors! Just different, and unfamiliar, sins.... It also provided our family the opportunity for a wonderful, life-changing experience.



Image from CIA Factbook

Objectives and Subjectives

- ♦ Why go to Haiti?
 - ♦ Lots of problems, most of them related to environmental disasters, either impending or already in progress.
 - ♦ My interest in math in the environment. How can math help?
 - ♦ Were we prepared?
 - ♦ French speakers
 - ♦ Thad age 4, pre-K
 - ♦ My Peace Corps and French-system educational experience.
 - ♦ Anna with medical experience
 - ♦ Relatively fearless....
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Let's Go! We Were Warmly Welcomed



Ranquitte seemed idyllic

- ♦ Vegetation was lush;
- ♦ Ranquitte is remote, isolated (which I like);
- ♦ People were very kind and welcoming to us;
- ♦ We quickly began to adapt to the climate, which was beautiful (albeit hot) in August;
- ♦ Thad had friends (lots of girls!) to play with, and seemed happy; and
- ♦ I found a Scrabble partner:



Education was a major draw for me:



I was looking forward to working with young students like these.

- ♦ I would work with the students and teachers on educational issues having to do with the environment.
- ♦ I would teach math in the High School.
- ♦ I would develop web-based materials having an environmental theme.

But It Wasn't All Wine and Roses...

- ◆ We were treated somewhat hostilely by some Haitians, particular young men.
- ◆ School-aged children were often rude, surly, and undisciplined, lacking respect for any authority.
- ◆ Thaddeus was once whacked on the head by a young adult male while walking down a road; an American visitor had a stone thrown at her by a young boy.
- ◆ I began to wonder about Haiti: the rudeness seemed endemic, and there seemed to be a “culture of indebtedness” here – the word “merci” didn't exist.

Still, there were positives:

- School was coming up, and I would be teaching the junior and senior level linear algebra classes.
- The environmental remediation and agriculture program appeared to be working well. That had been another strong draw for me.
- Anna was working in the clinic, and making progress there.
- Thad remained happy!



With George Derval, now Mayor of Ranquitte, and Director of CFI's Ag Program.



But the schools were chaotic...

- ♦ Classrooms were overcrowded (70 students in a classroom for 35). Students had no materials.
- ♦ While instruction was nominally in French, all the students spoke Haitian instead (as it should be, in my opinion). Translation: no one understood me.
- ♦ There was no discipline. In Togo, “Travail – Discipline – Succès”. In Haiti, there was neither travail, nor discipline, nor succès.
- ♦ Many of the students were undernourished. Turns out it's hard to learn, or behave, when you're hungry.


... and the educational system was worse.

- ♦ The curriculum of Haiti is the (old, out-dated) curriculum of Paris. When I arrived and took up the curriculum for the math classes I was to teach, I was astonished to discover that it was the same curriculum that I'd used while a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo, 20 years before. In the upper grades, high-stakes testing reigns supreme.
- ♦ Education often consists of the memorization of generally useless "facts", such as the "fact" that there are 4 billion people in the world. Elementary students shout these "facts" at the tops of their lungs.

I am not alone in my assessment:

- In the late 1800s, “...the government recruited a cadre of French teachers...[who] brought with them not only the classical standards of French public education but also its rigidities. Their influence was destined to carry over into the next century the dead hand of a system too inflexible and pedantic for even the mother country.” (*Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*, by Robert and Nancy Heinl (revised and expanded by Michael Heinl), p. 258.)

Education to the Point of Uselessness

- ♦ I suddenly suffered “deja vu all over again”: it was nearly the same, sad situation I'd encountered in Togo.
 - ♦ Students are educated to be faux Parisians, without any Paris in sight. There are no jobs for the graduates, and few can go on to university.
 - ♦ Once “educated”, however, the students refuse to return to the land – they won't help their families on the farms anymore. The graduates tend to go to the cities and make trouble.
 - ♦ Education becomes a problem, rather than a solution.
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Then, a Beacon of Light and Hope:

I picked up a battered book, and read things like this:

“In fact, one of the saddest things I saw... was a young man, who had attended some high school, sitting down in a one-room cabin, with grease on his clothing, filth all around him, and weeds in the yard and garden, engaged in studying a French grammar.”

-- Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*.

Twenty years since Togo for me, and same ol', same ol'... but Booker would have said **one hundred and twenty years** since Tuskegee, Alabama. Booker became my muse and mentor; a fellow traveller. I believe he wrote the book on how to do development in a place like Ranquitte.



Founder/
Creator of the
Tuskegee
Institute,
Tuskegee, AL

Washington Created the Tuskegee Institute



- ◆ “Founded in a one room shanty, near Butler Chapel AME Zion Church, thirty adults represented the first class - Dr. Booker T. Washington the first teacher. The founding date was July 4, 1881, authorized by House Bill 165.” -- from the [Tuskegee website](#).
- ◆ “I soon learned, however, that this money could be used only for the payment of the salaries of the instructors, and that there was no provision for securing land, buildings, or apparatus. The task before me did not seem a very encouraging one. It seemed much like making bricks without straw.”
-- BTW, *Up from Slavery*

The Students Became Booker's Straw:

- ◆ “The students had come from homes where they had had no opportunities for lessons which would teach them how to care for their bodies.... We wanted to teach the students how to bathe; how to care for their teeth and clothing.” -- BTW, *Up from Slavery*
- ◆ “The more we talked with the students, who were then coming to us from several parts of the state, the more we found that the chief ambition among a large proportion of them was to get an education so that they would not have to work any longer with their hands.” -- Ibid.
- ◆ “I determined to clear up some land so that we could plant a crop. When I explained my plan to the young men, I noticed that they did not seem to take to it very kindly. It was hard for them to see the connection between clearing land and an education.... [E]ach afternoon after school I took my axe and led the way to the woods. When they saw that I was not afraid or ashamed to work, they began to assist with more enthusiasm.” -- Ibid.

Booker on “Book Learning”

- ◆ “Of one thing I felt more strongly convinced than ever, after spending this month in seeing the actual life of the coloured people, and that was that, in order to lift them up, something must be done more than merely to imitate New England education as it then existed.... To take the children of such people as I had been among for a month, and each day give them a few hours of mere book education, I felt would be almost a waste of time.”
- ◆ “[M]ost of our students came from the country districts, where agriculture in some form or other was the main dependence of the people.... Since this was true, we wanted to be careful not to educate our students out of sympathy with agricultural life.... We wanted to give them such an education as would fit a large proportion of them to be teachers, and at the same time cause them to return to the plantation districts and show the people there how to put new energy and new ideas into farming, as well as into the intellectual and moral and religious life of the people.”

Booker on Haitian (NKU?) Development



- ◆ “From the very beginning, at Tuskegee, I was determined to have the students do not only the agricultural and domestic work, but to have them erect their own buildings. My plan was to have them, while performing this service, taught the latest and best methods of labour, so that the school would not only get the benefit of their efforts, but the students themselves would be taught to see not only utility in labour, but beauty and dignity; would be taught, in fact, how to lift labour up from mere drudgery and toil, and would learn to love work for its own sake. My plan was not to teach them to work in the old way, but to show them how to make the forces of nature--air, water, steam, electricity, horse-power--assist them in their labour.”
- ◆ Words even NKU could live by....



STARTING A NEW BUILDING.
Student masons laying the foundation in brick.

New Mission: Educate for Haiti, not for Paris.



Paris

Not Paris



- ◆ People in Haiti are starving, even **eating mud pies**. Basic sanitation, medical care, and health education are lacking.
- ◆ Everyone farms a little, but not very well; without sufficient concern for soil, marketing, crop rotation, insects, plant diseases, etc.
- ◆ Skilled laborers (e.g. welders, electricians) are hard to find. Meanwhile, there are not many jobs for high school graduates. [*French grammar, anyone?*]

My Ideal for Education in Ranquitte:

- ◆ Replace the current system of “education” with trade schools, ag schools, and with a limited “college-prep” track.
- ◆ Unfortunately, the “track record” is not good: “[President] Geffrard also tried to introduce, in association with his foundry, vocational training; but this proved to be another uphill battle, one that has lasted throughout Haitian history. Because by definition no member of the elite works with his hands, the idea affronted perceptions of education as strongly held in Haiti of the 1860s as a century later, and therefore failed.” -- *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*, by Robert and Nancy Heinl.
- ◆ It's a very hard sell, with either Haitian or CFI leadership.



“Cast Down Your Buckets Where You Are”: A Plan for Education on the CFI Campus

- ◆ “An over-riding goal... is that the campus should be a place of beauty, and a place where everything that is done is done in "the proper way". As a goal, we should see that every activity on campus is carried out so that it can be considered a demonstration for anyone in the community. The campus should be neat and clean. The agriculture taking place on campus should be carried out in the best possible way.” -- Campus Planning Committee, 2007
- ◆ “Furthermore, students should work on campus. They should be invested in the campus, so that they take care of it, and so that they feel proud of it. This is a time-honored tradition of Seventh Day Adventist schools.”
- ◆ “In Togo there is a strong tradition of apprenticeship, so that every [tradesman] is surrounded by as many as a dozen apprentices. Skills are transmitted in the most elegant and tried-and-true fashion: by hands-on learning.... By contrast, in Ranquitte there is an absolute dearth of skilled tradesmen... (beyond casket-makers); most have one or no apprentices.”



Before Education Comes Health and Sanitation

- ◆ “I taught the pupils to comb their hair, and to keep their hands and faces clean, as well as their clothing. I gave special attention to teaching them the proper use of the tooth-brush and the bath. In all my teaching I have watched carefully the influence of the toothbrush, and I am convinced that there are few single agencies of civilization that are more far-reaching.” BTW, UFS.
- ◆ Our friends in Ranquitte suffer many problems, but primary among them are issues of health, nutrition, and sanitation. Before they can be taught, they must be fed; before they can be taught, they must be cured of intestinal parasites; before they can be taught, they must have access to toilets; before they eat, they must wash their hands; after they eat, they must brush their teeth.
- ◆ I became an advocate of “education and health pre-requisites”, such as jobs for their parents.

A Guiding Principle: “Turning Problems into Solutions”

- ◆ Kitchen wastes become compost
- ◆ Dilapidated latrines become chicken coops (at left)
- ◆ Human waste, a sanitation nightmare, becomes a source of nutrients for trees (The “Arborloo”).
- ◆ Water rushing down a mountain becomes water for a nursery.



We Sought Out Projects Touching on Various Aspects of Development:

- ◆ Economics -- microloans, agriculture, industry
- ◆ The Environment -- moringa trees, nursery
- ◆ Education -- scholarships, professional development
- ◆ Health (e.g dentistry -->)
 - ◆ Water -- biosand filtration
 - ◆ Sanitation -- toilets
- ◆ Energy -- Solar Panels



Health and Sanitation: Arborloos and Dry Toilets



Both toilets turn waste into fertilizer;
turn problems into solutions.

Arborloos are simple and cheap family-level sanitation



- ◆ A shallow hole is dug (about a meter deep).
- ◆ A cement ring is poured, to keep water out of the hole, and to support the cover.
- ◆ The cement cover is the “toilet” -- it's a squatter!
- ◆ A structure is constructed to provide privacy.
- ◆ When the loo is full, the structures are moved to a new hole, and a tree is planted in the “fertile soil”.
- ◆ We provided the first six trees to our clients, from the nursery we created on campus.

Dry Toilets: Community Sanitation

“Sanitation and Occupation”

The impact of a toilet is not just better sanitation – fighting typhoid, intestinal worms, etc. – but also economic.

Building a toilet generates **jobs** – construction jobs; support jobs (e.g. feeding the workers); transportation jobs; and long-term jobs. People need to keep the toilets clean, and use the “products” of the toilets to produce more food – another benefit.



Economics: Food Dehydration – an industry for Ranquitte

We built a Solar Food Dehydrator;
and while we didn't succeed
(spectacularly), it is clear to us that
dried fruit is at the heart of what is a
future industry of Ranquitte:

- ◆ Mangos, papaya, and pineapples
abound (and when it rains, it pours
high-end fruit);
- ◆ We're working on an improved so-
lar dehydrator (with gas-assist).



Economics: Microloans

Microloans are becoming popular throughout the world. With prodding from my mother (Lyn Long), and Daryl Knauer (1st Pres, Ft. Thomas), we implemented one in Ranquitte. Ours features

- interest-free loans of \$120
- loans made only to women
- loans paid back in a year
- two trustworthy women administrators



Microloans, and a Macroloan: A Store for Ranquitte



R[®]I★MART[®]



Health Care – In Crisis *(Where There is No Doctor)*



One thing about visiting third-world countries: you always see interesting and tragic health problems....

- ◆ Malaria (April 25th is **World Malaria Day!**): I did come down with malaria, for the second time in my life.
- ◆ Typhoid joins with malaria as one of the major killers.
- ◆ There is almost no preventative health care (e.g. no pre-natal health care; no dental).
- ◆ Voodoo “medicine” is practiced.
- ◆ And the elephant in the room: **over-population.** (Shhhhhh!)

Health and Sanitation: Biosand Filters

Water is unsafe in Ranquitte, leading to health problems such as ascaris (intestinal parasites), giardia, amoebas, and typhoid. Filters (using sand and micro-organisms) cost about \$40 each. We funded 200 of them – 100 free (to the poorest), and 100 at a subsidized price. Subsidized filters are being sold through RoiMart.

First Presbyterian Ft. Thomas just funded 67 more filters as a Lenten discipline this month.



Mathematics didn't win this round...



- ❖ Pasteurization of water is possible: heating it to a sufficiently high temperature for a short period of time would do it.
- ❖ This parabolic trough design managed to provide only a nice shower....
- ❖ But it has inspired a former calculus student to attempt a better food dehydrator using parabolic collectors.

Energy: Proper placement of Solar Panels



- ❖ Solar panels were poorly placed; some even pointed NW.
- ❖ Mathematics won this round: I derived the optimal angle for fixed (non-tracking) solar panels at a given latitude.
- ❖ I also determined how to place panels on a non-south-facing roof so as to achieve that optimal case.

Our Continuing Role in Ranquitte

- ◆ Projects are in progress, and we continue to brainstorm solutions.
- ◆ On a personal note, we're adopting a young girl from Ranquitte (Rosemanie) – thank you Gisele Loriot-Raymer, among others.
- ◆ We're heading back in June, and will assess our projects for their value and sustainability; launching, stopping, or refinancing some.
- ◆ Several churches continue to support the projects (especially the Arborloos, the nursery, and the biosand filters).



Oh yes – and why are Haitians cranky?

“Have [slavers] not hung up men with heads downward, drowned them in sacks, crucified them on planks, buried them alive, crushed them in mortars? Have they not forced them to eat shit? And, after having flayed them with the lash, have they not cast them alive to be devoured by worms, or onto anthills, or lashed them to stakes in the swamp to be devoured by mosquitoes? Have they not thrown them into boiling caldrons of cane syrup? Have they not put men and women inside barrels studded with spikes and rolled them down mountainsides into the abyss? Have they not consigned these miserable blacks to man-eating dogs until the latter, sated by human flesh, left the mangled victims to be finished off with bayonet and poniard?” (*Written in Blood*, p. 26)

-- Vastey, President Henry Christophe's secretary and privy counselor (and an ex-slave). This is fairly typical in their history – nothing beautiful. The US only recognized Haiti in 1862, almost 60 years post-independence.

Special thanks to:

- ◆ Christian Flights International, and Scott Mandl especially.
- ◆ Northern Kentucky University, for the opportunity to go to Haiti; to its faculty, staff, *et al.*, who came together to provide over \$2200 for projects; and especially to Kirsty Fleming, my chair, who brought my “plight” (such as it was) to the attention of this wonderful community.
- ◆ First Presbyterian churches of BG, OH, and Ft. Thomas, KY, and especially Presbyterian Women, Teens, and Sunday School classes. My mom, Marilyn Long, who thinks big; and my brother Steve Long, who might even think bigger (and handled all the logistics for our family while we were away).
- ◆ To those near and far who have facilitated Rosemanie's adoption process.
- ◆ So many friends, family members, and community members who responded to stories of Haiti's plight, often with financial contributions.

Suggested Reading

- ◆ *Up from Slavery*. Booker T. Washington (it is in the public domain)
- ◆ *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*. Robert and Nancy Heinl (revised and expanded by Michael Heinl). University Press of America, 1996.
- ◆ *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World*. Tracy Kidder. Random House, 2004.
- ◆ *The Uses of Haiti*. Paul Farmer, Common Courage Press, 1994.
- ◆ *Haiti: the Duvaliers and their legacy*. Elizabeth Abbott. McGraw-Hill, 1988.