
BUILDING BRIDGES, BUILDING PEACE: **The Life and Work of** **Claudette Werleigh of Haiti**

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2011 Women PeaceMakers Program

Made possible by the Fred J. Hansen Foundation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	A Note to the Reader	4
II.	About the Women PeaceMakers Program	4
III.	Biography of a Woman PeaceMaker — Claudette Werleigh	5
IV.	Conflict History — Haiti	6
V.	Map — Haiti	13
VI.	Integrated Timeline — Political Developments and Personal History	14
VII.	Narrative Stories of the Life and Work of Claudette Werleigh	
	PART 1	19
	a. The Market	20
	b. If Time Could Stop	23
	c. Red	26
	d. The Visit	29
	e. What If?	30
	f. One Stone, Four Birds	32
	g. Some Are Never Really Dead.....	35
	PART 2	41
	h. The Return.....	42
	i. The Sacrifice of Power	47
	j. Fear Outlives its Origins.....	54
	k. Making Spaces	59
	l. Epilogue	62
	m. Postscript	64
VIII.	A Conversation with Claudette Werleigh	65
IX.	Best Practices in Peacebuilding	70
X.	Further Reading — Haiti	79
XI.	Biography of a Peace Writer — Bijoyeta Das.....	80

XII. Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice 81

XIII. University of San Diego 82

XIV. List of Acronyms 83

XV. Endnotes 84

A NOTE TO THE READER

In the following pages, you will find narrative stories about a Woman PeaceMaker, along with additional information to provide a deep understanding of a contemporary conflict and one person's journey within it. These complementary components include a brief biography of the peacemaker, a historical summary of the conflict, a timeline integrating political developments in the country with personal history of the peacemaker, a question-and-answer transcript of select interviews, and a table of best practices in peacebuilding as demonstrated and reflected on by the peacemaker during her time at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.

The document is not intended necessarily to be read straight through, from beginning to end. Instead, you can use the historical summary or timeline as mere references or guides as you read the narrative stories. You can move straight to the table of best practices if you are interested in peacebuilding methods and techniques, or go to the question-and-answer transcript if you want to read commentary in the peacemakers' own words. The goal of this format is to reach audiences through multiple channels, providing access to the peacemakers' work, vision, lives and impact in their communities.

ABOUT THE WOMEN PEACEMAKERS PROGRAM

Made possible through a generous grant from the Fred J. Hansen Foundation, the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice's (IPJ) Women PeaceMakers Program annually hosts four women from around the world who have been involved in human rights and peacemaking efforts in their countries.

Women on the frontline of efforts to end violence and secure a just peace seldom record their experiences, activities and insights — as generally there is no time or, perhaps, they do not have formal education that would help them record their stories. The Women PeaceMakers Program is a selective program for leaders who want to document, share and build upon their unique peacemaking stories. Selected peacemakers join the IPJ for an eight-week residency.

Women PeaceMakers are paired with a Peace Writer to document in written form their story of living in conflict and building peace in their communities and nations. The peacemakers' stories are also documented on film by the IPJ's partner organization Sun & Moon Vision Productions. While in residence at the institute, Women PeaceMakers give presentations on their work and the situation in their home countries to the university and San Diego communities.

The IPJ believes that women's stories go beyond headlines to capture the nuance of complex situations and expose the realities of gender-based violence, thus providing an understanding of conflict and an avenue to its transformation. The narrative stories of Women PeaceMakers not only provide this understanding, but also show the myriad ways women construct peace in the midst of and after violence and war. For the realization of peace with justice, the voices of women — those severely affected by violent conflict and struggling courageously and creatively to build community from the devastation — must be recorded, disseminated and spotlighted.¹

BIOGRAPHY OF A WOMAN PEACEMAKER —
CLAUDETTE WERLEIGH

From literacy education in rural Haiti to her post as Haiti’s first female prime minister and on to secretary general of the Catholic peace movement Pax Christi International, Claudette Werleigh of Haiti has witnessed conflict and worked for peace in all corners of the world, with people from every strata of society. She is a peacemaker at every level.



Photo credit: Michele Zousmer

The daughter of a prosperous business family, Werleigh was brought up on one side of Haiti’s social fabric, but she soon saw the realities of the other side. The structural violence embedded in Haitian society had a profound effect on Werleigh, now known in her life’s work as a staunch advocate for keeping policies and practices firmly rooted in the needs and voices of the grassroots.

As a young adult focused on justice for those caught in Haiti’s disparate social structure, Werleigh was drawn to the field of education — specifically adult literacy — and started a school for adults and rural Haitian farmers. Community-owned and run throughout Haiti’s tumult of political violence, earthquakes and epidemics, the school has been open and running for 33 years. Under the dictatorship of Jean-Claude Duvalier, Werleigh served as secretary general of Caritas Haiti for 10 years, coordinating relief assistance, civic education and respect for human rights.

Werleigh’s entrée into a career in public administration and politics began in 1990 as part of a broad democratic consensus government. The 1991 coup d’état that overthrew the first democratically elected government convinced her of the need to work not only for justice, but also for peace. She served as executive director of the Washington Office on Haiti from 1992 to 1993 and minister of foreign and religious affairs in Haiti from 1993 to 1995, and then made history as Haiti’s first female prime minister in 1995, during the Aristide administration. While always connected to her home country, Werleigh’s path has also taken her outside of Haiti’s borders into issues of international peace and conflict — as the director of conflict transformation programs at the Life and Peace Institute in Sweden until 2007, and then with Pax Christi where she was secretary general until the end of 2010 and now serves as a peace envoy.

Werleigh has worked with diverse communities in conflict and those transitioning out of war and violence around the world, deepening her understanding of the factors that trigger violent conflict. And the disparities she saw as a young girl in Haiti continue to transcend borders and inform her work. “The widening gap is not only between rich and poor nations but also between classes within a same single country,” she says of the chasm she’s spent her life working to bridge. Whether at home or in a new community, Werleigh is known for her commitment to keeping her ear tuned to the voices at the grassroots.

CONFLICT HISTORY — HAITI

Before Haiti came to be regularly presented as “the poorest country in the western hemisphere,”² it had been “*la perle des Antilles*” (the pearl of the Antillean countries) — the richest colony in the Caribbean. And long before that it was *Ayiti*, “high country or mountainous land,” the homeland of the Taino Arawak people.

The rugged mountains and fertile land were the basis for a strong socio-economic system that sustained one million Tainos. Ayiti, also called Quisqueya, was divided into five kinship nations where people lived peacefully in small villages along coastal areas and river deltas. When Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492, the Tainos warmly welcomed him, and he described them as “lovable, tractable, peaceable, gentle, decorous Indians.” He named the island *La Isla Española* (Hispaniola) and claimed it for Spain. But he had come looking for gold, and 50 years of massacre followed. European cannons, swords, horses, dogs, diseases and slavery wiped out the Indian population. Though the Tainos fought back, by 1540 the native people could be counted in the hundreds.

To replace the Taino labor, Spanish settlers began importing African slaves to build forts and work in the gold mines and sugar plantations. The Spanish were busy chasing gold in Mexico and Peru. The neglected western part of the island became the base for British and French forces, as well as pirates. Eventually Spain ceded the western part of Hispaniola to France by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. France called the new colony Saint-Domingue and thus began the era of brutal slavery in earnest. At least half a million Africans were imported to work in sugar, coffee, cotton and indigo plantations. Many Africans died after a few years of hard labor, and the French easily replaced them. At one time or another, Saint-Domingue was first in world production of coffee, rum, cotton and indigo and supplied three-fourths of the world’s sugar.

The last quarter of the 1700s saw the simmering of slave resistance and scattered revolts. The insurrection of 1791 opened with a vodou ceremony in Bois Caïman. Tens of thousands of slaves fought; at least 1,000 whites lost their lives and some 10,000 slaves were killed, with many fleeing to the hills. As the number of rebels swelled, Toussaint Louverture, who was born a slave, emerged as a leader. He introduced guerilla tactics in the slave army and was an excellent military strategist, a genius according to most historians. At times Louverture made alliances with, but also fought successively, the Spanish, the British and the French. At one point he had the whole island under his control. The French named him governor of Saint-Domingue, and he published the country’s first constitution in 1801. In the end, the French troops forced him to resign and exiled him to France. Louverture died in Fort de Joux in 1803.

The slaves, united by a legacy of suffering and vodou beliefs, then fought under the leadership of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a former slave. On Jan. 1, 1804, Dessalines proclaimed the independence of Saint-Domingue. The newly baptized state of Haiti became the second independent nation in the New World and the first black republic of the modern world, only to be castigated and isolated by the slave-owning Western empires. Haitian leaders officially declared the country an asylum for escaped slaves and for any person of either African or Amerindian descent.

The West was afraid that Haiti’s example would trigger similar revolts in other colonies. France recognized Haiti as a country in 1838 in exchange for an indemnity of 150 million gold

francs. Haiti did not finish repaying the so-called “independence debt” until 1946, which destabilized its delicate economy. The United States, which had a booming trade with Saint-Domingue, sent \$750,000 in military aid as well as troops to defend the white colonists. It recognized Haiti’s nationhood in 1862 after the slave-holding states seceded from the Union.

Dessalines, considered by many the founding father of Haiti, was assassinated in 1806. Many of the Haitian heads of state who followed him ended up establishing dictatorial and corrupt governments and, like Dessalines, had violent deaths. In 1844, under the presidency of Charles Rivière Hérard, the eastern part of the island became an independent state, the Dominican Republic.

Colonial realities forever marred the social fabric of Haiti. For the French colonists, all Africans were just black slaves. But in reality the island was a melting pot of Africans drawn from varied tribes and ethnicities. The savage oppression fostered a bond that united the slaves — a common suffering and disdain for masters. Kreyòl, often called a “language of survival” drawn from French and African languages, was born. Vodou, which originated in Benin, blended various African beliefs with elements of Catholicism and took on a uniquely Haitian identity.

The colonial rule also created divisive forces, which continue to scar Haitian collective identity and tear the nation into unequal fragments. Once the French departed, racial differences took on a new edge. The rivalry between the Black Haitians and those of mixed race, known as mulattoes, continued. Both mulattoes and free Blacks who had owned property, including slaves, before the revolution had formed a privileged class. Now all the people who fought for independence wanted a share of the wealth and power, and an even more important division emerged in Haiti: between the haves and have-nots.

The “haves” evolved into a tiny privileged minority of both Blacks and mulattoes, who lived in mansions in the capital of Port-au-Prince and other towns. The “elite” controlled the government, commerce and military. The rest, the overwhelming majority of “have-nots,” were the impoverished descendants of former slaves. They lived in the countryside, farming small plots of lands, tirelessly growing coffee to export and crops such as corns, beans and yams to eat. Their taxes filled the bottomless pockets of government officials while the rural areas lacked basic amenities.

There were also cultural differences. The elite spoke French, the language of government and commerce and the sign of sophistication. Their lifestyle modeled after European trends. The poor spoke Kreyòl, practiced vodou, and rituals, proverbs and folktales shaped their lives.

Though Haiti was portrayed as a pariah nation, an international outcast, its resources and cheap labor continued to attract imperialists. The United States started intruding on the market and finally invaded. Between 1870 and 1913, the United States increased its market in Haiti from 30 to about 60 percent. From 1879 to 1915, Haiti was the ground for contests between four imperialist powers. In January 1914, the civilian rule in Haiti came to an abrupt end when U.S., British and German forces entered Haiti to protect their citizens from political instability. By the end of the century, about 80 percent of Haiti’s revenues were siphoned off to repay the debts, including the indemnity to France.

The United States Marine Corps invaded Haiti in 1915 on the pretext of instability in Haiti and stayed for 19 years to protect property and investments, imposing martial law and taking control

of Haitian finances. Haiti could not take any new loans without the permission of the United States, who rewrote the Haitian constitution to permit foreigners to own land and whose investments in Haiti tripled. The United States pulled out of Haiti in 1934. They left behind the so-called “Garde d’Haiti,” the Haitian National Guard, a trained military force that later became the *Forces Armées d’Haiti* to protect American interests and to serve as the safeguard of the status quo. It became the foundation of a new Haitian army and, with the support of the U.S. government, would later help François Duvalier come to power in 1957.

The middle class finally came to power when Dumarsais Estimé became president in 1946, heralding a short period of growth and development. He garnered support from Haiti’s small socialist party and strong opposition from the United States. His government favored Haitian business, paid off the international debt owed to the United States and nationalized the central bank. It created income tax, passed legislation on social security and welfare and increased the minimum wage. When the Haitian military ousted Estimé in 1950, General Paul Eugene Magloire, a Black officer, came into power.

Despite the military domination that followed, the governments of Estimé and then of Magloire (1946-1956) are referred to as “the golden years of Haiti.” But the economy of the country continued to remain in the hands of the elite, both Black and mulatto families.

In 1957, François Duvalier was elected president by popular vote in a fraudulent election. He was an amateur ethnographer (specializing in vodou) and self-professed “country doctor.” He was involved in the *mouvement indigeniste*, which attempted to elevate Haitian culture as a nationalist response to the cultural imperialism of the U.S. forces. The military had expected a malleable puppet. Instead Duvalier, better known as Papa Doc, established a ruthless dictatorial regime. During this period, development eluded the Haitian poor, and their lives were invaded by fear and killings. Duvalier created the Volunteers for National Security (VSN), commonly called the *Tonton Makout*, consisting mostly of illiterate youth from the slums and the rural area. The Tonton Makout eliminated tens of thousands of Haitians, uprooting all opposition.

Papa Doc also Haitianized the Roman Catholic episcopate to ensure the archbishop of Port-au-Prince and all provincial bishops were loyal to him. Since the Concordat of 1860, all bishops in Haiti had been white Frenchmen, with the exception of Mgr. Rémi Augustin, the first Haitian to become bishop in 1953. The legislature, made anemic since 1917 by the Americans, was rendered further impotent and became unicameral. In 1964, Papa Doc declared himself “president-for-life,” in the tradition of seven heads of state before him.

In April 1971, Duvalier’s 19-year-old son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, succeeded him in Haiti’s only dynastic transfer of power. Known as Baby Doc, he continued his father’s tactics of arrest, torture and imprisonment.

Because his father had been responsible for the “political revolution,” Baby Doc promised to create the economic revolution, which meant a move toward liberalization. Haiti’s cheap labor and Duvalier’s generous tax holidays and tariff exemption provided the best ground for the mushrooming of the assembly industry. Haiti was the world’s ninth largest assembler of goods for U.S. consumption; the largest producer of baseballs, a game that continues to be unknown there;

and among the top three assemblers of such diverse products as stuffed toys, dolls and apparel, especially brassieres.

The Duvaliers adopted an ideological stance of being pro-Black, to work for the suppressed majority, but they were indiscriminately brutal against all forms of resistance, across race and class lines. Their regime used terror randomly against all its opponents, including peasantry and the urban working class, although history more frequently remembers the persecution of the Haitian elite during this period. Repression had seldom been experienced at such levels in Haiti. Between 1957 and 1986, hundreds of thousands of Haitians fled the country to the United States, Africa, Europe and elsewhere in the Caribbean. There was a time when there were more Haitian doctors in Montreal than there were in Haiti. The Makouts infiltrated all the vacant spaces, taking over the bureaucracy, trade unions, press and academics; there were even Makout priests.

Haiti was becoming inhospitable for its own people, who were fleeing the country in the thousands. Though the boat people are more often mentioned in the media, there was another quiet brain drain happening. During the 1960s many new states were formed as the anti-colonization movement spread. Many of the French-speaking former colonies, including Quebec, invited Haitian intellectuals to share their expertise. Soon the best teachers, lawyers, engineers, architects, doctors and nurses were emigrating from Haiti to these new states, an exodus equivalent to a hemorrhage.

The United States, embroiled in Cold War politics, was not willing to openly criticize a “friendly” non-communist government. In fact, the Duvaliers could never have stayed in power for nearly three decades without the covert support of the United States.

The Duvalier family fortune was estimated to be more than \$500 million, and aid from foreign governments and international agencies provided much of the revenue for Duvalier’s government. The government officials, army officers, coffee exporters and landowners lived in luxurious hillside villas with fountains and swimming pools, while in the slums below, the poor crowded into wretched shacks crisscrossed by open sewers. Nearly 75 percent of the population lived below the poverty line, and deforestation and erosion had further destroyed agriculture. In 1978, a U.S.-led campaign slaughtered all Haitian pigs, allegedly to stop the spread of swine flu. This loss left rural Haitians worse off than ever before.

By the 1980s widespread protests and a series of food riots began in Haiti, and on Feb. 7, 1986, Baby Doc fled to France on a U.S. Air Force jet, after emptying the national treasury. It was estimated that he and his family had diverted over \$800 million to their personal accounts. Young Haitians led the opposition: students, young working adults and schoolchildren, many of them encouraged by new forces within the Catholic Church. Thousands of Haitians took to the streets in joyous celebrations. Operation Uproot sought to wipe out all the traces of the Duvalierist past. Some Tonton Makouts were lynched; most escaped into hiding.

After 29 years of dictatorship, the Haitian people sought to reverse their fate. For the first time they were able to discuss politics openly and form organizations free of state control: trade unions, student groups and others. But these expectations were soon crushed. After the departure of the Duvaliers, U.S. officials helped organize a hasty transfer of power to a governing council, led by military personnel who had been closely associated with Duvalier. During this period known as “Duvalierism without Duvalier,” there were no land or economic reforms. Instead trade union

leaders were fired while notorious Duvalier officials were allowed to leave the country without facing trials for killings and torture. The United States sent tear gas, truncheons and rubber bullets to help the Haitian army “keep order” and disperse peaceful protestors.

A period of political instability followed, with seven different governments in four years installed by army-controlled elections and coups. Finally, negotiations with civil society organizations belonging to the democratic sector brought to power a supreme court judge, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, who became the first woman president of Haiti from 1990 to 1991.

During the ‘80s, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Roman Catholic priest who held an unequivocal position against Duvalierism, emerged as the messiah of the poor. Aristide became the leading exponent of liberation theology in Haiti. This provoked the ire of the U.S. government and the Haitian army, as well as the distrust of the traditional elite. But Aristide enjoyed huge popular support, as leader of both a coalition of center-left parties called the National Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD) and *Lavalas* (Cleansing Flood), a loose coalition of grassroots movements supported by the poor.

On Dec. 16, 1990, Aristide was elected president in a landslide victory, with 67 percent of the vote and a majority in all nine of Haiti’s political departments. The elections, held under intense international scrutiny, brought a voter turnout of 60 percent. Inaugurated on Feb. 7, 1991, Aristide took the oath in Haitian Kreyòl, promising justice, transparency and participation in state affairs.

Soon after Aristide took office, an antagonistic relationship developed between the executive and legislative branches of government because of their unwillingness to debate social and political reforms. Aristide warned the traditional elite of dire consequences if they did not contribute to Haiti’s development. The business sector worried that he would raise wages, apply the tax code and move against corruption. During his years as a priest he had challenged the church’s hierarchy and no longer had the support of this institution. Meanwhile the army and Aristide were embroiled in a dispute over the defense budget and civilian control of the army and police forces. Aristide’s uncompromising stance on these and other issues sealed his fate. He was deposed in Sept. 30, 1991, in a military coup led by General Raoul Cedras and Major Michel Francois. Aristide went into exile first in Venezuela, then in the United States where he led a government in exile.

In a move to validate the coup, the Haitian military named Court of Cassation Judge Joseph Nérette as president and human rights advocate Jean-Jacques Honorat as prime minister. Except for the Vatican, the international community refused to recognize the new government. Later on, banker Marc Bazin, who had received the support of the United States in the 1990 elections, replaced Honorat. Emile Jonassaint replaced Nérette. These moves also failed to win international approval.

The army, together with semiprivate militias like FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti), led by Toto Constant, was responsible for the murder of approximately 5,000 men and women involved in the popular movement. In 1993, it was revealed that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had paid assets to generals of the Haitian army’s high command, some going back 20 years. In the meantime, 40,000 Haitians fled the country in makeshift boats and rafts heading for the United States. Most were returned to Haiti, although dozens were allowed to plead their case for political asylum.

Aristide's government in exile, headquartered in Washington, D.C., was sustained financially by the Haitian assets seized by the U.S. government. Bouts of negotiations sponsored by the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the United States, and the half-hearted attempts to impose an embargo, failed to reinstate Aristide, despite the Governors Island Accord of July 1993. Finally, as a result of a last minute initiative spearheaded by three American political leaders — former President Jimmy Carter, General Colin L. Powell and Senator Sam Nunn — the Haitian military agreed to step down. On Sept. 19, 1994, U.S. military forces began a virtual occupation of Haiti, eventually coming to number more than 20,000 troops.

Aristide resumed his presidency on Oct. 15, 1994, receiving a hero's welcome. He appointed a number of women to top posts in his government, including then Minister of Foreign Affairs Claudette Werleigh as the first female prime minister of Haiti.

Aristide could not contest the 1995 elections because the Haitian constitution bars two consecutive presidential terms. René Prével, Aristide's first prime minister and an agronomist, became the president. This period saw a greater respect for human rights.

In 2000 Aristide was re-elected for a second five-year term, without the backing of the great powers. The last U.N. peacekeeping forces withdrew from Haiti. As the country approached the 200th anniversary of its independence, Aristide openly challenged France to return to Haiti — with due accumulated interest — the money they had unjustly collected. Aristide's second term was marked with political chaos. Violence spread throughout the country as the government cracked down on opposition party leaders holding power, in part with the aid of extra-legal gangs. There were also many accusations of human rights abuses against the Aristide government and supporters. In 2004, a revolt began in northern Haiti, and on Feb. 28, 2004, Aristide was once again forced out of power, in part by an armed uprising of former members of the military disbanded in 1995. Aristide was forced into exile in South Africa, and France and U.S. armed forces under the authority of the United Nations Security Council were sent to Port-au-Prince to bring order and oversee the installation of an interim government. In 2006, Prével was re-elected president.

Since 2008, Haiti's situation has worsened dramatically. Food riots, government instability and a series of hurricanes that killed hundreds battered the economy — all before the deadliest earthquake in the country's history.

The January 2010 earthquake left the country and its densely populated capital Port-au-Prince flattened, its poorly constructed buildings and shanties along with the national palace destroyed and the government broken. More than 230,000 lives were lost.

In March 2011 elections, Michel Martelly, a performer with the street name of Sweet Mickey, was elected president.

The political turmoil has had a deep impact on all aspects of Haitian life. But an important step was taken with the Constitution of 1987 that established power sharing: the introduction of a prime minister as head of the government while the president remains head of state. The constitution also gives extended power to the legislature.

Since the 1940s the middle classes have become a vital part of the political arena, indicated by a decrease in French cultural influence. There has also been an eruption of popular involvement in politics; the poor have been trying to influence the politics in Haiti since the 1980s. This led not only to the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier and the election of Aristide, but also to other important changes in society and culture. The old cultural order of pro-French and pro-Western forces seems to have been replaced by a new order, rooted in Indigenism and Pan-Africanism. These movements also contributed to a thriving cultural renaissance in the literary and performing arts. Haitian Kreyòl is no longer considered “bad French” or a pigeon language; it has become the official language along with French. There are dictionaries translating Kreyòl to French, English and Spanish, and vodou is now accepted as an official religion.

Meanwhile, a powerful U.S. influence remains in Haiti, due in part to the imposing number of Haitians living in the United States. The Haitian Diaspora sends back more than \$1.4 billion annually, which is one-fourth of the annual GDP in Haiti. The same Diaspora, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, gathered in New York City to protest in 1982 when the U.S. Center for Disease Control named Haitians as one of the risk factors of AIDS, referred to as 4H — the four being Haitians, homosexuals, hemophiliacs and heroin addicts. This branding destroyed tourism in Haiti and continues to make an entire nation suffer the consequences of the stigma.

Though Haiti became the first black republic, deep schisms continue to exist and the basic economic structure has remained the same. Coffee replaced sugar and a tiny elite replaced the colonial masters. The country is perennially dependent on foreign aid for survival. Agricultural production continues to decline while the population increases.

The Haitian proverb “*Dèyè mòn, gen mòn*” seems prophetic: Beyond the mountains, more mountains, as if in Haiti there is no end to suffering.



Map No. 3855 Rev. 4 UNITED NATIONS
June 2008

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

INTEGRATED TIMELINE

Political Developments in Haiti and *Personal History of Claudette Werleigh*

- 1492** Christopher Columbus lands in Haiti.
- 1501** The first Africans are brought to Hispaniola for labor.
- 1503** Spanish governor executes Queen Anacaona, leader of a Taino kingdom in Haiti.
- 1517** By now, the native people have been “virtually annihilated.”
- 1625** The French settle in Tortuga Island and northwestern Hispaniola, naming their colony Saint-Domingue.
- 1697** Spain signs the Treaty of Ryswick, under whose terms it cedes the western third of Hispaniola to France.
- 1751** Slave rebellions in northern Saint-Domingue, led by François Mackandal, begin.
- 1778** Led by French admiral Count d’Estaing, 500 people, including former slaves and free people, leave for Savannah, Georgia, to fight against the British in the American Revolutionary War.
- 1791** The beginning of a bloody insurrection on the night of August 14 marks the opening of the war for independence.
- 1792** France’s Legislative Assembly votes to give full citizenship and equal rights to all free people of color.
- 1793** Proclamation of general freedom is seen as a rapid culmination of the insurrectional movement initiated two years earlier.
- 1803** April — Death of Toussaint Louverture, a leader of the slave resistance and governor of Saint-Domingue, in Fort de Joux, France.
- November —Victory of indigenous forces over French troops at the Battle of Vertières.
- 1804** Haiti proclaims its independence from France on January 1.
- 1805** Jean-Jacques Dessalines formulates the first constitution of Haiti as an independent country, the Imperial Constitution of 1805.

- 1806** Assassination of Dessalines, the commander of the independence army. Upon Dessalines' death, Haiti splits into two rival states from 1806 until 1820. A western republic emerges under the leadership of Alexandre Pétion. In the north, Henry Christophe founds a republic, which becomes a kingdom in 1811.
- 1820** Jean-Pierre Boyer, a general, unifies Haiti and then rules over the island until 1843.
- 1825** A convention is signed between Haiti and France under which France recognizes the Republic of Haiti. In return, Haiti agrees to pay an indemnity of 150 million gold francs. Haiti does not finish paying the debt until 1946.
- 1844** Division of the eastern part of the island under the presidency of Rivière Hérard. The Dominican Republic emerges as an independent state.
- 1849** Haiti becomes an empire under Faustin Soulouque, who rules the country from 1847 until 1859.
- 1860** An agreement called the Concordat is signed with the Vatican State on March 28 and ratified by the Haitian senate on August 1, making the Roman Catholic Church an official presence in Haiti.
- 1862** The United States recognizes the statehood of Haiti.
- 1904** Haiti celebrates 100 years of independence.
- 1915** American forces land in Haiti and occupy the country until 1934.
- 1929** Haiti and the Dominican Republic sign an agreement settling the border between the two countries.
- 1933** The governments of Haiti and the United States sign an agreement on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country and the end of the U.S. occupation.
- 1934** Last American forces withdraw from Haiti.
- 1946** The Revolution of 1946 culminates in the departure of Haitian President Élie Lescot, who is replaced by Dumarsais Estimé; bicentenary of Port-au-Prince.
- September —Claudette is born in Cap-Haitien on September 26 in a well-to-do business family, where she is raised with six siblings.*
- 1950-1956** Paul Magloire is elected president. Together with Estimé's presidency, his time is described as "the golden years of Haiti."
- 1957** The Central Census Bureau declares François Duvalier the winner of the September 22 election.

- 1964 François Duvalier proclaims himself “president-for-life” with self-attributed right to designate his successor.
- 1965 *Claudette travels to Madrid to study medicine.*
- 1970 *Claudette marries Georges Werleigh.*
- 1971 Transfer of power from François Duvalier to his son, Jean-Claude, who pursues the dictatorial policies of his father and opens up the economy.
- 1973 *Claudette is appointed literacy programme coordinator of the Institute for Adult Education (IDEA), where she uses Paulo Freire’s methodology: empowerment of poor people from grassroots communities.*
- 1974 *Claudette completes her diploma in audio-visual techniques in adult education at the Regional Center for Latin America (CREFAL), Patzcuaro, Mexico, and at the Latin American Institute for Educational Communication (ILCE), Mexico City.*
- 1975 *Claudette becomes the executive secretary of Secours Catholique d’Haiti: September 1975 – October 1976.*
- 1976 *Claudette is appointed secretary general of Caritas Haiti: October 1976 – June 1987.*
- 1978 *Claudette finishes her studies in law and economics at Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Economiques, Université d’Etat d’Haiti, and becomes a registered lawyer (Barreau de Port-au-Prince).*
- 1979 *Claudette becomes co-founder and a member of the executive committee of the Institute of Technology and Animation (ITECA), where she is in charge of the curriculum, Gressier, Haiti: February 1979 – March 1990.*
- 1983 Pope John Paul II visits Haiti and advocates for change: “Some things have to change here.”
- Claudette becomes the coordinator of the Caribbean region for Caritas Internationalis, where she is in charge of the expansion, implementation and coordination of Caritas in the Caribbean: May 1983 – May 1987.*
- 1986 The Duvalier dynasty ends with Jean-Claude Duvalier’s departure for France and is replaced by a military-dominated National Governing Council. A period called “Duvalierism without Duvalier” begins.
- 1988 *Claudette completes a course in feminist liberation theology at Maryknoll School, New York, United States.*

- 1990 Supreme Court Judge Ertha Pascal-Trouillot becomes the first female president of Haiti.
- Claudette is appointed minister for social affairs and labor, Republic of Haiti: March –August 1990.*
- December — First democratic elections take place. Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide is elected president of Haiti.
- 1991 *Claudette is head of staff, Prime Minister's Office, Republic of Haiti: March – September 1991.*
- September 30 — A military coup deposes Aristide, who goes into exile first in Venezuela, then in the United States. At least 3,000 are killed. Thousands of Haitians begin to flee violence and repression in Haiti, crossing the frontier to the Dominican Republic and reaching other Caribbean islands by boat, with the majority trying to reach the United States. Although most are repatriated to Haiti by the U.S. government, many enter the United States as refugees.
- 1992 *July — Claudette is appointed executive director of the Washington Office on Haiti, Washington, D.C., United States.*
- 1993 July — Signature of the Governors Island Accord between President Aristide and the military.
- September — Claudette becomes the minister for foreign affairs and religions, Republic of Haiti.*
- 1994 The de facto military government resigns in September under pressure from the United States, which sends in troops to occupy Haiti. This occupation is sanctioned by the United Nations. In October, President Aristide is restored to office with the support of American troops.
- 1995 *November — Claudette steps down as the minister of foreign affairs and becomes the first female prime minister of Haiti.*
- René Préval is elected president of Haiti.
- 1996 *Claudette steps down as the prime minister of Haiti and goes back to informal adult education, working as a consultant on project evaluations.*
- Claudette is a co-founder of Lig Pouvwva Fanm (league for women's empowerment) Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where she trains women in politics: 1996 –1999.*
- 1999 *Claudette is appointed conflict transformation programs director of the Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden.*

- 2000** Aristide is re-elected for a second five-year term. The last U.N. peacekeeping forces withdraw from Haiti.
- 2004** Aristide goes into exile in South Africa after weeks of uncertainty caused by demonstrations by unarmed students coupled with a separate armed insurrection. After Aristide's departure for exile on February 29, Judge Boniface Alexandre, the president of the Court of Cassation, Haiti's supreme court, becomes provisory president of the Republic of Haiti. The real ruler is Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, a former employee of the World Trade Organization residing in the United States.
- 2007** Under the second presidency of René Préval, the country moves slowly toward stability. Widespread poverty fuels insecurity and political violence.
- November — After completing her two terms as conflict transformation programs director of the Life and Peace Institute, Claudette is appointed secretary general of Pax Christi International, Brussels, Belgium.*
- 2008** Tropical Storm Fay, Hurricane Gustav, Tropical Storm Hanna and Hurricane Ike strike within a month, leaving nearly 800 people dead and wiping out a quarter of the economy.
- Michèle Pierre-Louis becomes the second female prime minister of Haiti: September 2008 – November 2009.
- 2009** Former U.S. President Bill Clinton is appointed U.N. special envoy to Haiti. He is tasked with reinvigorating the country's moribund economy after the 2008 storms.
- 2010** January — A major earthquake, 7.0 on the Richter scale, kills more than 230,000 and causes massive damage to buildings and infrastructure in Port-au-Prince.
- December — Claudette steps down as the secretary general of Pax Christi International and becomes a Pax Christi peace envoy.*
- 2011** On January 16, Jean-Claude Duvalier makes an unexpected return to Haiti after 25 years. On January 18, he is taken into custody by Haitian authorities at his hotel.
- Aristide returns to Haiti just two days before the 2011 presidential election, on March 18.
- April — Michel Martelly becomes the president of Haiti.
- September — Claudette travels to the United States to take part in the Women PeaceMakers Program at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice in San Diego, Calif.*

NARRATIVE STORIES OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF
CLAUDETTE WERLEIGH

PART 1

The Market

“Dedette, Dedette Chérie!” Maman called in a sweet voice. “Where are you dear?” Thirteen-year-old Claudette paused before answering. Her mother was calling her by her pet name. *She is going to ask a favor*, she thought.

“*Oui*, Maman.”

“Can you go to the market and buy eggs?”

“How many?”

“All the eggs in the market. I have to bake so many cakes. Make haste, my dear.”

“*Oui*, Maman,” Claudette said with pride like a heat wave spreading through her upon being entrusted with such a responsibility.

Maman handed her 50 *gourdes*. Now she could buy all the eggs in the market in Dondon, the quaint little village where her family vacationed in the hot brooding months of summer, and in the market in the next village — and maybe the one after that.

Oh cakes! A vivacious sparkle spread over her eyes, a creamy, buttery, sugary gleam.

They needed so many cakes for her eldest sister Therese’s wedding that week. So many guests — family and friends from Cap-Haitien and Port-au-Prince — would come! When the wedding was over, they would wrap these cakes, like Christmas gifts in glitzy paper, stick on ribbons and bows and give them to guests. Cakes would even be sent to those who couldn’t attend the party. The Antoine children would then distribute cakes to the villagers in the open market and finish off the rest.

Yummm ... Vanilla, snow-white cakes! Claudette grabbed a nice, sturdy woven basket and raced out to the market only a few steps from the house.

She had visited the market so many thousands of times, and yet she swallowed all the colors and rumpus like they were brand new. Women wearing overly washed cotton dresses and bright headscarves with their hand-woven baskets made of straw, vine or palm. Squatting. Sweating. Chattering.

The smell of mangoes opened the invisible market doors to all its visitors. One often wondered if the sun’s rays coated its edible hosts with the sweet perfume of Ambrosia. Grapefruit, oranges, corossol, papaya, lime, pineapple and *ti-Baum* — Haiti’s delicious mint. The strong aroma of fresh garlic and scallions, dirt still on their roots. The warm moisture of the earth.

“*Men mayi a, men mayi a, men mayi a* — Here’s the corn!” shouted the corn merchant. “Come on dear, come get the freshest cherries!” exclaimed the fruit merchant. “Two *gourdes*. Two *gourdes*.”

“Best, just picked.”

“Just collected.”

“Baby, come here, I will give you a discount.”

They called out all at once. The tightness. The crowding. The senses overwhelmed.

A woman in flowery dress was bargaining with a fruit seller: “Three gourdes for a dozen apricots is too much. Were they grown in heaven’s gardens?”

She walked away, slowly, gracefully, only a few steps.

“OK, come back, I make it two and 50.”

“No, two. Do I look like a bourgeois to you!?”

The merchant gave in, not wanting to lose the business, but more because she understood the logic.

Claudette smiled and kept walking. The eggs could wait. She was following her nose. The jealousy of the stomach prevailed.

The tang of sour oranges, the smell of golden caramelized onion rings, the sharpness of pepper, thyme and cloves came first. There it was at the far corner of the market. *The best. Griyo!* The smoky pork fried in pork grease sold for 10 cents each.

She bit into two big pieces of crunchy pork shoulder and, with the peppery aftertaste lingering on her tongue, made her way back to the chatty egg sellers, making sure to lick every finger, twice. Yes, Haitians were crazy for griyo.

“Baby, come here to me. I have the biggest, nicest eggs,” the elderly woman sitting at the front of the row said. Eggs lay in piles of three on burlap sacks. “They were even laid this morning,” she added. The merchants could sell sea water to a mermaid.

Claudette hesitated. If only she were at home, she could test the freshness of the eggs. A fresh egg when placed in a deep bowl of water immediately sinks to the bottom. So instead she raised an egg and looked at the sun, squinting the left eye and through the right eye testing the freshness of the egg.

Satisfied, she asked, “How much?”

“Three for 25 cents.”

“Too much. I will buy all your eggs if you give me a discount!”

“OK, 20 cents for three, because you are a sweet child,” the egg seller said and flashed a toothless smile. “What do you say, my child?”

Claudette bought half a dozen eggs, then another half from the next seller and then walked up to the next one, and the next. She needed more eggs and she had lots of money. *Good job, Maman will be happy*, she thought.

“Wait, what are you doing?” a stern-looking egg seller asked. “You cannot buy all the eggs.” She gave Claudette a pile of three eggs and then kept the rest aside.

“Why not? I want all the eggs, and I will pay you,” Claudette replied softly.

“You cannot buy all the eggs because you are not the only one who needs eggs. Others may need eggs too.”

Claudette stared. One spoon of confusion, two spoons of nervous anger and a dash of embarrassment simmered inside her.

Come on. You can go home early AND maybe bring more eggs, sell them, make more money AND we need eggs for cakes AND we will also distribute cakes in the market AND you will get one too, she wanted to say.

But the fiery tone and the hardened look of the egg seller kept Claudette’s mouth shut. She became aware of little beads of sweat popping up on her forehead, her upper lip and her brows.

Claudette could see eggs sitting peacefully inside her own woven basket, and from the corner of her eye she checked out the piles she could not buy. But she turned back toward home, walking slowly, carrying the eggs with care. She thought she had failed. How would Maman react?

But above the worry, she was wrestling with confusion. *At our store Maman and Papa fill up the goody jars, even before they are half empty. So why is the egg seller not willing to go back home and try to sell more? Isn’t that good business? Who are the other people who might need eggs?* Maman had been telling her how eggs were important in the diets of children, breastfeeding mothers, pregnant women, sick people. *Could they be the “other people” the seller was referring to? Maybe.*

The merchants bring so much to the market, Claudette thought as she walked home, turning the egg seller’s scolding over again in her mind. *Values and wisdom along with all the goodies.* There was more than eggs and griyo for sale at the market.

If Time Could Stop

Life was *creamysmoothysunnyhappy* for Claudette, a sensitive and observant child. With a proud heritage, a privileged background and the warm Caribbean sun — the yellowness she savored, the mosquitoes she abhorred — Claudette was busy enjoying her life in greedy gulps.

She was the granddaughter of Albert Antoine, an aficionado of Cuban cigars and fine tobacco. A man of pride. Once a tobacco merchant, a woman of loud voice and short temper, asked him for the money he owed for tobacco. Short of change, he asked her to come the next day. She muttered, “Always the same with these people, never ready to acquit themselves of their obligations.” Her grandfather flew into a rage; his honor attacked, he smashed the pipe and never smoked again. His son, little Marc, was amazed but preserved this impression for posterity, an impression that slowly slipped into his own persona.

Marc Antoine, Claudette’s father, was an enterprising coffee exporter. Successful, audacious, handsome, a tough dad and witty man, he would have a great influence on Claudette’s life. Papa, as she called him, taught her to be industrious, yet sensitive to the needs of others.

And lovely Maman. Clara Lespinasse. *Ob Maman. Ob Maman. Ob Maman*, Claudette could sing all day long.

Her parents married in 1933, when he was 22 and she 20. Papa had started working in the family business of coffee exporting as a teenager. He became the richest man in Dondon, his native village, where the family had their shop and would spend their summer vacations every year. They went on to have nine children; two of them, Emmanuel and Mireille, died before their first birthdays.

Maman was classic, Cartesian, one who deconstructed every thought, every fear, every myth, filling everything with sense and wisdom. *Classic*. That’s what Claudette thought of her Maman. In her liquid embrace Claudette would melt; and under her tough discipline she would grow to be one who beckoned responsibility. At age 7, other Haitian children would recite what they had memorized from textbooks, with their hands behind their back, under the watchful eyes of their parents. But Maman explained to Claudette that she should learn to take responsibility for herself, and from then on she learned her lessons on her own.

When Claudette was growing up, life in Cap-Haitien in northern Haiti was comfortable for most. Everyone had two square meals a day. There were class divisions left behind by centuries of colonialism, but poverty was not like a malady, infecting everyone. Not yet.

But Claudette was shielded from all of that. When their school teacher asked how many rooms they had in their white, stately home, Claudette and her younger sisters Gladys and Nicole came home and counted. Eighteen.

The Antoine family had servants to take care of them, but Maman made sure her children treated everyone with respect. Their life was modeled on the European lifestyle, particularly the French. They would speak only French at home and at school. Kreyòl, the language of the masses and the poor, was banned in their home, restricted to the servant quarters. But that spicy language

full of French and African words would sometimes sneak in. So a Kreyòl-free-French-only-week would be rewarded with extra pocket money for the theater and goodies. The opposite would be punished, sometimes with a light spanking.

Some nights Claudette would wake up and gaze at the night sky's deep intense blue and thousands of twinkling stars. The huge full moon shone straight through the window as if to say hello. Unable to keep all the beauty to herself, Claudette would wake her younger siblings to join her. The four of them would stand by the bathroom window watching and admiring, an impromptu séance of sorts.

Nicole would be the first to decide that being in bed was safer and better than looking up at the sky. She would bid goodnight, advising Claudette not to wake her up the next time. Gladys would follow soon after, but made no protest to being taken out of bed. But Guy would stay, standing silently with his big sister until he started his questioning: "How many stars do you think there are? Do you think they are far away? Can they see us? Where do they go when we can't see them?"

Claudette imagined Guy's head as a question box, and figured he must think hers was an answer box, with responses to every curiosity in the world.

Claudette was a joyful girl, radiating a sense of inner strength coupled with merriness. Irresistible. Infectious. Life was full of stories — Kric? Krac!³ — European and America cinema, songs and carefree summers in a village.

Once her half-sister, Berthe, told Claudette, "I thought happiness was not real. But when I see you, Claudette, I know happiness exists."

On the day of her communion, Claudette was so content, so one with the idea of purity and impressed with heaven that she blurted out, "I am so happy, I could just die." She believed that if she died on that day, she would go straight to heaven.

If only time could stop, Claudette would think. If only time could end.

But did time stop?

It decided to turn, as it always does. Changing everything, as it swept through life.

In 1957, François Duvalier became the president. This country doctor soon became a giant spider that held the country in its grip, crumpling, crushing Haiti — and strangulating Haitians. His personal militia, the Tonton Makout (named after the "Uncle Bogeyman" of folk tales), the men whose rifles looked as tall as them, were sneaking into people's thoughts and filling them with fear.

No one taught Claudette that he was called Papa Doc, but she listened to the world around her and heard people referring to the president with that strange name. Children at school would whisper, with broken voices and fearful eyes, that Papa Doc could use vodou to change himself into a dog, a cat — even a fly, a mosquito or a tiny ant! Such magical power had been confirmed by the family servants. It was said to be true that Papa Doc had the power to be any place he chose to be:

in the streets, at the market, in the school playground or at home, listening to conversations between close friends and even exchanges between husband and wife. He was everywhere.

A sharp girl, Claudette linked that piece of information with the cautionary words often used by parents in Haiti, including her own mother: “*Les murs ont des oreilles!*” The walls can hear. Be careful what you say because you never know who will hear you: a servant, a visitor, a neighbor. Claudette noticed that people seldom talked about politics, and even less about the government. With infinite precaution, the message was spread that people would be arrested and even killed if they said anything bad — or perceived to be bad — against the president.

Papa Doc used vodou to enslave a nation, teaching people to live on hungry stomachs and making Haitians — even husbands and wives — spy on each other. He taught Haitians to talk with their eyes and communicate with signs.

Papa Doc had his own rules, and Haiti was his playground. It was decided that all public meetings were forbidden, but one could still go to school and to church. The big fear was communism, and it was said that communists formed little groupings called cells. Claudette knew that the streets counted as public, but what number of people found together would be interpreted as a public meeting? To play it safe, Maman would tell her, “One FINE, two OK, three DANGER.” Claudette would crinkle her nose and twitch her brows, yet she always walked home with her best friends Sylvie and Gabrielle. A very happy threesome, they made the secret agreement that one of them would immediately walk away should a fourth person approach them.

Claudette was lucky her name had the *CLO* sound and not *CO*, because anyone with *CO* in their names could be classified as communist. And Papa Doc loved hunting down communists. They were his enemies, and were presented as America’s enemies. And he was, of course, America’s friend.

Claudette also soon realized that all the things that filled her evenings and holidays and celebrations — the simple mundane parties, the good food, the pretty dresses, the cinema, the balls — were the dreams and fantasies of other children. She often wondered at it all. Maman and Papa worked hard, lived better and partied harder. And the barefooted peasants and coffee planters were working like ants, from field to store, store to field. Life was not *creamysmoothysunnyhappy* for them, for most Haitians.

In that perfect world, Claudette did have one tiny complaint. There was a gap of seven years between her and the first trio of Antoine children: Raymond, Thérèse and Jeanette. So, Maman would introduce her as the “oldest of the youngest.” She did not like it. Why couldn’t she be presented as the “youngest of the oldest”?

Why, why? she would protest. Later she devised an answer. To take her little revenge, and also to tease her younger siblings, she would tell them that she was the most precious one. She was right in the middle of the seven surviving children, protected on all sides like a little pearl or a precious gem in a jewelry box.

Red

Fresh morning sunlight streamed through the classroom windows of College Regina Assumpta, where girls in their early teens, dressed in pink and gray uniforms, waited in feverish excitement.

“Who can give me the correct answer to these problems?” asked the nun as she wrote algebra equations on the chalkboard in easy cursive writing. The usually quiet and attentive class was jostling today from the pulse-pounding energy in the air. Giggles went unpunished.

The headmistress had announced that school would close early. Everyone knew something important was happening in the city that day. No one knew what.

Noisy chattering girls began rushing out of the classroom. “Aren’t you coming, Claudette?” Gabrielle asked.

“Yes, yes. Of course,” Claudette said as they held hands and ran into the pulsating streets of Cap-Haitien.

Pon don pon pon ... Pon. Pon. Pon. Pon, the radio chuckled loudly. The trumpet and saxophone beats of the legendary *Orchestre Septentrional* floating from *Radio Citadelle* paused to be replaced by a now familiar tune.

“Communiqué. Communiqué.” *Something important. Very important.*

“Everyone come to the Champ de Mars. Today at 11. It is very important for all of you.” The male voice, coarse and commanding, floated in the streets. “Men, women, children, teachers, peasants, vendors, students and workers. All of you must come.”

Thousands of people from all around the city of 30,000 came running toward the Champ de Mars. A motley group descended into the wide, open field next to the central army jail, an imposing mustard-colored building.

“Mon konpè, Ma komè, Vwazen, Vwazin.” Sir, Madam, neighbor, they whispered to each other, the titles of respect, as they rushed hurriedly to the square.

“Sa kap pase? — What is happening?” they asked each other in naïve tones, as if to suggest that they did not hear the same radio announcement.

“Yo di. — They say.” What Haitians always say when they want to distance themselves from a rumor, when they want to keep their hands unstained.

The stronger men pushed through the crowd; the strong women pushed as the men did. The short stretched their necks to their limits, hoping to see past the crowd. The heightened sense of curiosity and obligation to participate lurked in their minds. The air was uneasy, unsure. Their hearts were racing, but Haitians are masters of their bodies, presenting calm in the midst of anxiety.

Claudette pushed her way through the crowd, but all she could see were the white wall and green doors of the Hospital Justinien and the green mountains on the other side. *Everyone is just moving, herethereeverywhere.* Pale brown dust rose from the rustling of the sweaty crowd.

“Be quiet, we are about to start,” uniformed men announced through handheld amplifiers.

Claudette stood on her toes. Craning her neck, she saw a man, dressed in a crisp white shirt and dark pants, being led toward a thick pole on a makeshift platform.

“Oh, that is the man from the funeral parlor!” someone called out.

“*Jezi!* — Jesus!” they shouted. “*Mezanmi yo!* — Oh my God!”

“Who would have thought the radio announcement was for him?”

Their hands were folded, jaws held tightly as if to keep them from falling off, wide open eyes bulging. Those who knew the man intimately clasped their heads with both hands, as if to keep their heads from erupting from the shock.

His arms were tied behind his back. Muscled young men, wearing blue denim and dark shirts, caps and golden-framed sunglasses, surrounded him. They carried rifles as long as their bodies. They were the Tonton Makout.

“Yes, yes. His name is René Péan, the man who owns a funeral parlor down the street,” a man said.

“That man is a *louganou* — he makes zombies,” another said. “He overpowers men in their sleep and they become his slaves.”

“He is the devil, so he was arrested and now they will kill him,” yet another whispered.

Claudette saw six burly, roguish-looking Tonton Makout raise their guns, forming a half-moon, the muzzles pointed at the zombie-making man.

“Fire.”

Boom...boom...boom.

The crowd began whispering, moving all at once, *thiswaysandthatways.*

“What happened? Did you see anything, Gabrielle?”

“No. But something happened. Hold my hand Claudette.”

They pushed forward, cutting through the crowd. And then they froze. They saw the bloody body of Péan dangling from the pole. It looked like a doll — the dolls of straw and colorful rags.

The dolls that are burned after carnival. Every year. Here, in the same dusty field where tittering young boys gathered to play soccer.

Claudette realized the gun-wielding, sunglass-wearing men had shot Péan.

And just like that the gossipy, restive crowd became somber. The guns answered their questions and stole their words. The language was very easy to understand for those who spoke it. Fear and intimidation was one language that everyone knew. They stared at those they knew, and only those they knew, with full eyes, stretched wide. There was no need for words; the eyes expressed how each person felt. If they only looked at each other, then no one could blame them for saying anything.

The crowd began moving gingerly from the bloody ground into the narrow lanes of the city, into buzzing markets and cool homes. Claudette and Gabrielle walked fast, their palms locked, their sweat mixed, sharing the pregnant silence.

Both were so in shock they felt as if their blood was being boiled in a pot. Had they been adults and in the comforts of a home, they would have been given some *kafe anmè*, bitter coffee. The Haitians serve this often, their antidote for shock, to prevent death from sudden surprise. But Claudette was just a child and not yet at home.

The rush of the crowd still in their bodies, they did not realize they'd moved so quickly until they were home. *Please don't tell me I have wings*, Claudette told herself, wondering if she'd flown home.

An unfamiliar fizzy feeling was swelling inside Claudette. As she saw the white walls of her house and the maroon iron gates with intricate heart shapes, she ran to find her mother.

“Maman, Maman, you know what we saw today?” Claudette screamed, rushing into the dining room where her mother was reading a book.

“Why are you late?” Maman asked, angry and not infected by the excitement that was bursting inside Claudette.

“Maman, listen, we saw Péan, the man who owns the funeral parlor, the Tonton Makout shot him. Boom, boom ... everyone was there,” Claudette said, her eyes wide, her mouth half-open.

“Stop talking about it,” Maman said, her eyes dark and face doleful.

“But, Maman, people said he was killed because he is evil and made zombies out of living people.”

“Stop talking about things you don't know,” Maman, who was always so soft-spoken, so loving, raised her voice. “They said he was bad but you do not know what the truth is. There may be other reasons.”

Claudette’s excitement was fizzling away, replaced by a long, careful, searching look. She tried to re-enter the execution. There she was under the sour yellow sunlight that now looked malicious. The brown dust turning red, crimson red, then purple red. Very RED.

Suddenly her legs began to ache. An unfamiliar pain was born. It was a fever no one would ever catch.

The Visit

*San Kric. San Krac.
The Tonton Makout came.
Not one. Not two.
Five dozen came.*

“Get ready. Fast,” Claudette’s father called out. “They could be here any moment.”

She watched her papa, the gutsy coffee-planter, the commanding former parliamentarian, wearing a jittery smile. His eyebrows twitched.

The food looked festive, but the mood was uneasy. Griyo lay next to multi-layered sandwiches of ham, cheese and white bread and chilled bottles of soda — red cherry, violet grape and yellow banana.

The summer sun was fierce and golden. *We should all be near the river munching coconut cookies with our cousins*, Claudette thought. But this day was different. Everyone was on tenterhooks. Claudette was curious, her parents edgy. The servants were all dressed up, walking fast, moving dishes and chairs.

Zacharie Delva, a big chief of the VSN, *Milice de Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale*, the private militia force of President Duvalier, would be stopping there for a break. He was on his way to Saint Raphael.

They waited for hours. The ice melted, the crispy pork fries became soggy. The heavy silence grew heavier.

“I am going to bed. They can’t expect me to wait on them,” said Maman in a firm voice and stomped off. Claudette stifled a yawn, curiosity ballooning in her gut. *Guests mean happy times, so who are these special men making Papa and Maman fidgety?*



Bhrrm ... Bhrrm ... The sounds of the big trucks approaching alerted the sleepy town.

Zacharie arrived, six hours late, storming in like royalty, a dirty smile on his face. At 10 p.m. he still wore shiny sunglasses.

Click. Clack. Click. The sound of a thousand footsteps following their master almost shook the house.

Claudette tried to count them. *One, two, three ... 10 ... 13.* She gave up. *Too many.*

The Tonton Makout had arrived at her home. No burlap sacks on their shoulders like Uncle Bogeyman, but rifles and shiny machetes. No matted hair, but caps. No blue tattered vest, but blue denims, imported looking.

“How do you do, Mr. Antoine?” Zacharie asked, raising his sunglasses with dark tinted film and golden frames. His half-smile grew into a wolfish grin as he saw the food.

“Fine,” said Mr. Antoine, with a discreet nod. “Have your men help themselves.” The Tonton Makout sat on the chairs, holding machetes and guns, their prized trophies, close. “Good job,” Zacharie smiled as he led his young men to the feast.

Papa Doc’s men ate, laughed and asked for more and more.

The Tonton Makout plundered people’s whispers, their words, their sleep, their homes and their blood. Those who spoke against Duvalier disappeared at night. Some were executed publicly; some had their bones mashed. Everyone’s voices clipped.

Beware, Claudette thought. She realized that gluttony and greed were suddenly minor vices.

Claudette watched her father, patient, worried, grudgingly buying peace from the devil. Though it may have seemed odd he was feeding them, she knew her father was doing everything he could to protect his family. A warm feeling of pride spread through her body and she yawned.

What If?

What will we call the kitty? Papa didn’t say if it is a she cat or a he cat. Minou if he. Minette if she, Claudette thought.

She was waiting for Papa, who had gone to Dondon, the hub of their coffee business, for his weekly visit. Every week, he returned home to Cap-Haitien with sweet-sour oranges and coconut cookies that Grandma baked. And this time he would bring a kitten.

Claudette was playing *Osselets* with her siblings, craning her neck often to check the gate. Maman was reading the newspaper. Claudette picked up all five osselets, made of goat knuckles, and threw them on the floor. She tried to keep them in a small area but not too bunched up, always easy to move and pick up. She chose one jack to be used as the ball and tossed it in the air while she gathered the remaining osselets. *Papa is late. But that is not unusual; everyone knows Papa and anyone can stop him on his way for a long bello.*

Papa walked into Jacky's house, the proud owner of unspoiled cats. "Hello, where is my little kitty?" he greeted her. "I am here to collect my present. I cannot give my children any cat less than perfect. This cat will not, like all Haitian cats, hunt and feast on mice."

"Well I know I promised you the cat, but I'm really sorry. Dubreus came along and said he wanted it," Jacky said. "I am just a small fly, who am I to say no?"

"Oh, Dubreus," Papa said. Dubreus, dirty warlord, bloody goon, the grand Tonton Makout. Cap-Haitien was his playground.

"I told Dubreus I had promised it to you," Jacky said. "But I told him it was up to him if he really wanted it."

Of course Dubreus, the mighty, took the cat. Papa smiled and said, "Such is life. Next time," and walked away.

At the market Papa said hello to many, and when he spotted Dubreus he walked up to him.

"I heard you stole my cat." Papa's face broke into a mischievous grin. Dubreus didn't smile, but kept staring stonily ahead. In Haiti, everyone knew their rank and only one without rank entertained foolish sentiments. His stony stare, though silent, shouted clearly: You don't compare to me.



A servant rushed into the parlor with the announcement: "Master has been arrested because of some cat!"

"No!" Maman cried.

No! Claudette's cry echoed somewhere inside her head. *Is it because of my cat? Because of me Papa is in jail?*

Maman sought out friends and family. Help was needed, urgently.

The Tonton Makout, Uncle Bogeyman, had come for Papa. And a monster came for Claudette, surging from her chest. A gurgling, jumpy, itchy monster. A monster that drew terrible pictures, raking his pointy fingernails across the chalkboard.

She squeezed her eyes shut, wishing all sounds and all scenes away. But the pictures grew bright: She could see the red dust of Champ de Mars, where René Péan, zombie-maker and funeral home owner, was executed. She could see the wolfish grin of Zacharie Delva, the regional chief of the Tonton Makout who had visited them at their Dondon home.

The monster even sketched shiny machetes and pointy rifles.

Hours later Papa came home, accompanied by his cousins and Maman. Claudette ran and hugged him, her liquid eyes lingering on his stubbly cheek, checking for scratches from the monster.

Papa laughed and announced, “A few hours at the station and some hundred gourdes, all for a joke. These guys are nothing but a band of money-hungry thieves.”

Claudette kept staring at Papa. *What if?* She realized that if anything happened to her father, any of the things she heard had happened to others, everything would change.

“Dubreus never took the cat. Jacky, the son of the devil, sold it to someone and blamed it on Dubreus,” Papa added.

The Tonton Makout freed Papa after a few hours of detention. But the monster filled Claudette’s heart with Fear. From then on, Fear had a shape and size. It would occupy big spaces in her little life, inching toward her heart, filling the four chambers with silence.

Fear began dislodging memories, scribbling new scripts of dos and don’ts. *Do fear. Don’t show.*

One Stone, Four Birds

“*Bonne chance.*” Claudette wished her lanky 25-year-old cousin, the very shy Torius Dorcin, good luck and handed him her used textbooks — French literature, algebra, physics and Latin.

“Th-th-thank you,” Torius said. *Is he shy because he stammers or does he stammer because he is shy?* she wondered.

Torius held a special status in Cap-Haitien, an unassuming scholar hungry for world news and exotic languages. Late in the evening, he was always listening to his radio, trying to catch words flying from Deutschland. Once when Papa met up with his German-born friend Otto Schutt, he called for Torius. “Yes my friend, ask me how this young man who was raised in a French and Kreyòl-speaking home is able to speak German and you will be surprised.”

Papa laughed at his own joke because Torius had never traveled abroad, never taken lessons in that foreign language. But Torius started speaking in German. No one could guess if he was speaking correctly, but the visitor was smiling, nodding; their long man-to-man, all-things-German conversation slowed only by Torius’ occasional stammering. Papa was stunned and Torius became a sort of star, *yon vrè fenomèn*, a real phenomenon.

And when Torius was not trying to imitate the accents of grave-sounding news anchors, he was preparing for his baccalaureate exams. Most students cleared it in two or, maximum, three attempts. He had failed the national exams four times so far.

Claudette passed her baccalaureate II exams in July 1965, on her very first attempt. She was preparing to go to France to study medicine.

“Thank you for the books and I hhhhope you have a good time in Fffrance,” Torius said.

“I hope everything will be OK in your next exam,” she responded.



The jinx refused to break. Maybe a good luck bath was what he needed — to remove curses and bad luck he may have inherited from his parents, people said. And Torius re-read all of Claudette’s textbooks with neat crisp notes on the margins in *undercurve-slant-loopback-loopforward-checkstroke-downcurve* cursive letters.

After his seventh attempt in July of 1967, Torius and his friends went to celebrate the feast of St. Anne. They drove 15 kilometers to the fishing village of Limonade, southeast of Cap-Haitien.

People from northern Haiti, from the capital and even those living in Canada and the United States, gather for two days of drumming and dancing for the Catholic festival of St. Jacques Majeur on July 25 at La Plaine du Nord. Then the pilgrims and the diaspora move to Limonade for the feast day of St. Anne, for one more night and day of celebrations. A time for prayers, candles, food and music.

Torius wore a new white *Guayabera*, often called the Mexican wedding shirt, with four patch pockets and two identical rows of *alforzas*, 10 fine, tiny pleats sewn together. Finished off with dark pants and polished pointy dress shoes.

Under the cloudless sky, thousands of men and women danced. Laughter, fried plantain, crispy potatoes, rum, syrupy ice, pork chops and happiness seemed limitless. Men loved the feast, and the cramped crowds made it easier for them to gyrate closer to women, touching, brushing and spraying dust with their moves. The legendary bands *Tropicana* and *Orchestre Septentrional* competed with each other playing jazz, merengue and compas. *Tout moun sou ak plezi* — all drunk with pleasure.

A pretty lady in red smiled at Torius and he asked her for a dance. They matched steps — slow, fast, fast, slow — a happy man and a gorgeous lady.

But earlier in the evening she had refused to dance with a tough, macho-looking man. The macho man returned, followed by a group of familiar denim-clad, sunglass-wearing, rifle and machete-carrying, angry young men. The Tonton Makout.

“How dare you refuse to dance with me?” the rejected, fuming man asked and pulled her slender arm.

“Hhheyyyyy,” Torius said. “Excuse me, please leave her alone.”

The angry men dragged Torius to the local jail. “Nnnnoo ... Nnnnoooo!” he screamed.

They punched and kicked him. Together, faster, harder. The Tonton Makout hit him with the wooden end of rifles. Wood on bone, on teeth, on skull until Torius lay sprawled, like the

collapsed wings of a butterfly, his head *pulpypurple* — in Limonade, where Christopher Columbus and his crew celebrated the first Christmas in the Americas in 1492.

The family received a crumpled death certificate that said Torius Dorcin died of a “heart attack.”

A couple days later, when the speakers of Radio Citadelle and *La Voix du Nord* read in alphabetical order the names of all the students who had passed the state exams, Torius Dorcin was among the names listed. But Torius could no longer listen to the radio. The Tonton Makout had stolen not only his life but also his hard-earned victory.



In Haiti they never say that someone died. Bad news should travel like a moth. First comes the news of sickness; then, when the inevitable is imagined, the news of death is delivered. The news of Torius’ killing reached his village of Dondon like a rancid, fishy smell that climbs out of the sea, hovering over the village, sneaking into every house, every vapid corner, even the ant holes.

In Dondon, where everyone was someone’s cousin, Torius had many, many cousins. And one such cousin, a very pregnant Zette, fainted, never to wake up again, when she heard the news of death delivered in such an un-Haitian way. Dondon prepared for two funerals, and Zette’s fiancé nursed a broken heart for as long as most remembered. *Ak yon dans, kat moun pèdi lavi*. With one dance, four lives were lost.



Claudette received a letter that said one cousin was buried with his head covered and the other cousin buried in a wedding dress with a baby in the belly.

As she read the letter, that Fear born years ago resurfaced; a familiar, stinging pain began nibbling at her legs. Fear had long drained all her tears. She had learned to mourn in an invisible, unvoiced way. Torius and Zette were names in the long list of cousins and friends who withered away in Haitian soil, untimely, forcefully — to whom she never got a chance to really say goodbye.

She tried to write a reply, but Fear had nipped the words waiting to spill out of her pen, weaving a spidery web that filtered all her words.⁴

Some Are Never Really Dead

The overhead stage lights created a yellow-cream halo around 16-year-old Claudette's slender frame as she recited the poem "Nedje" by Roussan Camille.

*Tes yeux étaient pleins de pays,
de tant de pays,
qu'en te regardant
je voyais ressurgir
à leurs fauves lumières
les faubourgs noirs de Londres...*

Yes your eyes are full of countries
so many countries
that when I looked at you
I saw arise
in their wild light
the dark suburbs of London...

Under the arches of the massive stone and brick theater, where French colonial masters once entertained themselves, Claudette's voice rose — a grave, young, pained voice.

*Les bordels de Tripoli
Montmartre
Harlem
tous les faux paradis
où les nègres dansent et chantent
pour les autres...*

The brothels of Tripoli
Montmartre
Harlem
every pseudoparadise
where Negroes dance and sing
for others...

Roussan Camille, a Haitian poet, journalist and diplomat, belonged to the Negritude school of poets, who rejected European colonization, celebrated black pride and drew inspiration from African values and cultures. His wistful words transported Claudette to the woebegone world of Nedje, a ravishing young woman trapped in false promises, who was stolen from her home in Danakil. Nedje moved from one false heaven to another: London, Tripoli, Montmartre, Harlem and Casablanca.

The poem told the story of the violation of Nedje's beauty and the rape of Africa. But the poet believed that in the days to come Nedje would be able to go back to her birthplace and be happy again. Then she would be able to dance freely and joyfully for her heroes: those who had died, those who were still alive and those still to be born.

Claudette could see rows and rows of dark silhouettes in the audience. She was torn between the beauty of the words and the brutality of their truth.

It was an evening of cultural programs organized by "L'Elan," a cultural club in Cap-Haitien that would often gather to feast on folk music, dance and poetry. L'Elan meant leap, and it hoped to help young minds achieve a spiritual leap as they became aware of the burdens of worldly life.

The audience clapped when Claudette finished reciting. With a bow, she retreated to the green room — full of musical instruments, scripts, half-open makeup boxes and bright cotton costumes.

"Congratulations."

She turned around to see the faces of Henri-Claude Daniel and Toto Calixte, two poets in their early 20s. They both wore blue-gray T-shirts, the official color for the organization *Caraco Bleu*, a group of young activists who were advocating for the empowerment of peasants.

Henri-Claude with his sharp face, curved nose and shiny forehead fired her curiosity. The suave poet wrote about the pains of growing up, the slippery decay of Haiti and the injustices of the land. He also wrote about the Haitian bats and pigeons, green mountains, snakelike rivers, blue ocean waters and hopeful feelings that kept him awake on balmy nights of white moons and silver stars.

In that wordless moment, Claudette's heart ballooned, filled with excitement only to be deflated by shyness. Henri-Claude blushed; his smile grew into a lopsided grin, his liquid eyes shy. Toto with round gold-rimmed glasses, known for writing fervent poems, looked amused.

"Your words were so moving, it touched my heart," Henri-Claude said.

"Thank you. I am happy you liked it," Claudette said with a smile.

Claudette and the poets came from two different worlds; there were very few occasions for them to interact. She went to a private Catholic school, while Henri-Claude and Toto attended public school. The poets were popular activists and one of their friends, Josué Bernard, had been arrested for unknown reasons, which usually meant political causes.

From the corner of her eye she saw her friends Gabrielle and Sylvie giggling.

"I hope we get more opportunities to meet and discuss things," Henri-Claude said and walked away, smiling. The Unsaid between them grew, swallowing them in a gust of youthful, tittering feelings.

The three girls went back to the theater to see young girls and boys perform folk dances — petro, ibo, banda, congo and yanvalou.

"See, I told you he has a crush on you. He really likes you," Sylvie whispered and winked.

It was well known among their friends that Henri-Claude liked Claudette. But Claudette liked to believe Henri-Claude simply wanted to discuss world affairs and enlighten her with values of a just world. Also, she had long decided love was not her thing. Love was a fleeting tempest, violent and delusive. Her love-infected friends used to swing from high-to-low-to-down-to-up moods. *Who wants the dizzy mess of love?* she thought. It was better if love blossomed on her wedding day, at the altar sealed by the blessings of a priest and a first kiss.

"Come on. He just wants to talk to me and help broaden my worldview," she said, bottling up all her emotions, all her experiences for memory's sake.



"Claudette, you have guests," her sister Nicole announced.

“*Special guests,*” echoed her other sister Gladys.

Claudette was surprised to see Henri-Claude and Toto again after so many weeks standing at the door. Her father was respected but also feared; very few young men dared to come see her at her house, much less uninvited. She led them to the room known as the little salon, the one with a small round table and straight-back chairs.

It was a morning of breezy smiles. They joked about school and taxing exams, discussed culture and poems.

“What do you think of Roussan Camille’s poems?” Henri-Claude asked.

“His stories of human trafficking are so well told,” she said.

About mundane, day-to-day things they talked.

“Hello, young men,” Papa said as he came into the room. Everyone stood up and nodded. Papa sat down in the big salon, adjacent to the little salon, from where he could hear and see all. He picked up the newspaper pretending to ignore everyone. *Come on Papa! In this 18-room house you find precisely this place to read your newspaper at precisely this hour?* Claudette thought. His office was just next door, where he usually read and attended to work matters.

He is treating me like a little girl. Why does he have to supervise an innocent exchange of worldly ideas?

The mood shifted; there was a heavy-footed silence, Papa’s watchful presence sapping all eagerness and all banter.

Henri-Claude gave her a book, a light stapled booklet containing many of his thought-provoking French and Kreyòl poems printed on yellowish plain paper. He sat there wiggling his slender fingers.

“Thank you so much,” Claudette smiled.

There was no time for frank jokes, much less for romance. The Unsaid remained unsaid. They left. There was no coffee, no cola, no cookies, only the hope to meet again, the need to share ideas and spaces. Claudette’s head was in a cloud, confused and ashamed. She held the book tightly — the only gift he would give her besides lifelong memories.



They met a few more times over the next couple of years, always in a group and always for fleeting moments. The pressure of secondary school exams and preparations for going to France to study medicine kept Claudette busy.

A few weeks before her scheduled trip to Nancy in France, Papa told Claudette, “You will be going to Spain. You will be able to learn a new language that will serve you better and be with your brother Raymond.”

Nineteen-year-old Claudette knew no Spanish. She also knew there would be no discussion. It was decided. That was all.

In that house parents decided everything and though Claudette was sad, there was very little she could do.

Papa had written a letter to her brother to come pick her up at the airport but he was not sure if he'd received it. That evening Claudette learned a few Spanish words (please and thank you and how much for the taxi). Her brother came to receive her. He helped her settle in and gave her all his books because he was studying medicine too. He also gave her a full skeleton; she kept it under her bed.

In the following weeks, all her days got lost in learning Spanish, finding her way through the cobbled streets of Madrid and diving into the world of medicine. She realized that Fear lived in Spain too, as people led *careful lives* under General Franco's dictatorship.

Every time she told her fellow students where she came from, they would lift their arms like wings and do a rapid hip-shaking *otea* dance. Everyone thought she came from Tahiti. Even if they did not know Tahiti was different from Haiti, that one was in the South Pacific Ocean and the other in the Caribbean Sea, some did ask her about vodou.

And she had no answers. Vodou was an untouchable universe in her home, banished to servant quarters. In Spain she began reading about and discovering the world of vodou, the New World Afro-diasporic religion, training herself in the tales of deities, called *Loa*, who could possess people, and how *boungans*, male priests, and *mambos*, female priests, were chosen and possessed by the spirits of the deities. Myths, rituals and spells of Haitian vodou, she learned in a foreign land.

The poets and the warmth of home became mere happy memories, pushed to the remote fringes of her mind.



“Choose every 1 and 15 or every 8 and 30 of the month,” Maman had said to her just before she traveled to Madrid.

Claudette chose 1 and 15, easy to remember. So it was decided that on those dates she would always send letters to her mother. Maman sent letters to her on 8 and 30 filled with information about extended family and friends, sprinkled with sorrowful news of the tyranny.

An unspoken code language was born, where mother and daughter knew what certain quoted words meant. “He went for a long study trip” meant another Haitian had escaped to settle in North America or Europe. “No visits for a long time” meant people had disappeared, maybe dragged from their house, half-asleep by the Tonton Makout. “Wore a black dress for the visit” meant someone had been killed.

No questions asked. No explanations given.

Sometimes Maman could not wait for 8 and 30 and she wrote earlier. It meant more bad news, very bad news that stirred painful memories. Sometimes the newspaper headlines would be sugarcoated. Sometimes letters from friends would arrive carrying the pain of the present and the hopelessness of the future in Haiti.

One friend wrote saying Henri-Claude and Toto had gone to Paris. For what, no one guessed.

It was not unusual for young men to disappear for a few days; they often went for secret meetings. Some went abroad to meet mentors; others ended up in jail. It was better not to try to find out: Don't ask, don't tell. The answers would become baneful for the knower. The knowers became criminals too, just for knowing something about someone.



In 1967, Claudette came home for summer vacation and went to visit a cousin, Ursula, in Port-au-Prince. She knew that Henri-Claude was there and living very close to Ursula's house. In those days no girl from a decent family would go to visit a young man alone. So both girls went to see Henri-Claude

They were seated in the living room, and Henri-Claude appeared in his undershirt, perhaps because he was so excited to see her. But Ursula was scandalized to see the bulging arms, well-formed neck and firm, handsome body of a young man under the form-fitting white undershirt. Ursula cut the visit short, but Claudette and Henri-Claude promised to keep in touch.



No letters were exchanged.

There was also no news of Henri-Claude, and a few weeks later Claudette moved to the United States of America, where she was studying English. She had studied English for seven years; she could read and write but still could not speak.

In the winter of 1969 she met a friend, Rochenel from Cap-Haitien, who was now living in New York City. Many of their former schoolmates were now living in the United States, Canada or Europe. Rochenel gave Claudette updates on friends still living in Haiti. Both felt sorry for those suffocating under the choking rule of a madman, who was making the poor poorer and stripping everyone of their basic rights and voice.

“And,” Rochenel paused. “Henri-Claude and Toto were killed.”

Claudette went quiet and still. But her mind was traveling to all the memories she had so carefully stocked: to the smooth feel of the poetry book, the giddy shyness of wordless moments, the exuberance of young minds, the giggles, the jokes, the fear, all memories from a bygone youth.

A powerless silence gripped her as she gulped down the news. *It is very cold today, I am shivering, I think I will catch a fever*, she thought. What fever, she knew too well. A rage that formed a tight knot in her heart. Silence was always her defense.

“I have been told that their heads were chopped off and taken to the national palace to present to Papa Doc as evidence that they were killed,” her friend continued delicately.

Papa Doc was born to kill, Haitians born to die. As if machetes were polished to behead young bright minds. The Tonton Makout had successfully established the culture of fear, the rule of death, pointing their guns at the brightest, the smartest and the ones who rebelled for change. *What a loss*, she thought as she sat in a gripping silence.



The silent mourning would go on forever.

Whenever she traveled by the metro in Paris, she would hope against hope that Henri-Claude would be there, just across the platform among the waiting. His shiny forehead and lopsided grin would come back.

She was not given a chance to say goodbye to the poet who filled the world with melody, who went to Paris to be baptized in liberty. She refused to let the image of the bloody head of Henri-Claude be her last memory. She hoped that maybe one more time, just one last time, she would see him among the masses of well-dressed, free-thinking Parisians.

You think that you have killed him, but I can always see him, sweet and handsome, still in his 20s, Claudette would often tell herself. It was her little revenge against his killers. Because some people never really die.

PART 2

The Return

Claudette looked out the window; she could see the ocean waters gleaming under the blazing sun. In her mind she could smell the saltiness and hear the frothy waves crashing on patient rocks. She looked up at the azure sky. *The Haitian sun is so warm, so unlike the European sun, cold even when bright yellow*, she thought.

The year was 1973 and she was back in Port-au-Prince after spending nearly a decade living in Europe and the United States. She had missed Haiti very much while she was abroad.

Claudette had married Georges Werleigh in 1970; she had known him since her school days. After their wedding they moved to Switzerland, where Georges was working on his Ph.D. in economics. In October 1971, Georges traveled to Montpellier, France, to specialize in rural economics, which he felt would better equip him to work in Haiti. Claudette remained in Switzerland, where she worked at the Institute of Physiology at the University of Freiburg. They spent vacation times and every other weekend together.

Papa Doc died in April 1971. Although he had been replaced by his son, some started to wonder if it was time to go back to Haiti. Claudette had lived in Spain, in the United States and now in Switzerland. The important thing for her was being involved in something useful, something that she believed in. For Georges, what seemed most important was living in Haiti. And he was already fed up with the “eight winters” he had already experienced.

Early in 1973, the couple received a letter that answered both of their hopes. It was from Father Yvon Joseph inviting them to come back to Haiti and be part of his new project. The Holy Cross Congregation had agreed to set up a new type of school, the Institute for Adult Education — IDEA — for people living in the countryside. “All the best minds that we have trained are now living in Europe and in North America. The peasants are the ones who stay in our land. Training rural community leaders will make a difference in our country,” he wrote.

Yvon was the same priest who had coached Claudette during summer camp in her last years of secondary school, where she interacted with Haiti’s poor peasants in a new, profound way. She later conducted classes for underprivileged children, learning about their needs and aspirations, and feeling the urge to help and to heal. It was a moment that led to her awakening — so much so that when her father wanted her to become a doctor, she said, “What is the point of becoming a doctor? Because if I cure poor people and save them, they might still die of hunger. I’d do better to be an agronomist.” Though she had still gone to Spain to study medicine, life had other plans for her.

Claudette always knew she wanted to improve life in Haiti. *Maybe now is the time to give back*, she thought, reading Father Yvon’s letter. It just seemed right for them to return. She also wanted to set an example for others, so that everyone would not abandon Haiti.

But what about safety?

The Duvaliers were still in power. Papa Doc had died “going from palace to cemetery” just as he’d promised. In Haiti’s only dynastic transfer of power, his 19-year-old son Jean-Claude Duvalier succeeded him. Famously stupid and fat, he was known as Baby Doc and sometimes

referred to as a “basket head.” He had announced that he would achieve the economic revolution because — according to him — his father had successfully completed the political revolution.

Haiti laid crumpled in Papa Doc’s wake. He had filled the army, the trade unions, the universities and the churches with his loyalists: the Tonton Makouts. All resistance had been ruthlessly crushed. Baby Doc, therefore, would reign as the second president-for-life, unopposed.

But Haitians believed the worst was over because Baby Doc was just a baby. There was a hint of excitement in the air; many people felt they could breathe easy. Baby Doc steered the country toward liberalization, but only to the degree of opening the market to assembly industries. Investors from the United States rushed to take advantage of Haiti’s dirt-cheap labor and tax breaks. Haiti became the largest assembler of baseballs, even though Haitians never played the game. Some business families benefited, but there was no real economic growth for the majority of Haitians.

Claudette and Georges had been invited to return by someone they considered a friend and both trusted. Still, Claudette asked Maman if it was OK to come back. In her letters Maman used to tell Claudette she was relieved because all her children were settled abroad. Safe, away from the maddening tyrant. Each letter would also mention how empty the house was and how lonely her heart felt. But Maman, like many others in Haiti, believed it was OK. It was safe now. Claudette could return, and they were both welcome to live in her parents’ now quite empty house.

So Claudette came back home — to a Haiti drenched in the Caribbean sun and ruled by Baby Doc, where people were busy making baseballs and poor peasants were staggering to stay alive.



Baby Doc drove his sports car around Haiti causing hours of traffic jams while his men continued Papa Doc’s tactics of terror. There was one big difference though: no gruesome public executions. It was as if the men had been trained to wear white gloves, hoping to leave no trace.

At a time when most people wanted to leave Haiti, Claudette had returned like someone in love with her fate, following her destiny. She came back to a land that was becoming increasingly inhospitable to its own people. She could still remember how she and Georges gave away their books before they left Europe for Haiti, fearing the military would seize them at the airport. One never knew. One had to be careful; even a dictionary could be seen as communist propaganda.

Once in Haiti, Claudette could see the changes. The familiar streets — where she walked as a 4-year-old and went to watch a film on Joan of Arc wearing mismatched socks, where she and Gabrielle ran after they saw the execution of René Péan — were different now.

She had come back to a buzzing city. With Nordic cruise ships arriving several times a week, life in Cap-Haitien was revolving around those days — Mondays, Thursdays and sometimes Saturdays. Tourists would spend the day in Cap-Haitien, many venturing higher up in the mountains to visit the Sans Souci Palace in Milot and the famous Citadelle La Ferrière. With the tourists came an explosion of paintings and handicrafts exhibited in private art galleries or merrily shown off in improvised public displays.

Still, there was an overwhelming emptiness, a halfness, like a book with missing pages. *Like a rainbow with a few colors missing*, Claudette thought. A whole generation was gone. Most people in their 20s, 30s and even 40s had seemingly vanished from Cap-Haitien. She and Georges stood out; there were so few like them. The young, the strong and the intellectuals had all escaped — gone abroad in search of safety and a better life. Those who stayed were very old or very young compared to Claudette — people her parents' age or the young students in secondary school to whom she taught anatomy and physiology.

Each house had a story of someone dead, or someone missing, or someone broken. All the cultural associations like L'Élan that promoted arts, culture and music had shut down. Instead there were many gospel groups, singing, praying, seeking a better life — as if Haitians knew that only help from heaven could change their fate and ease their life.

People looked at Claudette and Georges on the streets and wondered why they had come back. Could they be communists trained in Russia or Eastern Europe?

Claudette returned hoping to raise the consciousness of the poor, the unfortunate. She started working as the literacy programme coordinator at the Institute for Adult Education, where she based her work on Paulo Freire's approach of empowering poor people from grassroots communities. In 1974, she went to study in Mexico, pursuing a diploma in audio-visual techniques in adult education at the Regional Center for Latin America in Patzcuaro and at the Latin American Institute for Educational Communication in Mexico City.

One day, after Georges commented that some news on the radio seemed to come only from one side, someone told Claudette's father that his son-in-law was surely a "socialist." In Haiti, at that time, there was not much difference between a socialist and a communist. Many people — including former classmates — had been killed precisely for being associated with one of those names.

The pressure and scrutiny on her husband increased tremendously while Claudette was completing her studies in Mexico. When he learned that he was being followed and all his moves reported to the military authorities, a friend suggested that they relocate to Port-au-Prince, a bigger city.

Claudette was busy in the capital city. She was the executive secretary of Secours Catholique d'Haiti for one year, completed her law degree, became a registered lawyer and was appointed the secretary general of Caritas Haiti. She worked for Caritas for a decade, until 1987, coordinating relief assistance, civic education and respect for human rights.



Many Catholic organizations that focused on social issues, including Caritas, used the Lenten season — the 40 days before Easter — for awareness campaigns, and often used biblical frescos, or murals, to tell a story or teach a lesson. One year, when a program in Germany wanted to do a Lent campaign on Haiti, Claudette identified a Haitian painter, Jacques Chéry, to create a fresco for them. When the painting was finished, Claudette's director requested a large cloth copy for every parish in Haiti and her colleague Rose went to customs to retrieve the huge package.

But during the inspection, one of the customs officers had noticed the words “human rights” in English and Kreyòl, a sure sign of “subversive” material. Claudette received a phone call from a very scared Rose, who was being held under threat of jail because of the paintings. Anxious and afraid, Claudette, along with another colleague, jumped in a car and headed to the customs office.

After a lot of talking, arguing that the paintings were simply sent because they were made by a Haitian artist, the customs officer finally released Rose and let them leave with the package. Claudette knew it was highly unlikely that they’d convinced the officer; the more convincing argument probably came from Rose, who’d shared some of the food aid with the officer. More likely, he was just satisfied that he’d given a proper, threatening warning.

Had the customs officer looked more closely at the painting, he may not have released the package or Rose. He would have discovered a colorful illustration of a dark history, with Jesus Christ, portrayed with black features, nailed to the tree of life. The tree’s roots mingled downward with darkly painted scenes of violence at the bottom of the fresco: structural violence forcing people to flee on boats and military violence and war crushing people. Around the tree were scenes of people working the land, the life of most Haitian peasants. The scenes at the top of the painting portrayed the kingdom of God: a modern-day Moses in pants and a vest pointing to a tablet of the Ten Commandments, inscribed with the words “human rights” (the section that *had* caught the attention of the customs officer), and people of all colors and ages sitting around a table sharing the abundant goods of nature. With fair and good management, the fresco illustrated, there is more than enough for everyone.

Such awareness-raising in a country like Haiti, Claudette knew, was simply revolutionary. And dangerous.



Claudette believed deeply in promoting popular education, so as she continued her work with Caritas she, along with four friends, started a training center about an hour outside of the capital in Gressier. She chose the name with great care: Institute of Technology and Animation (ITECA). The agreement between the founders was to set up the institute on two legs: to provide training in natural sciences, such as agriculture and health, but also in social sciences like economics and law. The technical leg did not pose a problem. But training in social sciences could have raised suspicion and even be linked to communism, which is why Claudette chose the word animation. In English it referred to comic characters, but its real significance had more to do with the Latin word *anima*, meaning life and soul. In fact, many of ITECA’s courses were intended to empower people.

Claudette’s journey with ITECA started in 1979⁵ and was fraught with risks and life-changing experiences. She learned how to work with poor peasants and build their confidence. But she also had to take many steps to protect not only her own life but the lives of others. As an additional safety measure, the names of students in ITECA’s courses were kept in a special safe. They did not keep hand-written papers around and blackboards were meticulously cleaned after each use. Documentation about the early years of the institute would later be hard to come by.

The fear of the Tonton Makout was always there — their local VSN office was less than a 15-minute walk from the institute. Claudette chose to build the school on top of a small hill so she

could keep an eye on anyone coming up the path as she was teaching. If she became suspicious of someone loitering near the school, she would switch to a technical and less dangerous topic like health or nutrition.

When the school was built, the land around it was barren, so Claudette could see her beloved sea from the main open room and enjoy the view. But the school had promoted reforestation plans and a few years later she realized she could no longer see the water because of the trees. She was proud of the trees, though she always missed the sight of the sea.

When Claudette's friend, who was in charge of the Haiti desk at the donor organization the Inter-American Foundation, mentioned they were sharing reports with the Haitian embassy in Washington, Claudette chose to stop receiving funds from the organization. But she could not register ITECA as a non-profit organization, and wouldn't until 1994, because of the risks involved, so it remained under the broad umbrella of the Holy Cross Congregation.

In her work in the field of popular education, Claudette always put special emphasis on educating women. She realized that women added color and life to the classes. They were always chattering and joyful, enlivening the classrooms. More importantly, educating women would strengthen the community. It was a specific strength that was hard for her to pinpoint, but Claudette was convinced that women's contributions were not only valuable, but unique.



In November 1980, the political landscape shifted abruptly. The politics of the United States had always greatly influenced those of Haiti. During Jimmy Carter's presidency, many Haitians had been able to claim a little space to work for the respect of human rights. But when Ronald Reagan won the U.S. presidential elections, the "business about human rights was over." Baby Doc started a clampdown on human rights advocates, union leaders, activists, academics, radio journalists — anyone who had taken the liberty to work for the empowerment of others or dared speak against the dictatorship.

Jean-Jacques Honorat, ITECA's general director, was among those arrested, and was later sent to exile in New York. The day after his arrest, Claudette received a message: She better find a safe place to go, as she could be next. Georges was away as part of a congress in the Dominican Republic, so Claudette left her two daughters with her sister-in-law and went into hiding. But two days later, her sister-in-law came to visit her. Afraid someone might have followed her, Claudette decided to move, this time telling no one where she would be.

In her quest for a safe haven, Claudette went to a friend of her parents who lived in the suburbs of Port-au-Prince to ask for help. Peggy greeted her warmly, telling Claudette that God had answered her prayers and sent her company to help her through the most difficult period of her life. In her first few days of hiding, Claudette learned that Peggy had been calling Claudette's house to tell her she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. They were each experiencing pain and sorrow for different reasons, but somehow the two women had been placed under one roof to comfort each other.

Inside Peggy's house, Claudette shielded herself from the world, accompanied by her memories and her fears. She spent hours listening to the news, and at night she would count the days to Christmas and pray that the nightmare would soon be over. Always hidden behind thick curtains, Claudette would not venture out of the house or even sit in the courtyard. When her period came, Peggy asked the servant, a young boy, to bring her sanitary napkins. He walked from the store to the house, holding the pack of blue Kotex in his hand, uncovered, swinging this way and that. Claudette would have laughed if she weren't scared someone might guess there was a younger woman living in the house. That could get them both into deep trouble.

After three weeks, the wave of repression subsided, mainly due to intense international pressure. But while Claudette was in hiding, the military and Tonton Makout had visited ITECA. The institute staff had thrown most of the books down the toilet or burned them. They destroyed anything that could arouse the suspicions of the rifle-bearing men. But the soldiers, mostly poor young fellows, were more interested in typewriters, refrigerators, radios, ventilators, small pieces of furniture — the things they could easily grab, take home or sell. The soldiers, Claudette realized afterward, were never interested in books, or the ideas inside them.



It was Christmas of 1983 when Claudette's 5-year-old daughter Lesley-Ann asked her to write a letter to her aunt, who was living in the United States. "Maman," she said, "I want you to write this in English." *Even children know how to protect themselves*, she thought. Even a little girl knew that free thinking and free speech were dangerous in Haiti.

"Tell Aunt Nicole that I want to leave this country and never come back again." Claudette's heart sank. She and her husband had chosen to raise their children in Haiti, but their daughter, just 5 years old, was fed up. She wanted Claudette to find a job abroad. *Am I being selfish by making her go through this?* Claudette wondered.

Haiti was, once again, in turmoil. The next few years were marked with protests. Students, young people, even schoolchildren — almost everyone was out in the streets demonstrating against the Duvaliers. In 1986, Baby Doc left the country after emptying out the national treasury.

The protests in Haiti's streets were replaced with sparks of hope, cheers and celebrations. Claudette felt free like every other Haitian. But she also prayed. *I hope this will be a new phase for Haiti.*

The Sacrifice of Power

Congratulations. That's what everyone said when Claudette was appointed minister for social affairs and labor in March 1990 by Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, a Supreme Court judge who had just become the first female president of Haiti. "Your dad would have been so proud and happy!" one family member exclaimed. Claudette smiled sadly. Her father had died 10 years earlier. *The only person who would not rejoice is Papa*, she thought.

Claudette could not help but remember her father's words that had caught her attention: "Getting into politics is something that I would not wish, even to my worst enemy!" Papa had been a member of parliament during the government of Sténio Vincent and Elie Lescot before Claudette was born but had chosen to return to his business, probably because he was fed up with the politics, corruption and malice of the politicians.

Claudette knew that power corrupted people, but she was also conscious that her country was going through a historic moment. People — herself included — were thirsty for change. She and Georges had been advocating and working for change since they'd returned to Haiti. Now she was being asked not only to hold an academic discourse but to lend a hand — *mettre la main à la pâte*.



Haitians had lived under the dictatorship of the Duvaliers from 1957 to 1986. Nearly 30 years. The excitement that came from the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier had been brutally crushed by what followed: a period known as "Duvalierism without Duvalier." Though Baby Doc was out of the country, people close to the Duvaliers still ruled it. There was no real change — the repression, killings and looting continued.

To avoid a return of decades of dictatorship, people in civic society and grassroots organizations became very active. They voted massively in favor of a new constitution in 1987 that introduced the role of a prime minister so that power would not lie in just one hand. The president was now the head of state while the prime minister was head of the government. The new constitution also gave parliament the power to control the executive branch. The Haitian people were trying to give life to a new way of managing the country.

Haiti needed structural changes, but Haiti also needed hope. It was this desire for change and hope that resulted in Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide being elected president in Haiti's first free and democratic elections, in December 1990.

Perceived as a messiah by the poor, Aristide's homilies denounced the wrongdoing of the military, the Tonton Makout, the powerful oligarchy, even the imperialism of the U.S. government. The Haitian authorities had used the strongest means possible in their attempts to shut him up. Although she was living in another neighborhood, Claudette frequently attended mass at Aristide's St. Jean Bosco Church. It was pure luck that Claudette was not there on Sept. 11, 1988, when the Tonton Makout erupted, setting fire to the church, killing at least 13 people and leaving nearly 80 wounded. That Sunday, she had instead gone to pay a visit to a cousin who was sick. It was on her way home that she learned what had happened from her husband, who had rushed to the church in search of her. When he didn't find her, he stayed to help a friend whose husband was among the dead.

In March 1991 Claudette was appointed head of staff of the Prime Minister's Office. She held that position until September 30 when a military coup deposed Aristide, who flew first to Venezuela and then to the United States.



The coup d'état against Aristide had struck a fatal blow to the democratic movement in Haiti, with 3,000 to 5,000 people reported dead. Several members of the government had taken refuge in foreign embassies, and thousands of activists had gone into hiding.

Claudette, her husband and her younger daughter were among the latter group (her eldest daughter was already safe, studying in the United States). But that did not mean that they remained passive. Because of the extensive network of people and organizations that they had been in contact with, they received news, every day, of what was going on all over the country: the names of people who had been brutalized or killed; the names of the places where young girls and women had been raped, often in front of other family members who had been tied up; and many other atrocities.

From their hidden shelter, together with other activists, they would relay the news by fax to the outside world, to people and organizations working in solidarity with the Haitian people. One such person was Father Pierre Ruquoy, or “Pedro,” a Belgian priest who lived in the *bateyes* of the Dominican Republic and had been working very hard to protect the rights of the Haitian people.

Pedro was in charge of a radio station, Radio Enriquillo, located near the frontier in Barahona, that could be listened to throughout Haiti. Since all independent radio and TV stations in Haiti had been shut down, this was how people heard what was happening in their country. Soon everybody in Haiti knew that they should listen, every weekday at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., to Radio Enriquillo — named after a native Cacique who rebelled against the Spanish conquistadors that invaded the island with Christopher Columbus.

Cocorico! Cocorico! Claudette would hear a cock crow at the radio station — a signal that all Haitians understood. The cock had been the symbol of the FNCD (National Front for Change and Democracy), the coordination of political parties and grassroots organizations that had brought President Aristide to power. Then in Kreyòl, Claudette would hear all the atrocities committed by the military in power and their paramilitary ally FRAPH — the so-called Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti.

The government of Balaguer in Dominican Republic, acting in solidarity with the military in power in Haiti, intervened to stop the radio from transmitting news concerning Haiti. The radio antenna was vandalized, but Pedro repaired it and brought back the news. When the antenna was attacked more heavily a second time, somehow the radio started transmitting news again. Finally an official order came prohibiting the radio from transmitting foreign news. But Pedro's determined solidarity would not be stopped so easily. His imagination went wild. They had forbidden him to talk, but not to pray or to sing. A couple of days later, Claudette heard something new coming from the radio station — song. They were Gregorian-like tunes, but the lyrics conveyed information about what was happening in Haiti.

Imagination and determination are powerful tools and strong assets in the struggle for freedom, Claudette realized.



When her youngest daughter could no longer sleep because of the shooting in the streets, Claudette sent her to live with an aunt in New York. But Claudette soon followed in July 1992 when

she was appointed executive director of the Washington Office on Haiti, where her job was to lobby the U.S. government and explain to the American people what was happening in Haiti, a country under military control. But after the Governors Island Accord in 1993 when the military agreed to the return of the president, she was asked by President Aristide, still in exile in Washington, D.C., to become Haiti's minister of foreign affairs.

Claudette did not want to leave the Washington Office, and especially not her two daughters who she was now closer to once again. But she knew her country needed her. She'd been called upon to make a bridge with Haiti's peasants, the people she'd been working with for 10 years.

Claudette returned to Haiti as the military continued imposing its power. She had to wear a bulletproof vest to go to her new office — a gift from her niece Rose, who was living in the United States. Like the rest of her family, Rose feared for her safety. But after the assassination of Minister of Justice Guy Malary, Claudette decided to work from an office located at the Haitian Embassy in Washington, D.C. After all, according to international law, she was still working in “Haitian territory.”



The year was 1994. Claudette was still in D.C. working as minister of foreign affairs. She was excited as she stood inside the ornate, classic-looking Washington office. She was going to meet President Nelson Mandela — the living saint sitting on the pedestal of peace and rights. The U.S. State Department had facilitated the meeting. Claudette waited with bated breath.

Mandela joined them for a brief meeting and asked them about the state of affairs, what was happening in Haiti. The Haitian delegation described the coup and explained how Aristide was trying to run the government in exile.

He listened patiently to everything and then said, “Thank you for sharing your views, but I am sorry. I have to go for another meeting. Would it be possible to meet again tomorrow and we can discuss this more?”

Claudette was a little disappointed, but she was excited to have seen the slow-moving man with his affable smile, so reflective of his indomitable will against apartheid.

The next day they met again at the same office, and Mandela said, “Now tell me, what is the situation in Haiti? I am not so familiar with all the details, so please, tell me. I would like to hear the details from you.”

Claudette and the Haitian delegation described in more detail the atrocities the military was committing in Haiti.

“Have you thought of having a meeting with the military?” Mandela asked.

Wait a second, Claudette thought, *did I hear right?* Was this the same Mandela for whose release she had signed Amnesty International's petition campaign, year after year?

“It is important if you want to have peace,” he continued. “It is better sometimes to make sacrifices and talk to the military.”

Something was wrong here. *How can he say that we should shake hands with the military? Isn't that the same as hugging the Devil?* In that short moment, Claudette's impression of him vanished like smoke; he tumbled down from the pedestal. Though the Aristide government had an agreement with the military, the Governors Island Accord, the military had not honored it. Human rights violations and killings persisted, and Claudette worked with groups who strongly believed that there could be no peace without justice.

The military were the bad guys, the ones with guns who specialized in robbing people's sleep and painting their dreams red.

Claudette's adulation was replaced with suspicion. *Now I understand why he canceled the meeting yesterday. He must have met with the State Department and they have brokered a deal, she thought. I am sure he will get something from the U.S. for making us talk to the military.*

After all, it had been the State Department that approached them with the invitation to talk to President Mandela. *Donnant-Donnant.* Give and take went the mantra. *Sharp move, America! Sad move, Mandela!* Claudette thought. No one who knew the situation in Haiti would agree to these terms. This was something he was doing for his country. Claudette was ready for the talk to end.

The privilege of meeting Mandela would remain a sour memory for a very long time because, for Claudette, the idea of reconciling with the military was like betraying those killed.



After last-minute facilitation by Jimmy Carter in September 1994, the de facto military government resigned under pressure from the United States, which had sent troops to occupy Haiti. The occupation was sanctioned by the United Nations, and, on Oct. 15, President Aristide was restored to office with the support of American troops.

In November 1995, Claudette stepped down as the minister of foreign affairs when she was asked to become prime minister. She was not surprised to be approached for the position. A few years earlier, while President Aristide was still in exile, he'd asked different groups, both inside Haiti and in the Diaspora, to propose potential names for prime minister. Long lists came in, and Claudette had been told that her name appeared on several of them. But, in the eyes of influential people in Washington, D.C., Claudette was found to be “too close to the poor.” Those same influential people believed it was important for President Aristide to pick a prime minister who would reassure the private sector.

She was not surprised, but neither was she fooled. Claudette knew that, for some politicians, asking her to become prime minister was also a way of making sure she would not run for president in the coming elections. The struggle for power remained a prominent characteristic of politics in Haiti, but Claudette had not entered politics for personal gain. She was in politics to serve her country — to serve Haitians.

Claudette had endured much in her efforts to work for the betterment of Haiti, including having one daughter believe that when it came to Haiti, her own children came second. Claudette accepted the position — and with it a place in history as Haiti’s first female prime minister. With power came responsibility, and sacrifice. But deep inside, she knew this would be the last and ultimate sacrifice.

While power brought more responsibilities, there was still the expectation that she would continue performing her duties as a mother and wife. One day while Claudette was chatting with a longtime friend, William Smarth, her husband walked in complaining.

“Claudette, you should see the food I have been served.”

“Georges, what do you expect me to do?” Claudette asked.

“Georges, please, don’t tell me with all the problems Claudette has to deal with, that she still has to think about feeding you,” William said.

It was good that such a remark was made by a male friend. If it had come from a female friend, Georges would probably have retorted that it was merely a manifestation of “solidarity between women.”

No matter what position women hold, people still expect them to continue providing the same services they used to, Claudette thought.

But Claudette realized that people also expected her to exploit her position and give privileges to her family and friends.

When she had become minister of social affairs, she wanted to be approachable, accessible to all. But the system thwarted her plans. Once, she rolled down the car windows and the driver requested, “Please minister, Your Excellency, put your window up.” Claudette wanted to be accessible, but people rushed to her window, throwing bits of paper in with their names written on them. She later learned that these people expected to be given a job, or be sent a check, just because they had given her their names. Some even pretended that they had handed Claudette their land tenure papers. The next time, she reluctantly rolled her windows up. *It is hard but I learned my lesson,* she told herself. A history of corrupt power was hard to overcome.

Claudette never wanted any security guards either, but friends and family members insisted — there were too many people waiting at her doorstep every day. There was no privacy and little security. Knowing how worried her family and friends were, she grudgingly let security guards in. But she noticed they often slept while on duty.

When she became prime minister, she was sure that she would never use sirens and red lights. She had always detested how Baby Doc drove his fast cars, causing havoc on the streets, stopping people, even killing some. But the moment she would get in the car, the driver would flash the red lights, blare the sirens and dash off. “Stop, stop,” she would tell the driver. The officer in charge of security explained that if the driver drove fast, there would be less chance of her getting hurt.

People are asking for change, Claudette thought, but in reality they are not ready, and the power structure is still the same.



During her brief time as prime minister, Claudette did her best to practice cooperation instead of confrontation, but she learned that, in a system with a long history of corruption, being in power didn't necessarily mean having power.

Three months later in March 1996, in the ever-changing manner of Haiti's governments, Claudette stepped down as the prime minister when Aristide's first term came to an end and René Préval was elected president. She also decided to step away from politics in general, and return to her work in informal adult education. She worked as a consultant for project evaluations and volunteered at *Lig Pouvwa Fanm* (League for Women's Empowerment), an organization that she co-founded in Port-au-Prince together with other women who had been government ministers. There, she encouraged women to be active in politics and trained them in political leadership for three years.

Claudette continued trying to serve her country through such unpaid volunteer work, but she struggled to find a paying job doing the kind of work she wanted to do at the grassroots. In Haiti, once you have been the prime minister, the work market is drastically narrowed. People expect you to run for president, or perhaps become an advisor to the president. But going back down the perceived career ladder is nearly impossible. That imaginary ladder presented a problem, Claudette realized, not only for herself, but for the perpetuation of corruption in politics. With the volatility of Haiti's politics, unless one could return to one's old way of earning a living, the temptation to fill one's pockets would remain a serious problem.

She applied for jobs with nongovernmental organizations, where she was rejected and told that her country needed her "at a higher level." Even internationally, for reasons linked to protocol, Claudette's chances of finding a job were greatly diminished, unless her candidacy was officially presented by her own government. She was told by the United Nations that such positions were not fit for a former minister of foreign affairs.

Claudette still found ways to be involved in peace issues in Haiti, as a member of an advisory team for Haiti's National Justice and Peace Commission and participating in a dialogue process facilitated by the International Peace Academy. During the dialogue, when friction became obvious between members of Lavalas, Aristide's party, and the main opposition party, OPL, Claudette listened carefully to the two positions and discovered that they actually were not irreconcilable. She contacted members of the two parties, where she still had close friends, and wrote a piece called "In Search of a Rainbow." Some said she was too naïve. Others felt that acknowledging errors or weaknesses was simply handing tools to the adversary to crush them. The parties were not ready to talk, but Claudette had seen the possibility for a bridge.

But Claudette was determined to return to the profession she loved, working for peace closer to the grassroots. After three years struggling to do so, the Life and Peace Institute, an international ecumenical organization, asked Claudette to be their conflict transformation director.

She accepted the position and started in March 1999, embarking on a decade of peacebuilding at the international level.

Claudette left Haiti once again, motivated to do her best and hoping she might be able to achieve in another country what she was now unable to do in her own. It was like the old saying: “*Nul n'est prophète dans son pays* — Nobody is a prophet in her own country.”

Fear Outlives its Origins

Burned out hulks of tanks poked out from the red soil. Rustic and rusting. Brown and green. Like old war wounds. Reminding everyone of ashes and ruins. Claudette was clutching her seat as the white minivan flew over even asphalt roads into the countryside — roads that were still wet from last night’s thundering rain that fell like angry silver spears stabbing the thirsty sub-Saharan land. Here on the equator, the smell of rain after dusty and parched days always lingered, bewitching all.

Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz — *fastfasterforward*. The car zoomed. Claudette’s thoughts whizzed. Crickets hopped among freshly washed grass and frogs bounced in newly formed muddy puddles.

This was Claudette’s first visit to the Republic of Congo.⁶ The year was 1999. She had landed the day before at the Maya-Maya airport in the capital Brazzaville,⁷ where armed security guards stripped her bag, clawed through her clothes, makeup, medicines and notes, and let her go. But only a few steps. Another guard stopped her, opened her bag, rummaged through it and left it half-open. And then again. She was stopped five times, as if one imperious guard did not trust the other in this nation that was broken — fragmented by years of civil war. Where peace was fragile and tensions loomed.

Claudette wondered if broken could be healed. Could she help?

As head of the nonviolent conflict transformation program at the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) in Sweden, she was here on an exploratory trip. Would it be possible for LPI, as an international ecumenical organization, to make a difference here? The largest protestant church, the Evangelical Church of Congo, along with their counterpart in Sweden, had requested that LPI start peacebuilding efforts here. Claudette had joined LPI only a few months earlier, but as a long-term member of Pax Christi International⁸ she had traveled to Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador and many other countries. Armed with her vast international experience, peacebuilding skills, Haitian legacy and fluency in French, Claudette had come to gauge the realities on the ground.

She was accompanied by Runo, a Swede who was a blue helmet⁹ and had worked at the United Nations in New York. He was also in the Swedish reserve army and had years of experience working in conflict-ridden areas of the Middle East. If Claudette decided to start an office here, she would hire him. But first she wanted to see how he responded to the needs of the local people.

Claudette was traveling to the various parts of this war-torn country with Runo, who brought along some experience from the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping, an LPI intern from

Canada, a specialist on Congo from Lund University, a Swedish missionary and some local Congolese guides.

The young driver with a sweaty forehead and pearly white teeth, wearing a loose red shirt and baggy jeans, was on a mission known only to him. Claudette's fists were balled up and eyes pinned on the road, praying she would make it back to the hotel intact. *If only this were not a flying tour*, she thought.

Speed trumped words. Everyone was quiet. Through the windshield she saw blurry images of deserted streets, dark moss-green trees and small villages of tiny thatched huts, far and detached from one another.

The car came to a jolting halt at a military checkpoint.

A guard wearing dark green fatigues and carrying a rifle stood a few steps in front of the car. "Mammmmmman!" he said aloud. Claudette saw the driver's stunned face break into a lopsided grin. The guard looked more amazed than angry. He let the car pass.

One of the Congolese guides explained, "We were going way above the speed limit but he let us go because he thought it was you driving." Because of French influence,¹⁰ everyone drove on the right side of the road there, with the driver's wheel on the left. But their van was British and the driver sat on the right side of the car, so the guard assumed it was Claudette who was merrily breaking all the speed rules.

When the car stopped at their hotel, Claudette jumped out, her head dizzy, stomach funny and hair wind-beaten, inertia slowly releasing her. The driver dashed off.

The weary team looked at one another and it was clear that no one wanted another whirlwind tour. Someone muttered, "He must be a Ninja."

A Ninja? Claudette wondered.



Over the next few days Claudette immersed herself in understanding the conflict in Congo-Brazzaville. Policy briefings and academic manuals were never enough for her. She believed in listening to people and interacting with the community to reckon their expectations. She wanted to familiarize herself with the inexhaustible permutations of discord that continued to batter this beguiling African nation.

Like Haiti, Congo-Brazzaville had been a French colony. After three coup-filled but relatively peaceful decades of independence, the country experienced the first of two destructive bouts of conflict when disputed parliamentary elections in 1993 led to bloody, ethnic-based fighting between pro-government forces and the opposition. Then in 1997, ethnic and political tensions exploded into a full-scale civil war. By the end of 1999, the rebels had lost all holds and agreed to a ceasefire. But some remnant groups of the civil war, known as the Ninjas, went around marauding. Refusing to disarm, they became bandits.

Claudette knew help was needed. But how much and for how long? She knew too well that there was no ready-to-use formula to quash violent conflicts. No magic wands. No spell that could beckon peace. But she believed fragile peace could be strengthened. Wounds could be healed. Often basic and sensible rules could foster peace and reconstruction.

Claudette found fear hanging heavy in the air. The pulsating undercurrents of tribal divisions were inescapable. People were too scared to talk. Burnt houses and stores stood like gaping wounds. Wrecked roads and tents teeming with newly uprooted families enmeshed the nation in protracted mourning. Those who had been hiding in the forests during the violence were now tumbling out, foraging for food with sunken bellies. The homes that had endured tanks, guns and grenades became shelters for displaced relatives. Hospitals overflowed. Many women were infected with AIDS, as rape had once again been used as an instrument of war.

Those in power were suspicious of foreigners. Claudette and her colleagues needed special authorizations to move from one locality to another and to ask questions. And at the end of the day on that first trip, they had to present minutes of every conversation they had.

At every step there was a shadow following them — a shadow born of terror and suspicion, so familiar to Claudette. She knew the way terror slipped out of the powermonger’s words, guns and anger, how it formed a tight knot in one’s heart. And how silence is sometimes the only defense.

Claudette decided to start an LPI office¹¹ in Brazzaville in 2000. For the next few years, she led LPI’s Conflict Transformation Program (CTP)¹² in Congo-Brazzaville from Sweden while Runo was the LPI international representative in the country. LPI combined peace research with firsthand community-based peacebuilding experience. They partnered with churches, ecumenical bodies and other organizations working on peace and justice issues. The CTP involved women and youth and strengthened peace networks, with the goal of changing mindsets, social structures and political systems so human rights would be respected. Members of the Congolese Diaspora, experts on Congo and some missionaries who had spent time in that country formed the International Resource Group, acting as advisors. Another resource group, *Groupe Ressource Paix et Reconciliation* (GRPR), was also formed to include local Congolese scholars and practitioners.

Claudette often wondered about the similarities between Congo-Brazzaville and Haiti — two nations cursed with upheaval. The causes of conflict were perhaps different, but the effects were so similar. People were sapped of confidence because of years of unrest and fear. The sons and daughters of the rich were sent to private universities in Europe. Corruption and favoritism had long hijacked all democratic growth. And human rights violations occurred here, there and everywhere.

The similarities make it appealing but also heartbreaking to work here, she often thought.



During one of Claudette’s visits to Congo-Brazzaville in 2004, Runo told her that LPI had received a very special request.

“The chaplain of the local military groups has reached out to us and is asking us to train the military and police on human rights,” he said.

“Are you kidding me?” Claudette blurted out. “The military pretend that they don’t know what human rights are, but they know very well when they are violating them. No.”

Runo asked Claudette if she would take some time to consider the request. Claudette was reluctant. But she believed in listening to the grassroots voices and wanted to know what GRPR, the local resource group, had to say.

As always she looked calm, but there was a faint discomfort brewing inside her. A sliver of angst: poking, jabbing her mind. She had often packaged and repackaged her disgust of military behavior. But once in a while it raised its head from her careful packaging.

Some fears outlived their origins. Fear of armed men had soiled her happy childhood memories. And she remembered how President Mandela had saddened and disappointed her — how his suggestion to sit down with the Haitian military seemed unpardonable.

Once again, she was up against her own prejudices.

“The military violate human rights because of the power of their weapons, but also because of impunity,” Claudette said at the meeting with the GRPR.

“There should be some nuances,” Bébène, a woman doctor who was a member of GRPR, replied. “I do understand your point of view. But not all the people in the army have been trained. A lot of new people have been incorporated in the army, and some of them have never been trained.”

When Claudette agreed to meet the chaplain and give him a chance to elucidate his request, he explained how the rebels and the government had signed a ceasefire for the coming months, a concrete gesture toward achieving peace in recent years. Recruitments had been carried out in haste on both sides and, according to the political accord, many of the militia had been incorporated within the army, so they had very little training. Some had joined the army to imitate the adults, some to follow their peers and friends, and some were hungry for revenge.

Claudette knew it was her own stubborn inhibitions that were stifling her. Her feelings toward men in uniform were forever marked by the terror of the Tonton Makout. But, in recent years, her experiences in the post-conflict zones had begun tampering with her absolute abhorrence for the military. During a trip to El Salvador in 1997, her host had arranged for her to meet former members of both the FMLN opposition group and the military. While she was ready to meet the FMLN, who she perceived as “freedom fighters,” she was reluctant to meet the military who had backed the dictatorship. But one of the participants in that meeting had said, “While you people from the grassroots civic society and from the church *talk* about reconciliation, in reality we are the ones who really *know* what reconciliation means. After having fought against each other, we have been working together for some time for a better future for our children.” Claudette realized that it was true — the two sides had a common goal.

She also remembered the words of peace and development expert Mary B. Anderson in her book *Do No Harm*: Most nongovernmental organizations work only with the good actors, but it is also important to work with the “bad guys” to achieve peace.

Claudette knew there was the right man on the ground, Runo, to conduct the trainings, and the request had come through the proper channels: from the chaplain and from the grassroots.

“OK,” she told the chaplain. “It will be just a pilot project, and though I will be in Sweden, I will closely monitor the entire project.”

It is only a pilot project, she repeated to herself.



A few months later, Claudette was back at the office in Brazzaville. Runo had a tape from one of the training sessions in Ouesso, the northern part of the country, where the president came from.

The office also had an apartment where Runo lived. And there in the main living room, they both stared at the TV screen as he inserted a videotape into the VCR. In the grainy and slightly shaky video, she could see and hear a Congolese army officer talking about human rights: both theory and practice. And she saw fresh-faced young men sitting on benches, attentively listening to him.

Outside the apartment, tropical rain was falling hard, reanimating the dry city.

The instructor gave an example based on an unfortunate event that had happened a couple of years earlier: “There were two villages, separated by a river, united by harmony. But one day in one village a man died, and the local witch doctor said it was because of the evildoing of the villagers from across the river. They had done black magic and caused havoc. The villagers set out to burn and kill the neighbors. The others retaliated and burned more huts. Just like that, two villages were reduced to ashes. If we had intervened, then the squabble would not have grown.”

The best way to avoid such violence was simple and easy, he said. “Proper investigation and timely dissemination of correct information. If we had tried to understand, we could have avoided all the mayhem.”

The young men took in the information, letting it sink in. Claudette was now seeing the uniformed men differently, and she realized what they were lacking. They were young men lost in a hostile world, shooting to outdo the sounds of other guns — and also out of fear of being alone in an adult world, uncared for and terrorized.

“I must confess I am impressed,” she said to Runo. This information made a difference, she realized. It was worth investing money and time.

Runo smiled and shared another example. A few days after the training, one of the trainers was visiting a military post. He saw a young man from the military beating a civilian. But another military man intervened and said, “Wait a minute! Don’t you know that you are not supposed to beat people? This is in the leaflet of human rights.” He was one of the members of the military who had been trained by LPI. He had pinned to his shirt the blue human rights manual of the United Nations that was given to him during the training.

Claudette felt her reservations about working with the military being peeled away. She saw the merit in reaching out to the perceived hardliners, and human rights training for the military and the police became an essential part of LPI's programs in Congo-Brazzaville, with judges participating on the LPI training teams at times. The Salvation Army and some human rights organizations conducted other similar trainings for the army in military barracks in Brazzaville.

LPI was also involved in facilitating dialogue between criminal perpetrators and victims. Claudette had her own reservations about asking victims to talk to their perpetrators because of the psychological trauma it could revive. But the positive experiences she heard about from the participants convinced her of its value, just as she had been convinced of the benefits of working with the military. Something she had once likened to hugging the devil.

Making Spaces

On ne donne que ce qu'on a, Claudette repeated the French saying in her mind. One can give and share only what one possesses. *What can I give?* she wondered.

It was 2007. Claudette had completed two terms as the director of conflict transformation programs at the Life and Peace Institute, and she had just been appointed as the secretary general of Pax Christi International (PCI), headquartered in Brussels. She would be leading a worldwide movement that had more than 100 member organizations active in more than 60 countries on five continents.

Claudette was succeeding Etienne de Jonghe, who had held the post for 29 years. She knew there would be comparisons. She admired Etienne for his dogged work to strengthen PCI, but she was aware of the differences in their backgrounds.

Etienne was a white European male from a rich country. Claudette was a black woman whose origin and cultural legacy came from both America and Africa. And she was born and raised in Haiti, one of the most impoverished places on earth.

Haiti was a country one almost never heard about unless there was some coup d'état or bloody upheaval, an earthquake or a hurricane — always imputable to the Haitians themselves, whether the destruction or violence was caused by Mother Nature, the established forces of the military or Tonton Makout, or, more recently, the gangs known as chimères. What no one remembered was that Haiti was the first black county to overthrow slavery. What everyone ignored was that Haiti welcomed and gave freedom and land to all the people who came to take refuge within its borders. What some people knew but chose to ignore was that Claudette's Haitian forefathers helped countries like the United States and several others in South America gain their independence. While she realized how far her country was from what her ancestors envisioned, Claudette knew she carried in her the ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity.

Her privileged childhood had not been immune to fear, prejudice and violence against her family. Like any Haitian who grew up under the totalitarian rule of the Duvaliers, Claudette carried with her a pocketful of terrorized memories. Her work in adult education had been a confluence of

strategies to stay alive and struggles to advance popular education. And she had sat in the seat of power — the former prime minister of Haiti, the first woman to hold that position.

So, Claudette had a personal touch to bring to PCI that was different, yet to a certain extent complemented what was already there. She had an accrued knowledge of the countries in Africa, in particular the two Congos, the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. She was familiar with the work of both Christian churches — Catholic, Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist and Pentecostal — and non-faith-based groups. She'd also had the opportunity to exchange views and collaborate with Buddhists and Hindus. Working closely with people from different backgrounds and socio-economic strata, Claudette was continuously being exposed to different points of view.

She knew she could listen to opposed positions and understand that they are not always, or necessarily, irreconcilable. That discernment, coupled with her empathy, made her a bridge builder — making spaces for the exchange of experiences and peacebuilding skills. “A workaholic bridge builder,” some said about her.

As long as there are violent conflicts, as long as people die from the deliberate actions of others, conflict transformation, reconciliation and peacebuilding will remain relevant, she often told herself.



From 2007 to 2010 Claudette interacted with peacebuilders across continents, learning and giving. And everywhere she went, she collected more experiences, more lessons — for memory's sake, for posterity and, above all, for sharing.

Enmeshed in creating spaces for dialogue and the exchange of peacebuilding skills internationally, Claudette was leading programs involved in war prevention and facilitating dialogues, mediation, conflict transformation and resolution during war. Together with other member organizations, she accompanied some conscientious objectors and raised awareness about often overlooked aspects of war, such as the reality of child soldiers and sexual aggression toward women, while also focusing on denuclearization and the proliferation of weapons.

Facilitating conflict resolution within countries and sharing solutions to common challenges between countries, Claudette circled the globe, connecting lessons learned from people in every corner of the world to the people and conflicts in front of her.

When she went to Australia — to encourage Pax Christi Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand to continue opening the movement to the indigenous people — and was exposed to the culture and the history of the Aborigine people, she understood what some of their organizations were trying to achieve and was reminded of the work that some organizations were doing in Canada. Noticing the parallels, Claudette saw how the experiences in one part of the globe could be useful for others, so she volunteered to facilitate exchanges and build links between the two groups.

In Japan, she joined in celebrations with people of other faiths and other cultures: Buddhists, Christians of different denominations, Jews and Sikhs. At the national congress of Pax Christi USA in Chicago, she participated in a peaceful march for the respect of the human rights of undocumented migrants.

Claudette visited Rwanda and expressed her support to the Association Modeste et Innocent, and in Russia she maintained close links with the Regional Civic Initiative — Right to Life and Human Dignity. She reminded both organizations that perspicacity and strong determination, but also wisdom, should accompany any work that promotes human rights and efforts to build peace — in Russia or Rwanda.

Claudette encouraged Marie Louise Baggizi from Pax Christi Bukavu to continue her work at the grassroots level in one of the area's poorest and most violent neighborhoods. And together with a team, she monitored the work carried by IKV Pax Christi in Sudan. It was her way to be present, to provide support and to accompany people in finding their own path to peace.

While participating in a seminar in Cyprus, she better familiarized herself with the work of Pax Christi members in the Middle East, especially in Palestine, confirming her conviction that great patience and perseverance are needed in a nonviolent quest for peace. She also maintained close ties with the people in charge of the Association Justice et Miséricorde in Lebanon.

And in Haiti, Claudette provided documentation to the young people in charge of Pax Christi Port-au-Prince to help them address the violence that surrounded them. She also circulated widely the information received from the National Justice and Peace Commission in Haiti, knowing the importance of raising awareness and interest in the public when one wants an end to human rights violations.

During Claudette's term as secretary general, Pax Christi International gave its annual peace award to Bishop Dom Luis Cappio of Brazil for his work in the defense of poor fishermen and in favor of the environment. The following year, 2009, the award was given to Justine Masika Bihamba from the Democratic Republic of Congo, for her work to protect women victims of rape, used as an instrument of war. Finally in 2010, Claudette handed the Pax Christi International Peace Award to Mgr. Louis Sako, the archbishop of Kirkuk who had been working to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between people of different faiths in Iraq.

For Claudette, the myriad strategies and endeavours she'd witnessed and shared during her time with PCI, although varied and spanning the globe, were all nonviolent approaches to dealing with conflicts — approaches she wanted to continue to promote and share with others.



In 2010, Claudette stepped down as the secretary general of Pax Christi International. In her new and ongoing role as peace envoy, she continues to make spaces and build bridges, sharing her own experiences and telling the stories of people working for a better world.

And now that she no longer carries the burden of administrative matters, managing funds and personnel, she can focus on the educational aspect of peacebuilding that has been close to heart for so many years, sharing the knowledge she has accumulated throughout the years and around the world.

Epilogue

Spending two months in San Diego as a Woman PeaceMaker telling her stories of building bridges and building peace, Claudette dug deep into the memories and lessons that span a lifetime — and the globe.

On her last day in San Diego, Claudette sits alone in the beautiful garden in front of the Casa de la Paz, her temporary home. She lets her eyes absorb the magnificent pink, yellow, orange and red of the sunset. Her gaze is pulled to the ocean, a couple of miles below, but always so close to her heart. As far back as she can remember, water has always had a powerful soothing effect on her.

Claudette's life is at a crossroads. Up until now, she has always chosen what she believed was best for others and her country. And until now, everything has seemed clear and simple. But now Claudette is conscious that she also has to think of herself. Reflecting on her next steps, Claudette hopes to find the right one.

She always thought that when she stopped working — or having a job, since she would never really stop working — she would spend her time doing something fun, but still educational and useful.

Years earlier, while neighborhood children played with her daughters and nephew in her green courtyard — where on a single afternoon she had once counted 14 children running around — Claudette would spend her time watching documentary films from BBC World, National Geographic and the Discovery Channel. Most of the documentaries she owns being in English, Claudette sometimes envisions watching them with anyone interested — child or adult — translating them into Kreyòl and animating a discussion afterwards: “What can we learn from this? Is there anything that we can put to use in our country?”

She has talked so much about the documentary project that her children and her brother Guy always add to her collection on Christmases and birthdays.

But on Jan. 12, 2010, a devastatingly powerful earthquake hit Haiti, resulting in an incredible toll on the people and the land. When her family's house was practically destroyed, Claudette knew her informal documentary classes certainly could not be held there. The family house now needs to be demolished and rebuilt. And thinking about the family home brings to mind other memories. When Claudette's father died in June 1980, she took it upon herself to rebuild a house that he had owned. She has experienced the frustrations and pains of reconstruction in Haiti and is not looking forward to going through similar anguish again. Of course, she could always go elsewhere, she thinks, but where?

Claudette was in Brussels when the 2010 earthquake destroyed Port-au-Prince and much of the southern part of her country, taking more than 230,000 lives. Most of Haiti's public administration buildings were destroyed, including the offices where she once worked: the house where Alexandre Pétion, one of the founders of the nation, once lived, which hosted the Ministry of Social Affairs, and also the imposing, elegant offices of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, built close to the sea in 1949 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Port-au-Prince.

For several weeks, the government of Haiti was unable to communicate with its embassies and consulates around the world because most of its infrastructure had been destroyed. Claudette was well-equipped technically and had the necessary contact information for the Haitian missions abroad, so she volunteered to relay all the information that she could gather. She had done similar work, in different circumstances, while she was in Washington, D.C., and considered it an opportunity to serve her country at a difficult time.

Claudette traveled to Haiti several times after the earthquake. On her first trip, she was relieved to find some friends and family alive. She felt joy and hope when she realized that people were busy trying to get their lives back. In a makeshift camp in front of the National Palace, she noticed people selling CDs and DVDs, proof that culture was still important. She even saw an improvised beauty salon. But during her second trip, six months later, she was disappointed to find little change in the overall picture.

One year after the earthquake, Claudette returned again and took a detailed look at the “transitional houses” that had been built; they were incredibly small, made of plywood and could only last two or three years. She understood the logic: The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that built them were equipped to deal with emergencies, not permanent situations. They had also come to help, not to solve the situation in her country. Obviously, the foreign NGOs wanted to report to their donors an impressive number of houses built and a more impressive number of people they had helped.

Claudette understood the logic, but she felt sorry for her country and for her people.

But there was also good news. On two occasions, Claudette had visited ITECA. The new director had invited her to participate in a meeting with the municipality of Gressier, along with a member of parliament. Claudette smiles thinking about it. It seems quite a long time ago that she had to hide her work to protect it from the authorities.

Claudette took part in another meeting with a donor agency that wanted to work in partnership with ITECA to build a number of houses for earthquake victims living in the vicinity of ITECA. The two partners had different roles and responsibilities, and were also working in different contexts. As time passed, the European-based organization, which acted as an intermediary for other donors, started to receive pressure from the media and the public to provide concrete results. But ITECA, working in direct cooperation with the victims, got involved with issues not originally foreseen in the project: working with the municipality and the justice system to secure victims’ property rights, and helping repair a road to allow the building materials to reach the construction area. Although essential, both activities extended the length of the project.

It had been yet another situation where reconciling different points of view was not easy to achieve. But having lived and worked on each side, Claudette understood the frustrations and the pressures felt by ITECA at the grassroots and the European organization.

Looking out at the sea, Claudette continues her contemplation. Building bridges may still be a role for her to play. She doesn’t know what comes next, but there are still many bridges left to build.

Postscript

One feature of dictatorship is fear — a fear that makes people communicate with the intensity of a gaze, a facial expression, a quick movement of the hand. An oppressive and suffocating feeling that compels people to keep their thoughts and feelings deeply buried, fear prevents them from talking, or even inquiring, about friends and relatives.

More than 40 years after the events described in “One Stone, Four Birds” (pages 32-34), Claudette has tried to confirm what happened after the death of her cousin Torius Dorcin. Given her distance, a cousin agreed to go to Dondon to interview older relatives, more about the death of Zette than of Torius.

To Claudette’s surprise, her cousin came back with the information that “a young woman named Zette had died — a few weeks before Torius.” Claudette was shocked to learn that there was no possible causal effect between the two deaths, the way she had thought and the way it is presented in the story.

Convinced that truth is a pillar in the construction of peace, Claudette pondered feverishly whether to withdraw the story or modify it. She finally chose to keep it as it is but to add this postscript. While there may not be a direct relationship between the death of Torius and that of Zette, it remains true that this is the story Claudette has carried deep inside for more than 40 years. She also decided to keep the story because the message she wanted to convey is still valid: Whenever one person is killed, many other lives are broken.

Knowing what really happened is said to help the families of victims to mourn. Claudette has not yet overcome her own grief. Many are the Haitians, in Haiti and abroad, who still need to uncover the exact circumstances of the death or disappearance of a loved one.

A CONVERSATION WITH CLAUDETTE WERLEIGH

The following is an edited compilation of select interviews conducted by Bijoyeta Das between Sept. 16 and Nov. 4, 2011, and an interview by USD Professor Maria Pilar Aquino on Oct. 20, 2011.

Q: What is your approach to peacebuilding?

A: People and organizations working in the field of peacebuilding are often asked to provide peace indicators. While indicators of conflicts are well known and easily identified — number of people killed, wounded, maimed and displaced; massive destruction of public and private properties as the result of violence; increase in the circulation of armed people, weapons and ammunitions — this is not the case when it comes to peacebuilding.

Nevertheless, being able to recognize that peace is taking place is important for the organizations that fund peace projects; it is vital for the organizations implementing peace programs; and, last but not least, it is of utmost importance for the people living in the conflict areas.

Peace is the result of a combination of factors: satisfaction of basic needs; harmonious relationships; acceptance of differences (tolerance); respect; existence (and perception of the prevalence) of justice, fairness and equity; good governance; and freedom of expression. There is no ready-to-use formula to put an end to violent conflicts — not just one magical, unique and universal way to build peace. But, fortunately, there are some basic and sensible rules, which, if followed, can help establish and strengthen a peaceful environment.

“There is no ready-to-use formula to put an end to violent conflicts — not just one magical, unique and universal way to build peace.”

Q: What ideals guided you as a political leader?

A: I have always chosen cooperation instead of confrontation. Here is an example.

During a meeting between representatives of political parties and civil society, I acknowledged the differences of roles between the executive and parliament but pleaded for strong cooperation between the two. This has prompted Senator Jean-Yvon Toussaint to say that cooperation between the executive and parliament was best served during the time I was prime minister. I do not know why Senator Toussaint made that observation, but one story comes to my mind.

The press had informed the public that a couple of army airplanes had vanished from the airport. The executive had sold them in a very unclear situation; neither the parliament nor the public had been informed. This resulted in a very heated debate led by Senator Jean-Robert Sabalat, who vowed to shed light on the situation and bring the culprits to justice. This happened before I took power, but nevertheless, I was now the person in charge. I would be the one to be called by the parliament to provide explanation. I made my own inquiry and found the documents related to the selling of

the planes. I immediately invited Senator Sabalat to my office and presented him the evidence. Nothing had been done illegally, but the articles of the law concerning the selling of public goods were obsolete and needed to adjust to the existence of radio and newspaper to inform the public. For me, cooperation is the best choice.

“I have always chosen cooperation instead of confrontation.”

Q: What lessons did you learn from your political journey? What was your experience as a woman in a position of power?

A: The responsibility of managing the country doesn't sweep away the responsibility toward your husband and children. You still have to take care. It is as if people expect you to continue providing the same services that you offered before becoming a minister. It is true that in Haiti there is a male-dominated patriarchal system, but Haiti is also a hierarchical society, so once you are a prime minister, people show you respect. Otherwise they may lose their job. But there are also many who always expect you to do them favors, sometimes even friends and family.

It is important to be sensitive to poor people but also to protect oneself. When looking at all the problems of Haiti, one can feel powerless. One has to be careful. It is important that people do not see giving money as a solution. First, it is not going to solve any problem. It can help people to solve one or two issues, but it will not be a permanent situation. Say there are 30 people and you give them money; by tomorrow you expect less people will be asking for money. But it is the other way around. These people are going to tell their cousins, their neighbors. The following day, you will have 60 people, then 90 and then 200. Then, you cannot work anymore. Second, when you give money, you are not empowering people, you are only responding to emergencies. You will not be in a position to build the country.

It is good to be the first female prime minister. But once you become a public figure, you have no privacy and people think that they can say or write anything about you. It is also difficult to insert yourself back into the society. I applied for some jobs and was perceived as overqualified. Taking a less “prestigious” position was perceived as going down the ladder. No wonder there is corruption! I strongly believe that one can serve his or her country well without necessarily be a member of the government.

Q: What factors influenced your dedication to your work at the grassroots level?

A: I believe that I owe what I am today mostly to the education I received and my parents' roles and guidance. As a young person, I saw my mother and father work hard. They had their own business. That did not mean that they would work only when they felt like it. They worked assiduously every day of the week, except Sunday. In the evening, they would check that we had done our homework, then go to the movies or entertain themselves otherwise. My paternal grandmother worked until she died at 86. It is true that in our society most people have no pension or other retirement fund. Nevertheless, my grandmother was not obliged to work in her old age. My father would often

suggest — and at times even asked — that my grandmother stop working, but she would not listen. Attending to her general store daily was not just about work. I dare say that it was more a social issue, her way to keep in touch with people. Since she lived in a small town where most everyone was related, if Grandma was not at her store by 9 a.m. on any given day, people would begin to wonder whether she was sick. They would come over to our place and inquire about her, or go to her house and visit her.

Q: What motivated you to work for the empowerment of others?

A: Helping at my father’s store during summer vacation, I soon realized that the money that we paid the farmers who sold us their coffee was immediately used to buy other goods from us: agricultural tools, hardware, sewing materials, flour, milk, sugar, soft drinks, matches, cigarettes and sometimes, though less often, love cards and perfume.

I knew that my father was making some profit by processing and exporting the coffee, as well as on the goods that he sold. I had heard him explain why it was to our advantage to keep this profit to a minimum: The benefit would come not from individual transactions, but from the sheer number of people who would use our services. Such summer vacation introductions to business made me realize at an early stage (I was about 16 years old) that unless some profound changes were made in the way business is conducted, the poor would likely remain poor while other people like us would continue having access to good education and private health care services, the leisure of traveling abroad and other privileges. My involvement with and dedication to non-formal adult education was a way for me to give back to the poor people in my country some of what they had given me.

“My involvement with and dedication to non-formal adult education was a way for me to give back to the poor people in my country some of what they had given me.”

After both our parents died, all my brothers and sisters agreed to make our family home in Dondon, built originally by our father as a hotel, available to the parish to be used for any project that would benefit the entire village. It has been converted to a school for the community. Mom and Dad must be happy where they are.

Q: How do you balance your work at an intense grassroots level and constant international travels with your personal life? How have you been able to link work with joy?

A: My oldest daughter, Leyla, portrayed me once as “addicted” to work. She was teasing, of course, but I know that she believes I work too hard and too much. My husband pretends that I am a “workaholic” — that I work as if I were convinced that work was going to disappear from this world and I have to do it all now.

It is true that work is very important for me. It is also true that I often work long hours, giving the impression that I am “always” working and that work comes first. In reality, I have been lucky (or perhaps I have managed so far) to work not so much as a way to earn a living, but devoting my time and skills to a cause I believe in. This is why I do not mind spending long hours working. That does not mean I do not take time out for other things in life. Whenever possible, I have linked my work to other activities that I have simply enjoyed, wanted or needed to accomplish. For example, when my children were young, I often took them to my adult education classes out of town. I could teach while the children bathed in the river, took a walk, discovered the natural things around them and generally enjoyed the countryside. When visitors came from abroad, we would all go to the beach together. This arrangement allowed me to be with my family while taking the opportunity to continue the discussion on issues related to work, all while having a good time in a relaxed environment.

While I was minister of foreign affairs, I went to the beach almost every Sunday, taking along heavy briefcases full of files. I would alternate work with bathing, eating, sleeping and admiring the scenery. Whenever I felt tired, I would allow myself to be gently driven afloat by the sea waves. The sea would not only clean my skin and soothe my tired muscles, but it would also wash away all my worries. I would return home totally refreshed, reinvigorated and ready to start another week. Nature truly possesses unique and wonderful ways to give us life over and over again.

Q: Can you tell us about your work with women?

A: When I was working in Caritas, I participated in a meeting in Panama where they were talking about the role of women in Latin America. It was eye-opening for me to realize how women have special roles to play. Up to then, I had looked at myself as a “person” working and not as a “woman.” Someone came to interview me and asked, “How is it being secretary general of Caritas Haiti? Did you face any resistance for being a woman?” I realized that I had never thought about such an issue. I had many colleagues who were men, and some were priests; it was a matter of providing services and not about power. I was gender blind and did not think of the gender dimension of work.

“In some parts of the country, women told us that when they started coming together for meetings, men felt threatened and were resisting, as if women were meeting to plot against men.”

But when I came back to Haiti I started a women’s chapter in Caritas. At the beginning, I was the person in charge of the women’s programs. After that meeting in Panama, I started going to main cities to sensitize our members about the importance of women’s organizations. People would come to our trainings and tell us what they were doing. In some parts of the country, women told us that when they started coming together for meetings, men felt threatened and were resisting, as if women were meeting to plot against men. Young boys were throwing stones at the meeting place. In the

Central Plateau and in Jérémie, we had to start with mixed groups before we could form women's groups.

When *Solidarite Fanm Ayisyen* (which means Haitian women working in solidarity) started to talk about sexual violence against women openly on the radio, men in Haiti felt really frightened. Some said, "Why are these women always talking about sex?" Others spread the rumor that the women in charge were "easy to seduce" and just being "provocative."

Because of our work in Caritas and the women's empowerment programs of several other groups, women's gatherings are no longer an issue. A few years later, there is no place in Haiti — not a municipality in the capital, in the big cities or even in the small villages — that does not have its own women's groups.

Microcredit programs for women have also worked very well. Women would usually pay back well: The rate was more than 92 percent. Some were able to improve their lives, and a lot of women have been able to open a small store and/or send their children to school.

Q: How did your mother influence you?

A: My mother was a practical person who believed in rational thinking. She was progressive and always encouraged me to seek the truth and the deeper meaning. One example is when I wanted to study agronomy instead of medicine. I had realized that if I studied medicine and cured people and afterwards they died of hunger, that did not make sense. I wanted to work to become an agronomist. There were two different reactions at home.

My father did not believe me. He said that if he had seen me just once put a little seed in the soil, he would have believed that I could be an agronomist. But my mother said "OK! You want to be an agronomist? Alright, but don't believe that you are going to be an agronomist sitting down in an office and writing. If you want to be an agronomist, you have to put on some pants and boots, dirty your hands and work on the soil." Mother was right: Too few of the Haitian agronomists are really providing the technical support and accompaniment that the poor Haitian farmers need.

BEST PRACTICES

Lessons Learned in Adult Popular Education

Claudette Werleigh worked in the field of adult education in Haiti from 1973 to 1990. She is the co-founder of Institute of Technology and Animation (ITECA) in Gressier, which was established in 1979. She was a member of the executive committee and in charge of the curriculum from its inception to March 1990. She is a pioneer in adult popular education, and ITECA is one of Haiti's most important educational organizations, continuing to expand popular education in Haiti.

Haitians are rightly proud of their country as the first black republic, but overthrowing the colonial regime did not stop the exploitation of the poor by those in power. However, the desperate situation of most Haitians forced them to develop their own educational and community organizations, and today Haiti has a growing reputation for the vigor of its grassroots nongovernmental organizations, all set up by and for the local community.

By the late 1970s, church-linked groups supported by institutions like ITECA were mushrooming throughout the country to help peasants organize and improve their conditions, as well as promote small-scale development projects. Claudette's work in adult education represented a continuous struggle for change. And working for change implied rejection of the current order and being critical of the status quo — often interpreted as being “against” the government. In a country like Haiti, where the government is known to use repression, working for change is dangerous and usually results in persecution. The essence of Claudette's work is to help raise the awareness of the population and to motivate local actors and partners to decide to do something about their lives and shape their own future. Her job was like lighting candles of hope.

The knowledge and experience that Claudette has accumulated over two decades of work represent both struggles and strategies. Her grassroots experience was marked by a continuous effort to stay alive and not put other people's lives at risk — but also to keep on working. At the same time, she was encouraging a collective and participatory approach to the problems. The goal was to provide a place where people from different parts of the country could get together and exchange ideas; practice critical analysis; build national awareness; try to solve small but important problems such as drinking water and better hygiene; and learn to stick together and get organized.

The following are some important lessons learned in adult popular education:

Alternative Knowledge

Adult education is quite different from working with children. While children must be “raised” and “taught,” adults have already accumulated a lot of knowledge. Often people who hardly know how to spell or write their names can explain complex theories of economics more simply and clearly than many with much higher education.

Informal Approach

A good methodical approach is the informal approach: Most “classes” are gatherings to exchange experiences or points of view on different matters. The atmosphere tends to be friendly but

provides huge opportunities for learning. The important thing is to find out what people identify as their needs and areas of interest and build on those.

Partnerships

Many of the peasants who join the programs are poor farmers trying to survive on tiny pieces of land. Because they are often treated as citizens of secondary category by both the State and people in cities, it is very important to help them rediscover their own values and build their self-esteem. It takes some time to gain their confidence — with actions, not words — but once their confidence is won, it is then possible to develop a strong partnership.

Practical and Vocational Education

Peasants are used to handling concrete materials, such as tools, soil, plants and seeds. They are very practical and cannot afford learning just for the sake of theory. This is why adult education programs should be directed toward helping peasants find concrete responses to their daily problems. This is also why, along with literacy programs, ITECA established courses about agriculture, animal husbandry, community health and techniques involving water, among others.

Understanding

ITECA's approach is to start with what people know already (praxis), discuss it, analyze its components, look for causes and consequences (theory) and try to find out how to improve people's living conditions (improved praxis).

Participation

It is very important for ITECA's peasants/students/partners to participate in all stages of any given project: from decision-making on choice of projects, the actors and beneficiaries, to the planning, methodology, implementation and evaluation.

Attitude

The correct attitude is to work *with* people and not *for* them so they can learn the skills and make the project their own.

Responsibility

It is very important to have faith in the partner organizations and give them responsibility instead of taking a paternalistic approach. Only then do people feel that they are being treated with respect, as adults and as human beings.

Problem Solving

A development project is a struggle to get out of a bad situation. It is not an easy process, and one problem is often linked to others. People should commit themselves for the long haul and be ready to solve one problem after another.

Change

It is important to foresee the reaction of other people to changes, in particular those who favor status quo forces and are against changes.

Solidarity

It is said in Haiti: *Yon sèl dwèt pa manje kalalon* — You can't eat okra with only one finger. In other words, you cannot achieve anything by yourself; you can only succeed if other people work with you.

Majority

Since it is not easy to reconcile everyone's points of view or interests, always work for the well-being of the majority.

Lessons Learned in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

Claudette Werleigh was the director of the Conflict Transformation Program (CTP) of the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) in Sweden from 1999 to 2007. She was then secretary general of Pax Christi International, headquartered in Brussels, from 2007 to 2010. She continues to be involved in peacebuilding as a peace envoy for Pax Christi.

Claudette has contributed to peacebuilding across continents, knowing very well that there is no ready-to-use formula to end violence. There is not one magical, unique and universal way to build peace. But there are some basic and sensible rules, which if followed, can establish and/or strengthen a peaceful environment. There are clear indicators of wars and violent conflicts, but this is not the case when it comes to peacebuilding.

This path of nonviolent conflict transformation includes a number of activities, such as advocacy, dialogue, training, networking and others. The CTP activities take place at different stages of a conflict: from prevention to post-conflict situations. They involve meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars and other activities aimed at acquiring skills and knowledge, as well as facilitating dialogue for a peaceful resolution of conflicts and reconciliation.

The following are some of the highlights of nonviolent conflict transformation:

GOAL

- To change minds and attitudes so that people gradually move from revenge and violence to peaceful coexistence and cooperation.
- To change social structures that support violence and war to organizations and institutions that favor peace and nonviolence.
- For people to make a deliberate choice for a system based on the respect of human rights and democratic principles like participation and inclusion.
- To ensure full integration and active participation of women in all activities aimed at conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- To use a gender-sensitive approach and monitor the consequences of both the conflict and the CTP's intervention on girls and boys, women and men.

TIMING

- Before conflict: to help prevent violence
- During conflict: to facilitate communication, dialogue and mediation
- After conflict: to provide trauma healing and reconciliation

MEANS

- Identifying and strengthening local peace initiatives
- Facilitating dialogue and local participation
- Carrying out research
- Civic education training: colloquies, conferences, seminars, workshops
- Involvement and empowerment of local communities
- Special attention to women

STRATEGY

- Identifying and strengthening peace initiatives
- Partnering with churches, media and local NGOs involved in justice and peace issues — local partners are selected on the basis of their vision, their work for peace and their organizational capacity.



Claudette led the CTP of LPI in the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) from its inception in 2000 until 2007, implementing action-oriented methods to empower local peacebuilding initiatives.

When Claudette initiated the CTP in Congo-Brazzaville, the country was staggering due to several years of war, unrest, extensive looting and destruction of public and private properties, which had eroded the confidence of the Congolese people. At that moment, corruption, injustices, abuses of power by the forces of order, impunity, banditry and multiple human rights violations were diminishing, but still remained frequent.

The following are some of the best practices that were the essence of the CTP in Congo-Brazzaville.

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS	RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Contribute to the restoration of peace and justice in the Republic of Congo</p>	<p>Seminars aimed at strengthening local associations’ capacities in peacebuilding activities and promotion of human rights.</p> <p>Research activities aimed at increasing knowledge of the root causes of conflicts, as well as improving the quality of fieldwork.</p>	<p>Congolese civil society in general plays a more prominent role in peacebuilding.</p> <p>Increased awareness that the Congolese themselves have to build their own country, and that the country can only be strong if people work together.</p> <p>Civil society leadership becomes a real advocate for the population it represents, i.e., advocating for peace and reconciliation.</p> <p>Conflict at the grassroots level is dramatically reduced as a result of strengthening community-based conflict prevention mechanisms.</p> <p>The Congo conflict is better understood, both by the Congolese population and the international community.</p> <p>Discussions between interest groups have become transparent and constructive.</p>	<p>External influences, like a resumption of the war or interference of “warlords,” may jeopardize the success of the project under its actual form.</p> <p>The impact of the program might be hardly, or not at all, measurable with quantifiable indicators.</p> <p>Civil society leaders accept playing a new role, i.e., being real advocates for the population they serve.</p>
<p>Increase understanding of the different conflicts that devastated the Republic of Congo, and increase the knowledge of Congolese civil society</p>	<p>Training program developed to improve Congolese knowledge of conflict transformation and prevention theory.</p>	<p>Increased civil society understanding of conflict transformation and prevention.</p>	<p>Churches are essential actors in the promotion of peace values in Congo, and are actively demanding new tools for conflict prevention and transformation.</p> <p>There is a need to increase churches’ responsibility in searching for and</p>

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS	RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS
			<p>establishing sustainable peace in Congo.</p> <p>The capacities of churches and NGOs have been strengthened.</p> <p>Communities are willing to participate in the process.</p>
<p>Disseminate research results to increase awareness about the situation in the Republic of Congo</p>	<p>Strengthen the national watchdog, <i>L’Observatoire Congolais des Médias Nationaux</i>.</p>	<p>Ethics are respected in the media.</p> <p>Professional solidarity is strengthened in order to better claim media independence.</p> <p>Recognition of a structure that will guarantee the respect of ethics and law.</p> <p>Structures to promote and enhance gender equality in the media are developed and implemented.</p>	<p>The government will honor its engagements in favor of a free and independent press.</p> <p>The authority of such a structure has to be accepted by all national media.</p>
<p>Reinforce the quality and capacity of media intervention in the promotion of sustainable peace in the Republic of Congo</p>	<p>Training sessions for Congolese journalists in conflict analysis and deontology.</p> <p>Organize public radio and television emissions on human rights.</p>	<p>The public awareness of issues of peace and human rights is increased.</p>	<p>Insecurity will not disrupt the entire program.</p>
<p>Reinforce the capacities of and access to programs for women</p>	<p>Support creation of an <i>Observatoire des Droits de la Femme et de l’Enfant</i> (Observatory of the rights of women and children).</p>	<p>The quality of women’s associations is improved.</p> <p>Women have a qualitative, quantitative and respected contribution in the peace process.</p>	<p>Men agree that women should be part of the reconstruction of society.</p>

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS	RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS
	Participate in and organize training of trainers sessions.	At the beginning of the program, women will represent at least 25 percent at all activities. Near the end of the program the numbers should increase, ideally to 50 percent but at least to 40 percent.	
Promote values of human rights and citizenship	Support the cooperation and improve the coordination between human rights NGOs. Training programs for citizens and policing agents to raise consciousness on the penal level.	Widespread awareness and knowledge of human rights. Training sessions were implemented and well-evaluated.	NGOs work together and speak with a single voice on important issues. Insecurity will not disrupt the entire program.
Contribute to development of a society that solves conflicts through dialogue, with the help of nonviolent actions aimed at social justice and democracy	Training program developed for grassroots leaders who are, or should be, key players in conflict prevention and should ideally now also play a role in peacebuilding. Facilitate the creation of a platform for human rights NGOs and the strengthening of action capacities. Facilitate projects that promote peace through cultural activities like music, sculptures and paintings, with	Training sessions were implemented and well-evaluated. Mediation, education or awareness-raising campaign actions are taken commonly by various organizations at local level. 24 educational seminars organized and well-evaluated. A large part of the population has been involved. Peace artwork has been exposed to a large portion of the Congolese territory.	The government is open to the implementation of this program. Authorities allow information sharing (no censure).

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS	RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS
	special attention given to youth.		
Cooperation with churches	<p>Facilitate initiatives (training programs) at denominational levels.</p> <p>Strengthen the coordinating capacities of the Ecumenical Council of Christian Churches of Congo (COECC) by organizing seminars and workshops on issues of justice and peace.</p>	<p>An inventory of less obvious, non-surfacing conflicts in the church.</p> <p>Detailed research on the collaboration of, or conflicts within, the churches.</p> <p>An in-depth analysis of the current peace work of the churches. Does this correspond with the mission of the church? Is it possible for the churches to go deeper into the root causes of the conflict?</p> <p>Churches develop strategies and activities appropriate for them and in the general interest of the population.</p> <p>Churches develop links with counterparts in the rest of the country and with neighboring countries.</p> <p>Churches are active participants in all peacebuilding activities and will also have their own peace activities through the churches' structures.</p>	<p>The churches do not resist change.</p> <p>The churches do accept some assistance from the outside.</p> <p>The churches will not be blocked from the outside, e.g., by the more extreme groups in civil society.</p>
Promote a reconciliation process	<p>Disseminate messages about the organization of a reconciliation process.</p> <p>Raise awareness and organize</p>	<p>Communities engage and participate in reconciliation process.</p> <p>Community leaders, the diasporas and politicians are active participants in promoting reconciliation.</p>	<p>Government supports the reconciliation process and engages in its own process.</p> <p>Communities are willing to participate in the process.</p>

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS	RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS
	support seminars for the diasporas, local leaders and politicians about the need for reconciliation.		

FURTHER READING —
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BIOGRAPHY OF A PEACE WRITER —
BIJOYETA DAS



Photo credit: Michele Zousmer

A freelance photographer and multimedia journalist based in New Delhi, Bijoyeta Das has reported from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Turkey and the United States. Das holds an M.A. in journalism from Northeastern University in Boston and a B.A. in history from Delhi University in India. Her work has been published in *Women's eNews*, Deutsche Welle, WAMC Northeast Public Radio, All India Radio, Tribal Truth, FotoWitness and SocialDocumentary.net. Her photo story "Dreams of a Goddess" won the Silver Medal at the TashkentAle-2010 photo festival in Uzbekistan, and her short documentary film "Branded Girls" was a finalist and screened at the 2011 Women's Voices Now Film Festival in Los Angeles. Das has worked as an intern at *Dorchester Reporter*, *New England Press Association Bulletin* and Barakat, Inc., and taught English language at Northeastern University and Kaplan, Inc. Das continues to document human interest stories focusing on culture, women and migration. Her work is available at www.bijoyetadas.com.

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

The mission of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) is to foster peace, cultivate justice and create a safer world. Through education, research and peacemaking activities, the IPJ offers programs that advance scholarship and practice in conflict resolution and human rights. The institute, a unit of the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, draws on Catholic social teaching that sees peace as inseparable from justice and acts to prevent and resolve conflicts that threaten local, national and international peace.

The IPJ was established in 2000 through a generous gift from the late Joan B. Kroc to the University of San Diego to create an institute for the study and practice of peace and justice. Programming began in early 2001 and the building was dedicated in December 2001 with a conference, "Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century."

The institute strives, in Joan B. Kroc's words, to not only talk about peace, but also make peace. In its peacebuilding initiatives, the IPJ works with local partners to help strengthen their efforts to consolidate peace with justice in the communities in which they live. In Nepal, for example, for more than a decade the IPJ has been working with Nepali groups to support inclusiveness and dialogue in the transition from armed conflict and monarchy to peace and multiparty democracy. In its West African Human Rights Training Initiative, the institute partners with local human rights groups to strengthen their ability to pressure government for reform and accountability. And the Guatemala Justice Project is currently implementing a legal empowerment program in the indigenous region of Quiché.

In addition to the Women PeaceMakers Program, the institute has several ongoing programs. The Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series is a forum for high-level national and international leaders and policymakers to share their knowledge and perspective on issues related to peace and justice.

WorldLink, a year-round educational program for middle school and high school students from San Diego and Baja California, connects youth to global affairs.

Community outreach includes speakers, films, art and opportunities for discussion between community members, academics and practitioners on issues of peace and social justice, as well as dialogue with national and international leaders in government, nongovernmental organizations and the military.

In addition to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies includes the Trans-Border Institute, which promotes border-related scholarship and an active role for the university in the cross-border community, and a master's program in Peace and Justice Studies to train future leaders in the field.

UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

Chartered in 1949, the University of San Diego (USD) is a Roman Catholic institution of higher learning located on 180 acres overlooking San Diego's Mission Bay. The University of San Diego is committed to promoting academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse community and preparing leaders dedicated to ethical and compassionate service.

The university is steadfast in its dedication to the examination of the Catholic tradition as the basis of a continuing search for meaning in contemporary life. Global peace and development and the application of ethics and values are examined through campus centers and institutes such as the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, the Values Institute, the Trans-Border Institute, the Center for Public Interest Law, the Institute for Law and Philosophy and the International Center for Character Education. Furthermore, through special campus events such as the Social Issues Conference, the James Bond Stockdale Leadership and Ethics Symposium and the Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series, we invite the community to join us in further exploration of these values.

The USD campus, considered one of the most architecturally unique in the nation, is known as Alcalá Park. Like the city of San Diego, the campus takes its name from San Diego de Alcalá, a Franciscan brother who served as the infirmarian at Alcalá de Henares, a monastery near Madrid, Spain. The Spanish Renaissance architecture that characterizes the five-century-old University of Alcalá serves as the inspiration for the buildings on the USD campus. The architecture was intended by the founders, Bishop Charles Francis Buddy and Mother Rosalie Hill, to enhance the search for truth through beauty and harmony. Recent additions, such as the state-of-the-art Donald P. Shiley Center for Science and Technology and the new School of Leadership and Education Sciences building carry on that tradition.

A member of the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa, USD is ranked among the nation's top 100 universities. The university offers its 7,500 undergraduate, graduate and law students rigorous academic programs in more than 60 fields of study through six academic divisions, including the College of Arts and Sciences and the schools of Business Administration, Leadership and Education Sciences, Law, and Nursing and Health Science. The Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies opened in Fall 2007.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CTP	Conflict Transformation Program
CREFAL	Regional Center for Latin America
IDEA	Institute for Adult Education
ILCE	Latin American Institute for Educational Communication
IPJ	Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
ITECA	Institute of Technology and Animation
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FNCD	National Front for Change and Democracy
FRAPH	Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti
GRPR	<i>Groupe Ressource Paix et Reconciliation</i> (Resource Group for Peace and Reconciliation)
LPI	The Life and Peace Institute
PCI	Pax Christi International
USD	University of San Diego
VSN	<i>Milice de Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale</i> (Volunteers for National Security)

ENDNOTES

¹ A version of this paragraph first appeared in the article “‘Women Cannot Cry Anymore’: Global Voices Transforming Violent Conflict,” by Emiko Noma in *Critical Half*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2007). Copyright 2007 Women for Women International.

² Haitian poet and historian Jean-Claude Martineau says that Haiti is the only country with a last name, denouncing how arbitrary and unfair it is to label one’s country so negatively.

³ In Haiti, the storyteller would say “Kric?” — asking if the audience was ready for a story — and their reply would be “Krac,” which meant an excited yes.

⁴ Please see the postscript on page 64 for an explanation of the “One Stone, Four Birds” vignette.

⁵ The Institute of Technology and Animation is still active today.

⁶ The Republic of Congo is often referred to as Congo-Brazzaville to distinguish it from its neighbor, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Congo-Kinshasa.

⁷ The capital, Brazzaville, was named after Pierre Paul François Camille Savorgnan de Brazza, a Franco-Italian explorer who opened up central Africa for French colonies to be established.

⁸ Pax Christi International (PCI) is a non-profit, nongovernmental Catholic peace movement working on a global scale on a wide variety of issues in the fields of human rights, human security, disarmament and demilitarization, a just world order and religion and violent conflict. For more information, visit www.paxchristi.net

⁹ U.N. peacekeepers are often called Blue Helmets or Blue Berets because of the light blue berets or helmets they wear.

¹⁰ Congo-Brazzaville was a French colony and gained independence in 1960.

¹¹ The Life and Peace Institute (LPI) head office is located in Uppsala, Sweden, and there are currently three offices in Africa: a regional office in Nairobi serving the Horn of Africa; an office in Khartoum for Sudan; and a third office in Bukavu set up to serve the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where conflicts are intrinsically linked to those of the Great Lakes Region. For more information, visit www.life-peace.org

¹² For more details on LPI’s Conflict Transformation Program, see page 72 in the Best Practices section.