

Beyond the Mountain: Joining Hands with the People of Haiti

Workshop 2: Haitian History

Total time: two hours

Theme: self-determination

Objectives

- Review highlights from Haitian history.
- Start to discover connections between U.S. and Haitian histories, including U.S. involvement in Haiti.
- Identify Haitian resiliency as a force that runs throughout history.
- Recognize that history does not occur as isolated events but rather is interconnected with what takes place throughout the rest of the world.
- Witness the work of an eye-to-eye partnership that focuses on the needs of rural communities.
- Discuss food-sovereignty issues in their community and complete an activity to encourage homegrown food.



Opening (5 minutes)

Materials needed

- Optional: chalice, candle, and lighter

Description

If you choose, light a chalice. Share this opening reading by Suze Baron:

YO DI
Yo di
san kreyen
enrichi
late
Si sete vre
Si sete vret
mezanmi
ala diri
pitmi
ak mayi
ki ta genyen
la peyi
D'Ayiti

They say
human blood
enriches
soil
If that were true
If that were true
my friends
how rice
millet
and corn
would thrive
in
Haiti

Activity 1: Timeline (15 minutes)

Objective

- Recognize that history does not happen in isolated events but rather is interconnected with what takes place throughout the rest of the world.

Materials needed

- Legal paper
- Markers
- Pencils
- Optional: computer with Internet access

Preparation

Prepare a sample timeline, using the instructions below.

Description

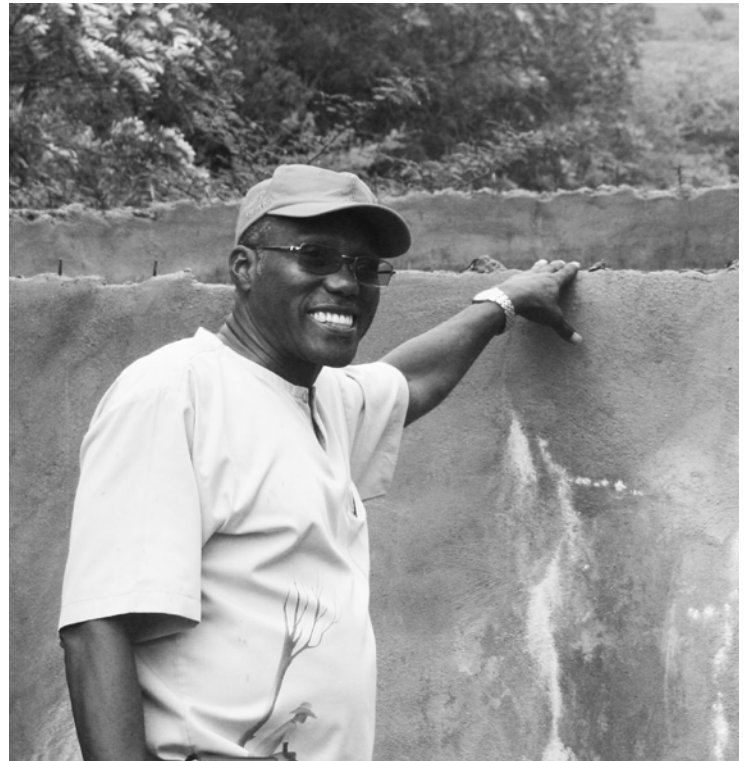
Give each participant a sheet of legal-size paper. Ask everyone to create a timeline, following these instructions: Across the center of the long side of the paper, use a dark marker to draw a line. Starting at the left side of the line, make a mark approximately

every two inches. You should have six hash marks. Label the far left of the line "Before 1492." Label the hash marks, from left to right, "1500," "1600," "1700," "1800," "1900," and "2000." Label the far right "after 2000."

Below the timeline, on the far left, leaving room underneath for another row, write "Personal History." Invite participants to write, in pencil, a few milestones in their personal or family history along this row. For example, if their family came to this country as immigrants or slaves and they know or can estimate the date, they may note it. If they had a relative who fought in the Civil War, note it. They should mark when they were born and perhaps birth dates of ancestors and offspring.

Below "Personal History," write "U.S. History." Stop here. Ask the group to brainstorm important dates in U.S. history. The events individuals find important will vary. Participants should feel free to add the dates and events they find important to the timeline. To keep it legible, suggest they limit entries to 10–15 dates and events. Ask everyone to include the following: "Before 1492" as a date when Native Americans held the dominant culture; "1492" as Columbus's trip to the Americas; and "1776" as the founding of the United States. Remind the group to use pencils, in case they want to change dates or events later.

Above the timeline, to the far left, write "Haitian history." Ask the group what significant events in Haitian history they know. Estimating dates is fine. Remind the group that you will talk about Haitian history today, so if their Haitian timeline is empty or slight, this will be remedied during the next activity. If participants know Haitian historical events but not dates, they may guess dates and write the events in pencil. Some dates will become clear during the workshops. If time permits and you have computer access, other events may be dated through an Internet search at the end of the workshop.



Activity 2: Postcards from Haiti (45 minutes)



Summary

Review highlights from Haitian history and, in groups, create postcards depicting the prominent themes and events from various time periods in Haiti's history.

Objectives

- Review highlights from Haitian history.
- Identify Haitian resiliency as a force that runs throughout history.
- Start to discover connections between U.S. and Haitian histories, including U.S. involvement in Haiti.

Materials needed

- Various art materials

Preparation

Print out and cut apart the five histories. Break the group into teams of at least two members each, preferably with three to five members. If you have a large group and can make more than five teams, feel free to divide postcards into shorter time frames.

Description

Break the group into five or more teams. In your own words, say to participants: "In the earlier decades of this past century, Haiti had a strong tourism industry. The name Haiti means 'mountainous country.' It comes from the Taino, the Native Americans who populated the island before 1492. Like other countries in the Caribbean, it is a beautiful, tropical land, with consistently warm temperatures and golden shores banking a crystal blue sea.

"Imagine yourself vacationing in beautiful Haiti. Imagine sending a postcard to your family and friends about your visit there. That is what each team will do. However, each team will be visiting Haiti during a different historical period. The postcard your team will create should inform the group about major events during your specific time period, the events of which will be detailed on cards given to each team. Your team should design an appropriate postcard and be prepared to present the postcard of events to the larger group. Please keep presentations to three minutes or less but feel free to be as creative as you like in your presentation. Use any of the art supplies in the room. You have 15 minutes to plan and to create your postcard."

Give warnings at five and two minutes before the end of the activity. Ask everyone to come back to group. As each team presents its postcard, remind participants to add important dates to their Haitian timeline, requesting that teams repeat dates, if needed.

After each presentation, ask if participants see anything in the history just presented that might still affect modern-day Haiti.

After all teams have presented, process the activity with these questions:

- What made an impression upon you about this abbreviated history of Haiti?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Did any themes emerge?
- How has self-determination been a theme in Haiti's history?
- How has race been a theme?
- How has use of natural resources, especially the land, been a theme?
- Give examples of Haitian resiliency from the short history observed.

Now look at the timeline and consider the following questions:

- What, if anything, in Haitian history reminded you of your personal history? Of U.S. history?
- How well did our first Haitian timeline capture Haitian history? If the answer is "not well," why do you think this is so?
- From where did you receive most of what you know about Haiti's history? From where do you receive most of your information about modern-day Haiti? Do you think any of these sources may be biased? Distribute the handout entitled "Resources about Haiti." Tell the group that this list of resources includes books, films, and websites about Haitian history and many other aspects of Haiti. It includes works of nonfiction and fiction, both for children and youth.
- The United States and Haiti both have a history of slavery. How did slavery in Haiti and the United States differ? How was it similar? Both countries still struggle with issues around race. You will hear more about this in the fourth workshop.

Leave a few minutes to clean up.

Activity 3: Spotlight on Partners — Papaye Peasant Movement (50 minutes)

Summary

We will study the Papaye Peasant Movement and its involvement with food sovereignty in rural communities. We will also decorate pots and fill them with seeds or seedlings to plant in the communities our congregation has adopted.

Objectives

- Witness the work of an eye-to-eye partnership that focuses on the needs of rural communities.
- Discuss food-sovereignty issues in their community and complete an activity to encourage homegrown food.

Materials needed

- A computer with Internet access, projector, and screen
- Vegetable seedlings or seeds, soil, pots, and water
- Paint and paintbrushes
- Smocks or old T-shirts
- Optional: gardening gloves and tools

Preparation

- Prepare a place for pots to dry after being painted.
- Be prepared to offer a few options for recipients of the seedlings and let participants decide.
- Decide if the youth and adults will do this activity alone or jointly with any children participating in the concurrent workshop. This is a great opportunity for a truly multigenerational activity.
- Test your equipment for accessing the Haiti map.

Description

Part 1 (30 minutes)

Remind participants that UUSC works through eye-to-eye partnerships. Make sure that the group understands that UUSC seeks partnerships with grassroots organizations comprised of people who decide for themselves what is best for their community. The organization communicates the kind of support they need, and UUSC communicates how it can best give such support. It is a collaborative model of working with the people of Haiti, not for them.

Go to the video “Papaye Peasant Movement,” available online as part of the Haiti Curriculum: Beyond the Mountain playlist at [youtube.com/uusc4all](https://www.youtube.com/uusc4all) or on UUSC’s *Beyond the Mountain* DVD.

In your own words, say to participants:

“In every workshop, we will meet one of the UUSC’s partners in Haiti. You might remember that the marginalized group identified in the previous workshop was women. Each of UUSC’s partners is seeking justice for at least one marginalized community. Today, you will hear from a partner that endeavors to provide a better life for Haiti’s rural communities, including those who have relocated from the capital to the rural areas after the earthquake.”

Continue, sharing the following information:

“The Papaye Peasant Movement, known as MPP, was founded in 1973 to empower small farmers to improve their living conditions. (“Peasant” is the preferred term for rural farmers in Haiti.) Today, MPP has more than 100,000 members, including men, women, and youth. MPP’s major goals include helping Haiti regain food security, contributing to sustainable natural-resource management, advocating for women’s rights, promoting alternative energies, and building people-centered rural communities. The work of MPP has taken on new importance since the earthquake. Thousands of people, rendered homeless, moved to the countryside to live with family members. Peasant families suddenly found themselves overwhelmed: too many mouths to feed and drastic underemployment.”

Watch the short video.

Ask the following questions one at a time, allowing several minutes for each to be answered:

- What issues may have contributed to rural communities receiving less access to aid and other relief resources after the earthquake?
- Issues concerning sovereignty have been a part of Haitian history from the time its history started being documented. The Taino originally lived on the land. The Spanish invaded in 1492, and France took possession of the island in 1697. Though Haiti was declared free after the slave revolution in 1804, that freedom has always had qualifications. A huge debt was inflicted by France. For decades, surrounding nations, including the United States, refused to acknowledge, trade, and build mutually benefiting relationships with the government on the island. The United States has occupied Haiti three times. Currently, Haiti is bound by more free-trade agreements and has more nongovernmental organizations on the ground than any other country in the hemisphere. In the fourth workshop, we will focus more on how history has impacted Haiti’s economy. With such a history, it is not hard to see why self-empowerment is a crucial piece in the vision for a better Haiti. How do the programs of MPP address self-empowerment?
- Most of the peasant farmers in Haiti are women. How might sexism or gender bias work to disempower peasants?
- MPP and other grassroots organizations in Haiti want support for Haitian sustainability and less direct aid. How is MPP working to increase sustainability in Haiti? Can you compare this to sustainability projects in your community?
- What issues with food security exist in your community? Do people in cities have easy access to affordable fresh produce? Are farmers subsidized to not grow food or to grow food for livestock instead of people? How do class issues affect questions of food sovereignty in the United States? What can you do to help?

Part 2 (20 minutes)

MPP is encouraging small-scale farming with tire gardens. Invite participants to help encourage gardeners locally by planting vegetable seedlings. Consider using recycled materials as pots, such as old wicker baskets or wine crates lined with moss.

If your congregation has adopted a neighborhood, nursing home, or school, the seedlings can be donated to them. If this is the plan, consider scheduling a time outside the workshop for congregants to join the recipients in decorating the pots with bright, lively colors. If your community has a community garden, inquire if they have a program to support people as they build home gardens. If so, the potted seedlings could be given away for home gardens.

To make this project a long-term, faith-in-action project, workshop participants could work with children in religious education to plant seeds. The children would help by nurturing the seeds into seedlings before giving them away. They could also join the painting party.



Closing (5 minutes)

If applicable, extinguish the chalice. Share the following closing reading by Carl Gustav¹:

The great events of world history are, at bottom, profoundly unimportant. In the last analysis, the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately spring as a gigantic summation from these hidden sources in individuals. In our most private and most subjective lives we are not only the passive witnesses of our age, and its sufferers, but also its makers. We make our own epoch.

Alternate activities

MPP to Monsanto: Burn, Baby, Burn

Read the following pieces:

- "Manifest Haiti: Monsanto's Destiny," an article about MPP's resistance against Monsanto's "gift" of non-native vegetable seeds after the earthquake
- "Five Answers on Monsanto's Haiti Seed Donation," a post from Monsanto's blog that talks about the process they used to orchestrate the seed donation
- "Haitian Farmers Commit to Burning Monsanto Hybrid Seeds," a *Huffington Post* article by Beverly Bell with more information specifically about Monsanto's practices

Discuss these articles. These questions might help:

- They say there are two sides to every story. What are the two sides to this story?
- The Monsanto blog post says the seeds given to Haiti were hybrids, not genetically modified organisms (GMOs). What is the difference? Monsanto noted that Haitian farmers seldom use hybrids, but they gave them hybrids anyway. They say some of the seeds are already in use in Haiti, but the seeds were mostly not native species. Why can use of non-native seeds be a problem? Some of Monsanto's seeds are non-regenerative. This means that instead of plants producing seeds that can be planted next year, farmers will need to get new seeds every year. Why might this be a problem?

¹ Carl Gustav, "Memorable Quotes for Matter of Heart," The Internet Movie Database, accessed April 8, 2010, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0084313/quotes?qt0535021>.

- Haitian peasants traditionally save seeds from the harvest to plant next year. Monsanto's seeds were rumored to be non-regenerative. Why would this work to Monsanto's benefit, but not the farmers'?
- The claim has often been made that many of the seeds Monsanto produces are chemically dependant on the fertilizers and pesticides also produced by Monsanto. Monsanto claims this is not true of the seeds provided to the Haitians. They say each farmer can decide for themselves if they wish to use fertilizers and herbicides, though the organization handling seed distribution will "support farmers with recommendations and resources." Who stands to gain from recommending the use of fertilizers and herbicides?

Children's Activity, Workshop 2 (60 minutes)

Objectives

- Learn more about Haiti and UUSC's partners.
- Have the opportunity to ask questions about Haiti.
- Participate in an activity to help local people grow food.

Materials

- "Puzzle Pieces" handout
- Map of Haiti or a globe
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A computer with Internet access, projector, and screen
- Vegetable seedlings or seeds, soil, pots, water
- Paint and paintbrushes
- Smocks or old T-shirts
- Optional: gardening gloves and tools

Preparation

- Prepare a place for pots to dry after being painted.
- Be prepared to offer a few options for recipients of the seedlings and let participants decide.
- Decide if the children will do this activity alone or jointly with youth and adults from the concurrent workshop.
- Test your equipment for showing the PowerPoint presentation.

Description

If appropriate, start this session with a favorite children's chalice lighting.

Part 1 (10 minutes)

If the children participated in the activities in Workshop 1, remind them that the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (say the full name often) works in many other countries and in communities in the United States, too. In your own words, say to the children: "It puts our UU faith in action by working for justice all around the globe. UUSC does its justice work by partnering with organizations in other countries and communities, people who can tell UUSC what they need so UUSC can support them in working for justice."

"One place where UUSC is currently working is Haiti. [Show the children Haiti on the map or globe.] Let's learn more about UUSC's partners in Haiti."

Give each child a piece of a Haiti puzzle. Each piece is half of Haiti and corresponds to only one other matching piece. One matching piece has the name of a partner. The corresponding puzzle piece has bullets that detail some of the actions of the partner. Invite children to find their matching puzzle piece. If they need help, remind them to look at the shape. If you have more puzzle pieces than children, as a child finds a match, give them another piece until all the puzzles are complete.

Ask each pair to read the information about their partner. Be ready to assist early readers. Process the activity with these questions:

- Where is Haiti located? [Point to the country on the globe if they need help.]
- What do we call that area of the world? [The Caribbean, after the sea that surrounds these islands.]
- How many people do you think live in Haiti: almost 1 million, almost 5 million, or almost 10 million? [10 million]. Compare this to the size of your city or town.
- UUSC sponsors trips during which volunteers go to Haiti to work directly with partners. Which of the activities listed on the puzzle pieces sound interesting to you? Could you imagine yourself, when you are older, leaving home for a couple of weeks to support our partners in Haiti? What do you think it will be like?

Part 2 (15 minutes)

Show the PowerPoint presentation "Joining Hands PowerPoint." Ask the children: What did you like best about this? Did anything surprise you? What did you learn about Haiti? What else did you notice?

Part 3 (10 minutes)

Ask the group what questions they have about Haiti, UUSC, or their partners. Record the questions on newsprint. If the answers are not found in this program, search the UUSC website or the Internet in general for answers. Tell the group you will do your best to answer their questions before the end of the program. If older elementary children are present, seek volunteers to research the questions and bring answers to the next workshop. You will want to check in with them a couple of days before to remind them of the assignment.

Part 4 (25 minutes)

Ask if children remember the tire gardens from the PowerPoint presentation. This is a project of the Papaye Peasants Movement (MPP). Say that it is empowering to be able to grow your own food and feed your family, and we want to support the people of Haiti in doing this. We can support others in doing this, too.

Invite the group to plant vegetable seedlings. Consider using recycled materials as pots, such as old wicker baskets or wine crates lined with moss.

If your congregation has adopted a neighborhood, nursing home, or school, then donate the seedlings appropriately. If you do this, consider scheduling a time outside the workshop for children to join the recipients in decorating the pots with bright, lively colors. If your neighborhood has a community garden, ask if they have a program to support people as they build home gardens. If so, the potted seedlings could be given away for home gardens.

To make this project a long-term, faith-in-action project, youth and adults engaged in the formal workshop series could work with children to plant seeds. The children would help by nurturing the seeds into seedlings before giving them away. Leave time to clean.

If you lit a chalice at the opening, extinguish it now, and include any traditional readings or sayings with which the children are familiar.

Want to know more?

The InfoPlease website has a short entry on Haitian history. See the resource list for other sites where you can explore this country's history in more depth.



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